

DEVELOPMENT OF TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN KYIV REGION (1927-1931)

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Abstract

The preconditions for the formation and activities of the True Orthodox Church in the territory of the Kyiv region from 1927 to 1931 are studied in the scientific paper. Based on archival documents, the reasons for the emergence of the anti-Sergius opposition among the Orthodox clergy and laity who rejected the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) on loyalty to Soviet power are analyzed. It is shown that the Kyiv region became one of the centers for the development of the True Orthodox Christian movement in the Ukrainian SSR, where independent communities were formed. The specifics of underground church life are revealed, including illegal divine services, the establishment of clandestine monasteries, and the distribution of leaflets and spiritual proclamations.

Particular attention is given to the repressive policies of the Soviet authorities, culminating in the OGPU operation ‘Chornye Pauki’ (Black Spiders) (1931), which led to the arrests and convictions of dozens of clergy and laity in the Kyiv region. It is concluded that the True Orthodox Church in the Kyiv region became a manifestation of religious nonconformism and spiritual resistance to the totalitarian regime, having played a significant role in the formation of Catacomb Orthodoxy in Ukraine.

Keywords: True Orthodox Church, anti-Sergius opposition, Kyiv eparchy, Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), religious underground, Catacomb Church, ‘Chornye Pauki’ (Black Spiders), Soviet repression, church resistance.

Introduction

The problem of studying illegal church life in the USSR remains far from being completed. The revitalization of research in this area in the late 20th–early 21st century, although revealing many previously unknown aspects of religious life under the conditions of Bolshevik persecutions and Soviet repression, in our opinion, also generated even more questions that required deep and thoughtful empirical research to uncover new sources, integrate disparate information from various archives, and critically analyze the documents of

the Soviet security services. The complexity of implementing the above-mentioned tasks at the modern stage has become complicated by the fact that the archives of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus are becoming increasingly inaccessible (in fact, inaccessible), and documents of the Soviet period that were previously declassified are again acquiring a secret character. The repressions against the Research Center 'Memorial' are a vivid testimony of Russia's regressive policy toward the Soviet past. Therefore, it is unlikely that objective studies of Soviet security services' documents will be conducted in republics with authoritarian regimes in the near future.

Altogether opposite processes have been occurring in Ukraine in recent decades. Having declassified Soviet security services' documents for research significantly later than Russia in the 1990s, Ukrainian archival institutions achieved the level of full access to former KGB documents for ordinary researchers. This process made it possible to study numerous little-known episodes of the secret religious life of Soviet society, while also reflecting the depth and scope of lost chapters of the past. This is due to the mass destruction of intelligence and operational materials in accordance with the order No. 00150-1990 of the Chairman of the KGB of the Ukrainian SSR. As a result, as Dmitriy Vedeneev, a researcher of the history of the Ukrainian security services, indicates, "the subject of study of scholars will no longer be the organized and highly informative documents on Orthodox-colored religious nonconformism – the six-volume case against 'churchmen and sectarians' (1942-1945), 23 volumes of the letter-coded case (1952-1965) on the underground of The True Orthodox Church (TOC), the multi-volume working of the case (1952-1961) on the 'anti-Soviet activities' of the monasticism of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), as well as numerous multi-volume intelligence and operational cases that were worked for a long time in the Center and in the oblast departments of the state security agencies regarding the Orthodox religious opposition ('church-monarchist underground')"¹ and many others.

Those losses were compounded by the loss of archival documents as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war: the occupation of the Crimea, Donetsk, and Lugansk in 2014, which resulted in the removal of all Soviet security services' documents from local archives to Moscow; the destruction of the archives of the Chernigov Branch of the Security Service of

¹ Дмитро Веденєєв, "Документи органів державної безпеки як джерело дослідження соціокультурних особливостей «катакомбної» течії у православ'ї в Українській РСР у 1920-ті – 1950-ті рр.," [Dmytro Vedenieiev, The Documents of the State Security Offices of the Ukrainian SSR As the Source For the Research of the Social-Cultural Features of the «Catacomb» Direction of the Orthodoxy in Ukraine 1920's – 1950's]. *Бібліотекознавство. Документознавство. Інформологія*. No 1 (2017), 28.

Ukraine during the bombing of the city; and the looting of documents from the Kherson archives during the occupation of the city in 2022.

Furthermore, the specific nature of the underground church life itself – deep conspiracy, the destruction of epistolary heritage by both believers and security services officers after their seizure as material evidence, and the absence of living witnesses of those years who could recreate the events through ‘oral tradition’ – did not contribute to a full-fledged study of the phenomenon.

All of the above requires researchers to make every effort to find and study surviving documents and consolidate information from various archival repositories to reconstruct little-known pages of the religious underground in both the USSR as a whole and the Ukrainian SSR in particular.

The relevance of the current issue is also confirmed by its insufficient study. The historiography of the formation and development of the True Orthodox Church in Soviet Ukraine is limited to a dozen works, while the history of the True Orthodox Church within the Kyiv eparchy is limited to individual studies by M. Shkarovsky, O. Trygub, S. Shumilo, D. Vedenev, and I. Osipova, where the Kyiv chapter is an insert in the general picture of the all-Ukrainian or all-Union scale (for a more detailed historiography of this issue, see the study of A. Kyrydon²).

In the current research paper, the authors aim to study the preconditions for the formation of the structures of the so-called True Orthodox Church in the USSR, as well as their spread, activities, and anthropological profile based on materials from the Kyiv region, as well as to show the repressive nature of the Soviet regime toward the clergy and laity of the TOC.

The Concept of True Orthodox in Academic Literature

Key concepts used in both Soviet official documents and literature, as well as in modern works, include the True Orthodox Christians, the True Orthodox Church, and the Catacomb Church. Without entering into a discussion about the interpretation of these concepts, which may have different meanings for different researchers,³ we will reveal their essence from the authors’ perspective.

² Алла Киридон, “Рецепція Істинно-православної церкви в сучасній історіографії” [Alla Kyrydon, “Reception of the True Orthodox Church in Modern Historiography”], *Слов’янський вісник. Серія «Історичні та політичні науки»*. Issue 14 (2012), 38-44.

³ Regarding different approaches in the interpretation of these definitions and discussions on the issue, see the works of: Павел Проценко, “Миф об истинной церкви” [Pavel Protsenko, “The Myth of the True Church”],

True Orthodox Christians – a general name for illegal religious groups and communities in the USSR. Under this name, we mean practically the entire illegal (underground, catacomb) movements that identified themselves with Orthodoxy and counteracted the anti-church policies of the Bolshevik regime.

The True Orthodox Church – a body of Orthodox groups uniting the clergy and laity who refused to recognize Soviet power and whose religious life, with the beginning of the repressions in 1930-31, proceeded outside the officially registered churches of the All-Russian Orthodox Church. Moreover, those groups had varying relationships with the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) – some maintained ties with it, while others severed them completely. Initially, the term was rather conventional and acquired a definite institutional character only after World War II.

The True Orthodox Church was not a unified organization, but rather united various groups opposed to the Moscow Patriarchate, including the Buivites, the Josephites, the Non-Commemorators, the Anti Sergianists, the Podgornovites, and the Stefanovites, among others.

