

PART II

The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad since 1945

Chapter 1

The Losses Suffered by the Church Abroad in Eastern Europe, China, Manchuria, and Palestine in the Years 1944-1949

The occupation of parts of Eastern and Southern Europe, the Baltic Republics, and Manchuria by Soviet troops led to the Communist seizure of power in these countries. The collapse of the German-Romanian southern front in April of 1944 and the occupation of Romania led to the conquest of the remaining countries of Eastern and Southern Europe in the following months. Because the advance of the Soviet troops into these territories was foreseeable, countless Russian émigrés, and with them clergy of the Church Abroad, fled westward to the German Reich, and then again to the Western Allied-Occupied zones of Germany and Austria.

The situation in the Far East was entirely different. After the occupation of Manchuria by Japanese troops in 1931, the independent state of “Manchukuo” was set up and proclaimed an Empire in 1934. After the outbreak of the War in the Far East, the Japanese occupied Manchuria/Manchukuo. While many Russian refugees had already left Manchuria in the 1930s

and after the renewed Japanese occupation, the mass of Russian émigrés did not escape the Soviet invasion. Some 100,000 faithful and 200 priests were still living in Manchuria in 1944-45.

In Eastern Europe the majority of the émigrés and clergy left their parishes. Most of those who stayed behind were elderly and infirm or were in areas where émigrés did not expect an invasion by the Red Army (as in the case of Bulgaria, which had declared war on the Western Allies though not on the Soviet Union). The immediate consequence of the advance of the Soviet troops was the loss of all the Church Abroad's possessions in these areas. A further impoverishment was the loss of all the properties in Israel, including the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem with its extensive complex of buildings, the Gorny Convent, and numerous churches and plots of land, which were transferred to the Soviet government, which in turn handed them over to the Moscow Patriarchate for use. The transfer of the Church Abroad's property in Eastern Europe occurred in all cases without compensation. This held true both for those assets which were built with émigré donations or with the host countries' governmental support.

If one looks at the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, relatively few churches and plots of land outside Russia which had belonged to the Russian Church before the Revolution,¹ and one quickly gleans that the émigrés had built most of the churches, monasteries, homes for the elderly, hospitals, and obtained land and other real estate holdings before 1944-45 with their own financial means, and were, therefore, the rightful owners of these buildings and property. The Soviet Union, or its representative the Moscow Patriarchate, could really not have had any legal claim to this property, or to those properties taken over by the national Orthodox Churches, because these assets had never belonged to them. The situation was different with those churches and plots of land that had belonged to the Russian Church before 1917.

The struggle over the ownership of Russian ecclesiastical property outside the borders of the Soviet Union is practically as old as the Church Abroad itself. During the First World War, Russian property on the territory of the Central Powers was mostly under Swiss and Spanish trust administration. Embassies, missions, churches, and chapels were closed. After the October Revolution and the refusal of other nations to recognize the new Soviet government, the property of former Imperial Russia was administered by the governments in whose countries they were located. The churches, chapels, and buildings designated for church use were handed over to the émigrés, i.e., the Russian Church Abroad, for use. Because ecclesiastical unity existed in the early 1920s, there were no jurisdictional problems here. In all cases, the Church Abroad received the right to use the property. The struggle over these rights began with the schism. The Paris Jurisdiction claimed to be the legitimate heir of the Russian Church; if this were true, theoretically all churches should have to belong to it. Of course, the Church Abroad contested this claim, maintaining that the Paris Jurisdiction was in schism from the Church Abroad.

The situation in North America between 1926 and 1936 was similar. A legal struggle ensued between the émigré jurisdictions over the rightful use of church buildings, a struggle which continues even to this day.² After the émigré jurisdictions broke with the Moscow Patriarchal Church in 1927 and 1931, the latter then made additional claims on the former possessions of the Russian Church.³ After the 1920s the Patriarchal Church was represented by the Soviet government in legal struggles over property. When diplomatic relations were established between the Soviet government and the governments of Western nations, the Soviets laid claims on the transfer of Russian ecclesiastical property in the respective countries, thereby creating difficult situations for many émigré parishes. Due to the exposure in the West of Soviet behavior towards religion, their demands for the most part met with no success. The Soviets

decided to turn the Saint Alexander Nevsky Church in Paris into an exhibition hall for Soviet art, which naturally led to protests not only on the part of the émigrés, but of others as well.⁴ There was a similar situation at the embassy church in Tehran. When the émigré parishioners were supposed to be removed, they occupied the church and held continual divine services until the Soviets repealed their decision to close the church. The Soviets then decided to hand it over to the Renovationists, though this attempt likewise was aborted when the émigrés opposed it.⁵

