



THE NEW MARTYRS AND CONFESSORS OF RUSSIA

BY VLADIMIR MOSS

Hieromartyr Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia *1865-1925*

His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, in the world Basil Ivanovich Bellavin, was born on January 19, 1865 in Toropets, Pskov province, the son of a priest, Fr. John of the Spaso-Preobrazhensky church. His mother was called Anna. Once his father dreamed that he spoke with his dead mother. She warned him of his imminent death and went on to say that of his three sons, one would be a protector, one would die a youth and be brought back to Toropets, and Basil would become very great. Just after he had had been made Bishop of Alaska, Basil accompanied the body of his youngest brother back to Toropets, in fulfilment of this prophecy. Basil was a very cheerful, good-humoured and kind boy. He was also very intelligent, and used to help his schoolmates with their work.

In 1872 Basil entered the Toropets spiritual school, and in 1878 - the Pskov theological seminary. In 1884, at the very young age of 19, he entered the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. He was very popular with his fellow-students, who prophetically nicknamed him "Patriarch" and once jokingly censed him, crying: "Many years, your Holiness". On June 11, 1888 Basil graduated from the Academy and returned to Pskov seminary as a teacher in Dogmatic and Moral Theology. There he lived very simply in a tiny annexe to a simple wooden house near the church of

St. Nicholas. On December 22, 1892 (according to another source, December 14, 1891) he was tonsured into the mantia by Bishop Hermogenes (Dobronravin) of Pskov, and a little later was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood.

In March, 1892, Tikhon was appointed inspector of the Kholm theological seminary, later becoming rector of the same seminary with the rank of archimandrite. (According to one source, he was briefly transferred to the Kazan Theological Academy as rector with the rank of archimandrite, but soon returned to the Kholm seminary as rector.) Here, besides his duties in the seminary, he was made president of the Diocesan Educational Council, president of the Kholm Orthodox Brotherhood of the Mother of God, dean of the monasteries of the Kholm-Warsaw diocese and publications censor.

On May 6, 1895 he was awarded the order of St. Anne, second class.

Fr. Tikhon's simple, unaffected ways endeared him to the local population, and many uniates returned to the Orthodox Faith through his gentle tact. This reached the ears of the Holy Synod, who on October 19, 1897 consecrated him Bishop of Lublin, a vicariate of the Kholm-Warsaw diocese, in the Trinity cathedral of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra in St. Petersburg. His consecrators were Metropolitan Palladius (Rayev) of St. Petersburg, Archbishop Arsenius (Bryantsev) of Kazan, Archbishop Anthony (Vadkovsky) of Finland, Bishop John (Kratirov) of Narva and Bishop Gurias (Burtasovsky) of Samara.

After his consecration, Bishop Tikhon returned to Kholm, where he remained for about a year. Then, on September 14, 1898, he was made Bishop of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska. In 1900 he was appointed Bishop of North America, becoming archbishop on May 19, 1905.

His activity in America was very successful, in recognition of which he was awarded the order of St. Vladimir, third class, in 1901, and the order of St. Anne, first class, in 1904. In Minneapolis he founded a seminary, which was soon producing enough American priests to obviate the necessity of sending priests from Russia. And in New Canaan, Pennsylvania he founded the St. Tikhon's monastery. The number of parishes increased from 15 to 70, and all became self-supporting. As in Kholm, Tikhon continued his missionary activity among the uniates, and a large number converted to the Orthodox Faith. Service-books were translated into the English language with his blessing. A special achievement of Tikhon's, in view of the later disintegration of American Orthodoxy into various ethnic groups, was his unification of all the groups - Russian, Greek, Syrian, Bulgarian, Aleut - under his leadership. A symbol of this unity was the first Orthodox Church Council in America, which was convened by Tikhon in Mayfield, New York, in February,

1907.

However, Tikhon did not attend this Council because on January 25, 1907, he was appointed Archbishop of Yaroslavl and Rostov. Here, as always, Tikhon made a special point of visiting all the churches in his diocese, and by his humility, approachability to all classes and kinds of people, and active interest in the details of the lives of all his spiritual children he soon became as popular in Yaroslavl as he had been in Kholm and America. But his gentleness and love were combined with firmness on matters of principle. This once brought him into conflict with the governor of Yaroslavl, who on December 22, 1913 secured his transfer to the diocese of Vilnius. The people were greatly saddened, and at a grand farewell ceremony he was made an honorary citizen of the city, the first time any bishop had been accorded this honour. Earlier the Holy Synod had awarded him the order of St. Vladimir, second class, in 1909, and the order of St. Alexander Nevsky in 1913.