The Catacomb Church – a collective name for that portion of the Orthodox clergy and Orthodox communities that left the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate in the 1920s, accusing it of collaboration with the Soviet authorities, and assumed an illegal/underground status. It should be noted that a broader concept exists–*the catacomb movement*–which encompasses not only Orthodox and quasi-Orthodox communities but also other religious denominations and movements operating underground during the Soviet era, such as the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

All these concepts overlap and serve as either a specific or general name for a broad underground anti-Soviet movement within the Orthodox Church of the USSR. Ukrainian researcher Sergei Shumilo says that the name ‘The True Orthodox Church’ was first used in February 1928 by Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovykh) in a response letter to a Sergianists

Вестник русского христианского движения. No 5-6 (179) (1998), 137-150; Киридон, op.cit.; Олександр Тригуб, Розгром української церковної опозиції в Російській православній церкві (1922-1939 рр.) [Oleksandr Trygub, Defeat of the Ukrainian Church Opposition in the Russian Orthodox Church (1922-1939)] (Миколаїв: ТОВ «Фірма Іліон», 2009), 145-146; Сергей Шумило, В катакомбах. Православное подполье в СССР. Конспект по истории Истинно-православной церкви в СССР [Sergei Shumilo, In the Catacombs: The Orthodox Underground in the USSR. A Summary of the History of the True Orthodox Church in the USSR] (Луцк: Терен, 2011), 52-53; Алексей Беглов, В поисках «безгрешных катакомб». Церковное подполье в СССР [Alexey Beglov, In Search of ‘Sinless Catacombs’. The Church Underground in the USSR] (Москва: РОССПЭН, 2018), 9-16.

Regarding the distinction between True Orthodox Christians and True Orthodox Church, see: Людмила Шугаева, “Релігійні утворення істинно-православної церкви й істинно-православних християн як форма протистояння тоталітаризму” [Liudmyla Shuhaieva, “Religious formations of the true Orthodox Church and true Orthodox Christians as a form of opposition to totalitarianism”], *Проблеми історії України: факти, судження, пошук: Міжвідомчий збірник наукових праць*. Issue 15 (2006), 423-435.

Archimandrite Lev (Egorov). Followers of the TOC themselves often began to be called True Orthodox Christians, denoting their affiliation with the TOC (for example, Archpriest Anatoly Zhurakovsky, one of the TOC ideologists in Kyiv, called the followers of the TOC True Orthodox Christians as early as 1930). Those names were never officially established and were not legally formalized. In different areas, followers of the TOC were called by various names—Tikhonovites, True Orthodox, Old (Patriarchal) Church members, Secret Church members, Catacombists, Khatniki—as well as by the names of the bishops and priests who gave guidance to them – Josephites, Kirillovites, Victorians, Andreevites, Buivites, Mechevites, Seraphimites, Feodorovites, Antonievites, Stefanovites, and so on. However, such names were often conventional and did not necessarily signify separate groups or movements. The TOC was often referred to as the Tikhonite Church, and its followers were known as Tikhonovites, after Patriarch Tikhon, whose precepts the TOC piously adhered to. Followers of the TOC often identified themselves in such a way, considering it the canonical successor to the pre-revolutionary Russian Orthodox Church after the ‘New Renovationist Schism’ of 1927.⁴

It should also be noted that several terms originated in the offices of the Cheka, and from there, along with the released clergy and believers, found their way into society, acquiring a so-called popular character.

Prerequisites for the Formation of the True Orthodox Movement

April 7, 1925, marked a pivotal event in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, one that would significantly impact its future destiny: the death of Patriarch Tikhon (Belavin). Sixty bishops arrived in Moscow to bid farewell to the Patriarch, gathering on April 12 after the funeral to announce the last will of the deceased. It was made public by Metropolitan Peter, and based on the will, a resolution was passed transferring power “due to the absence of Metropolitan Kirill and Metropolitan Agathangel, the duties of the Patriarchal Locum Tenens are entrusted to Metropolitan Peter.”⁵ Thus, the full powers of the Patriarch were transferred to Metropolitan Peter (Polyansky) of Krutitsy, even though he was third in the Patriarch’s will after Metropolitan Kirill (Smirnov) and Metropolitan Agathangel (Preobrazhensky), who were in exile.

Just a month after Patriarch Tikhon’s death, the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU)

⁴ Шумило, *op.cit.*, 52-53.

⁵ Лев Регельсон, *Трагедия русской церкви. 1917-1945* [Lev Regelson, *The Tragedy of the Russian Church. 1917-1945*] (Москва: Крутицкое патриаршее подворье, 1996), 385.

under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, through Moscow Vicar Bishop Boris (Rukin), proposed to Metropolitan Peter (Polyansky) conditions for the legalization of the activities of the Tikhonite Russian Orthodox Church⁶. The conditions for legalization proposed to the Locum Tenens by OGPU representatives were as follows: 1) the issuing of a declaration calling on believers to be loyal to Soviet power; 2) the suspension of bishops undesirable to the authorities; 3) the condemnation of foreign bishops; 4) contact regarding activities with the government in the person of GPU representative E. Tuchkov⁷. The Locum Tenens resolutely rejected such a proposal.

At the end of November 1925, almost all the notable bishops living in Moscow at the time were arrested. Anticipating imminent arrest, on December 6, 1925, Metropolitan Peter drew up the following directive for the future: "In the event that for any reason it becomes impossible for me to perform the duties of Patriarchal Locum Tenens, I temporarily entrust the performance of such duties to His Eminence Sergius (Stragorodsky), Metropolitan of Nizhny Novgorod. If this Metropolitan is unable to carry this out, then Mikhail (Ermakov), Exarch of Ukraine, or His Eminence Joseph (Petrovykh), Archbishop of Rostov, will temporarily assume the duties of Patriarchal Locum Tenens, should Metropolitan Mikhail be deprived of the opportunity to carry out this directive of mine."⁸

On December 9, 1925, a meeting of the Commission for the Implementation of the Decree on Separation of Church and State was held at the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). After hearing a report by the OGPU on intra-church groups (how to split the Church, whom to help, whom to eliminate), as well as information on the behavior of Metropolitan Peter, who was unwilling to cooperate with the security services, the party-state body resolved: "In view of the church policy he (the Locum Tenens) is pursuing, which is clearly hostile to Soviet power, and the specific incriminating materials available on him, to recognize the line proposed by the OGPU on the issue of intra-church groups as correct."⁹ On the same day, Locum Tenens Peter was arrested and, after a lengthy investigation, sent into exile.

Based on the aforementioned directive of Metropolitan Peter, Metropolitan Sergius

⁶ After the Renovationist schism in 1922, bishops and eparchy administrations that refused to transfer to the Renovationist ROC were not registered and, therefore, found themselves in a semi-legal position, lacking the legal rights (according to Soviet legislation) to administer.

⁷ Регельсон, *op.cit.*, 389.

⁸ Дамаскин (Орловский), Мученики, исповедники и подвижники благочестия Российской Православной Церкви XX столетия: Жизнеописания и материалы к ним. Кн. 2 [Damaskin (Orlovskiy), Martyrs, Confessors, and Ascetics of Piety of the Russian Orthodox Church of the 20th Century: Biographies and Materials for Them. Book 2] (Тверь: Булат, 1996), 346-347.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 348.

