

## **Second Open Letter to Patriarch Aleksii II**

Your Holiness,

I cannot consider your letter to the chairman of the State Duma, I. P. Rybkin, as an answer to my open letter to you of 19 January 1994, which was published in *Nezavisimaya gazeta* and *Ekspress-khronika* and received wide public response. It does not address the serious problems in the life of our church today which I have listed in my letter. I am distressed to note that your letter was simply a form of denunciation.

You write to the State Duma in the hope that it will apply sanctions to me, refusing to allow me to wear priestly garments or pectoral cross. In prison and labour camp they took the cross from me by force (not only the pectoral cross but also the one worn under my clothes) and even shaved off my beard. So thank you, Your Holiness, for not asking the Duma to pass a law to that effect.

The inordinate pretentiousness you display shows that you have forgotten what times we are living in. You turn to the highest legislative body with a complaint about a deputy you do not like, interfering in the affairs of state and at the same time provoking the state organs to interfere in the internal affairs of the church. But today the church is separated from the state not only formally, as it was in Soviet times, but in reality – although it finds itself in a superprivileged position.

You write that my political activity is evoking ‘mass protest from clergy and believers’. What political activity are you talking about? The process of democratic reform, thanks to which the church was given its freedom for the first time in 70 years, and thousands of churches were opened again? Support for the president, the reforms and the new constitution? It is clear that the issue is the democratic direction of my activities as a whole. You are thus testifying to the fact that the people of the church and its pastors today are incapable of helping in the spiritual and moral resurrection of our society and that in the Moscow Patriarchate it is the fascist and antisemitic ideas of Metropolitan Ioann of St Petersburg that receive support. He it was who first said that I would have to be defrocked, having announced himself my political adversary, and, as we see, he got his way. In going along with those who are nostalgic for the lost ‘totalitarian paradise’ and want to bring it back in a new Nazi version, You are inflicting heavy losses on Russia. You must know that monastery and church bookshops regale the people with Black Hundreds literature, some of it published at the Monastery of the Holy Trinity and St Sergius of which you are an archimandrite, and some of it at the Danilov Monastery, your official residence. You must also be aware of the number of complaints your parishioners and clergy send you about corruption, bribery, extortions and blackmail by some archbishops who are proven drunks, debauchers and even sodomists. However, you remain deaf to this ‘mass protest from clergy and believers’, thus covering up for those who are undermining the church and bringing it into disgrace.

You are indignant that I call the top hierarchy the ‘church *nomenklatura*’. Are you really going to deny the evidence of the archives of the Communist Party, the KGB and the Council for Religious Affairs, and the testimony of the Council’s former

chairman, K. Kharchev, to the effect that not one member of the hierarchy of the ROC could become a bishop, not to mention patriarch, without the initiative of the KGB and the sanction of the CPSU? I enclose a copy of your letter to that very K. Kharchev in which you request that the priestly *nomenklatura* be included in the sanatorium service of the Fourth Administration of the Ministry of Health. Does this not speak of '*nomenklatura*' pretensions?

You must be glad to note that after your letter was distributed to the deputies it found enthusiastic support from two famous 'pillars' of Orthodoxy, Zhirinovsky and Nevzorov. I am sorry that you were not able to reply in detail to the letter which was sent to you, and to the main idea that without repentance Russia cannot be reborn. The people of the church are accustomed to ritualism, and the clergy have been turned into a priestly caste. Neither can fulfil their calling: to become, in the words of the Saviour, the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

Deputy of the State Duma Fr Gleb Yakunin

11 February 1994

(Translated from the Russian by Emma Watkins)