In Vilnius the Russian Orthodox were a distrusted minority in a sea of Catholics. But once again Vladyka succeeded in winning the trust and respect of the heterodox. However, his work in this field was interrupted by the war. He worked first with refugees, and then with the soldiers at the front. He conducted services under bombardment and maintained the morale of the soldiers so well that he was awarded a military order for distinguished conduct. In 1916 he was awarded a diamond cross for wearing on his klobuk.

When Vilnius was occupied by the Germans, Archbishop Tikhon was forced to go to Moscow, taking the relics of the holy three Vilnius martyrs with him. However, he was not detained long in Moscow and soon returned to the part of his diocese which was still in Russian hands. Here he often came under enemy fire.

During the war Archbishop Tikhon was frequently called upon to attend meetings of the Holy Synod. And after the abdication of the Tsar and the coming to power of the Provisional Government in March, 1917, he was a member of the Synod under its new procurator, Prince Lvov. However, there was so much friction between Lvov and the members of the Synod that in April the procurator dismissed all of them except the future traitor of the Russian Church, Archbishop Sergius of Finland. Sergius became head of the new Synod, which also included the future traitor of the Russian Church in America, Metropolitan Platon of Georgia.

Since Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow had been among those removed from his see, it was necessary to elect a new metropolitan. On June 19, 1917, a congress of the clergy and laity of the diocese of Moscow met and on June 23 / July 6 (according to another source, June 21 / July 4) elected Tikhon as Archbishop of Moscow and Kolomna (he

became metropolitan on August 14/27). However, this appointment caused some pain to him, because for a long time Metropolitan Macarius protested against his removal and did not want to recognize it as lawful.

Metropolitan Tikhon immediately set about visiting all the churches of his diocese, and became a member of the committee to prepare the election of delegates to the forthcoming Local Council of the Russian Church.

At about this time Bishop Joannicius of Archangelsk arrived at the Solovetsky monastery to supervise monastic life there. As he was coming towards the monastery hospital in the company of the monastery's clergy and monks, he met a monk named Tikhon whom the brotherhood considered to be mad and who ran up to the window, opened it, stood on the sill and started to bless the approaching company with both hands, crying:

"We, humble Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, declare..."

Then he looked at the bishop who was just entering and said:

"and we bless you."

Surprised by this strange behaviour, the bishop asked the superior who this was. And he received the reply:

"This is Monk Tikhon, who already a year ago, having gone out of his mind, began to go up to the window and bless the people entering, saying similar things."

It is not known whether the bishop was satisfied by this reply. But soon the election of Metropolitan Tikhon to the patriarchate gave a prophetic significance to the acts of Monk Tikhon.

On August 15, 1917, the Local Council of the Russian Church opened in the cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow attended by 564 delegates. Metropolitan Tikhon was elected president of the Council by 407 votes to 33.

The first major question before the Council was the restoration of the patriarchate, which had been abolished by Peter the Great in 1700. 200 delegates participated in the Section on the Higher Church Administration which was to decide this question, and for a long time the opponents of the patriarchate, led by the future renovationist Professor Titlinov, waged a bitter struggle against its restoration. However, the Bolshevik coup on October 25 changed the mood of the Council, and on October 31, at the suggestion of Count Paul Mikhailovich Grabbe, nominations of candidates took place.

On the first secret ballot, Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kharkov received 101 votes, Archbishop Arsenius of Novgorod - 27 votes, and Metropolitan Tikhon - 23 votes. On the second ballot, only the first three candidates on the first ballot were considered. Archbishop Anthony got 159 votes, Archbishop Arsenius - 148 votes, and Metropolitan Tikhon - 125 votes. These three names were then put in a blessed urn and placed before the famous wonderworking Vladimir icon of the Mother of God. On the following morning, after the Divine Liturgy and a moleben served to the Holy Hierarchs of Moscow, Elder Alexis of Zossima hermitage drew out one of the names and handed it to Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev, the future hieromartyr. Metropolitan Vladimir crossed himself and read out:

"Tikhon, Metropolitan of Moscow, Axios!"