(Stragorodsky) assumed the duties of Locum Tenens. During the first half of 1926, he was imprisoned twice for refusing to comply with the demands of Soviet power. Furthermore, Metropolitan Sergius was informed that the convocation of the Council and the election of a Patriarch would be possible not before, but after, the Church's acceptance of the proposed legalization conditions.¹⁰

On December 13, 1926, Metropolitan Sergius was arrested in Nizhny Novgorod and transported to the OGPU internal prison on Lubyanka in Moscow.¹¹ In his absence, Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovykh) temporarily assumed the duties of Deputy Locum Tenens, who, fearing arrest, also appointed three deputies for himself. Thus, by early 1927, the situation within the Higher Church Administration had become intricate and challenging to resolve. The names of 13 hierarchs claiming 'primacy' were known. A considerable proportion of the episcopate was in prison. The Christian denomination itself was torn by internal contradictions and schisms, with each faction asserting its own right to be recognized as the 'true' Church.¹²

Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) spent three and a half months in prison, subjected to relentless pressure from the OGPU. Throughout those months, Yevgeny Tuchkov, Head of the 6th Section (countering religious organizations, including the Russian Orthodox Church), a secret department of the OGPU, personally 'worked' with him. For the authorities, Metropolitan Sergius was the only figure capable of uniting the Patriarchal Church under the control of the GPU. Apparently, Metropolitan Sergius was unable to withstand the pressure exerted by the special services, which resulted in his acquiescence to the aforementioned conditions of legalization and cooperation.

On March 30, 1927, Metropolitan Sergius was released and resumed his role as Deputy Locum Tenens of the Moscow Patriarchate. In May 1927, Metropolitan Sergius petitioned the NKVD, requesting the convening of a meeting of bishops and the establishment of a Synod. After receiving a certificate of temporary registration for the Synod on May 20, de facto eparchy administrations began to establish themselves on a local level.

The unexpected release of Metropolitan Sergius had a profound impact on many church officials, as the other bishops arrested with him had been sentenced to exile and sent to prison

¹⁰ Михаил Одинцов, "Декларация митрополита Сергия от 29 июля 1927 г. и борьба вокруг нее" [Mikhail Odintsov, "The Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius of July 29, 1927, and the Struggle Around It"], *Отечественная история*. No 6 (1992), 124.

¹¹ Александр Мазырин, "Легализация Московской Патриархии в 1927 году: скрытые цели власти" [Alexander Mazyrin, "The Legalization of the Moscow Patriarchate in 1927: The Hidden Goals of the Authorities"], *Отечественная история*. No 4 (2008), 115.

¹² Одинцов, *op.cit.*, 124.

camps. For instance, Bishop Afanasy (Sakharov) was sentenced to three years in the Solovetsky camps for “belonging to a group of bishops headed by Metropolitan Sergius.” The head of the ‘group of bishops’ was not only released but also granted the right to reside in Moscow, a prerogative previously unavailable to him prior to his arrest. Naturally, suspicions emerged that all that was no coincidence and that some secret agreement had been reached between Metropolitan Sergius and the GPU.¹³

On July 29, 1927, *Izvestia* published the ‘Declaration,’ signed by Metropolitan Sergius and eight members of the Patriarchal Synod. It was distributed in the form of leaflets throughout the eparchies. The fundamental provisions of the draft of June 10, 1926, were retained in it, while adjustments were made personally by OGPU officer E. Tuchkov (an expanded provision on the law-abidingness of believers, a sharp assessment of the activities of the Karlovci Synod, and the blurring of ideological contradictions between Orthodox Christians and Communists).¹⁴ The central leitmotif in the ‘Declaration’ was: “...We need to show not just in words but in deeds that trustworthy citizens of the Soviet Union, loyal to the Soviet regime, are not only those indifferent to Orthodoxy, not only its apostates but also its most ardent supporters for whom it, with all its dogmas and traditions, with all its canonical and liturgical order, is as dear as truth and life themselves. We want to be Orthodox and at the same time to be conscious of the Soviet Union as our civil motherland, whose joys and successes are our joys and successes and whose failures are our failures. Any blow directed at the Union, be it a war, a boycott, some kind of public calamity, or just a treacherous murder, like one in Warsaw, is recognized as a blow aimed at us. While remaining Orthodox, we remember our duty to be citizens of the Union “not only out of fear but also for conscience’ sake,” as the Apostle teaches us (Romans XIII, 5).

...our Patriarchate, while doing the late Patriarch’s will, decidedly and undoubtedly takes the path of loyalty people of the said opinion will either have to overcome themselves and leave their political preferences at home, bringing to Church only their faith and working with us only in the name of the faith, or, if they cannot overcome themselves immediately, at least not to hinder us and to move temporarily away from the affairs of the Church.¹⁵

The ‘Declaration’ signed by Metropolitan Sergius in 1927 marked the final transition of the Orthodox Church from a position of political apathy and spiritual separation from the

¹³ Михаил Польский, *Каноническое положение Высшей церковной власти в СССР и за границей* [Mikhail Polskiy, *Canonical Position of the Supreme Church Authority in the USSR and Abroad*] (Jordanville, N.Y., 1948), 34.

¹⁴ *Русская Православная Церковь и коммунистическое государство. 1917-1941. Документы и фотоматериалы* [The Russian Orthodox Church and the Communist State. 1917-1941. Documents and Photographic Materials] (Москва: Изд-во Библейско-Богословского Института св.апостола Андрея, 1996), 200-201.

¹⁵ Одинцов, *op.cit.*, 131-132.

Bolshevik regime to a position of complete law-abidingness, unconditional recognition of the legitimacy of Soviet power, and, furthermore, de facto cooperation with government entities, on the condition that the latter would renounce their support for legally operating schismatic centers. However, the establishment of certain allied-subordinate relationships with the godless state and the manifestation of unnatural spiritual solidarity with the atheistic power had led to the emergence of new schisms within the Church, without saving the Moscow Patriarchate from subsequent repression.¹⁶ In turn, the First Patriarchal Exarch of All Ukraine, Metropolitan Mikhail (Ermakov), also prepared a 'Declaration' for the Ukrainian believers, which he proclaimed on November 17, 1927. It preserved the main theses of Metropolitan Sergius's 'Declaration.'¹⁷

That 'Declaration' provoked varied responses among the episcopate, clergy, and believers. The episcopate, as noted by the renowned Russian historian M.I. Odintsov, gradually split into three groups. One sharply condemned Sergius and therefore broke with him. The other, although not overtly protesting, shied away from cooperation with the metropolitan, refusing new appointments and requesting 'retirement' and leave under various pretexts. The third group, comprising almost half of the episcopate, supported the 'Declaration.'¹⁸ It was the first group that formed the basis for the formation of the institutional structures of the TOC.

However, the above classification is highly notional and based on data from the Russian (RSFSR) part of the Soviet Union, where opposition to Metropolitan Sergius was much more active and widespread, comprising several (approximately five) factions. Those opposing Sergius included Agathangel (Preobrazhensky), Kirill (Smirnov), Joseph (Petrovykh), Demetrius (Lyubimov), Alexy (Bui), and over twenty representatives of the Russian episcopate. The center of the opposition was the Leningrad clergy, headed by Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovykh) and Demetrius (Lyubimov), who had become the core of the future True Orthodox Church.

It is noteworthy that most of the Ukrainian episcopate of the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as the clergy, supported the 'Declaration.' During the second half of 1927, the clergy of the Kharkiv, Poltava, Kremenchug, Glukhiv, Kherson, Tulchin, Kamenets-Podilskyi, Proskuriv, Mogyliv, Konotop, Poltava, Odesa, Mykolaiv, and other okrugs submitted a series

¹⁶ Юрий Макаров, Советская государственная религиозная политика и органы ВЧК-ГПУ-ОГПУ-НКВД СССР (окт. 1917-го – конец 1930-х годов): автореферат диссертации [Yuriy Makarov, Soviet State Religious Policy and the Cheka-GPU-OGPU-NKVD Organs of the USSR (October 1917 – Late 1930s): Dissertation Abstract], (Санкт-Петербург, 2007), 36.

