

Appendix

We publish as an appendix to the preceding article some documents from Tragedia russkoi tserkvi by Lev Regelson (reviewed in RCL Vol. 5, No. 4) with the kind permission of the YMCA-Press, Paris. Dates are given in the old style unless otherwise stated. Ed.

From Disunity to Harmony

The following description of the change which took place within the 1917 Council is given by an eye-witness, Metropolitan Yevlogi. The Russian text is published in Lev Regelson: Tragedia russkoi tserkvi (hereafter TRT), p. 29.

Russian life in those days was like a sea tossed by the storm of revolution. Church life had fallen into a state of disorganization. The external appearance of the Council, because of the diversity of its composition, its irreconcilability and the mutual hostility of its different tendencies and states of mind, was at first a matter for anxiety and sadness and even seemed to constitute a cause for apprehension . . . Some members of the Council had already been carried away by the wave of revolution. The intelligentsia, peasants, workers and professors all tended irresistably to the left. Among the clergy there were also

different elements. Some of them proved to be "leftist" participants of the previous revolutionary Moscow Diocesan Congress, who stood for a thorough and many-sided reform of church life. Disunion, disorder, dissatisfaction, even mutual distrust . . . — such was the state of the Council at first. But — O miracle of God! — everything began gradually to change . . . The disorderly assembly, moved by the revolution and in contact with its sombre elements, began to change into something like a harmonious whole, showing external order and internal solidarity. People became peaceable and serious in their tasks and began to feel differently and to look on things in a different way. This process of prayerful regeneration was evident to every observant eye and perceptible to every participant in the Council. A spirit of peace, renewal and unanimity inspired us all . . .

The Council's Goal: "Sobornost"

A. V. Vasilev, a member of the 1917 Council, believed that the Council's main task was to build up sobornost within the Church. The word sobornost is difficult to translate into English in all its implications. "Conciliarity" is some-

times used, since Sobor means a Council, and the 1917-18 Council itself was called a Sobor. However, as the writer refers specifically to the ninth article of the Creed ("one holy Catholic . . ." etc.) the translator of the following passage

has preferred to use the word "Catholicity" to make it consonant with the Creed for English readers. The Russian text appears in TRT pp. 29-30.

The main task of the Holy Council was to establish the basis for unity in the life of our Church and of our Fatherland as professed by us in the ninth Article of the Creed, in life neglected and suppressed – which enjoins Catholicity (*sobornost*) [Vasilev's italics. Ed.]. If we confess a Catholic and apostolic Church, and the Apostle characterized her as the *body of Christ*, a living organism in which all the members are in harmony with one another and subordinated to one another, then this means that such subordination is not opposed to the principle of Catholicity (*sobornost*) and that Catholicity does not consist in a full equality of different members or parts but in the recognition of a *personal and hierarchical* principle ... Catholicity (*sobornost*) does not deny authority but demands from it *conditions permitting willing*

obedience. Thus, *authority* defining itself as *service*, in the words of Jesus Christ, "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" – and those subjected to authority *submitting themselves willingly to its recognized rule – agreement, harmony and unity of spirit*, at the basis of which lie mutual trust in one another and love – that is Catholicity (*sobornost*). And only on this condition is the existence of true Christian freedom and equality and brotherly love among peoples and nations possible ... In Catholicity (*sobornost*) there is close agreement between the personal hierarchic and social principles. The Orthodox understanding of Catholicity (*sobornost*) includes within itself the concept of *universality*, but – more profoundly – it witnesses to an inner union, a wholeness; just as in a man there are spiritual powers, will, understanding and feelings, so in a whole society and people – according to the agreement of its constituent organisms – there are different members ...

Election of Patriarch

On 5 November 1917 the election of the Patriarch took place at the Cathedral of St. Saviour in Moscow. Metropolitan Yevlogi describes the scene in his memoirs, *Put moei zhizni* (YMCA-Press, Paris, 1947) pp. 302-3. This passage appears in TRT p. 217.