After a moleben had been served, the Patriarch-elect said: "Your news about my election as Patriarch is for me that scroll on which was written: 'Tears, groans and mourning.' Such was the scroll that the Prophet Ezekiel had to eat. How many tears I shall have to swallow and how many groans let out in the patriarchal service that is set before me, and especially at such a terrible time! Like the ancient leader of the Hebrew people, Moses, I shall have to say to the Lord: 'Why dost Thou torment Thy servant? And why have I not found mercy before Thine eyes, that Thou shouldst lay upon me the burden of the whole of this people? Did I bear this people in my womb and give birth to it, that Thou shouldst say to me: bear it in your hands as a nanny bears a child? I alone cannot bear all this people, for it is heavy for me' (Numbers 11.11-14). From now on the care of all the Russian churches is laid upon me, and I must care for them every day. And who could be happy with that, even if he were among those who are stronger than me? But may the will of God be done! I find strength in the fact that I did not seek this election, and it came in spite of me and in spite of men, in accordance with the lot of God. I trust that the Lord Who has called me will Himself help me through His almighty grace to bear the burden laid upon me and will make it light. A consolation and encouragement for me is the fact that my election has not taken place without the will of the All-Pure Mother of God. Twice she, through the presence of her honourable Vladimir icon has been present in the cathedral of the Saviour at my election. This time the lot was drawn from her wonderworking image. I have as it were come under her honourable omophorion. May she the all-powerful one stretch out to me, the weak one, the hand of her help, and may she deliver this city and all the Russian land from every need and sorrow."

Soon the word went through Moscow that God had chosen, not "the cleverest" (umneyshij), Anthony, or "the strictest" (strozhayshij),

Arsenius, but "the kindest" or "the quietest" (tishayshij), Tikhon. And on November 21 / December 4, 1917, Metropolitan Tikhon was enthroned as Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in the Kremlin Dormition cathedral to the sound of gunfire from the battle of Moscow raging outside.

As he received the staff of St. Peter from Metropolitan Vladimir, the newly elected Patriarch expressed his sorrow at the tragic events that were taking place around him: "The patriarchate," he said, "is being restored in Rus' at a terrible time, in the midst of shooting and weapons of death-dealing fire. Probably it will itself be forced to resort more than once to bans in order to bring the disobedient to their senses and restore church order. But as in ancient times the Lord appeared to the Prophet Elijah not in the storm or in the earthquake but in the coolness and the breath of a quiet breeze, so now to our pusillanimous reproaches: 'Lord, the sons of Russia have abandoned Thy covenant, they have destroyed Thy altars, they have fired at the holy things of the churches and the Kremlin, they have slaughtered Thy priests' - the quiet breath of Thy words is heard: 'There are still seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the contemporary Baal and have not betrayed the true God.' And the Lord as it were says to me: 'Go and search for those for whose sake the Russian Land still stands and is maintained. But do not abandon the lost sheep who are doomed to destruction and slaughter - sheep who are truly pitiful. Shepherd them, and for this take this, the staff of goodwill. With it search out the lost sheep, return the oppressed, bind up the wounds of the wounded, strengthen the sick, destroy those who have grown fat and obstreperous, shepherd them with justice.'"

After the Liturgy the Patriarch immediately went round the Kremlin in a cross procession, sprinkling the wall with holy water.

Patriarch Tikhon immediately had to face a great test of his leadership as the new Bolshevik regime passed law after law restricting and robbing the Church, while excesses and murders of Church servers throughout the country increased. He did not wait for the delegates to the Council to return from their Christmas recess, but immediately took upon himself the whole responsibility for rebuking the communists.

On January 19, 1918, he anathematized the Bolsheviks and their co-workers, saying: "I adjure all of you who are faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ not to commune with such outcasts of the human race in any matter whatsoever". Addressing the pastors and archpastors, he said: "Do not hesitate for a moment in your spiritual activity, but with fiery zeal call your children to defend the rights of the Orthodox Church which are now being trampled on. Immediately organize spiritual unions, call on them to enter, not of necessity but

voluntary, into the ranks of the spiritual warriors, who oppose external force with the force of their holy inspiration..." The decree ended with an appeal to defend the Church, if necessary, to the death.

This was read out by Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan to a closed session of the Council, which immediately supported the Patriarch with an epistle of its own.

In March, the Patriarch condemned the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which left millions of Russians in captivity and freed the Bolsheviks to turn the war into a civil one. In July, he condemned the killing of the tsar, and warned that anyone who did not likewise condemn it was also guilty of this most terrible of crimes. And in October, he again condemned the Red terror, saying: "It is not our task to judge earthly governments. Every government allowed by God would attract blessing if it were truly a servant of the Lord for the benefit of its subjects and were a deterrent not for good deeds but for bad (Rom. 13.34). But now to you who use your powers for the persecution of the innocent, we direct our word of warning. Celebrate the anniversary of your rule by freeing the imprisoned, cease the bloodshed, violence, destruction, persecution of the faith, turn not to destroying, but to maintaining order and laws, give the people their well-deserved rest from civil war. Otherwise you will have to answer for all the righteous blood shed by you (Luke 11.51), and you who have taken the sword will perish by the sword (Matt. 26.52)."

