

CHAPTER THREE: A DISUNITY BORDERING ON CHAOS (1918 - 1943)

The following years, beginning with 1918, were to be extremely difficult years for the North American Diocese reflecting in some measure the same problems that the Mother Church of Russia herself was facing. Archbishop Evdokim did not return. Even before the October Revolution in Russia, all financial assistance from the Mother Church had ceased.

In September 1918 a pre-Sobor of the Clergy was held in New York City and it was agreed that a full Sobor would be held in February 1919 in Cleveland, Ohio and an appeal was made to the Russian Consulate in Washington, D.C. to underwrite the costs of the Sobor.

From the 12th to the 15th of February 1919 the Sobor took place in St. Theodosius' Church in Cleveland and the main action of the Sobor was to elect Bishop Alexander (Nemolovsky) as Archbishop of America and Canada in view of the fact that Archbishop Evdokim had failed to return and that on the basis of a directive of Archbishop Evdokim Bishop Alexander had been acting as his substitute during his absence.¹

In 1921 Bishop Anthony (Dashkevitch) arrived in America and was assigned to be Bishop of Alaska and in the same year, by different routes, Metropolitan Platon (Rozhdestvensky) and Archpriest Feodor Pashkovsky returned to the United States. In 1922 due to increasing financial difficulties of Archbishop Alexander in connection with mortgaging churches and parish homes as well as other church property in order to pay the missionary clergy and meet administrative costs, he felt that for the good of the Church it would be best for him to leave the country and go to Europe, which he did. Before leaving, he addressed a letter to Metr. Platon dated the 20th of June 1922 requesting him to assume the duties of Ruling Hierarch of the North American Diocese. In a statement dated the 3rd of July, Metr. Platon accepted on the condition that he could only be responsible for acts and papers signed by himself personally (this was an obvious attempt to escape responsibility for the heavy debts incurred by Archbishop Alexander for unavoidable reasons).²

¹ 150th Anniversary Book, New York, 1944, pp. 281-282.

² 150th Anniversary Book, New York, 1944, pp. 286-287.

Disunity

In November 1922, from the 25th to the 27th of November an All-American Sobor took place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Metr. Platon was elected the new Head of the North American Diocese and given the title of "Metropolitan of All America and Canada." Just a month previous to the Sobor, on the 24th of October, Bishop Stephan (Dzubay) on the basis of his claim to be "acting Head" of the Diocese consecrated (together with visiting Bishop Gorazd (Pavlik) from Czechoslovakia) Archimandrite Adam (Philipovsky) as Bishop of Canada.³

There seems to be no question that Patriarch Tikhon verbally authorized Metropolitan Platon to temporarily act as the Head of the North American Diocese⁴ but there is considerable controversy as to the authenticity of the Ukaz of the Patriarch and Sacred Synod which was produced later to bolster Metr. Platon's claims to St. Nicholas Cathedral in New York City as against those of John Kedrovsky, married Archbishop of the "Living Church."⁵

In 1923 Bishop Stephen, on his own authority, called a Sobor in New York City of Carpatho-Russian Clergy and Laity and announced that his successor as Bishop of the Carpatho-Russian Diocese would be Bishop Adam and that now he was assuming the office of acting head of the North American Diocese since he stated the credentials of Metr. Platon were doubtful (in fact Bishop Stephen soon after, unable to persuade most of his claims, after participating in the historic 1924 Detroit Sobor, returned to the Unia expecting to be named Bishop of the Uniate Diocese but this did not happen and so he remained a Uniate Bishop without jurisdiction until his death in 1933).

The historic Detroit Sobor which met from the 20th to the 22nd of March and from the 2nd to the 4th of April 1924 took a decisive step when it decided almost unanimously that the North American Diocese temporarily become a self-governing Diocese.⁶

There is much dispute about the intent of this Sobor and the way in which it was conducted. It must be noted that Metr. Platon did not preside and was not the Chairman of the Sobor (nor in fact was a Hierarchy a Chairman of the Sobor despite the presence of Bishop Stephen (Dzubay), Bishop Theophilus (Pashkovsky), and Bishop Appollinary (Koshev). Archpriest Leonid Turkevitch

³ "Archbishop Adam (On the Occasion of his 40th Anniversary as a Clergyman and 30th Anniversary as a Bishop" by "Zemlyak" (in Russian) in "One Church" September-October 1952, pp. 3-6.

⁴ See "Reflections on Religion in Russia 1917-1967" by Paul Anderson, pp. 11-33, esp. p. 15, in the newly-published *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union 1917-1967* edited by Richard H. Marshall, Jr., Thomas E. Bird and Andrew Q. Blane, University of Chicago Press, 1971.

⁵ See Appendix for text of Ukaz as printed in 150th Anniversary Book, N.Y. 1944, p. 295. There is reason to seriously doubt authenticity of the written Ukaz, despite statement of D. Grigorieff in "Historical Background of Orthodoxy in America" page 20 of No. 1-2 SVSQ 1961 citing A. Kazem-Bek in JMP p. 67 for June '57. See N.Y. State Supr. Court Decision 1925, p. 7.

⁶ See Appendix for the complete text.