All waited with trepidation to see whom the Lord would appoint. At the end of the *moleben* (Te Deum), Metropolitan Vladimir proceeded to the icon-stand (lectern)* took the coffer in his hands, blessed the people with it, untied the string with which it was secured and broke the seal. From behind the screen there emerged a tall old man – the Special Priest-Monk (*Ieroskhimonakh*) Alexi, the hermit of Zosima Desert (not far from the Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery), who was taking part in the Council by reason of special church obedience. He crossed himself three times and, without a further glance, took a paper out of the coffer. Metropolitan Vladimir read aloud in a clear voice:

"Tikhon, Metropolitan of Moscow!" It was as if an electric spark ran through the praying gathering ... The exclamation of the Metropolitan was heard: "Axios!", which was drowned in the unanimous "Axios, Axios" ... of the clergy and people. The choir joined with those in prayer in singing "We praise Thee, O God" ... Tears were in the eyes of many. It was felt that the election of a Patriarch was a joy for all, representing the finding, in the days of confusion in Russia, of a defender, a representative and an intercessor for the Russian people ... All were willing to believe that with a Patriarch dissensions would somehow die away.

When we separated and donned our fur coats, Archpriest Shavel'sky said: "I perceive that our Church has not been abandoned by the Lord!"

*The Russian word used is *analoj*. This is a stand on which, in a Russian Orthodox Church, icons or liturgical books can be laid. Ed.

Council's Advice before Elections

Before the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the Council sent the following address to members of the Russian Orthodox Church. The letter is dated 4 October 1917 and was published in Tserkovnye vedomosti 1917, No. 42, pp 375-7 and is reproduced in TRT p. 212.

The Orthodox people has been set a great task. Not for the first time in our history the edifice of government is crumbling and our motherland is overtaken by mortal confusion. And once again, as it did 300 years ago, Russia [the old form *Rus* is used. *Ed.*] demands that the mind of all its people should strengthen the basis of law, should revive a power which is tottering, and by strong laws should protect freedom and order in our land ...

... The power of government is not created by party strife and class antagonism, nor are the wounds healed which were inflicted by a terrible war and destructive antagonism. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. The competition of parties, classes and

nationalities should not be turned into internecine strife. Unity of all people, illumined by a common faith, enlightened by an incorruptible conscience, have from time immemorial established a kingdom; when faith is shaky and conscience is obscured, strength is dissipated and states fall. The wisdom of ages tells us this, and this truth our motherland, now poisoned by the sin of envy and deep-rooted cruelty, has learned upon the path of suffering. May the spirit of dishonesty and hatred which buffets the people be overcome by them, and then they will easily and justly carry out the work of government through harmonious effort. May the dry bones come together, may they be clothed in flesh and may they live at the command of the Spirit. But without love, humility, gentleness, we undertake this labour in vain ... The eye of faith sees in the motherland a holy land ... And in truth the motherland is not dear to us without our holy faith. May the bearers of faith be called to heal her wounds ...

Council Appeals for Peace

After the Bolshevik coup d'état of 25 October 1917, the Council addressed the following letter to the faithful on 11 November. The Russian text is reproduced in TRT pp. 36-9.

Already our motherland has experienced dreadful calamities; yet the vial of God's wrath continues to be poured upon us, and the renewal of our sins serves only to increase His righteous anger. The civil strife which holds Russia in its grasp has now been added to all our sufferings. A part of the army and people, dazzled by promises of all earthly blessings and of early peace, has fallen upon the other part, and our land is red with the blood of compatriots. Russian guns and artillery have even been turned, not against an enemy but against our own cities, including the defenceless citizenry, women and children. And even this was not enough for the leaders of insurrection. A blas-