When this epistle was read out at a united session of the Synod and the Higher Church Council, many tried to dissuade the Patriarch from publishing it, indicating that it would put him in great danger. The Patriarch listened carefully to all this, but did not change his decision. However, the Muscovites feared for the Patriarch's life, and organized 24-hour guards at his residence so that the alarm could be sounded immediately if he was arrested.

At one point shortly after the murder of the Tsar, which the Patriarch openly condemned, some member of the Council suggested to the Patriarch that he take refuge abroad, so that he not share in the fate of the Tsar. "The flight of the Patriarch," replied his Holiness, "would play into the hands of the enemies of the Church. Let them do with me what they want."

As the civil war progressed, however, Tikhon adopted a strictly apolitical stance that reflected the fact that there were millions of Russian Orthodox on either side of the conflict. (However, he is reported as having blessed the White supreme, Admiral Kolchak.) Thus in the autumn of 1919, when the White armies had captured Orel and threatened Moscow, he issued an epistle to the clergy requiring that they not enter into the political struggle, while at the same time

reminding them that the commandments of God are more binding than any human directives: "Remember the canonical rules, archpastors and fathers, and the testaments of the holy apostles: 'Guard yourselves from those who create discord and dissension'. Decline from participation in political parties and speeches, obey your human superiors in external matters (I Peter 2.14), give no reasons to the Soviet authorities to suspect you, submit to their commands insofar as they do not contradict faith and piety, for we must obey God, according to the apostolic exhortation, more than men (Acts 4.19; Gal. 1.10)."

On November 7/20, 1920, as the White armies boarded the ships taking them to Constantinople with several Russian hierarchs on board, he issued his famous ukaz no. 362, which authorized hierarchs who were out of touch with the centre to form their own autonomous administrations. This not only gave the émigré bishops the basis for their independent activity, but also helped the patriarchal Church to survive during the ascendancy of "the Living Church" and was used by the Catacomb Church after the apostasy of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927.

In 1921 a terrible famine struck the Volga region. Tikhon immediately authorized that the Church send aid to the starving, and in August appealed to foreign Christian leaders for help. But the Bolsheviks saw in this tragedy an opportunity to oppress the Church even further, and letters began appearing in the press accusing the Church of greed and demanding that all the Church's wealth should be used to feed the hungry. The Patriarch then issued a statement authorizing that all the church valuables could be donated, but only voluntarily and excluding those which were consecrated for use in the Divine Liturgy.

In February, 1922, the Bolsheviks decreed that the local soviets should seize all the valuables from the churches. This led to bloody clashes between the local soviets and believers. Many Orthodox suffered martyrdom defending the Church from sacrilege, many were brought to trial and the Patriarch himself was placed under house arrest.

At one such trial, that of the 54 in Moscow in May, the Patriarch appeared as a witness for the defence. The presiding judge asked him:

"Do you consider the state's laws obligatory or not?"

"Yes, I recognize them," replied the Patriarch boldly, "to the extent that they do not contradict the rules of piety."

Among the critics of the Patriarch on the question of church valuables was a group of pro-revolutionary "renovationist" clergy, who created the so-called "Living Church". In this same month of May they took advantage of the Patriarch's transfer to the Donskoy monastery to

seize control of the Church's central administration.

Soon the renovationists were attacking several of the basic dogmas of the Church, and introduced several modernist innovations such as the new calendar and married bishops. They adopted a vigorously pro-Soviet and anti-patriarchal policy. The GPU supported them while imprisoning those clergy who remained loyal to the Patriarch. Soon most of the churches in Moscow and about a third of those in the whole country were in their hands. However, the masses of the people remained faithful to the Patriarch, who in April, 1923 was imprisoned in the Taganka prison pending his trial.

At their second council, which met in Moscow in the same month of April, the renovationists first heaped praises on the revolution, which they called a "Christian creation", on the Soviet government, which they said was the first government in the world that strove to realize "the ideal of the Kingdom of God", and on Lenin: "First of all, we must turn with words of deep gratitude to the government of our state, which, in spite of the slanders of foreign informers, does not persecute the Church... The word of gratitude and welcome must be expressed by us to the only state in the world which performs, without believing, that work of love which we, believers, do not fulfil, and also to the leader of Soviet Russia, V.I. Lenin, who must be dear also to church people..."