The Church Abroad's canonical specialists, and indeed most of the lawyers in the host countries, took the position that the Soviet Union could have no legal claim to church property. These embassy churches had belonged to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Soviet law on the separation of Church and State not only ignored the canons, but also could not be applied to the situation abroad, since it concerned only the property within Russia.⁶ Soviet law had no validity abroad. Furthermore, in Orthodox nations, Orthodox ecclesiastical law was valid. Only in the case of the embassy churches could ecclesiastical law not be applied because these were located on foreign soil and also had never been subject to the Metropolitan of Petersburg. At any rate, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs only ever acquired legal possession of the buildings, not however the church objects (church utensils, icons, books, etc.), which remained the property of the Church. The question of whether the Soviet State or the Church Abroad owned church property arose in all cases except those concerning embassy churches. According to the interpretation of Russian legal experts -- Professor N. Suvurov was named explicitly -- churches could only be legally used for divine services. This interpretation is also applied in Romano-Germanic law (*res divina* — *res sacra*). Thus, the Soviet government infringed upon a generally recognized, basic interpretation of the law when it used churches for other purposes. Accordingly, embassy churches must also be used for divine services. According to the parish by-laws of the Russian

Church — and this coincides with the interpretation of the Orthodox canons — the parish church is the sanctuary of the parish. Article 112 of the parish by-laws states that church buildings, houses of prayer, and chapels are not alienable and are not subject to state legislation. Therefore, the state should have no legal right to rule on this property, since it is subject to canon law.⁷

For the most part, the émigrés met with success when they used these arguments, all the more so in that the Soviet government was concerned with public opinion rather than the émigrés' petitions. While various opinions prevailed concerning the property of the Russian Church before 1917, the properties acquired by the Church Abroad after 1918 clearly belonged to the émigrés.

In Palestine, the situation was for the most part similar until the partition. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Great Britain in 1924, the Soviet government made a proposal to the Administration of the British Mandate on the transfer of Russian ecclesiastical property in Palestine.⁸ This proposal was rejected. The British pointed out that in Palestine Ottoman law had jurisdiction over the holy places. Consequently, the status of the holy places could not be changed. Thus, the Russian Church Abroad retained possessions in Palestine until 1948. After the partition of the country, the Israeli government transferred the administration of the property in Israel to the Soviet Union, which, in turn, transferred it to the Patriarchal Church for its use. The Israeli Parliament and the Church Abroad contested this decision, though all protests were unsuccessful because the Israeli courts declared themselves “not competent” and likewise quoted Ottoman legislation (*status quo ante*). With the recognition of the Soviet Union as the heir to Imperial Russia, the rights to the Russian Church property in Palestine were, according to Israeli law, legally transferred to the Soviet government.

That these arguments were based upon unsound reasoning can be seen in Israeli behavior in 1953. After the severing of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel, the Israeli government returned the Russian Church properties to the Church Abroad, but then a few weeks later reversed its decision when relations were reestablished. This made it clear to the Soviet government and the Patriarchate that their ownership was very tenuous indeed. Between Israel and the representatives of the Soviet government — not of the Patriarchal Church — negotiations were initiated over the sale of Russian real estate, which continued for over ten years. Only in the autumn of 1964 was an agreement reached: the Russian Square in Jerusalem with its extensive building complex — the Church of the Resurrection, the building of the Ecclesiastical Mission, and one other in which the Israeli Supreme Court was housed and which had belonged to the former Palestine Society — were excluded from the negotiations, as well as all the remaining church buildings and plots of land except the churches in Jaffa, Haifa, Nazareth, and on Mount Tabor, which were sold to Israel for four and a half million pounds sterling. (Originally the Israelis had offered three million, while the Soviets had demanded six million).⁹