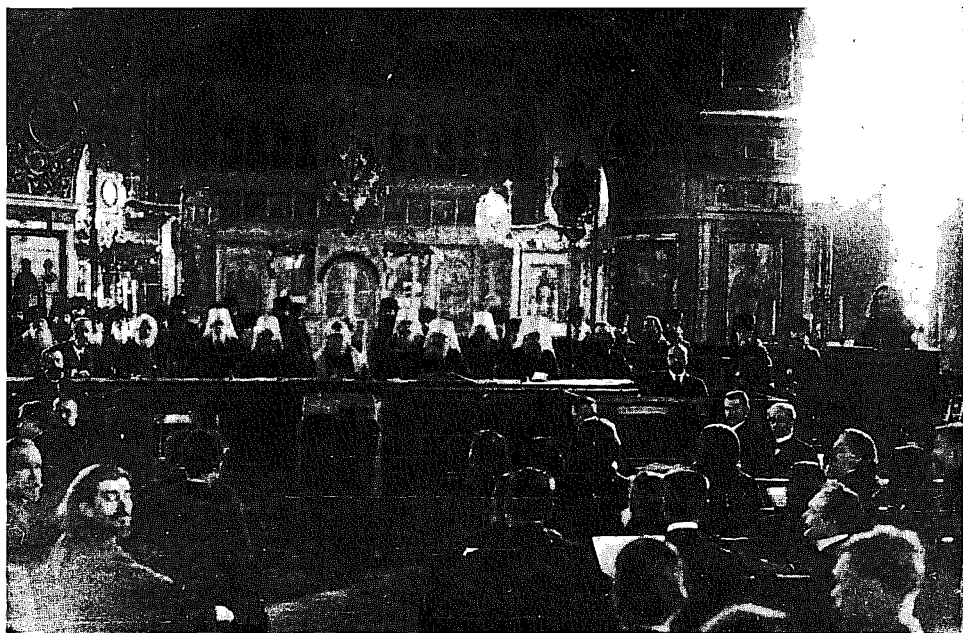
phemous crime has been committed against the Orthodox faith, against the entire Orthodox people and their history. For a few days Russian artillery shelled the most sacred place in all Russia - our holy Moscow Kremlin with its ancient cathedrals, which contain holy and miracle-working icons, the relics of holy servants of God and ancient Russian treasures. Shells shattered the roof of the house of the Mother of God, our Cathedral of the Dormition, damaging the icon of St. Nicholas, which remained on the Nikolsky doors even in 1812. Likewise the Chudovo monastery, which contains the holy relics of Metropolitan Alexi, has suffered damage. The Orthodox people look in horror on what has been done; our descendants, in revulsion and anger, will brand this deed as evil; the shame of it covers us in the eyes of the world, and we cannot lift our heads for grief and disgrace. Truly the words of Jeremiah's lamentation have

been fulfilled in us: "Thou hast made us as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people . . . Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction" (Lamentations 3:45-47). But by whose hands have these dreadful deeds been accomplished? Alas! Our Russian army, that very army which we prayerfully honoured with the name "Christ-loving", which but a short while ago achieved feats of courage, meekness, honour. The perpetrators of this evil deed live now in our midst, with the mark of Cain the fratricide, with the sin of deepest blasphemy on their conscience; though perhaps even, drunk with the blood of their victory, they do not even think of what they have done. Yet God's judgement and God's righteousness remain! God will not let Himself be blasphemed. In place of the new order of society promised by the teachers of lies, bloody discord exists between those who would build it; in place of peace and the brotherhood of man there is the confusion of tongues and bitter hatred one for another. Those who forget God fall upon each other like hungry wolves. Conscience and reason is everywhere darkened. The responsibility for this evil deed rests in unequal measure upon those who brought it about, since many of them - even the majority we believe - are simple and ignorant people who have been led astray, deceived and corrupted, and who did not know what they were doing; while all the responsibility rests on their seducers and leaders . . . "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matthew 18:7). For a long time past the seeds of the antichrists have lain deep in the Russian soul, and the heart of the people has been poisoned by teachings which deny faith in God, nourish envy, covetousness, the plunder of the property of others. On this foundation they promise to build universal happiness on earth. Christians are forewarned by God's Word about such false teachers. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (I Timothy 4:1). "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blas-

phemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded" (II Timothy 4:1). Open combat is fought against the Christian faith, in opposition to all that is sacred, arrogantly abasing all that bears the name of God (II Thessalonians 2:4). So it is no accident that Russian guns, in wrecking the holy places of the Kremlin have wounded the people's heart, which burns with Orthodox faith. But no earthly kingdom founded on ungodliness can ever survive: it will perish from internal strife and party dissension. Thus, because of its frenzy of atheism, the State of Russia will fall. The righteous judgement of God upon the people who destroyed the holy places is being fulfilled before our very eyes. With the cathedrals of the Kremlin the whole earthly fabric of the Russian State began to collapse. Though but recently mighty, powerful and glorious, it is now falling apart. Abandoned by God's grace, it is disintegrating like a body from which the spirit has departed. "And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbour; the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable". (Isaiah 3:5).