The council tried Patriarch Tikhon in absentia, and deprived him not only of his clerical orders but also of his monasticism, calling him thenceforth "layman Basil Bellavin". Then the patriarchate itself was abolished, its restoration being called a counter-revolutionary act. Finally, some further resolutions were adopted allowing white clergy to become bishops, and priests to remarry, and introducing the Gregorian calendar. When the decisions of the council were taken to the Patriarch for his signature, he calmly wrote: "Read. The council did not summon me, I do not know its competence and for that reason cannot consider its decision lawful."

46 "bishops" out of the 73 who attended the council signed the decree condemning the Patriarch. One of them, Joasaph (Shishkovsky), told Fr. Basil Vinogradov: "The leaders of the council Krasnitsky and Vvedensky gathered all those present at the 'council' of bishops for this meeting. When several direct and indirect objections to these leaders' proposal to defrock the Patriarch began to be expressed, Krasnitsky quite openly declared to all present: 'He who does not immediately sign this resolution will only leave this room straight for the prison.' The terrorized bishops (including Joasaph himself) did not find the courage to resist in the face of the threat of a new prison sentence and forced labour in a concentration camp and... signed, although almost all were

against the resolution. None of the church people had any doubt that the 'council's' sentence was the direct work of Soviet power and that now a criminal trial and bloody reprisal against the Patriarch was to be expected at any time."

The pressures on the Patriarch were mounting inexorably, with daily visits from the GPU agent Tuchkov, who made blackmail threats to force him to make concessions to the State. (Tikhon called him "an angel of Satan".) In April, the government announced that the Patriarch was about to go on trial on charges arising from the trials of the 54 in Moscow and of Metropolitan Benjamin in Petrograd the previous year. However, partly because the authorities wanted to give the renovationist council the opportunity to condemn him first, and partly, later, as the result of an ultimatum issued by the British foreign minister Lord Curzon, which was supported by an outcry in the British and American press, the trial was postponed to June 17.

At the beginning of June, the Patriarch fell ill and was transferred from the Donskoy monastery to the Taganka prison. There he was able to receive only official Soviet newspaper accounts of the Church struggle, which greatly exaggerated the successes of the renovationists. Feeling that his presence at the helm of the Church was absolutely necessary, and that of his two enemies, the renovationists and the communists, the renovationists were the more dangerous, the Patriarch decided to make concessions to the government in order to be released. Thus on June 3/16 and again on June 18 / July 1 he issued his famous "confession", in which he repented of all his anti-Soviet acts (including the anathema against the Bolsheviks), and "finally and decisively" set himself apart "from both the foreign and the internal monarchist White-guard counter-revolutionaries".

Tikhon was released on June 12/25, 1923, and his appearance in public - he had aged terribly in prison - was enough to send the Living Church into a sharp and irreversible decline. They remained dangerous as long as they retained the favour of the authorities; but by 1926 the authorities were already turning to others (the Gregorians, then Metropolitan Sergius) as better suited for the task of destroying the Church. And by the end of the Second World War the last remaining renovationists had been absorbed into the neo-renovationist Moscow Patriarchate. However, the government still supported the schismatics, and to the end of his life the Patriarch's main preoccupation was to limit their influence.

On seeing the real situation, the Patriarch bitterly repented of his "repentance" in prison: he said that if he had known how weak the Living Church really was, he would not have signed the "confession" and would

have stayed in prison.

On July 2/15 he anathematized the Living Church, declaring: "They have separated themselves from the body of the Ecumenical Church and deprived themselves of God's favor, which resides only in the Church of Christ. Consequently, all arrangements made during our absence by those ruling the Church, since they had neither legal right nor canonical authority, are non-valid and void, and all actions and sacraments performed by bishops and clergymen who have forsaken the Church are devoid of God's grace and power; the faithful taking part in such prayers and sacraments shall receive no sanctification thereby, and are subject to condemnation for participating in their sin..."

The authorities then tried to make the Patriarch introduce several of the innovations which the renovationists had adopted. One of these was the new calendar. For a short time, the Patriarch was in favour of this, thinking that the other Orthodox Churches had accepted the new calendar. However, the people were against it, and when he received a telegram from Archbishop Anastasius of Kishinev, the future first-hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad, saying that the other Orthodox Churches had not accepted the new calendar, the Patriarch reversed his decision. He informed the authorities about this, and noted with some irony that he did not quite understand why the secular authorities should be interested in changing to the new style...