The Russian Church Abroad, as well as the organization which succeeded the Palestine Society, protested against this confiscation of property. The Church Abroad filed a lawsuit lasting many years over the rights of ownership for the church in Jaffa, to which an extensive orange grove was attached. This lawsuit was abandoned in 1970 on the grounds that state courts have no jurisdiction in religious matters, since this concerned a holy place. Thereupon, the Church Abroad once again instituted legal proceedings in order to clarify whether the church in Jaffa, on whose land the grave of Saint Tabitha is located, is a holy place; were that found to be the case, the place would then fall under the jurisdiction of Ottoman law. In October of 1972, the

district Court of Jaffa handed down a verdict that this was not a holy place; thus, Israeli legislation had jurisdiction over the matter. The fate of the other property rights to be decided upon by the Court also hung in the balance.¹⁰ In 1979, the rights to the church in Jaffa were awarded to the Church Abroad, but nevertheless the Moscow Patriarchate continues to occupy it. The attorney for the Patriarchal Church immediately lodged an appeal against this decision. In Israel in 1948, Russian Church properties were valued at 100 million U.S. dollars.¹¹

Whereas in the West the Church Abroad has been able to fight for its property rights in court, this possibility did not exist in communist-dominated lands.

A few weeks after the conquest of the Eastern European countries by the Red Army, emissaries of the Patriarchal Church traveled to these countries to inspect the Russian émigré parishes there. Bishop Sergius (Larin) of Kirovgrad visited Yugoslavia in April of 1945.¹² Likewise, Archbishop Gregory (Chukov) visited the Russian parishes in Bulgaria in April of 1945.¹³ Archbishop Photius (Topiro) of Orlov visited the parishes in Austria and Czechoslovakia.¹⁴ The Eastern Slovaks, who formed the Diocese of Mukachevo-Preshov (which was subject to the Serbian Patriarchate), had already been received into the Moscow Patriarchate in the autumn of 1944. The official “reunification” of the diocese took place on 22 October 1945.¹⁵ The reports of such trips made by the emissaries of the Patriarchal Church as published in the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* maintain that the reunification took place with the unconditional consent of the faithful and their priests, who unanimously sought to be received into the Moscow Patriarchate. Certainly, there had been priests and laymen who did agree to join, but the majority was opposed to it. Wherever there was perceptible opposition to Moscow’s plans, those groups of people were arrested and deported to the USSR. This fate was shared by laypeople and priests alike who opposed Moscow’s wishes. Thus, for example, Archimandrite

Isaac, Bishop Sergius' (Korolev) assistant, and the Priest M. Vaznetsov were arrested in Prague and sentenced to ten years of forced labor. The official reasons for such arrests were listed in most cases as "collaboration with the Germans" during the war. The real reason, of course, was their refusal to join the Patriarchal Church.¹⁶ This fate awaited not only the Russian émigrés. Attempts to subordinate smaller Orthodox parishes sometimes met with bitter opposition. The Hungarian-speaking Orthodox refused to submit to Moscow. This led to the arrest of numerous believers and priests, including the Hungarian Archimandrite John (Peterfalvy), who was under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. His refusal to submit to Moscow and his canonical loyalty to the Ecumenical Patriarchate earned him ten years of forced labor in Siberia.¹⁷ The union with the Moscow Patriarchate occurred "voluntarily and at the request of" these parishes, if one is to believe the *Journal's* reports.

An example from the Russian communities in Yugoslavia will serve to illustrate the actual attitude of the émigrés. The relationship between Moscow and Belgrade underwent a fundamental change after the break between Tito and Stalin, and it was this change that revealed the true reactions of the émigrés who had remained in the country. During his visit to the Russian Orthodox communities in April of 1945, Bishop Sergius (Larin) maintained that the émigrés were petitioning for "reception into the Moscow Jurisdiction." The nuns of the Lesna Convent and the Convent of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple expressed their desire to "be allowed to return to the homeland." After a divine service in the Holy Trinity Russian Church in Belgrade, the senior priest, Father John Sokal, announced the reunification of his parish with the Patriarchal Church.¹⁸ The fact was, however, that none of the aforementioned nuns "returned home" and, besides Archpriest Sokal, only Archpriest Nekludov joined the Patriarchal Church. The parishes remained under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Patriarchate. In February/March of

1946, Bishop Sergius undertook a second trip to Yugoslavia. He again celebrated the Liturgy in the Holy Trinity Church. It had also been stated, contrary to the facts, that besides Archpriests Sokal and Nekludov the “young talented Archimandrite” Anthony (Bartosevich — later Archbishop of Geneva and Western Europe), Archpriest Tarasiev, Priest Moshin, and Archdeacon Kachinsky joined. Even the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* writes this time that only Archpriests Sokal and Nekludov expressed the desire to be received into the Patriarchal Church. Of the remaining clergy nothing further was reported in this regard.¹⁹

