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MANU MILITARI

ArchBishop Nikon's Trip to Mt. Athos

Even before formally reaching its decision the Holy Synod had requested and received permission from Patr. Germanos to send Abp. Nikon on a mission to Athos. Troitsky was to accompany him, and their official goal was "to act upon the Russian monks ... in the sense of peace-making and subjecting them to church authority regarding the question of God's name." (*Tserkovnyy Vestnik* 1913 21:641) Detailed information about the course of the mission is available in the official reports of these two, but the reliability of that information is open to question. Both reports were compiled afterward in the midst of a great public outcry against the expedition's outcome, so a concern for self-justification will have made it desirable for the reporters to present the imyaslavtsy in as bad a light as possible.

Nikon left St. Petersburg on May 23. After stopping in Kiev to pick up Vice-Consul Shcherbina he proceeded to Odessa. There he was joined by Troitsky and began his work by making speeches in churches at local dependencies of Athonite monasteries which were "infected by the heresy." Of these first attempts at persuasion he writes:

It is noteworthy that all of the speeches of the monks in defense of the false teaching and later on Athos had one and the same character: [all consisted of] fervent declarations that for the name of God they were ready to lay down their soul, suffer, and die (as if we were some kind of torture-masters). When we would tell them that no one was requiring this of them but that things were just being explained to them; that we too all piously honor the name of God; [that] we acknowledge that it is worthy of praise and is glorious; but that it itself is nevertheless not God himself -- then they would begin to get wildly excited and to cry out one and the same phrase "God himself! God himself!" (1504)

As had others before him, Nikon found himself accused of denying the divinity of Jesus Christ himself:

For my part, no matter how many times I would repeat that I believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is the true God; that the discussion is not about his person but only about words, about his names; that the Lord himself is one thing and his name another -- nothing helped. They would already be accusing me that I don't call Jesus Christ God, that I am a heretic. (1504)

The next stop was Constantinople, where he held a brief consultation with the patriarch and picked up two more key personnel: General Consul Shebunin and Secretary of the Embassy Serafimov.

Arriving at the Rossikon on June 4 aboard the naval gunboat *Donets*, Abp. Nikon found a cold reception:

Below, on the dock and near the gates, were gathered about 150 to 200 orthodox³² monks with their abbot, Archimandrite Misail, at the head. The others either stood at a distance, not wanting to receive a blessing from me, or did not come down from the terraces [and] were simply spectators of this meeting, which, I must admit, seemed to me far from "ceremonious." (1507)

What he does not speak of here is his own coldness -- imyaslavtsy later recalled that he himself refused to give his blessing to those of them who requested it. While not mentioning that behavior in his report, he does recount asking during his discussion with the patriarch whether or not he should give his blessing to those of the heretics who would ask for it out of a sense of propriety and being told "No."

After a short service in the monastery's main church he began his first speech, though relatively few came to hear it. The emphasis was not on explaining or on dialogue but on the importance of obedience and the consequences of disobedience:

Not entering into the details of this question, for the time was already late, I asked the listeners to direct special attention to the fact that this question had already been examined thoroughly and in detail by church authority, [and] that it is not the business of monk-simpletons to delve into dogmatic investigations, which

³²As opposed to the "heretics," i.e., the imyaslavtsy.

are anyway beyond the powers of their minds unprepared by science. Moreover the holy fathers forbid this to monks. And what is most important -- to remember the command of the Savior about obedience to the Church and to the divinely established pastors in order not to be subjected to judgment for disobedience and even excommunication from it. (1508)

Nikon spent the night on the *Donets*, and the next day saw the beginning of several weeks of efforts at convincing the intransigent monks of their error.

Nikon and Troitsky held private discussions with the leaders of the "heretics"; they passed out brochures and pamphlets; they read the Synod's epistle publicly in church and followed it with more speeches; Troitsky stationed himself in the library inviting any and all to come and debate with him; and both traveled to New Thebaide and other nearby communities for more discussions. Nikon says he planned also to go to St. Andrew's, but they would only receive him without soldiers, and he did not want to do that because travel was dangerous. Bands of robbers were roaming the Holy Mountain due to Greece's troubles with Bulgaria -- one monk even arrived at St. Panteleimon's with a gunshot wound to the hand. So instead of going himself, Nikon directed Troitsky to visit St. Andrew's and the more distant kellii.

