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Sergei Chapnin: The Demolition of the Church Legacy of Russian Emigration: How It Is Done.

What image expresses most fully the content and character of Patriarch Kirill's visit to London? My answer may seem paradoxical or even frivolous. Yet I think it would seem so only at first glance. The image, which is a fairly accurate reflection of the inner meaning of the visit of Patriarch Kirill, and moreover, of all his multifaceted activities, is a photograph that the Patriarch had brought with him and presented to the Royal Geographical Society. This photo is very symbolic, iconic. It depicts the Patriarch in an orange vest over the black robe with a few small penguins in the background. They are standing on the shore of a cold sea, all looking in different directions, and each one in his own way alone. On the one hand, and it seems to have been the intention of the Patriarch, the picture is evidence that he had traveled all over the world and honestly earned his membership in the Royal Geographical Society. On the other hand, such a gift is not devoid of self-admiration – it is hard to imagine a humble man, especially a clergyman who gives others a picture of himself. And the final important detail is that the Patriarch in this photo is not shown among the people, but on a deserted beach. It would seem that the anticipated image of the Primate of the largest Orthodox Church is the Patriarch among the people. To demonstrate travel it could be in a remote corner of Russia, but above all with his flock. However, for London the Patriarch chose a completely different image - a deserted beach devoid of people. The only one who has received an honor to be with him, a penguin, is a cute, but exotic animal. I think this photo

could not better reflect the identity of the Patriarch: he feels very alone in carrying his mission. He craves attention and gestures of appreciation, such as a membership in the Royal Geographical Society. All these gestures are perceived neither as a formality nor as a gift, but as a tribute. Yes, Patriarch Kirill has really earned them.

And his visit to London has turned into a sequence of such “tributary” events - the consecration of the cathedral (he is entitled to it as a Patriarch), joining the Royal Geographical Society (he is a great world traveler), meeting with the Queen (yes, the meeting of the two Church primates). It is impossible to argue that this is what it is.

Yet I cannot help thinking that the first place here is held by narcissism. The Patriarch is not surrounded by people; he is surrounded by ranks and positions. Instead of meeting with the parishioners and clergy, instead of a pastoral component, he is seeking approval or confirmation of his high status in the international hierarchy, etc., etc.

If we talk about the political subtext of the visit, it is quite clear - this was yet another attempt to demonstrate to the Kremlin that the Russian Orthodox Church can play, and is already playing, its role in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. This intent is clearly indicated in the central thesis of Patriarch Kirill’s [sermon](#) after the consecration of the Dormition Cathedral in London. He said bluntly that the Russian Orthodox Church had long played an important role in Russia's relations with other world powers:

"A church is a soul of the people, and at the deepest level the Church represents its people to the outside... On the spiritual and cultural level there is a particularly close collaboration of countries and peoples, which is not subject to political conjuncture of the present situation [my emphasis - SC]. This is very clearly shown in the 300-year history of the sojourn of the Russian Church in the United Kingdom ... For all of 300 years in London there was a

Russian Orthodox church, and the vicissitudes of international political strife [my emphasis - SC] did not prevent the Russian people from gathering together to pray to God, and do not prevent them from seeing Britons as their genuine brothers and sisters, united by faith in the Lord and Savior."

However, the visit did not clarify the extent to which the Orthodox and Anglicans are "united by faith." If after the meeting with Pope Francis in February of 2016 a joint declaration has been signed, and the Primate of the Church gave a joint press conference, nothing like this happened in the relations with the Church of England - no joint statement or a joint press conference. Does this mean that the relationship is actually quite cool, and the meetings are only a formality?

An important indicator was a meeting of Patriarch Kirill with Queen Elizabeth. On the one hand, yes, it was a great success of the church diplomats, and the culmination of the visit from a political point of view. But on the other hand, the meeting was very formal, and the main issue for the Kremlin, the situation in Syria, was not possible to discuss, even if only in terms of humanitarian cooperation, although the Russian Church **counted on it** very much.