After the break between Tito and Stalin, the émigrés’ situation changed. They were again permitted to travel to the West. Archimandrite Anthony, the entire sisterhood of the Lesna Convent, nuns from the Entry of the Theotokos Convent – which as a Serbian convent was part of the Serbian Patriarchate but had been revitalized by Russian nuns – went to the West in 1949-50. Both Father Sokal and Father Nekludov were arrested by the Yugoslav authorities and convicted of espionage for Moscow.²⁰ Archpriest Tarasiev remained in Yugoslavia and took over the administration of the Russian émigré parishes. At this time, he joined the jurisdiction of the Serbian Patriarchate, since contact with the Church Abroad was, of course, not permitted by the Communists. In November of 1954, the Moscow Patriarchate officially relinquished the administration of the Russian parishes in Yugoslavia and “transferred its churches, clergy, and parishes to the jurisdiction of the Serbian Orthodox Church.” The Moscow Patriarchate retained Holy Trinity Russian Church as a representation of the Moscow Patriarchate in Belgrade, headed by Archpriest Tarasiev.²¹ These statements appeared in the *1958 Jubilee Volume of the Moscow Patriarchate Church*. The Moscow Patriarchate thus acknowledged the real situation in Yugoslavia, where the Russian parishes had been under the jurisdiction of the Serbian

Patriarchate since 1948. In return for this acknowledgement, the Serbian Patriarchate permitted the Holy Trinity Russian Church to function as the “outpost” of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The case of the Russian parishes in Bulgaria was similar. The administration of the parishes and both Russian monastic communities in Bulgaria after 1945 remained with Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), whom the Moscow Patriarchate confirmed in this responsibility. After his death in 1950, the Holy Synod in Moscow resolved to transfer all the parishes and monasteries to the Bulgarian Church. The Moscow Patriarchate retained only the Church of Saint Nicholas in Sofia, which had originally been built as an embassy church in 1911-14, and which became the residence of the Moscow Patriarch’s representative to the Bulgarian Church.²²

In Romania a different situation existed; there were no Russian parishes except in Bucharest. The Orthodox Russians who lived there were cared for by the Romanian Orthodox Church. All parishes in Bessarabia (Moldavia) were subsumed by the Russian Patriarchal Church after the re-annexation of the region.

In Czechoslovakia in 1945, Bishop Sergius (Korolev) was the administrator of the parish in Prague, which included the Dormition chapel in the Russian cemetery. Hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Autonomous Church, Bishops Anthony (Marchenko), John (Lavrinenko), and Daniel (Juzviuk) were also staying there. Presumably, they were overtaken in their flight to the West by the advancing Soviet troops. All four bishops joined the Patriarchal Church. After their return “home,” which they had left just a few weeks earlier, Bishops Anthony, John, and Daniel wrote an article in the *Journal* about their first impressions of church life in the homeland, praising the complete freedom of Church and religion.²³ Similar articles, which pursued the same ideas, extolling religious freedom in the USSR, appeared in these months in

the *Journal*. They originated mostly with bishops and clergy of the Church Abroad who were forced by the political events of these years to become part of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchal Church.

What little success the Patriarchate met with in annexing the Church Abroad's communities is illustrated in the example of Palestine. In May-June of 1945, Patriarch Alexis I personally undertook a trip to the Holy Land. The trip was a prelude to the new policy of the Patriarchal Church, which thenceforth was to intensify constantly its contacts with other Churches, in which undertaking the Patriarchal Church received massive financial support from the Soviet government.²⁴ This first visit of a Russian Patriarch to the Holy Land can be seen as a mixture of religious and political goals. The motive of bringing all the Church Abroad's communities into the Patriarchal Church was doubtlessly behind the visit of the Patriarch and his entourage to the various Russian churches in Palestine.