Their efforts met with much opposition. Nikon describes one fruitless speech in the church of the Pokrov:

After lunch they rang the bell and the church filled up with monks. After putting on the mantia I went out to the ambo. A tight ring of "imyaslavtsy" surrounded me, but the consul had taken the precaution of placing sailors in front of me. There were rumors that the "imyaslavtsy" were threatening, "Let Nikon fall into their hands and then he'll know what it means to revile the name of God." ... I appealed to common sense, noting that their teacher Bulatovich considers all of the word of God to be God, but after all, there are many human words there, for example the words of the fool "There is no God" ... and about God's creatures, like the worm: What?! Is all this God? The names of God, as words, only designate God, refer to him, but by themselves still are not God: the name "Jesus" is not God, the name "Christ" is not God. At these words, on command of Ireney were heard cries of "Heretic! He teaches that Christ isn't God!" ... they kept on interrupting me with noises and shouts but I finished my reading and explanations anyway. ... [Then Ireney] proudly announced that none of my exhortations would have any success, and the noise of those who agreed with him confirmed his words. They shouted at me "Heretic! Crocodile from the sea! Seven-headed snake! Wolf in sheep's clothing!" (1510-11)

As for the one thousand copies of his report to the synod which he had brought with him to pass out, "they tore it in pieces and threw it to the wind."

Some sense of the difficulty of the task undertaken by Nikon and Troitsky, even with monks who were willing to listen, can be gained from the following story:

Ieromonakh Flavy, an elder (духовник) from the hermitage of Thebaide, came to me five times, now repenting, now denying the orthodox teaching. Finally, I asked Sergey Viktorovich Troitsky to take care of him separately, and he spoke with him for about two hours. But even after this conversation, during which the whole false teaching was thoroughly picked apart, Flavy would only deny the false teaching after, having made several prostrations, he decided to draw lots: To believe, or not to believe the Synod? And by the mercy of God, twice they came up "Believe." Then he came to me and with obvious agitation of soul said, "Now I believe as the Synod has ordered." (1515)

Others were firmer in their convictions and were inclined to defend them vigorously. Nikon reports that some dug up and spread around a text of St. John Chrysostom which they felt to be applicable to heretic-archbishops:

If you hear someone reviling God on the square or in the crossroads, go up and say something. And if necessary, hit him; don't back off, hit him in the face or box him on the ears, sanctify your hand with the blow ... (1513)

There was a "rebellion" within three days of the expedition's arrival, apparently due to Consul Shebunin's threat to imprison Ireney on the *Donets*. The latter fled to a monastery church, an alarm bell was rung, and masses of his followers converged upon the church in his support, making it impossible to carry out the threat. The consul requested reinforcements. They arrived on the thirteenth, and when he ordered the 123 soldiers ashore to take up posts around the monastery there was another moment of tension as the monks gathered at the gate to obstruct their entrance. The soldiers were let through peacefully only after they explained that they were there just to guard the monastery in view of rumors that there were plans to burn it or rob its bank.

On the twenty-ninth the consul decided to verify everyone's passports. This move was said to be inspired by a rumor according to which someone had threatened that "since in this world he had already sent two policemen to the other world, it wouldn't cost him anything to send an abbot

there as well." (1515) In the process each monk was asked how he believed, and of about 1,700 in all, a little over 700 proclaimed their nonacceptance of the "heresy"; still a minority, but an increase over the ratio of one fourth estimated at Nikon's arrival.