The reasons for this have been clarified by Baroness Joyce Anelay, Deputy Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who in the framework of the visit to London met with Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev). The DECR (Department of External Church Relations of Moscow Patriarchate) official website **reported** that "Metropolitan Hilarion drew the attention of his interlocutor to the plight of Christians in the region, many of whom have been forced to leave their homelands in search of a safe life, as well as to the responsibility of the entire international community for maintaining Christian presence in the Middle East." However, the British media **complement** this message with a very curious detail. Baroness Anelay reacted rather harshly to Metropolitan Hilarion's words, "I made it clear that the reason for this problem is Assad ... he made no attempts to protect [the

Christian] minority." And then she added: "Assad and his allies, including Russia, did not provide and cannot ensure the protection of minorities."

Thus, the political mission was a failure, but the main result of the visit, in my opinion, should be seen in a completely different context, the context of the strategic objectives of the Patriarch toward the Russian Diaspora. He was able to personally ascertain that the final incorporation of Russian parishes in the UK into the new "Russian World" was complete, and that they would not present any more surprises. This transition was symbolically affirmed by the ritual of re-consecrating the Russian cathedral in London performed by the Patriarch on October 16, 2016.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the Diocese of Sourozh, which incorporated Russian Orthodox churches in the UK, was perhaps the most difficult and inconvenient foreign diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate. Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (1914-2003), head of the Diocese from its inception until his death, was one of the most famous Orthodox archpastors and homilists of the twentieth century.

While formally staying under Moscow's jurisdiction, Metropolitan Anthony operated freely and independently from the policy of the Patriarchate. As was the case with many representatives of the "first wave" of Russian emigration, he was dedicated to the church and cultural traditions of pre-revolutionary Russia, and also to European culture. The life of the diocese was based on the resolutions of the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-1918, which was considered by many the most outstanding Council in the history of Russian Orthodoxy. In the Soviet Union, its resolutions were never incorporated, and by mid-century conveniently forgotten. Metropolitan Anthony abandoned rigid hierarchical structures and actively encouraged his parishioners to participate in church management.

He did not conceal his disagreement with the policies of the Moscow Patriarchate, which was essentially a puppet of the Soviet regime. In 1974 he openly condemned the expulsion of Alexander Solzhenitsyn from the USSR while the Russian hierarchs fully supported it.

The Moscow Patriarchy was not happy with Met. Anthony, but there was nothing they could do to suppress his independence: he was not a Soviet citizen, he lived outside of the USSR, he was very famous in the Christian world, and highly respected by the Catholics and Anglicans. Firing him would have instantly resulted in worldwide outcry.

From the point of view of contemporary promoters of the "Russian World," he was an extremely unsuitable bishop because for him love for Russia was not the same as state sponsored patriotism. He did not strive to preserve 'Russianness' and the Russian language at any cost. In the 1980s, a large part of his parishioners were second and third generation Russian immigrants and English speakers. Therefore, he preached not only in Russian, but in English and French as well.

The Diocese of Sourozh church services and the life of its communities were humble, simple, and without any Byzantine pomp. Metropolitan Anthony taught that Christian life should not concentrate on rituals, but on Christ Himself, and, a great rarity in our times, he personally demonstrated it by his life. Church hierarchs visiting from Moscow would quietly express their resentment and say that the way Met. Anthony serves and conducts the life of the community is wrong. For decades the Moscow Patriarchate was thinking about how to "correct" this anomaly.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the demographics of the congregation changed. A considerable part became composed of migrant workers from Russia and other former Soviet Republics. The last years of Metropolitan Anthony's life were clouded by the conflict between the old and new members of the Diocese of

Souroz. The new Russians were quite pushy in their demands for more rights and more Slavonic language in the church services and parish activities. English-speaking parishioners did not quite understand these demands, were apprehensive towards the new Russians and did not know how to build a relationship with them.