"The brutal persecution," writes Fr. Demetrius Serfes, "did not let up during the entire remaining period of the Patriarch's life. They wished thereby to make him their obedient slave, as Metropolitan Sergius subsequently became, but he remained a guardian of Orthodoxy. Never during the Church's entire history had it ever been confronted by such a cruel and evil foe. The Patriarch literally fell ill after every encounter with Tuchkov, who directed Soviet ecclesiastical policy. The Patriarch was not afraid of martyrdom. The most savage death would probably have been easier for him than having to be constantly concerned over exiled bishops, priests and faithful laymen. On the other hand, as the breakdown which took place during his imprisonment indicated, it would seem that it was essential to do everything possible without changing the fundamental principles of the Church and its internal freedom, so that the recent state of affairs under which the sheep were abandoned to the mercy of wolves, would not occur again. The sheep however, realized that their shepherd had not forsaken them, but had been parted from them against his will. And they showed their love for him whenever possible."

The Patriarch was in effect powerless. As he said: "It's better to sit in prison - you know, I'm only considered to be free, but in fact I can do

nothing. I send a hierarch to the south and he turns up in the north, I send him to the west, and they take him to the east."

In February, 1924, one of the renovationist leaders, Krasnitsky, with GPU backing, tried to join the patriarchal Church. After some wavering, the Patriarch rejected this, though the effort caused him to fall ill. Then Patriarch Gregory IV of Constantinople, who had just caused a schism in his own Church by introducing the new calendar, tried to reconcile the Patriarchal Church with the "Living Church". The Patriarch decisively rejected this attempt.

The Bolsheviks now resorted to another tactic. Instead of trying to remove the Patriarch, whose popularity was too solidly entrenched among the people, they tried to force him into accepting legalization by the state on terms that involved more-or-less total submission to them. To this end they applied blackmail - the threat of shooting several bishops. Under this terrible moral torture, the Patriarch's health began to deteriorate...

At about this time the Patriarch confided to his close friend and personal physician, Michael Zhizhilenko, the future Catacomb Bishop Maximus, that he feared that soon the "political" demands of the Soviets would go beyond the bounds of faithfulness to Christ, and that the Church, in order to remain faithful, would have to go into the catacombs.

On December 7, 1924, the Patriarch sent an epistle to all the clergy of the Church, in which he wrote: "Whoever was in the administration of the Living Church in the HCA cannot take up any further administrative position in our Church. And not only can he not be an administrator: he cannot have a vote during a Council." This was an important decree, because it disqualified the man who eventually became "patriarch" after Patriarch Tikhon, Metropolitan Sergius of Nizhni-Novgorod, who had been a member of the renovationist Higher Church Administration.

After the publication of this epistle, the Bolsheviks decided to kill the Patriarch. Jane Swan writes: "On December 22, 1924, a second attempt on the life of the Patriarch was made. For many years the Patriarch had been served by a man called James Sergievich Ostroumov. James had been with him during his years in America, and then on returning to Russia had married Princess Drutskaya-Sokolinskaya. When Tikhon became Patriarch, James was again with him, probably the closest person to him throughout those harrowing years. On the evening of December [9/]22, the Patriarch was standing before the icons in his bedroom praying. Hearing a shot, he crossed himself in the direction of the shot, then opened the door. For a moment, the door could not be opened for something was obstructing it. Then it suddenly gave and there James lay covered with blood, half on the floor and half against the door. Two men

stood there. On seeing the Patriarch, one of them grabbed his own head with his hands and turning, ran out. The other followed, also running. Tikhon shouted,

"'Stop, what have you done? You have killed a man!'

"James opened his eyes, looked at the Patriarch, and then died. The police were called at once, and next day a notice was printed in Izvestia that two thieves had entered the apartment of Citizen Bellavin and stolen a fur coat. No mention was made of the murder and no investigation was ever made. Curiously enough, the Bolsheviks made an issue over James' burial. The Patriarch wished to have him buried at the monastery and for a while the Bolsheviks refused. Finally it was allowed, but almost as soon as the grave was made, the government announced that they were building a crematorium on that spot. Tikhon had the grave removed next to the walls of the church and eventually his own body was to be placed in the grave next to James'. This incident shattered the little health which remained to the Patriarch and his attacks [of angina] increased."

According to the witness of Bishop Maximus (Zhizhilenko), during the murder of his cell-attendant, the Patriarch remained in a chair in the same room, but the murderer did not see him.

On January 12, 1925, the Patriarch was admitted to a small private hospital run by Dr. Bakunina. Even here he came under pressure from the GPU agent Tuchkov. However, his health recovered somewhat, and for a while he was able to officiate in church again.