Nikon's Final Solution

The following day the archbishop proclaimed a three-day fast scheduled for the second, third, and fourth of July, during which petitions for the "uprooting of error" were to be added to litanies in the church services. This was actually not another means for admonition but rather a means for keeping as many monks in the monastery as possible. July 5 is the feast day of the Great Lavra, the senior monastery on Athos, and since the celebration draws masses of monks from all over the Holy Mountain, many had already begun leaving St. Panteleimon's. But Nikon's company had already decided to deport the intransigents, had requested a ship suitable for the task, was expecting its arrival any day, and did not want any imyaslavtsy to miss deportation simply because they were temporarily away.

When the *Kherson* arrived on the second day of the fast, Consul Shebunin did not even wait for its completion. (Or rather Nikon later blamed Shebunin for what followed; it is, however, difficult to believe that the latter acted without the archbishop's knowledge or consent or even direct orders.) Shebunin informed the imyaslavtsy that all who would not sign the required papers expressing acceptance of the Synod's epistle would have to go to the ship. They were not told what was in store for them. They asked for a promise that they would be given a share in the monastery's wealth proportionate to their numbers, but received instead an offer of twenty-five rubles to monks who had lived in the monastery for ten years, fifty rubles for twenty years, and one hundred for thirty. They asked to be given their own monastery in Russia. Shebunin refused. The result was the scene recounted at the beginning of the Introduction.

Much about that scene sounds almost comical, but in fact the official reports do not reflect the true level of violence with which the soldiers, armed with bayonets and joined even by some of the monastery's other monks, attacked the soaked imyaslavtsy. Nikon reported about twenty-five "'injured', i.e., scratched," but it is hardly possible to imagine a bayonet making only a "scratch." The monks themselves later claimed that forty had to be treated in the monastery hospital, four of whom died later from their wounds and were quietly buried that night. (See

Niviere 350) After the attack the imyaslavtsy were brought to the boat immediately, and the next day their things -- or rather the less desirable portions of them -- were brought to them from their cells. But then it was found that some were needed for vital jobs in the monastery -- and so they were then forcibly removed from their comrades on the ship and brought back to shore.

On the sixth, soldiers were dispatched to St. Andrew's. There the monks chose to avoid a repeat of the St. Panteleimon's affair and agreed to go peacefully, having been given the opportunity to take their things with them. After their departure Jerome staged a triumphant return on July 8.

The Deportation

According to the official figures released by the Russian Church, 621 monks were deported aboard the *Kherson* and a week later 212 more aboard the *Chikhachov*. Of the first figure 436 were from St. Panteleimon's and 185 from St. Andrew's; the 212 on the second ship were more monks from the Rossikon who chose to leave voluntarily rather than signing papers repudiating their beliefs. Vechevoy (49) and Bulatovich (Моя Борьба 158, 64) estimate that in the ensuing months as many as one thousand more Russian monks unwilling to sign left Athos on their own. This supposition is indirectly corroborated by the modern historian Smolitsch, who reports that Russian monks on Athos totaled 3,496 in 1910 but only 1,914 in 1914. (305) Subtracting the 833 deportees, that leaves 849 unaccounted for.

While impressive in themselves, these numbers actually belie the true strength of opposition to the Synod's position among the Athonite monks, for many of those who signed did so only to avoid trouble. If 1,000 monks of St. Panteleimon's declared themselves "confessors of the name" on June 29, and only 643 were deported a few days later, that leaves about 350 who rather abruptly decided to sign the necessary papers. After holding firm through a month of constant exhortation to recant, these monks are not likely to have actually changed their beliefs in a matter of days. Fr. Parfeny, in whose kelliya of the Annunciation Fr. Antony Bulatovich had lived after leaving St. Andrew's, and who had published locally many of his works, probably typifies their attitude. Nikon recounts:

... he sent to me his representative (НА МЕСТНИК) to sign for all the brethren [of his kelliya] the repudiation of the heresy. ... I told the representative that he could sign for himself but for the others -- no: let them sign themselves. He signed and took with him a sheet to present to the starets and the others. ... About a week went by. On the sixth of July, already after the removal of the heretics from the monastery, the same representative came to me and gave [me] three letters from Parfeny at once. The starets wrote that just as he has learned to believe from the cradle, so he will believe, and repeated nearly the whole symbol of the faith [i.e., the creed] and asked me to leave him to die in peace -- but not a word about the synodal epistle, not about the decrees of the patriarchs, not about faith in the name of God. Then I wrote to him decisively and briefly: why is he being deceitful, why does he in not a single letter answer the question: how does he believe about the names of God; and [why does he] not sign the repudiation? I asked that as the starets of a kelliya where more than 50 brothers live, he answer me, whether yes or no. If yes, then good, but if no, then I will report this to the Holy Synod and the patriarch and -- right away tomorrow -- to the *Koinotes* ... In the evening on that very day the old man sent me the formula of repudiation with signatures -- his and the elder brethren.

It is not difficult to imagine just what depth of conviction those signatures and many others like them expressed.

And the monks' fears concerning the consequences for not signing were not groundless; the lot of those who were expelled was a hard one. On the *Kherson* they found themselves treated as criminals: they were kept locked up and under guard, allowed to walk on deck only infrequently and in small groups, and fed prison rations of shchi (cabbage soup) in the morning and kasha (cooked grain) in the evening. When the ship arrived in Odessa on July 13, police cordoned off the dock to keep the public away, then boarded the ship to interrogate the monks. The latter were presented with forms to sign stating that they had left their monastery voluntarily (!!), retained no claims on it, and were voluntarily removing their monastic clothing. A complaint they made later notes also that these forms were presented as being nothing more than verification of identity -- and since many of the monks were illiterate they could not tell otherwise. Before being taken ashore their things (books, icons, clothing, money -- everything) were taken from them by customs agents. Then they were variously led or driven to jail, the police station, or St. Andrew's dependency in Odessa.

To the latter only eight were sent, whose monastic rank the Holy Synod recognized; the rest were treated as if they had never been tonsured. For justification of its treatment of them the Synod referred to an 1836 decision according to which all monks coming to Russia but tonsured

outside of it were required to go through a three-year trial period before their monastic rank would be recognized. The regulation was certainly not intended as a simple way to defrock monks without having to bother with a church court -- but that is precisely how it was used. After jail stays varying from two to fifty days their monastic clothing was forcibly removed; they were given "identical 4.5 ruble costumes" of lay clothing; their hair was cut;³³ and they were sent "home" as private citizens, presumably to whatever part of the country where it was determined that they had relatives. Reportedly forty who were suspected of being criminals or whose identity could not be confirmed were kept in jail indefinitely. The monks were not given back either their possessions taken by customs or their money, though the police promised to send the latter on to them later. Many never saw it again or only got part of it back.

The shock and hardship endured in all this by the monks may seem obvious but must be incomprehensible for anyone not familiar with monastic life. Many had lived as monks for twenty or thirty years or more, during which time their whole life revolved around church services often totaling eight hours or more each day. The suffering for those who suddenly had that focus of their life removed from them and a return to it forbidden is hardly imaginable for a modern American except perhaps to compare it to the death of a spouse.

Besides that, many would have had no work responsibilities in the monastery; aside from worship services they would have attended only to their private rule of prayer, which could occupy many additional hours every day. Others might have had some relatively short and simple daily work assignment (such as sweeping floors, setting and clearing tables, etc.), usually involving few hours and little if any pressure for production and efficiency. Such people would have no salable skills "in the world" and if they did would not be desirable laborers. After years of "work" done primarily as a necessary break from the far more important mental work of prayer, they would have neither ability nor inclination to suddenly become productive hirelings working hard, long hours every day. To set such people loose to fend for themselves in a capitalistic society lacking a developed social welfare system was cruel almost beyond belief. Small wonder

³³Athonite monks prefer to let their hair and beard grow long, rarely if ever cutting them.

that a few later regretted choosing not to sign the repudiation,³⁴ as did one who wrote to friends on Athos that "when the police officers took off of me my monastic clothing and put on me a jacket and a cap, I cried bitterly." (Pakhomy 208)