¹⁷ Тригуб, *op.cit.*, 133-134.

¹⁸ Одинцов, *op.cit.*, 125.

of declarations to the NKVD authorities and Metropolitan Mikhail, acknowledging their ‘political mistakes,’ expressing loyalty to Soviet power, and calling on Metropolitan Mikhail to support Metropolitan Sergius’s ‘Declaration.’ At the same time, such unanimity in resolutions and free expression of attitude toward the ‘Declaration’ in Ukraine could not escape the sanctions of the anti-religious Secret Operational Department of the OGPU and the NKVD’s Department of Administration, confirming the assertion of a certain level of support for the Moscow Patriarchate from the Soviet authorities and the security services.¹⁹

An exception to that unanimity was some representatives of the Ukrainian episcopate: Pavel (Kratirov) of Starobelsk (retired), Ioasaf (Popov) of Novomoskovsk (retired), Vasily (Zelentsov) of Priluki, Arkady (Ostalsky) of Lubny, Damaskin (Tsedrik) of Starodub and Glukhov, Pakhomy (Kedrov) of Chernigov, and Averky (Kedrov) of Volyn.²⁰ Half of them were already imprisoned at the time of publication of the ‘Declaration.’ Letters protesting the Patriarchate’s new policy and calling for its abandonment began arriving to Metropolitan Sergius. Exposés, messages, and claims criticizing the ‘Declaration’ and condemning the church policies of the Deputy Locum Tenens began circulating throughout the country. Thus began the emergence of a movement of those who disagreed with the ‘Declaration,’ marking the start of a schism that would ultimately lead to the establishment of the True Orthodox Church in all its forms.

The Transition of Orthodox Parishes in the Kyiv Region to the True Orthodox Movement

Opponents of Sergius’s 1927 ‘Declaration’ (hereinafter referred to as the ‘anti-Sergius opposition’) in the Kyiv region split into two independent movements. One group adopted a wait-and-see attitude, known as Non-Commemorators, not officially severing ties with Metropolitan Sergius, while the other openly opposed the ‘Declaration,’ forming the core of the future TOC.

According to historian Mikhail Shkarovsky, “there was not a single bishop in Kyiv who joined the TOC. Five bishops residing in the city expressed their disapproval of the 1927 ‘Declaration’ and joined the Ukrainian group of Non-Commemorators, which did not formally break with Metropolitan Sergius. They advocated for the legalization of the Church in the Soviet state, but with minimal concessions to power.”²¹ However, the researcher does

¹⁹ Тригуб, *op.cit.*, 135-136.

²⁰ Шумило, *op.cit.*, 47-49.

²¹ Михаил Шкаровский, *Иосифлянство: течение в Русской Православной Церкви* [Mikhail Shkarovskiy, *Josephites: A Current in the Russian Orthodox Church*] (Санкт-Петербург: НИЦ «Мемориал», 1999), 90.

not provide the names of the bishops or the source of this information, and we consider this assertion to be incorrect. It should be noted that in mid-1927, only four bishops resided in Kyiv: Bishop Dimitry (Verbitsky) of Uman, Archbishop Vasily (Bogdashevsky) of Kaniv, Bishop Georgy (Deliev) of Tarascha, and Bishop Filaret (Linchevsky) of Chygyryn. All of them, albeit with apprehension, supported both Sergius's 'Declaration' and Mikhail's (Ermakov) subsequent 'Declaration.' As a result, all of them were legalized and approved in early 1928 by the NKVD Department of Administration as the episcopate of the Kyiv eparchy.²² From the Kyiv eparchy, only Bishop Afanasy (Molchanovsky) of Skvyra and Berdychiv, who was in exile at the time, joined the movement of Non-Commemorators.

In general, the clergy of the Kyiv eparchy reacted with apprehension to both declarations. According to Professor V.I. Volovik, an active member of the Refectory Church community in Kyiv, "in many communities, the 'Declaration' was not brought to the notice of even members of the Pyatidesyatka [core group of religious activists] or to the believers in general, and if it was announced, it was incomplete due to the fact that passages referring to the contact with Soviet power were deliberately omitted. Therefore, neither Bishop Georgy (Deliev) nor any other member of the Kyiv episcopate gave a firm directive to read aloud this 'Declaration.'"²³

This was corroborated by Alexander Lobachevsky, priest of the Refectory Church: "...the 'Declaration' itself was met with confusion by the clergy... [and] it, at least in Kyiv, was not made public from the ambon... because it could have generated undesirable uproar from the laity." As a result, "the Kyiv clergy avoided any discussions with the laity" regarding the 'Declaration,' as its text had created confusion among both the laity and the clergy: "The laity called Metropolitan Sergius a 'Zhivist' and threatened to renounce from the clergy who signed the 'Declaration.'"²⁴ Taken as a whole, as Mikhail Panteleev, caretaker of the Refectory Church, asserted: "By not demanding the reading of the 'Declaration' in Kyiv churches, he [Metropolitan Mikhail (Ermakov)] somewhat pacified the mood, since such a reading would have initiated many questions, misunderstandings, confusion, unnecessary disputes, and new separations among the common people... In summary, I must say that Metropolitan Sergius's renowned 'Declaration' was determined by the majority of the Kyiv

²² The Central State Archive of Higher Authorities and Administration of Ukraine. Fund 5. List 3. File 369. P. 10back.

²³ The Central State Archive of Public Organizations and Ukrainica (CSA POU). Fund 263. List 1. File 66923. T. 1. P. 110-111.

²⁴ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 66923. T. 2. P. 77-79, 83.

clergy as an act undesirable for the Church.”²⁵

The formal separation from the official Russian Orthodox Church was marked by the announcement in November 1927 of the proclamation ‘K Chadam Rossiiskoi Tserkvi’ (To the Children of the Russian Church), which became known in literature as the ‘Kievskoe Vozzvanie’ (Kyiv Proclamation). According to émigré and church literature, its author was Bishop Damaskin (Tsedrik). However, the authors of the current study are more inclined to accept the assertion made by contemporary historians M. Shkarovsky and I. Osipova, who attribute the authorship to Anatoly Zhurakovsky and Schema-Archbishop Anthony (Abashidze).²⁶ The proclamation noted that as a result of Metropolitan Sergius’s ‘treacherous policies,’ “the Truth of the world is shaken, falsehood has become the law and basis of human life. Human word has lost all connection with the Truth, with the Righteous Word, and has lost all the right to trust and respect. People have lost faith in one another and have drowned in an ocean of untruth and hypocrisy, insincerity and falsehood.” The proclamation further emphasized that “the only hope for believers amid this storm of general corruption, protected by the rock of martyrdom and confession, is the Church, standing firm as a pillar and affirmation of Truth.”

That powerful and emotional proclamation, widely circulated throughout the eparchies and expressing the very essence of the differences of opinion between the opposition clergy and Metropolitan Sergius, concluded with the words: “And it seems to us that not we, but Metropolitan Sergius and those with him, are captivated by the terrible dream that the Church can be built on human complacency and falsehood. We are to affirm that falsehood only begets falsehood, and it cannot be the foundation of the Church.”²⁷ That marked the beginning of the organizational formation of the anti-Sergius opposition, also known as the True Orthodox Church in the Kyiv region.