On March 23, he consecrated two bishops. But the following evening he arrived back at the hospital exhausted after a meeting of the Holy Synod.

According to the official version of the Patriarch's death, he died at 11.45 p.m. on March 25 / April 7, 1925, "at the end of the feast of the Annunciation. There is no hint in the official version that the Patriarch may have been poisoned. But this is the inference to be drawn from the following account by the Catacomb Schema-Bishop Peter (Ladygin), which he received from the Patriarch's cell-attendant:

"The Patriarch continued his work. On the Annunciation [March 25], having celebrated the Liturgy, he was completely healthy. At four o'clock Metropolitan Seraphim of Tver [a suspected GPU agent who later joined Metropolitan Sergius' false synod] came to him. The Patriarch told him that he would serve the next day, but Seraphim said:

"'Do not serve, your Holiness, have a rest. You are very tired and weak.'

"Seraphim left at eight o'clock in the evening.

"The Patriarch felt well and was getting ready to serve the next day. But suddenly there was a ring at the door. When they opened the door, a doctor entered. The doctor said:

"Your Holiness! You rang us and asked us to come since you were weak. Here I am to examine you and prescribe you some medicines."

"The Patriarch said: 'But no. I feel fine.'

"Okay," said the doctor, 'but just allow me to examine you. Your pulse is weak. You must drink some medicine.'

"The Patriarch asked: 'Why have you come and not my doctor, who always looks after me?'

"He's not at home now, he's on call, but I was at home - so here I am," replied the doctor. 'In an hour's time I shall send you a mixture.'

"An hour after the doctor had left, at ten o'clock in the evening, Mark brought the Patriarch a mixture and said that the doctor had ordered him to drink a spoonful.

"Give it to me," said the Patriarch.

"Mark poured out a spoonful of the mixture and the Patriarch drank it. Immediately he began to vomit (be sick). The cell-attendants Stratonicus and Mark rang the doctor. After a few minutes the doctor appeared. The Patriarch was lying down.

"What's the matter with him?" asked the doctor.

"The doctor prescribed a mixture and ordered us to give him one spoonful," replied Mark.

"The doctor demanded to see the mixture immediately. They gave it him. On seeing it, the doctor threw up his hands and immediately sent the Patriarch to hospital. Mark and Stratonicus took him out and put him in the carriage. They got in themselves and accompanied him to the hospital. There they gave him some milk, and prepared some baths, but nothing helped. Within an hour and a half Patriarch Tikhon had died. The cell-attendants took him back. At three o'clock the Patriarch was laid out as a corpse at home. I write this from the words of the cell-attendants Mark and Stratonicus, who were with the Patriarch in the place of the murdered James."

Just as the official version of the Patriarch's death may have been tampered with, so his official will, which was flagrantly pro-Soviet, was almost certainly a forgery. That was the opinion of Bishop Maximus and Protopriest Basil Vinogradov. As Bishop Gregory Grabbe writes: "We know that on the day of the death of the Patriarch the question of the epistle [his will], which was demanded by Tuchkov, was discussed. Apparently the last conversation between the Patriarch and Metropolitan Peter was precisely about this. The room in which the Patriarch died was immediately sealed by Tuchkov. Only after several days did Tuchkov give what purported to be the will of his Holiness to the two metropolitans to be taken to the newspaper.

"But Fr. B. Vinogradov tell us, from the words of people who were near the room of his Holiness the Patriarch, that during the conversation with Metropolitan Peter the Patriarch was heard to say: 'I cannot do that.' Then it is very important to draw attention to the fact that at the meeting of the assembled bishops the notorious 'will' was NOT proclaimed. Fr. Vinogradov is right in emphasizing that Tuchkov, in allowing the meeting, would undoubtedly have demanded its proclamation if it had really been signed by the Patriarch. Moreover, Metropolitan Peter in his first address as locum tenens not only did not mention the will, but wrote in a quite different spirit."

Schema-Monk Epiphanius Chernov has further pointed out that the wording of the Patriarch's will is lifted almost word for word from the renovationist appeal published on April 30 / May 12, 1922 under the heading: "To all the believing sons of the Orthodox Church of Russia". Moreover, continues Fr. Epiphanius, "the official Soviet 'variant of the death' of Patriarch Tikhon was timed to take place in the clinic of Dr. Bakunina. There, as this 'variant' affirms, the 'will' was 'written', 'edited' and 'signed' by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon. That's how it is in accordance with the official Soviet version... But why then does this 'will' end with these words:

"... May the Lord strengthen you all in faithfulness to the Holy Orthodox faith, the Church and Her hierarchy.