Nor was the lot of those few whose monasticism was recognized an easy one. More than a month after his arrival in Odessa Archimandrite David wrote to a newspaper complaining of the "strict regime" he had to undergo at St. Andrew's dependency there. The abbot was openly calling him and his companions "deluded heretics, antichrists, deprived of communion and monasticism, and excommunicated from the church," and he made life difficult for them in other ways as well:

At the beginning when we moved into the monastery they gave us food from the brotherhood's kitchen, and, although rarely and with difficulty, brothers were permitted to come to us. But now it is already the third week that no one is permitted to come to us and we are not permitted to go anywhere. Now they give us our food from the brothers' leftovers and the visitors' kitchen. Borshch and soup they pour into one container; kasha, stew, boiled potatoes, macaroni, and other things they throw together in another. The food is repulsive. (NV 1913 Aug 24:13)

Response to Nikon's Final Solution

The outcry in the Russian press against Abp. Nikon's handling of the affair was nearly universal. Troitsky himself later wrote that only Skvortsov's *Kolokol* and an insignificant Odessa paper expressed approval. Some condemned the use of force against the monks for political reasons, regretting that the loss of a Russian majority on Athos would mean the demise of Russia's plan for internationalizing Athos instead of giving the peninsula to Greece. Some suggested the Greeks had deliberately used the controversy precisely for that purpose. And some raised questions about the legality of the move, insofar as Athos was not Russian territory and many of the monks were no longer even Russian citizens. But most simply deplored the use of military force as a means for settling a theological dispute, as did *Moskovskiya Vedomosti* on July 28 in a front-page article:

³⁴Although as late as September *Novoye Vremya* reported that only "10 of 600" monks recanted. (Sep. 4:5)

The first time, we heard about violence and fights occurring among private persons. While that was not good and not Christian, it was a private matter. But now appears before us the church authority, a representative of the Holy Synod. ... this is no longer a simple brawl of the monks themselves, who have no worldly or spiritual authority. This is much worse.

Novoye Vremya asked, "Who gave the order to take such a measure? Really the archbishop? And does monastic or in general ecclesiastical law foresee such a punishment as a cold shower?" (Aug. 22:3) The Moscow paper *Russkiya Vedomosti* (Russian News) printed a vehement article comparing the events on Athos to the burnings of old-believer monasteries in the 1830's and lamenting that "this brings us back to the era of Nicholas." (Sep. 4:3)

Adding their voices to the clamor were several famous Russian theologians. Nicholas Berdyaev (1874-1948), who had once been exiled for socialist activities, found himself in trouble with the government again when he attacked in print this misuse of state power. In his autobiography he recounts his reasons for writing *Gasiteli Dukha* (Quenchers of the Spirit) and the results:

I didn't have special sympathies for imyaslavstvo, but violence in spiritual life and the meanness and unspirituality of the Holy Synod upset me. The issue of the newspaper in which the article was printed was confiscated, and I was placed under judgment according to an statute on blasphemy, the punishment for which was eternal exile in Siberia. My lawyer thought my case hopeless. (Самопознание 219)

Berdyaev was saved first by the onset of World War I, which delayed his case, and then by the revolution, which made blasphemy rewardable rather than punishable.

Another well-known theologian, Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944), similarly deplored Nikon's actions. In the September issue of *Russkaya Mysl'* (Russian Thought) he wrote:

The color of shame, of indignation, of sorrow, [and] of insult for the church appears on one's face at the thought of this expedition and of that sad role which an orthodox archbishop permitted himself, not refraining from moral participation in the foul treatment of the Athonite monks. (42)

This was only mentioned in passing, however; the article focused rather on the issue of how "dogmas" are determined to be true or false in the Orthodox Church -- and how the Holy Synod's behavior constituted a betrayal of the very nature of the Church.