For those who see the sole foundation of their power in the coercion of the whole people by one class, no motherland or holy place exists. They have become traitors to the motherland and instigated an appalling betrayal of Russia and her true allies. But, to our grief, as yet no government has arisen which is sufficiently one with the people to deserve the blessing of the Orthodox Church. And such will not appear on Russian soil until we turn with agonising prayers and tears of repentance to Him, without Whom we labour in vain to lay foundations.

The Holy Council today calls upon the entire Russian Church to offer prayers of repentance for the great sin of those of its sons who, under the influence of false promises, through ignorance succumbed to fratricide and the blasphemous destruction of the holy places of the people. We receive their deeds as the sin of all the people, and will entreat the Lord for forgiveness. May the Lord Himself awaken in their



The Council of the Russian Orthodox Church held in 1917-18 (see pp. 17-25).



Patriarch Tikhon elected on 5 November 1917 at the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church.



The Special Priest-Monk (*Ieroskhimonakh*) Alexi who was chosen by the Russian Orthodox Church to draw the lot at the election of the Patriarch in November 1917.

hearts a salutary repentance and the recognition of all their sins before God and the Russian people.

Therefore repent and bear worthy fruits of repentance! Abandon the unreasonable and impious dreams of false

teachers, who claim to create universal brotherhood by means of universal strife! Return to the way of Christ!

Let God arise and scatter His enemies, and let all who hate Him flee from before His face.

Protestants Support Orthodox

On 16 March (new style) 1918 representatives of the Protestant sects in Russia sent a letter to the Council which expressed concern and support for the Russian Orthodox Church at that time. Patriarch Tikhon, on behalf of the Council, replied on 28 May (new style) 1918. The text of his reply is printed below. It appeared first in Tserkovnye vedomosti 1917, No. 17-18 and is reproduced in TRT pp. 240-1.

With emotion of spirit We and the Holy Council of the Orthodox Russian Church have received the message, full of deep Christian feeling, of the members of the Protestant Confession on the subject of the evil times which have overtaken the Russian land and the "distress and oppression" (Romans 8:35) of the Orthodox Church. After hearing this message at its session of 26 March (8 April new style), the Holy Council resolved that you should be thanked through our unworthy person.

Moved by the feelings of our heart, we express to you and your brethren in faith our hearty gratitude for your love and your good wishes for the success of the labours of the Holy Council of the Orthodox Russian Church, and we pray to the Lord that He, the true Lover of Mankind, will not leave you without a heavenly reward for the expression of sympathy for the suffering of those looking towards the consolation of Christ. In the sorrows and misfortunes of the oppression of the Orthodox Church, We constantly remember Jesus Christ blessing "those who mourn and are persecuted for righteousness sake" (Matthew 5:4, 10) and we profoundly hope that the Heavenly Chief Shepherd "will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able" (I Corinthians 10:13), for "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

In entire agreement with yourselves,

we confess that throughout the course of its recent history, a not seldom sorrowful historical journey, the Russian people will be able solely under the banner of the Cross and by way of the Church to achieve their spiritual development and fulfil their world destiny. And now We are persuaded, without any doubt, that only by adopting as the basis of its spiritual and civil renewal of life the living principles of the Gospel of Christ, will the Russian people overcome the test imposed on it by deviations from the historical laws of truth and faith.

The Orthodox Church, ever devoting her forces to the salvation of her children and the good of the Fatherland, even now does not cease, even to the martyred blood of her adherents, and in the future will not cease from any sacrifices for the rebirth of our Fatherland and the renewal of the spirit of Christ in the hearts and consciences of the Russian people. The labours of the Holy Council, based on the Word of God as the cornerstone, are laying a firm foundation for the restructuring and the strengthening of the Church's life and, uniting in the Church all its true members, will offer greater assistance to restoring the Fatherland's unity and strength.

In your kind letter, We also perceive a sincere pledge that Christians of all Confessions place, with us, all their forces at the service of the good of the Fatherland and are endeavouring to stand with "all the armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11) against "the gates of Hell" (Matthew 16:18) and by the light of Christ to drive away the darkness of Antichrist which has enveloped Russia, so that "in the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 6:19) [sic - Trans.] on the common pasture of the one flock of Christ (John 10:9, 16) they may achieve their salvation to the glory of God. Amen.