Despite all the attempts of the Kyiv episcopate to avoid a schism and to soften the perception of both declarations by the clergy and laity, the schism, according to the Father Superior of the Kitaevo Holy Trinity Monastery in Kyiv, Archimandrite Hermogen (Golubev), “which received the name of the ‘Josephite’ or ‘Dmitrievsky’ schism, after Metropolitan Joseph [Petrovykh] and Bishop Demetrius [Lyubimov], soon penetrated Kyiv, where its ideological inspirer was Priest Zhurakovsky. From among the clergy, Archpriest

²⁵ CSA POU. *Ibid.*, T. 1. P. 190back, 192back.

²⁶ Осипова, *op.cit.*, 13; Шкарковский, *op.cit.*, 91.

²⁷ Осипова, *op.cit.*, 13-14.

D. Ivanov, Priest L. Rokhlits, Priest B. Kvasnitsky, Priest A. Boichuk, and Archimandrite Spiridon [Kisliakov] joined it.

The schism also penetrated the Lavra conventual community. It was joined by Archimandrite Makary (Velichko), Hierodeacon Apollonius (Konosky), Hieromonk Agapit (Zhidenko), Hieromonk Seraphim (Ilchuk), Hieromonk Martiry (Slobodianko), Hieromonk Erasmus (Prokopenko), Hieromonk Feogny (Derkach), Monk Kondrat (Rechka), Monk Patricky (Nedrol), and Monk Victor (Emelyansky). They, together with Archimandrite Klimenty (Zheretienko), established an independent organization subordinate to Bishop Pavel Kratirov, who resided in Kharkiv, while Priest Zhurakovsky's group was subordinate and in contact with Bishop Demetrius Lyubimov of Leningrad.”²⁸

One of the most authoritative communities to break away from the Moscow Patriarchate was the parish of the Varvarinskaya Church in the bell tower of the Church of St. Nicholas the Good in Podil, headed by the renowned Ukrainian pastor, Father Anatoly Zhurakovsky, who gathered around him ‘spiritual children,’ primarily representatives of the scientific intelligentsia and students. He was an extraordinary and very talented personality who deserves a separate, in-depth study, even though such attempts have already been made (see the collection ‘Pr. Anatoly Zhurakovsky: Materials to His Life’²⁹ and the work of S. Bilokin³⁰).

As the aforementioned M. Pantelev wrote, “Fr. A. Zhurakovsky explained his separation by the fact that since the ‘Declaration’ contained lies (and he considered the ‘Declaration’ as the voice of the Church), and whereas lies cannot be uttered on behalf of the Church, he believed that Metropolitan Sergius had cut himself off from the Church, and therefore he, Zhurakovsky, should have nothing in common with Metropolitan Sergius. All those who remained with Metropolitan Sergius were declared heretics by him, and all communication with them was ceased,”³¹

Congregants of the Kyiv Archpriest A. Zhurakovsky recalled that

Metropolitan Sergius... seduced by the erroneous idea of ‘saving’ the Church, took upon himself the incomparable sin of declaring a lie on behalf of the Church, supposedly leading to salvation. However, the Church does not condone falsehood, no matter in whose

²⁸ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 66923. T. 1. P. 120.

²⁹ Свящ. Анатолий Жураковский: Материалы к житию [Priest Anatoly Zhurakovsky: Materials for his life] (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1984).

³⁰ Сергій Білокінь, О. Анатолий Жураковський і київські йосифляни. Документальне дослідження [Serhiy Bilokin, O. Anatoliy Zhurakovsky and the Kyiv Josephites. Documentary research] (Київ: Інститут історії України НАН України, 2008).

³¹ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 66923. T. 1. P. 191-191back.

name it is uttered. Great strife shook the body of the Church... and new sorrow filled with sadness the priest's soul.³²

That was also when, in September 1927, in one of his sermons, Fr. Anatoly articulated his stance regarding the 'Declaration,' albeit in allegorical form: "Representatives of the Church and Christianity strive to create a Church without suffering here on earth, for the sake of their own peace. For the sake of their own peace, they change the foundation of faith, giving it up cowardly, thoughtlessly, justifying themselves and babbling something incomprehensible in their defense."³³ We see here a straightforward reproach directed at the legalized Church and its episcopate. At the end of 1928, Fr. Anatoly left for the Church of the Transfiguration (Preobrazhenskaya) on Pavlovskaya Street. The Father Superior of the church there was Archimandrite Spiridon (Kisliakov), a former monk of Mount Athos who strove to revive the ancient Christian norms of life in the Church. Already in the fall of 1927, he actively opposed the policies of Metropolitan Sergius.

Gradually, four large opposition communities were formed in Kyiv and its suburbs at the churches: the Irpin Trinity Church, the Church of the Transfiguration (Preobrazhenskaya) on Pavlovskaya Street, where Archimandrite Spiridon and priests A. Zhurakovsky, Ye. Lukyanov, and A. Boichuk served, and the Pokrovskaya and St. Elijah churches in Podil. They issued a collective written proclamation to Metropolitan Mikhail, protesting the 'Declaration' and expressing their point of view that it was unacceptable to them, stating that they were severing all relations with him.³⁴

The community at the Pokrovskaya Church, whose Father Superior was Father Leonid Rokhlits, was particularly active. Priests Anatoly Bobrov and Boris Kvasnitsky also served at that church. On September 20, 1928, they were expelled from the church of the Vvedensky Convent (Entry of the Mother of God Convent), for their sharply negative attitude toward the declarations of Metropolitans Sergius and Mikhail. Shortly thereafter, ties were established with Archbishop Demetrius (Lyubimov), and after his arrest in November 1929, with Bishop Pavel (Kratirov).³⁵ Believers from Mogilev, Rostov, Kuban, and other parts of the Soviet Union came to Father L. Rokhlits. According to the monk Gamaliil (Rusalev), "Leonid's services are structured in a monastic manner; there are two 'prophets' and holy fool monks and nuns in the church."³⁶

³² Свящ. Анатолий Жураковский, *op.cit.*, 109.

³³ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁴ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 65744фп. Т. 13, P. 115.

³⁵ Шкаровский, *op.cit.*, 93.

³⁶ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 66923. Т. 1. P. 151back.

Some monks from the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, as well as nuns from the Vvedensky, Frolovsky, and Pokrovsky convents, who had not accepted Metropolitan Sergius's 'Declaration,' left for the Pokrovskaya Church. The central figure of the women's community was Father Boris Kvasnitsky, who maintained close ties with Hieromonk Erasmus (Prokopenko), who founded an underground convent in Irpin. According to L. Rokhlits, "...Hieromonk Erasmus established a clandestine convent around himself, tonsured them into monasticism himself and cultivated in them and in many people who came to him secretly a hatred for the existing state regime...."³⁷

The activities of the opposition group at the Pokrovskaya Church, as Father Alexander Lobachevsky testified, can be summarized as follows: "its representatives announced to the laity of their parishes that parishes recognizing Metropolitans Sergius and Mikhail had joined the Zhivists, and therefore they had openly broken away from them." Furthermore, opposition representatives also conducted propaganda among the laity against the latter attending the Sergianists Church, a campaign that extended far beyond Kyiv, as "we observed cases of pilgrims coming to Kyiv inquiring about the Pokrovskaya Church, which had come under the control of the opposition group."³⁸

A relatively strong community was formed in the town of Irpin, where Father Dimitry Ivanov served. Since pre-revolutionary times, he had maintained friendly relations with the Venerable Confessor Sofia Grineva, who, in the 1920s, was already known as Hegumenia Sofia. The latter, after the closure of the Kyiv Pokrovsky Nunnery (Nunnery of the Protection of the Mother of God), relocated to the town of Irpin, where she resided in a dacha with several sisters and the family of D. Ivanov.³⁹ All the nuns of the former Pokrovsky Nunnery, headed by Hegumenia Sofia, expressed their opposition to Metropolitan Sergius's 'Declaration.'⁴⁰ Viktor Davidovich, a priest of the local church, also joined them.⁴¹ Researcher M. Shkarovsky points out that it was Fr. Dimitry who was the first of the Kyiv clergy to separate from the Deputy Patriarchal Locum Tenens formally. In July 1928, he traveled to Leningrad and met with Bishop Demetrius (Lyubimov) of Gdov and Archpriest Feodor Andreev. Bishop Demetrius, representing the Irpin clergy and some of the Gomel clergy, formalized their accession to the TOC in writing.⁴²

³⁷ Ibid., т.20, л.28.