Patriarch Tikhon.
Moscow. Donskoy monastery.

March 25 / April 7, 1925.'

"This means that the writing and signing of this 'document' took place and was finished in the Donskoy monastery, and not in the clinic of Dr. Bakunina! Which corresponds to the hidden truth..."

According to the Patriarch's cell attendant, Constantine Pashkevich, his last words, uttered in an unusually strict tone, were: "I shall now go to sleep... deeply and for a long time. The night will be long and very dark."

The burial of the Patriarch took place on March 30 / April 12 in the presence of fifty-eight bishops and enormous crowds. There has never been such a huge demonstration of religious feeling in Russia from that time to the present day. He was buried in the old winter church of the Donskoy monastery.

The monastery was closed in 1927, and it was rumoured that the monks had hidden the relics to protect them from the communists. In May, 1991, after a fire that damaged the church, a search commenced for the relics of the Patriarch. Hearts sank when, after hours of digging beneath the marble slab bearing the Patriarch's name, they finally uncovered a burial vault only to find it contained nothing but cobwebs. Closer inspection, however, revealed that this chamber was but part of the underground heating system. They also noticed that the heating ducts directly beneath the assumed burial place were firmly secured with cement and not limestone as elsewhere in the system. More significantly, this part of the system lay not on the ground but on top of a massive cement slab. The care with which it was all arranged made it doubtful that this was the work of chekists. Two more days of intense digging - and the real sepulchre was uncovered. It may have been that this was the plan from the first, which would explain why only a few hierarchs were admitted into the church for the actual burial.

The relics, which were almost entirely incorrupt in spite of the extreme dampness of the vault, were discovered on February 19, 1992 (according to another source, February 22). On March 23 / April 5, 1992, 50 patriarchal bishops solemnly transferred the relics of Patriarch Tikhon to the monastery's main church. Witnesses, who included Catacomb Christians, reported that "it was even possible to recognize the face of the Patriarch from his incorrupt visage, and his manta and mitre were also preserved in complete incorruption. Witnesses also speak about a beautiful fragrance and an unusual feeling of reverential peace at that moment. But then, as some patriarchal clerics confirm, on contact with the air the relics crumbled, or - as the Catacomb Christians remark - the relics were not given into the hands of the Moscow Patriarchate. Then they buried them in plaster - a blasphemous act from an Orthodox point of view..."

At the reliquary there is an icon in which the Saint is depicted holding a scroll with the words: "My children, stray not from the path of the Cross, which has been sent to us by God."

(Sources: M.E. Gubonin, Akty Svyateishago Patriarkha Tikhona, Moscow: St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, 1994; Metropolitan Manuel, Russkie Pravoslavniye Ierarkhi, Kuibyshev, 1966, reprinted Erlangen, 1989, vol. 6; Jane Swan, A Biography of Patriarch Tikhon, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1964; Protopresbyter Mikhail Polsky, The New Martyrs of Russia, Montreal: The Monastery Press, 1972; I.M. Andreyev, Russia's Catacomb Saints, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 1982, pp. 56-57; Fr. Epiphanius Chernov, Tserkov' Katakombnaya na Zemlye Rossijskoj (MS); Alexander Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago, Collins, 1974, vol. I; Fr. Demetrius Serfes, The Life and Works of St. Tikhon the Confessor, Patriarch of Moscow, vol. I, Old Forge, PA, pp. 37-38; Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky), Zhizneopisaniye Blazhenneishago Antoniya, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galistskago, Montreal, 1960, vol. VI, p. 114; "Vospominaniya Skhiepiskopa Pyotra [Ladygina]", Tserkovnaya Zhizn', NN 3-4, March-April, 1985, p. 78 and NN 5-6, May-June, 1985, p. 148; Moskovskij Paterik, Moscow: "Stolitsa", 1991; "Patriarch Tikhon's Relics Discovered", Orthodox America, March-April/May-June, 1992, p. 11; "Zhizneopisaniye Svyashchenomuchenika O. Sergiya Mechova, sostavlennoye ego dukhovnymi chadami", Nadezhda, 16, Basel-Moscow, 1993, p. 125; Eugene Polyakov, personal communication; Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), Zavet Svyatogo Patriarkha, Moscow, 1996; V. Petrenko, "Sv. Patriarkh Vserossijskij Tikhon", Vestnik I.P.Ts., N 1 (11), 1998, pp. 24-27; M.B. Danilushkin (ed.), Istorია Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi, 1917-1970, St. Petersburg: Voskreseniye, 1997, p. 201)

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