Perhaps the Moscow Patriarchate hoped that now, after the end of the War, their ally, England, would ultimately give Moscow the communities and properties that belonged to the Church Abroad. This matter was first broached in 1944. The simplest way would, of course, have been for the convents and communities to have freed themselves from the Church Abroad on the occasion of the Patriarch's visit and joined Moscow. In this respect, the Patriarch's visit was a failure. With the exception of one parish in Alexandria, all communities remained faithful to the Church Abroad. The official report in the *Journal* again gave the appearance that Patriarch Alexis and his entourage were cordially received everywhere. Thus, the report reads that among the onlookers at the Jerusalem airport were "our people who had been taken by surprise here by the War of 1914," that at Golgotha the Patriarch was "greeted by the administrators of the Russian communities," that "he paid a visit to the convents in Gethsemane and on the Mount of

Olives, and to the chairmen of the Pan-Slavic Committee and to Russian families.” Furthermore, the report continues to say that “Russian nuns” accompanied the Patriarch on 5 June. The reader is given the impression that the Patriarchate and the Russian émigrés were on friendly terms. The report of the head of the Ecclesiastical Mission, Archimandrite Anthony (Sinkevich, later Archbishop of Los Angeles) was quite different. The Patriarch, accompanied by representatives of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, visited the churches on the Mount of Olives and in Gethsemane, entered the sanctuary, and after a short time left the churches, without greeting or blessing the nuns, who remained silent and did not take any notice when the Patriarch visited the churches.²⁵ Archimandrite Anthony was even sought out by the Patriarchate’s representatives, who proposed that he and his communities join the Patriarchate, promising that he would in turn be elevated to the rank of Metropolitan. Archimandrite Anthony refused, declaring that the Mission was part of the Church Abroad.²⁶ That such offers of promotion were made rings true, since numerous clergymen who defected to the Moscow Patriarchate were invested with high offices. Thus, after joining the Patriarchate in June of 1945, Hieromonk Alexis of Saint Alexander Nevsky Church in Alexandria was elevated to the rank of archimandrite in the following year; later, in November of 1949, was appointed Patriarchal Exarch in Czechoslovakia; in January of 1950 was consecrated Bishop of Preshov; and finally, in 1957, was made Archbishop of Vilnius and Lithuania.²⁷

Since this trip was unsuccessful with regard to the émigrés, Metropolitan Gregory (Chukov) of Leningrad returned to Palestine in the following year. This time the representatives of the Church Abroad were portrayed in quite another light. Archimandrite Anthony’s refusal to join the Moscow Patriarchate was “politically motivated.” He also spread a “malevolent mood” and “terrorized” the nuns there, who acknowledged the “Moscow Patriarch as their head.” This

time the *Journal* gave the impression that there were differences of jurisdictional allegiance between the archimandrite and the lower clergy.²⁸ However, the Patriarchate, in fact, was compelled to conceal its complete failure with regard to the émigrés because they were now, as before, refusing to recognize the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. Only after the forcible division of Palestine in 1948 did the Patriarchal Church succeed in annexing some of the Russian properties in the Holy Land.²⁹

While the Patriarchal Church handed over the Church Abroad's former property in the Orthodox countries of Eastern Europe to the local Orthodox Churches of these countries, it also tried to subordinate other — even non-Russian — parishes directly to the Patriarchal Church. In Hungary, a deanery was set up for the Hungarian-speaking parishes. In Austria, a deanery was likewise set up, although apart from the Saint Nicholas embassy church in Vienna the Patriarchate had no other parishes anywhere in Austria. After the creation of the Central European Exarchate of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Bishop of Vienna and Austria was subordinated to the exarch of the Patriarch, who resided in Berlin and to whom all Russian parishes in East Germany, West Berlin, and West Germany were subject.³⁰ All of the church properties in East Germany — overwhelmingly churches that existed before 1917— and the Cathedral of the Resurrection in West Berlin, which had been built for the émigrés with help from the German government, were confiscated from the Church Abroad after 1945. A special situation existed in the Far East after the Red Army's invasion of Manchuria and the outbreak of the Chinese Civil War. The metropolitan district of the Far East³¹ was without doubt the most important within the Church Abroad during the years 1920-45. The bishops in China and Manchuria, the Korean Mission, and numerous parishes of the diaspora in Southern Asia belonged to it, with a total of some 250,000-300,000 faithful, of whom 150,000 lived in

Manchuria. From 1941-45, four bishops belonged to the Diocese of Harbin: Metropolitan Meletius (the ruling bishop), Bishop Demetrius of Chailar, Bishop Juvenal of Zizikar, and Archbishop Nestor of Kamchatka and Seoul. There were 217 priests in approximately 150 parishes for some 100,000 faithful, who owned seventy churches, and numerous chapels and temporary church buildings. This diocese also had a number of monasteries, theological faculties, schools, and social and charitable facilities.

