

Not to repeat the sins of the past, let's revisit the 16th century... Intrigue, ransom, and threats from Moscow

Hagiographos, Elias Damianakis

Archon Maestor of the Great Church of Christ

Archonellias.com - archonellias@gmail.com



Ironic similarities in Orthodoxy appear to be manifesting themselves in 2018, barely a century after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of communist Russia, Moscow again utilizes intrigue, ransom, and threats in an attempt to annex the Orthodox Church in another spasm of “Third Rome” fantasies... Similar to the century following the defeat of the Roman Empire in 1453, Orthodoxy finds itself in a particularly tumultuous epoch of Muscovite ecclesial aggression.

After the collapse of New Rome, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople continued to suffer under the new Islamic regime of the Ottomans. Patriarchal coup d'états, church property confiscations, and revolutionary conspiracy theories abounded within the Ottoman court with devastating consequences for the Orthodox Church as a whole, and especially for the Ecumenical Patriarchate. During this time the Patriarchal Church of Theotokos Pammakaristos was confiscated and turned into the Fethiye Mosque. Ecumenical Patriarch Matthew II moved the Patriarchate to the former convent of St George in the Phanar in about 1600, where it is still located. During this unrestrained half century Patriarch Jeremias II was Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople three times between 1572 and 1595. It was in his reign and forced captivity by the Muscovites that Metropolitan Job, in 1589, became the first Patriarch of Moscow, under very threatening circumstances including kidnaping and ransom.

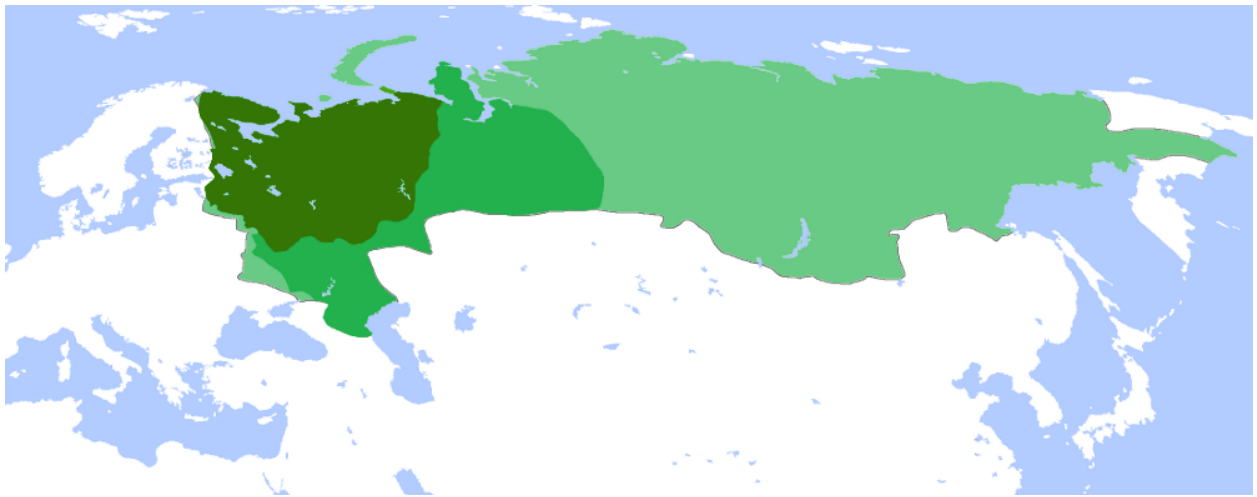
As the throne of Constantinople contend with the everchanging whims of the Sultans, the Moscow church presided under the abuses of Ivan the Terrible. In attempts to sever ties with the Czar the Hundred Chapter Council of 1551 unified church ceremonies and duties throughout the Moscow Church. Reinforced by these reforms, the Moscow Church felt powerful enough to occasionally challenge the policies of the tsar. Metropolitan Philip eventually engineered Ivan's deposition and murder.