³⁸ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 66923. Т. 2. P. 79.

³⁹ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 460. P. 15back-16.

⁴⁰ Александр Стрижев, Сергей Нилус. Тайные маршруты [Alexander Strizhev, Sergey Nilus. Secret Routes] (Москва: Алгорит, 2007), 333-334.

⁴¹ Польский, op.cit., Vol. 2, 169-170.

⁴² Шкаровский, op.cit., 92.

Later, during interrogation by the NKVD, S. Grineva recounted that “Fr. Dimitry Ivanov conducted prayers and services in half of his apartment, as stipulated by the Holy Church’s statutes, and I enjoyed this privilege until 1928, when I was arrested in the spring, in the month of May.”⁴³ Thus, Father Dimitry established an illegal church in his apartment, which was not subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate. As for Sofia Grineva, seven weeks after her 1928 arrest, she was released, having signed an acknowledgement of travel restrictions, but she violated it and, in the fall, left for the Poltava region, thus avoiding the mass arrests of the anti-Sergius opposition.

The monks of the closed Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra were united under the leadership of Hieromonk Erasmus (Prokopenko), who established an illegal monastery in Irpin, which included both male and female communities. To establish the monastery, Irpin dachas were purchased, and nuns and monks were housed there. Funds for the purchase of dachas were raised by sending monks to villages in Ukraine, Belarus, and the Central Black Earth Okrug of the Russian Federation, where a campaign was performed among the peasants to raise funds ‘for the monastery.’ From 1927 to 1928, the Erasmus (Prokopenko) community, “at the time of the legalization of the Tikhonite Church group, opposed the legalization, proving to believers that signing a document recognizing Soviet power, as Metropolitan Sergius of Nizhny Novgorod had done, meant betraying the Church to the power of the Antichrist.” Subsequently, the illegal monastery joined the Kyiv group of the TOC, headed by Dimitry Ivanov, through whose mediation Hieromonk Erasmus contacted Leningrad Bishop Demetrius of Gdov.⁴⁴

The St. Elijah Church, located in the Podil district of Kyiv, became Josephite only in August 1930. Its Father Superior, Fr. Vasily Konsky, passing through Kharkiv, met Bishop Pavel (Kratirov) there and joined him.⁴⁵

The Kyiv opposition placed great emphasis on the ideological struggle against Sergianism. Irpin priest Dimitry Ivanov, during an interrogation on April 16, 1931, indicated that one of the tasks was compiling and distributing leaflets, which were written in various cities, including Leningrad, Vyatka, Voronezh, Kyiv, and elsewhere. The primary characteristics of that type of propaganda and informational literature were:

– The leaflets were, as a rule, mixed in nature: while having a church-religious character, they also concerned relations with Soviet power;

⁴³ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 460. P. 20back.

⁴⁴ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 62198фп. P. 322-323.

⁴⁵ Шкаровский, *op.cit.*, 94.

– The texts were intended exclusively for enlightened circles, that is, primarily for the clergy;

– The leaflets were written in various literary forms: epistolary, that is, in the form of letters from individual authors (letters from Bishop Victor, Bishop Damaskin, and others); in the form of official proclamations ('Proclamation from the Leningrad Group,' 'Proclamation from the Kyiv Priests'); in the form of archbishop's messages ('Circular Message of Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich,' 'Message of the Synod Abroad'); in the form of literary sketches ('Church in the Desert'); like reference collections ('Answers to Those Who Ask'), and scholarly articles answering a particular question;

– Most of the leaflets were anonymous, attributed to various authors, causing quite justified surprise and speculation about forgeries;

– Due to purely technical reasons and a lack of funds for their distribution, they did not enjoy widespread circulation;

– In rural Ukraine, they were unacceptable because they were written in Russian, moreover, in a language more than literary, and there was no Ukrainian translation (the authors of the current study are unaware of any leaflets in Ukrainian);

– There were no specific leaflets regarding the organization of the TOC.⁴⁶

The Kyiv Josephites maintained close ties with the anti-Sergius communities in Kharkiv, Kursk, Belgorod, Voronezh, Chernigiv, Vinnytsia, Poltava, Zinovievsk, and other locations. In Chernigov, the well-known church writer Sergei Nilus was among the leaders. He had resided in Chernigov since April 1926, having been exiled there by Soviet power. S. Nilus was one of the most active church figures in Chernigov during that period. In his apartment, the preacher organized regular spiritual discussions between worshippers and clergy, as well as readings of spiritual literature. Through the mediation of S. Nilus and his wife, Elena, the Chernigov clergy maintained ties with like-minded clergy in Kyiv, including Archpriest Dimitry Ivanov, Hegumenia Sofia (Grineva) of the Holy-Pokrovsky Nunnery, and others. In August 1927, he was arrested and exiled to the Vladimir gubernia, where he died in 1929.⁴⁷

Bishop Damaskin (Tsedrik) also maintained close ties with the Kyiv opposition. Although he did not openly join them, he was a staunch ideological supporter of the Kyiv

⁴⁶ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 65744фп. Т. 13, P. 126-128.

⁴⁷ Виталий Шумило, Схиархимандрит Лаврентий и его время. Очерк церковной истории Черниговщины (1868-1950 гг.) [Vitaliy Shumilo, Schi-Archimandrite Laurentiy and His Time: An Essay on the Church History of the Chernihiv Region (1868-1950)] (Чернигов: Русское Православное Издательство «Вера и Жизнь», 2001), 16.

oppositionists.⁴⁸ Father Anatoly Zhurakovsky maintained contact with Archpriest Grigory Seletsky, a well-known oppositionist from Zinovievsk (now Kropyvnytskyi).⁴⁹

Boris Kvasnitsky and Leonid Rokhlits maintained contact with parishes of the Podillia eparchy and the Vasylkiv and Bila-Tserkva regions of the Kyiv okrug. From 1929 to 1930, under the influence of Father Boris, the Father Superior of the church in the village of Starye Pozdniaki (now part of Kyiv), Nikita Smoliy, rural priests from the area near Chornobyl and Radomyshl, Nikolai Sokolovsky and Father Evfyny, Father Dimitry from Vasylkiv, and Father Ioann from Kursk, joined the opposition. The Lavra's True Orthodox monks conducted agitation in the countryside, which found a response among the believers of Guta, Kosachovka, and other villages of the Kyiv eparchy.⁵⁰

Thus, from 1928 to 1930, in the Kyiv region, as well as throughout Ukraine as a whole, a relatively extensive network of anti-Sergius opposition communities emerged, rejecting the pro-Soviet policies of Metropolitans Sergius (Stragorodsky) and Mikhail (Ermakov). Undoubtedly, such a movement among the clergy and believers aroused concern among the Soviet repressive authorities, which began preparations for mass arrests.