Bulgakov observed that settling such disputes is no problem for the Roman Catholic Church thanks to its doctrine of papal infallibility and its dividing the Church into "teaching church" and "taught church." Even though not every papal statement is called infallible, such doctrines reflect a view according to which the church hierarchy of itself decides dogmatic questions while the "laity" must simply accept and obey. For the orthodox things are not so simple:

The same question is posed completely otherwise in orthodoxy. There is no external dogmatic authority in orthodoxy. Such are not the organs of higher church administration or hierarchy, nor even the so-called "ecumenical councils" themselves, which, in essence, only proclaimed and confirmed a dogma which had been received rather by the whole body of the Church. ... [Quoting A. S. Khomyakov:] "In the true Church there is no teaching Church. The *whole* Church teaches; in other words, the Church in its wholeness. The Church does not acknowledge a teaching Church in a different sense." (38)

Since truth in the Orthodox Church is preserved by all of its members and not just by the hierarchy, conciliarity is of the utmost importance. Dogmatic questions are to be resolved preeminently at councils attended by both hierarchs and others, all of whom then merely witness to an already existing common consciousness.

Only that which has already been received by the whole church may be proclaimed a dogma,

... and even the higher hierarchy may not appropriate this right to itself, being authorized ... to condemn only those opinions which constitute in themselves direct or indirect contradiction of already acknowledged dogmas, and which are in this sense obviously heretical. But in new questions, posed for the first time in church-historical evolution -- up until dogmatic maturity sets in for one or another teaching and it is fixed in the church's consciousness there remains freedom for personal investigation, for that which is technically called sometimes "theological opinions" (in contradistinction to dogmas). (40)³⁵

³⁵Specific examples of what this means: "On essentially such a position many thinkers lived in orthodoxy and unhypocritically considered themselves faithful to it, such as Bukharev, Dostoyevsky with his chiliastic hopes, V. S. Soloviev with his teaching about Sofia, N. F. Fedorov with

This freedom of investigation constitutes the "living nerve of the Church," and to stifle it is to "quench the spirit." It always involves the danger of heresy, but heresy itself is possible only in the presence of "dogmatic life," as scripture itself affirms: "It is necessary that heresies be among you so that the approved ones may become manifest ..." (1 Cor 11:19)

"Reasoning theoretically," a heresy can be in two directions: thought or will. The first occurs when a "theological opinion" obviously contradicts an already received dogma. The second occurs when someone calls their "theological opinion" -- regardless of its content -- obligatory for all and begins to call others who do not accept it heretics. In the second case "even a true opinion, if it becomes a means for church division and creates a will toward it, can obtain a heretical shade (оттенок)." (43)

The point of all this is that no one in the debate about God's name acted according to these basic tenets of Orthodoxy. To some degree the Athonite monks erred by ascribing obligatory value to their "theological opinion," but by far the greatest blame lies on the hierarchy. If the essence of the new teaching truly consisted only in a mechanistic and magical divinization of letters and sounds then the response of church authorities would have been correct, but in fact the issues are not nearly so clear and even now there is neither unanimity nor even a clear understanding of them in "church circles." The question is rather both highly complex and of fundamental importance. Ultimately it is about "a theory of prayer, how to understand the real effectiveness of prayer, in which to the invocation of God's name, and therefore to God's name itself, belongs primary significance." (41)

The authorities should have begun by encouraging debate to clarify the issues. Bulgakov suggests that Patr. Germanos did not do so because of "national-political motives" and that his condemnation, which proceeded "with highly suspicious speed and lightness" was specifically intended to give the Greeks the canonical right to expel large numbers of Russians from Athos and thereby put themselves in the majority once again. (Such analyses of the patriarch's motives were common in the Russian press.)

his teaching about the resurrection, Tyutchev, A. Tolstoy, K. Leontiev, ..." (40)

The Russian Holy Synod did no better. Noting a complete absence of the issue from all of the theological academies' journals, Bulgakov assumes the Synod began by resorting to "the beloved method of shutting mouths." And having cut off initial debate it then made three poor choices of people to advise it by submitting reports. Abp. Antony was obviously prejudiced, Nikon had only a seminary education, and Troitsky was an "up to now unknown" professor, a "gutta-perchallike theologian,³⁶ convenient also for his portability³⁷." (44) Bulgakov asks:

... why were the spiritual academies and representatives of the orthodox pastorate and laity not consulted, in general why was at least an external decorum of "conciliarity" not observed -- to this there can be no satisfactory answer. (44)

Furthermore even the three reports were not unanimous, varying from the "extreme rationalism" of Abp. Antony to the obscure position "approaching 'imyaslavstvo'" of Troitsky. Yet even if all three had been formulated well and were unanimous the decision would carry no absolute authority, "no matter how much our synod tries to copy the pope."