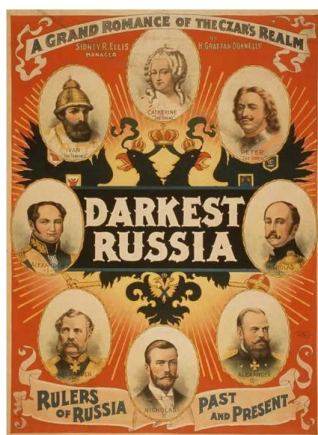
The 12th Ottoman Sultan, Murad III (1546-1595) and the first Czar of Russia, Ivan the Terrible (1533-1584) inflicted such a devastating blow to Orthodoxy that we are still feeling the repercussions four centuries later. Eerily today we find political leadership of Turkey and Russia; Erdogan and Putin both attempting to revitalize aspirations of empire's lost, and both seeking the fabricated “Third Rome” status...

During the political and ecclesial chaos of late 16th century the reengineering of political administrations, and geopolitical posturing the church of Moscow was able to manipulate a tomos of autocephaly. Notwithstanding the suspicious conditions of imprisoning another patriarch, the “Golden Tomos” clearly defined the geographic territory of this new “Patriarchate” a provision which **Moscow has never adhered to**. The Moscow Patriarchate unilaterally created a new ecclesiology based on an anti-canonical expansionist ideology. The Moscow patriarchate indignantly grew along with the aggressive warmongering Czarist empire. Illegitimately enlarging its territory into new “barbaric” territories and even onto new continents. 16th century geographic territorial maps of Russia clearly illustrate that Kiev was not part of the Russian Empire nor was it part of the integrity of the “Golden Tomos”. In these cases, Moscow has not only violated an ancient tradition of the Orthodox Church founded on canons of the Ecumenical Councils, but also in actions and statements conforming to those of Holy Orthodox faith. Moscow continues to express a teaching foreign to the Fathers of our Church.

The territorial map of 16th century Russia (dark green) is only a fraction of what we think of today.



Here we see the growth of Russia from the period of the tomos (dark green), and subsequent 17th and 18th centuries. “In the second half of the 18th century, the borders of Russia expanded again into the north and to the east. In those years, Russian merchants discovered the Aleutian Islands which formed in the Pacific Ocean a chain from the eastern shores of Kamchatka to the western shores of North America.” Missionaries led by Germanus (known today as St Herman) departed from Saint Petersburg in 1793 and they arrived on Kodiak Island on September 24, 1794. Despite the uncanonical expansion of the Russian missionary, they in obedience, sowed seeds of holiness and Orthodoxy in modern day Alaska.



The next century of Orthodox “rebirth” was ushered by the collapse and slow deterioration of the Ottoman Empire and the Balkanization of Orthodoxy. A critical Russian aggression would manifest itself at the end of WWI with the establishment of ROCOR (Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia) a pseudo-ecclesial semi-autonomous body created under the guise of being an “independent jurisdiction as a result of Russian bishops losing ‘regular liaison’ with the central church authority in Moscow.” The ROCOR encapsulated their theories in order to support their imperialistic Russian Orthodox nationalist views against the “Greek” Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Orthodox lexicon is still tainted by the talking points of this indoctrination. In an excellent article *Historical Background of the*

Tensions between Moscow and Constantinople, Alexander G. Dragas offers several uneccelesiastical and uncanonical theories developed by this propaganda group:

- **Autocephaly** : The notion that each local Church is autocephalous when its leaders, who are ordained by Christ, then ordain their successor Bishops. No local Church (i.e. Constantinople) can interfere in the affairs of another local Church (i.e. Moscow). (John of Shanghai, Troitsky & Grabbe).
- **Third Rome** : The 19 th century concept that Moscow (Third Rome) and its Tsar became the God ordained protectors of Orthodoxy after Constantinople abdicated its position through its betrayal of Orthodoxy in the Synod of Florence and as a result was enslaved to the Turks.
- **Greek Papism** : The notion that Constantinople still seeks to dominate all the independent Orthodox Churches in order to create an Orthodox Papacy. The main attacks in this respect were directed against Patriarchs Meletios IV and Gregory VII of Constantinople who were berated for distorting canon 28 ECIV in order to take over former Russian lands (Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, etc.) and usurp the role of Third Rome (now identified with ROCOR) (Nikolaev & Troitsky).
- **Primacy of Authority** : The theory that canon 3 ECII only gave Constantinople " primacy of honor ", which Constantinople reinterpreted to mean " primacy of authority " over all the Orthodox Churches. In reality, they argued that Canon 28 ECIV, which repeated Canon 3 ECII on the " primacy of honor," purposefully restricted the jurisdiction of Constantinople to the Churches of Asia, Pontus and Thrace (Grabbe & Troitsky).

The self-aggrandizement of the “modern” Moscow Patriarchate discriminately disregards its historical illegitimacies in many circumstances. Of late the Moscow Patriarch’s many aggressive ecclesial shuffles with his pervasive presence in the Western Europe (France, Poland, Czech Republic), the New World (USA, Canada...), Asia (China, Korea...), and churches of the former Soviet Union (Hungary, Bulgaria, Georgia...). The Moscow Patriarchate has maintained its Czarist Russian and Soviet ideology of expansion and intrusion. Even today Patriarch Kyrill (Vladimir Gundyayev) promotes a ridiculous assertion "I am the only free Patriarch" ignoring rumored ties to the KGB, Putin and ultimately Russia’s political adventures in Syria, Georgia, Korea, Israel, Turkey and beyond.



Perhaps more glaring impositions of Moscow’s Patriarch aggressions are those encouraging disunity. Unwarranted interventions into local ecclesial affairs of other autocephalous churches, unduly pressuring regional churches once engulfed in the Soviet Union to subtle discord. Conceivably more injurious to the church is the apparent lack of philotimo or Christian ethic, honoring consented texts the inter-Orthodox dialogues and breaches in agreed coordinated events like her appalling actions regarding the Holy and Great Council in Crete 2016.

Moscow’s fight against the invitation to His All Holiness by the Ukrainian people to consider autocephaly is most unwarranted. For over two decades Moscow has not addressed the looming concerns of the Ukrainian Church. Opposing biblical teaching of love and patience, Moscow has in its place issued threats of schism, ultimatums, and soviet style mass media blitz through the Synod of Moscow and its department of external affairs utilizing Russian controlled media outlets.



We are eloquently reminded by Metropolitan Emmanuel of France:

“for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Kiev has never ceased to be outside its care. Even after granting Metropolitan Kiev's right of ordination to the Patriarch of Moscow, with the well-known Patriarchal Act of Ecumenical Patriarch Dionysios IV in 1686, the patriarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch is preserved by the Metropolitan of Kiev before the Patriarch of Moscow.”



Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew emphasizes:

“During the first millennium, our blessed forefathers confronted the temptation of heresy. The great temptation of the second millennium, which was also bequeathed to the millennium we have now entered, is the status of jurisdictions. The source of this problem is ethnophyletism, the propensity to expansionism and the disregard of the boundaries defined by the Patriarchal and Synodal Tomes. The Ecumenical Patriarchate bears the responsibility of setting matters in ecclesiastical and canonical order because it alone has the canonical privilege as well as the prayer and blessing of the Church and the Ecumenical Councils to carry out this supreme and exceptional duty as a nurturing Mother and birth-giver of Churches. If the Ecumenical Patriarchate denies its responsibility and removes itself from the inter-Orthodox scene, then the local Churches will proceed “as sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9.36), expending their energy in ecclesiastical initiatives that conflate the humility of faith and the arrogance of power.”