Repressions Against the anti-Sergius Opposition. Operation 'Chornye Pauki' (Black Spiders) (1931) and Its Implementation in the Kyiv Region

Meanwhile, authoritative bodies continued to report to the higher authorities about the facts of opposition by Orthodox clergy and laity to the Soviet regime's atheistic policies, which had gradually transformed into a broad, non-ecclesiastical, anti-Sergius, and anti-Soviet movement. Under the banner of church activism, rather numerous nonconformist elements 'united': from the semi-legal opposition in the form of 'True Orthodox' and 'Ultra-Orthodox' to the 'underground activists' within the 'True Orthodox Christians' who did not even attempt to comply with Soviet religious legislation. To neutralize those oppositionists, the OGPU launched a grandiose and large-scale, all-Union operation to falsify a 'mythical counterrevolutionary' church organization called the 'True Orthodox Church.'

One can agree with the historian D. Vedeneev's assertion that the Josephites movement, as early as the late 1920s, had come under the operational control of the OGPU's secret political units, and the accumulation of information and investigative materials quickly resulted in their implementation through the fabrication of investigative cases using the previously well-practiced mechanism for fabricating political cases against 'church

⁴⁸ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 65744фп. Т. 13. P. 120.

⁴⁹ Тригуб, *op.cit.*, 149-150, 152.

⁵⁰ Шкаровский, *op.cit.*, 94.

counterrevolution.’⁵¹

The first arrests in Ukraine began as early as 1930. One of the first Ukrainian oppositionists to be arrested was Anatoly Zhurakovsky, who was detained on October 14, 1930, and on September 3, 1931, sentenced to capital punishment (later the sentence was commuted to 10 years in a labor camp), as a ‘counterrevolutionary’ in the case of the ‘All-Union Center of the TOC.’ His wife, Nina Zhurakovskaya, was arrested on February 19, 1931, in Moscow and was also tried in the same case.⁵²

From 1930 to 1933, a campaign to liquidate widespread communities of True Orthodox Christians and a number of other ‘church-monarchist’ groups was also performed throughout the Soviet Union. A mass operation, codenamed ‘Black Spiders,’ was performed in January 1931 throughout Ukraine. On January 15, mass arrests were carried out in Kyiv, Mykolaiv, Kherson, and Zinovievsk; on January 16 – in Kharkiv, Debaltsevo, Stalino, Mariupol, Novomoskovsk, Krivyyi Rig, Poltava, and Oleksandriya; and from January 18 to February 17 – in the Vinnytsia region. Overall, according to the archives of the Security Service of Ukraine, in 1931 alone, 260 individuals were subjected to repression in connection with the TOC case, but only 136 were brought to trial, including two bishops, 52 priests, 19 monks, one deacon, six psalm-readers, and 56 laypersons (the difference is explained by the fact that the cases of a significant number of those arrested were combined into separate proceedings).⁵³ In total, according to D. Vedeneev, a Ukrainian researcher of the history of Soviet security services, over 3,000 individuals were arrested and convicted in the “Political and Administrative Centers of the All-Union Counterrevolutionary Organization of Monarchist Churchmen ‘The True Orthodox Church’” from 1928 to 1931.⁵⁴

The case of the Kyiv opposition in the multi-volume ‘True Orthodox Church Case’ consists of two volumes titled “Working of the Case of ‘Blagodeteli’ (Benefactors).” The first volume, besides arrest warrants, search warrants, and search reports, among other documents, consists of the minutes of the interrogations of D.I. Ivanov, conducted from April 12 to 19. On April 16, 1931, a 46-page report was compiled, which formed the basis for the indictment in the case. In addition to interesting facts about church life, it reveals specific nuances that a clergyman ‘in his right mind’ (the defendant could have been subjected to physical and

⁵¹ Дмитрий Веденеев, “«Православный андеграунд». Движение «катакомбной церкви» в Украине. 1920-1980-е годы. Часть 1.”, *Православная жизнь*. 2016, 28 декабря. <https://pravlife.org/ru/content/pravoslavnyy-andegraund-dvizhenie-katakombnoy-cerkvi-v-ukraine-1920-1980-e-gody-chast-1> [Dmitry Vedeneev, “The Orthodox Underground”. The ‘Catacomb Church’ Movement in Ukraine. 1920s-1980s. Part 1”]

⁵² Осипова, *op.cit.*, 307.

⁵³ Тригуб, *op.cit.*, 172-173.

⁵⁴ Веденеев, *op.cit.*

mental violence) could not have imagined: preparation of a coup d'état (p. 110), training of combat personnel (p. 112). This provides grounds for a somewhat cautious approach to Fr. Dimitry Ivanov's testimony concerning the organizational structure of the opposition group and its ties.⁵⁵

Based on the testimonies of those arrested and cooperating with the investigation (approximately 10 secret GPU collaborators were involved in the case) and reports from 'volunteer assistants,' the investigation claimed that by early 1929, the group had evolved into an underground counterrevolutionary organization of an insurgent nature, comprising large and small counterrevolutionary groups and cells organized in a number of cities and villages across Ukraine.

In organizational terms, the Ukrainian organization of TOC consisted of four main centers: Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Odesa. The Kyiv group consisted of four cells, covering Kyiv itself and the surrounding region, as well as adjacent areas. Kyiv was the branch's center, with Dimitry Ivanov named as its city leader, and Boris Kvasnitsky and Leonid Rokhlits as its oblast leaders. Structurally, according to the Chekists' scheme, the Kyiv group was part of the Kharkiv branch as an autonomous entity (Russian researcher I. Osipova considers Kyiv to be an independent branch). The head of the Kharkiv branch was Bishop Pavel (Kratirov); the group's center was the village of Gavrilovka, near Kharkiv, and ties with Kyiv were maintained through the mediation of Hieromonk Agapit (Zhidenko).

What counterrevolutionary activities did the investigative authorities see in the True Orthodox Church groups' actions? Almost everything that a believer should do: meetings with clergy, veneration of 'prophets' and 'seers,' belief in insights, visions, prophetic powers, the coming of the 'antichrist,' and anticipation of the approaching end of the world.

Furthermore, the alleged organization was accused of actively counteracting collectivization, disrupting grain procurements, preparing an insurrectionary movement to overthrow Soviet power, and establishing ties with White Guard organizations abroad. For instance, during interrogation on February 24, 1931, A. Zhurakovsky was forced by Chekists to admit: "The counterrevolutionary position of the True Orthodox Church organization encompassed the following: the government was recognized as godless, anti-religious, and persecuting the church and faith. Loyalty to the Soviet regime was deemed impossible for those who belonged to the True Orthodox Church organization. From this, various individuals within the organization drew various conclusions: some spoke of disobedience to the

⁵⁵ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 65744фп. T. 13. P. 106-152.

authorities on specific issues (for example, cultural and educational work), others of a boycott of the government (for example, collectivization), and still others of open struggle against the Soviet regime and even of an uprising.”⁵⁶ Such an attitude can also be traced among other arrested supporters of the TOC, and it should be noted that the Soviet regime was indeed considered negatively by the most radical True Orthodox believers.