The mission to Athos manifested the same wrong attitude:

Abp. Nikon did not consider it necessary to visit Athos and hear out the Athonite "confessors" while still compiling his report to the synod, when it would have been possible to freely exchange opinions. He appeared there rather with a prepared sentence and a request of obedience under threat of excommunication and ... expulsion, and in spite of that he complains that he was met coldly and mistrustfully. (43; ellipsis the author's)

The same point about the archbishop's attitude had been made by Fr. Antony (NV July 25:5), who also observed that by choosing to keep his living quarters on the *Donets* rather than in the monastery itself Nikon had made himself inaccessible to most of the monks who desired to speak with him.

³⁶"Rubbery," i.e., flexible; apparently referring to a willingness to tailor theological conclusions to the desires of superiors.

³⁷Referring to the Synod's sending him to Athos along with Nikon.

Nevertheless, Bulgakov concludes that the Athonite affair essentially constitutes a "joyful event in the life of the Church" because it proves the "vitality of orthodoxy," which is still able as it was in the past to beget martyrs and confessors for the faith. And this is not the end of the debate but rather a "prologue to further dogmatic movement" in which all members of the church must take part.

Fr. Florensky, apparently less reluctant to take sides, wrote an article entitled "Archbishop Nikon: Spreader of 'Heresy'" (Распространитель "Ереси"). (See Andronik 287) He still thought it wiser not to do so openly, however; when published both in an anthology edited by Fr. Antony Bulatovich and separately in pamphlet form, the work was unsigned. How much influence it or its author had on the controversy is difficult to say.³⁸

Criticism of the Russian church's behavior came even from the other Orthodox churches. Less than a week after the exiles arrived in Odessa, the patriarchs of Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Alexandria joined in submitting a formal protest to the Holy Synod regarding its non-recognition of the monks' monastic rank merely on the basis of their tonsure outside of Russia. Although the text of that protest was never published, *Russkiya Vedomosti* (July 21:3) reported that the patriarchs expressed concern about the "belittling of the prestige of autocephalous eastern-patriarchal church[es]."

Rumors that some members of the Synod itself were also dissatisfied with the turn of events on Athos were rampant. *Novoye Vremya* reported:

We are told that all of what occurred on Athos happened, supposedly, without the Synod's knowledge and that it had to contend with an already established fact. So then, in order not to injure the prestige of a Russian archbishop and emissary of the Synod, it became necessary to sanction the measures taken by him. (July 27:4)

Others said some of the hierarchs on the Synod felt that force had not really been necessary, that Nikon had overreacted and behaved tactlessly, and even that he should be removed from his synodal post.

³⁸Another churchman speaking out on the side of the imyaslavtsy was Vladimir Franzevich Ern (1882-1915). However, his main efforts on their behalf consisted only in a few magazine articles and a short pamphlet, and they were not published until 1916 and 1917. See the Bibliography.

Nikon's and Troitsky's Defense

Such universal opposition gave the deported monks hopes that the Synod might change its stand, so they submitted a formal petition for reconsideration. But before it could be acted upon, Nikon's and Troitsky's reports had to be heard, and they were largely devoted to justifying the actions taken on Athos. Nikon claimed that through their violent behavior the imyaslavtsy had made their own expulsion inevitable. That so many Athonite monks should be of such poor character he attributed to the rapid growth of the Russian population on the Holy Mountain and to poor controls in Russia over who could go there. Noting that even military deserters and political exiles found it a safe haven, he asserted:

... among them appeared people who were seeking not so much spiritual asceticism as the satisfaction of their personal vainglory, a particular careerism, a searching for a certain preeminence among the others -- I would say -- "diotrefism." Bulatovich is typical of such monks. Not having at the base of their spiritual upbringing real ecclesiality, such people can easily give in to temptations to depart to the side, away from the teaching of the Church, from the spirit of its traditions ... (1520)

As for the violence of July 3, he emphasized that he played no direct role, that he did not even witness it, and that it was the responsibility of the civil authorities. This is a rather lame excuse, however. As *Moskovskiya Vedomosti* charged after hearing it, if the church and state authorities had acted so independently there should also have been a report to the Synod from the latter. In any case the civil authorities would have done nothing without Abp. Nikon's approval and/or direct orders.

Troitsky presented a variety of practical reasons for the expulsions. He acknowledges concerns that bringing the "heretics" back and resettling them all over Russia would merely infect the homeland with what was once a strictly Athonite plague. But he argues that Athos is too important to the Orthodox world to leave heretics there; they would have eventually corrupted all of Russian Athos; and then they would have used the tremendous financial and organizational resources of the great Athonite monasteries to spread their heresy in Russia itself anyway. Not only that, but they would have had the advantage of the aura of authority that belongs to the name of Athos among Orthodox faithful. But now, on the other hand, they have no such means at their

disposal and not even the spiritual authority of being monks thanks to their having been defrocked -- so the amount of damage they can do is actually much less.

The option of resettling them in dependencies of the Athonite monasteries located outside of Russia had been considered. But this was rejected by the embassy in Constantinople, which didn't want to have to deal with the attendant problems. Also, it would have been difficult to do that resettling within a foreign country, it would have been difficult to prevent their return to Athos, and they would have been able to continue their propaganda.

Troitsky also argues that if the Russians hadn't taken action as they did, the Greeks would have. This was to be avoided for several reasons: it would have been an indirect acknowledgment of Greek authority over Athos;³⁹ the Greeks would have done it with cruelties and plundering; and they would have tried to remove as many Russians as possible in order to diminish Russian influence on Athos. "In general, to leave thousands of Russian citizens and millions in Russian money to the whims of the Greeks would have been extremely careless." (OIB 174) As for the expulsion's effect on Russian prestige there vis-a-vis the Greeks, the loss of such troublemakers couldn't possibly hurt. And in any case the overpopulation at St. Panteleimon's was alleviated.

Whether for these or other reasons, the members of the Synod were not inclined to condemn Nikon's actions. They did remain divided over whether to employ more repressive measures or treat the exiled monks mercifully, but at a crucial meeting on August 27 those who supported the latter course of action were absent.⁴⁰ Hence the resulting decision (определение) approved of Nikon's actions and specified a series of further measures to be taken against the imyaslavtsy. Their petition for a church court was to be ignored, but since they were actually under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople, the Synod would ask him to hold one. It would also ask him for permission to receive back into communion those who would repent.

Meanwhile the monks were to be officially renamed "imyabozhniki" ("name-god-niks" or "name divinizers"); clergy of the areas to which they had been sent were to be warned of their presence and told to admonish them and take steps against their propaganda; and lists of names

³⁹Athos' political fate had not yet been decided; it was at the time under Greek "occupation" rather than Greek "sovereignty".

⁴⁰Innocent, Exarch of Georgia and Aleksey of Tobol'sk. *Rech'* Aug 29:4.

were to be distributed to all monasteries warning them not to take in any of the exiled monks except those willing to repent. For the latter a form was provided which they would have to sign wherein they would admit to having fallen into "heretical thinking" (мудрование); avow acceptance of the epistles of Joachim, Germanos, and the Synod; reject the teaching found in *Na Gorakh Kavkaza* and *Apologiya*; and acknowledge that "all names of God are to be honored relatively and not divinely (боголепно)" and are "by no means (отнюдь) to be considered God himself."

The next step was to aid the Russian pastors in their work of admonition by undertaking a thorough theological exposé of the heresy. That task was entrusted to Professor Troitsky.