Bishop John (Maximovich) of Shanghai belonged to the Chinese diocese, which was ruled by Archbishop Victor of Peking and China. The exact number of priests and parishes is unknown, but the number of faithful may have been around 100,000 in 1945. Information on the number of believers in China and Manchuria around 1945 is contradictory due to the political situation; a civil war shook the country and no statistical research could be carried out. Many Russians left Manchuria for China during the years 1943-45. Approximately 100,000 émigrés may well have lived in Manchuria and China at the end of the 1940s.³²

In the Chinese Diocese there were nine monasteries and convents, approximately fifty churches, numerous social and charitable facilities, church schools, workshops, and extensive real estate, including twenty-three cemeteries. Most churches, buildings, and land set aside for church use were built or obtained by the émigrés using money collected in donations. The entire property of the Church Abroad was given to the Patriarchal Church in the years between 1945-49, then after 1956 to the Chinese Orthodox Autonomous Church.

After the invasion of the Red Army, emissaries of the Moscow Patriarchate – as in Eastern Europe³³ – immediately traveled to Manchuria in order to prepare the émigré communities to enter their jurisdiction.³⁴ The Patriarchate charged Bishop Elefery (Vorontsev) of Rostov and Taganrog with the task of preparing the communities in Manchuria and China for

reunification with the Patriarchate. The exchange of greetings between the hierarchy of Manchuria and the Patriarchate then led to the “reunification” of the separated churches. While the hierarchs and priests of Manchuria, in view of the Soviet occupation, had hardly any other choice, Archbishop Victor of Peking and China declared himself in favor of joining the Patriarchal Church, while his vicar in Shanghai, Bishop John (Maximovitch), remained faithful to the Church Abroad. Bishop John remained in China until the last possible moment in 1949, and then left with many of the clergy and the faithful. Until his repose in 1966, he remained the nominal leader of the Peking Mission and the spiritual father of the refugee communities that had settled in Taipei, Hong Kong, and Manila. He exercised especial care over the refugees in China who had not left the country in time, and he made certain that they could later emigrate to the West.

The administrative structure established under the Church Abroad was retained by the Moscow Patriarchate: Metropolitan Meletius remained head of the Diocese of Harbin until his repose in 1946. His successor was Archbishop Nestor, who bore the title of patriarchal exarch, and who, after the repose of Metropolitan Meletius, united the parishes in Manchuria in the Exarchate of Eastern Asia. However, Archbishop Nestor was arrested in 1947, leaving the diocese vacant. In 1950-56, Bishop Nicander (Viktorov) headed the diocese.

The Vicariate of Chichikar remained in existence until 1946. Bishop Juvenal (Kilin) headed this vicariate; he was later appointed by the Patriarchate to head the Vicariate of Shanghai. Bishop Juvenal was arrested by the Chinese nationalist authorities during his journey to Shanghai and, as a result, returned to the USSR in 1947, where he was named Archbishop of Izhevsk and Udmurtia. The Chailar vicariate was next ruled by Bishop Demetrius (Voznesensky), whom the Patriarchate elevated to the rank of archbishop, but who soon

thereafter returned to the Soviet Union and lived in retirement in the Pskov Caves Monastery; he died in 1947, in Leningrad.

After the reunification of China and Manchuria in 1949, Archbishop Victor was named patriarchal exarch of Eastern Asia. He was given the administration of all the parishes in China and Manchuria. Thus, all the territory of the former Far Eastern district came under a central administration for the first time. However, this led to the Diocese of Harbin losing much of its significance. The vacant Diocese of Shanghai was reoccupied in 1950: the Chinese Father Simon (Dou) was consecrated Bishop of Shanghai, becoming the first Chinese to attain the high office of Orthodox bishop.³⁵

After the proclamation of the People's Republic of China and the reunification with Manchuria, the Soviet government seems to have used the Russian émigrés and the Church to penetrate the country politically.³⁶ Otherwise, the new Chinese rulers' attempt to supplant Soviet influence on Orthodox parish life by setting up a Chinese Church organization would not be comprehensible. This development began as early as 1950, when the Chinese authorities demanded that the Russian émigrés who had remained in the country leave, giving them the choice of immigration to the Soviet Union or to the West. The consecration of Bishop Simon (Dou) must be seen in connection with this nationalization. While Moscow was intent upon bringing back to the Soviet Union as many émigrés as possible, tens of thousands succeeded in reaching the West. In many respects the situation resembled that of Yugoslavia, where the break between Tito and Stalin resulted in the émigrés' departure for the West.