In the all-Ukrainian case ‘True Orthodox Church,’ which was performed as part of operation ‘Black Spiders,’ 10 individuals were convicted in the Kyiv region: Dimitry Ivanov, Boris Kvasnitsky, Sergei Labinsky, Viktor Davidovich, Andrei Boichuk, Agapit (Anton) Zhidenko, Feogny Derkach, Yevgeny Lukyanov, Vasily Konsky, and Kondrat Rechka. A. Zhurakovsky and L. Rokhlits were previously arrested and transported to Moscow for investigation, where they were retained in custody in Butyrka Prison, and their cases were combined into a separate proceeding (the criminal cases are currently stored in the Archives of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation and are inaccessible to researchers).

All of them were accused of establishing a “counterrevolutionary monarchist organization of clergymen, which was systematically engaged in counterrevolutionary activities among the religious population, instilling anti-Soviet ideologies among people, disrupting various Soviet events both in the city and in the countryside, and training personnel so as to be prepared for the intervention... [The organization], which later received the name True Orthodox Church.”⁵⁷

According to investigators,

the Kyiv branch had four cells, of which the cell of Priest Zhurakovsky (transferred at the disposal of the OGPU) conducted activities among the intelligentsia, the cell of Priests Rokhlits and Kvasnitsky conducted activities in the villages, for which they extensively involved wandering monks. Priest Konsky’s cell conducted activities among the petty bourgeoisie in the outskirts of the city, while the cell of Ivanov and Davidovich was the leading one for all, but besides leading the local organization, it was also involved in the production and distribution of counterrevolutionary leaflets.”⁵⁸

The Kyiv group “was formally affiliated with the head of the Kharkiv branch, the defendant Pavel Kratirov, and conducted counterrevolutionary activities independently. It extended its influence throughout the Kyiv region.”⁵⁹

The True Orthodox were also accused of anti-Soviet agitation and ties with foreign

⁵⁶ Обвинительное заключение по делу политического и административного центров Всесоюзной контрреволюционной организации церковников «Истинно-православная церковь» [Indictment in the Case of the Political and Administrative Centers of the All-Union Counter-Revolutionary Organization of Churchmen ‘True Orthodox Church’] (Москва, 1931), 38.

⁵⁷ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 65744фп. Т. 8. P. 98.

⁵⁸ Ibid., P. 99.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Т. 20. P. 8.

clergy and church institutions, where they sent materials on the religious situation in the USSR, the schism in the Church, the antireligious policies of the Bolsheviks, and the repressions against the Church and laity.

According to the decision of the OGPU Collegium of January 2, 1932, D. Ivanov, B. Kvasnitsky, and S. Labinsky were sentenced to five years in the camps; V. Davidovich, A. Boichuk, Agapit (Zhidenko), V. Konsky, and Ye. Lukyanov were sentenced to three years in the camps; and F. Derkach and K. Rechka were sentenced to three years of exile to the Severny Krai (Northern Region).⁶⁰ The fate of Priest Leonid Rokhlits remains unknown to this day.

Concurrent with operation 'Black Spiders', arrests were also performed against the so-called Non-Commemorators, who had not openly joined the TOC but also refused to accept Metropolitan Sergius's pro-Soviet policies. The case involved a total of thirty individuals, including clergymen, church officials, monks, and laity, among which were Vladimir Volovik, Archimandrite Hermogen (Golubev), Yulia Davydova, Archimandrite Feodosiy (Mikhailovsky), Gavriil Neverovich, Deacon Sergei Ulyanitsky, Archimandrite Ioann Cherkassky of the Bratsky Monastery, Georgy Kostkevich, monk Gamaliil (Rusalev), and priests Vasily Dolgopopolov, Fedor Pospelovsky, Antony Yunak, Viacheslav Bychkovsky, Konstantin Steshenko, Ksenofont Sokolovsky, Alexander Lobachevsky, Nikolai Grossu, Savva Petrunevich, and others. The arrests took place from October 1930 to February 1931. Their peak occurred during operation 'Black Spiders,' from January 15 to 18, 1931.

All defendants were charged with "participating in a counterrevolutionary organization whose goal was to overthrow Soviet power." Consequently, the minutes of the Special Meeting of the OGPU Collegium on December 14, 1931, resulted in the conviction of 25 individuals, most of whom were sentenced to three years of exile in the Northern Region, while eight were released. On January 2, 1931, the cases of Golubev, Mikhailovsky, Rusalev, and Volovik were reviewed. Golubev and Mikhailovsky were sentenced to 10 years in the camps, while Rusalev and Volovik were sentenced to five years.⁶¹

Thus, from 1927 to 1931, in the Kyiv eparchy, as in the entire Ukrainian SSR, a relatively strong anti-Sergius opposition emerged, which rejected the pro-Soviet course of the Moscow Patriarchate and, as a result, found itself caught in the machinery of the USSR's repressive system. However, even though the main cells of the TOC were smashed (the Russian researcher M. Shkarovsky erroneously asserts that by 1931 "the Josephites movement

⁶⁰ Ibid., P. 91-95.

⁶¹ CSA POU. Fund 263. List 1. File 66923. T. 3. P. 139, 169.

in Kyiv had already been largely crushed”),⁶² they still functioned in many regions.

Conclusions

An analysis of the development of the True Orthodox Church in the Kyiv region from 1927 to 1931 allows us to conclude that the studied phenomenon was the result of a profound spiritual crisis within the Russian Orthodox Church, caused by Metropolitan Sergius’ (Stragorodsky) ‘Declaration’ of loyalty to Soviet power. The ‘Declaration’ became the starting point for the formation of a broad anti-Sergius opposition, within which the True Orthodox Christians movement originated.

The Kyiv region had earned a special place in the history of the movement. Here, as in several other centers of Ukraine, opposition groups emerged, rallying clergy and laity who rejected the declarations of Metropolitans Sergius and Mikhail (Ermakov). The core of the anti-Sergius movement in Kyiv consisted of clergy and monastics, headed by Archpriest Anatoly Zhurakovsky, priests Dimitry Ivanov, Leonid Rokhlits, Boris Kvasnitsky, Archimandrite Spiridon (Kisliakov), and others. Under their influence, a network of opposition parishes emerged in Kyiv and its environs – including Pokrovsky, Preobrazhensky, St. Elijah, and Irpin – as well as a number of clandestine monastic communities.

The oppositionists viewed the Soviet regime as a godless force, and Sergius’s ‘Declaration’ as an act of betrayal of ecclesiastical truth. Their preaching and practical activities, which took the form of organizing legal and illegal religious services, establishing clandestine monasteries, and distributing leaflets and appeals, were regarded by the OGPU as counterrevolutionary.

The culmination of the repressive policy against the TOC was operation ‘Chornye Pauki’ (Black Spiders) (1931), during which the so-called “counterrevolutionary church organization – the True Orthodox Church – was ‘exposed’ and liquidated in Ukraine.” Dozens of people were arrested and convicted in the Kyiv region alone.

The repressions of 1930-31 dealt a decisive blow to the True Orthodox movement, but the Soviet state security agencies were unable to eradicate it completely. Individual communities and underground monastic groups continued to exist until the beginning of World War II, preserving the continuity of the catacomb tradition and the ideals of fidelity to ‘true Orthodoxy.’

The experience of the development of the TOC in the Kyiv region from 1927 to 1931

⁶² Шкаровский, *op.cit.*, 97.

testifies to the natural transformation of religious opposition into a form of civil resistance. True Orthodox clergy and laity demonstrated courage and fortitude, remaining faithful to the ideals of pre-revolutionary Orthodoxy and refusing to comply with the ideological dictates of Soviet power. Their activities and subsequent tragic fates have become an integral part of the overall history of the church underground and repression in the USSR, requiring further comprehensive study based on archival materials.

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