From 1953 onwards, the World Council of Churches, the United Nations, and numerous Russian, church, and private (especially American) took up the cause of the exiles.³⁷ Before 1956, some 50,000-60,000 left the country. Most went to Australia and to North and South

America. The emigration lasted into the mid-'60s and included groups of up to 1,000 people. Clergy of Russian descent also left. Of the 200 clergymen who lived in Manchuria in 1949-50, in 1953 100 were left, and in 1955 only thirty remained. A year later, twenty-seven priests and Bishop Nicander were expelled, leaving only three clergymen of Russian extraction in China. Archimandrite Philaret, who in 1964 was elected First Hierarch of the Church Abroad, was one of these three. He had refused to accept a Soviet passport and tended the ever-decreasing Russian flock until 1962, the year of his departure. Officially, all Russian clergy left the People's Republic of China in 1956 at the request of the Chinese authorities. From the early 1960s until the summer of 1966, the only Russian priest who lived in Harbin was Father Victor Tsernych, who then immigrated and lived in a French home for the aged until his repose in 1967. Until his departure, he celebrated divine services regularly in the Church of Saint Elias for the few Russians who had remained; their number had dwindled from 45,000 to a few hundred.³⁸

With the expulsion of the Russian clergy and the majority of the faithful, the nationalization of the Orthodox community was complete. In May of 1957, the "Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church" was formed out of the former metropolitan province of the Church Abroad and the Patriarchate's Exarchate of the Far East. The First Hierarch of the new Church was Bishop Basil (Shu-an), who was consecrated Bishop of Peking. In 1950, there had been an attempt to consecrate him Bishop of Tientsin, but he had refused this office. Bishop Basil headed the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church until his repose in 1962. The Vicariate of Shanghai was ruled by Bishop Simon until his death in 1965 or 1966. A total of some 20,000-30,000 Chinese belonged to the Chinese Autonomous Church. Very little is known about the number of Chinese priests. In 1954, Archbishop Victor ordained eight deacons to the priesthood, and Bishop Basil ordained "a few Chinese priests" for the parishes in Harbin.³⁹ In 1964, for

example, in Harbin, divine services were held only in the Church of the Iveron Mother of God, where a certain Father Gregory had a small parish; a Father Stephen served at the Church of Saint Alexis; and Father Nicetas at the Saint Nicholas Church. All three were Chinese. In the Monastery of the Kazan Icon, only a few aged Russian émigrés lived in the home for the aged; divine services were no longer held. There were no monks living in the monastery. In the Convent of the Vladimir Icon, a few Chinese nuns gathered for common prayer, since there was no longer a priest.⁴⁰

From the early 1960s, there was a campaign to close all churches and temples in the entire country, including Orthodox churches. During the Cultural Revolution, all churches were closed, and most of them were destroyed. The Chinese priests “proved themselves to be brave and true to the Faith,” but were somehow forced to participate in the destruction of their churches.⁴¹ The years 1965-66 were the climax of this persecution. In Harbin alone, where some 400 Russians lived, the Church of Saint Nicholas (built in 1898-1901), the Church of the Iveron Mother of God, in which divine services were celebrated to the very end, the Church of Saints Boris and Gleb, the Church of Saint Alexis, and numerous smaller churches were destroyed. The largest church, the Church of the Annunciation (built in the thirties), was turned into a circus, the Church of Saint Alexander Nevsky into a restaurant, and the Church of Saint Sophia into a warehouse.⁴² A letter from Harbin about the horrific depredations of the Red Guard reached the West; it was a shocking document describing these occurrences.⁴³ In the rest of China, similar scenes took place. The largest churches were confiscated for secular purposes; the smaller ones were simply destroyed. Church utensils were confiscated; icons and books were burnt. Bishop Simon is reported to have perished during the wave of persecution.

With the crushing of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church, the 280-year-long history of Orthodoxy in China nearly came to an end. Thanks to the Russian émigrés in the time after 1918, throughout the country it had been possible to spread Orthodoxy, which had been given such a hopeful beginning by the missionary groundwork of the Russian Church before 1917.⁴⁴ Astonishingly, according to recent information, in 1981 the repair of one of the Orthodox churches in Harbin was begun and divine services have also been celebrated.⁴⁵ Whether other Orthodox communities have been revived remains unknown.

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