The sharp escalation of this conflict occurred in early 2002, after young Bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev) arrived in London. Hilarion was already familiar with the Diocese because he had studied at Oxford and served in the Diocese's parishes since the mid-1990s. Metropolitan Anthony hoped that Hilarion would cater to the spiritual needs of the Russian-speaking parishioners.

It appears, however, that in Moscow Bishop Hilarion was instructed to take measures in order to increase Moscow's control over the diocese. The conflict soon moved into the open, and Metropolitan Anthony issued a public letter in which he urged the Bishop Hilarion "to discover for himself the essence of the Diocese of Souroz and decide whether or not he is ready to maintain its spirit and work in accordance with the ideas we have been developing for 53 years. If he is not sure, and if we are not sure, we shall amicably part".

Bishop Hilarion did not accept this criticism, and was soon promoted by Moscow to a high diplomatic post in Brussels. After his immediate superior Kirill (Gundyaev) was elected Patriarch, Hilarion took his seat and became chairman of the Department for External Church Relations. During Kirill's recent visit to London, Hilarion, already a Metropolitan, accompanied him.

In 2003, after a long and serious illness, Metropolitan Anthony departed from this world. The conflict had not been resolved, and most of the older parishioners and priests left the Moscow Patriarchate for the Russian Exarchate under the Patriarch of Constantinople.

We note that ten years ago, when the conflict was still not fully resolved, Metropolitan Kirill (Gundyaev) visited London for the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the Cathedral. The idea of “re-consecrating” the Cathedral was not on the agenda, so the distinguished guest just celebrated a liturgy.

At that time, the Diocese was temporarily managed by Archbishop Innokenty (Vasilyev) of Korsun. In 2007 it came under the leadership of Archbishop Elisey (Ganaba). Abp. Elisey had never stated that he knew Metropolitan Anthony personally. His focus was almost exclusively on the Orthodox communities for the new Russians all over the UK. The style of worship gradually became similar to Moscow’s. Parish structures became more rigid with “vertical lines of power”. The Russian Orthodox churches in the UK overflowed with Ukrainians, Russian, Moldavians and other new immigrants. What does one call this? Replacement? Substitution? Generational change? In any case, the new wave of parishioners is happy. They got exactly what they were accustomed to receiving in their former motherland. They have no concept of the intense spiritual life of the diocese before their arrival. They are pleased and excited about expensive high-quality repairs of the Cathedral and the visit of the Patriarch. They are happy that he appreciates the work of their Bishop and their sponsors.

But we cannot just end here. Patriarch Kirill's visit to England has great symbolic and strategic importance.

According to the Orthodox canon, the altar of the Eucharist should be consecrated by a special rite. In 1976, the altar of the Cathedral was consecrated by Metropolitan Anthony. Why this new consecration? It was due to the replacement of the altar during the renovation for the new stone one. So, on October 16th Patriarch Kirill consecrated it again. For Archbishop Elisey this presented a win-win pretext for inviting the Patriarch.

Yet many people also saw the symbolic meaning of the Patriarch’s visit. The repair and re-consecration of the Cathedral have

simultaneously closed the most important chapter of the history of the cathedral in Ennismore Gardens, a history tied to Metropolitan Anthony and more broadly to the history of the Russian Orthodoxy in exile. The image of Metropolitan Anthony is now cast in a bronze memorial plaque, an honorable and safe place from the point of view of church authorities. The life of the Diocese of Sourozh is now organized the very same way as the church in Russia. Dioceses and parishes are just cells of Putin's "Russian world." Organized uniformly, they are conveniently arranged for centralized management from Moscow. The Cathedral in London is now just one of these cells. The new Bishop of Sourozh invited the Patriarch to personally make sure this is so. No more rebels, no more dissent.

The 're-consecration' of the Cathedral in London was a sign of the final successful dismantling of the hundred-year heritage of the Russian emigration in the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church. This heritage turned out to be quite fragile, its dismantling was not hard, albeit it took a long time.

What's next? This is not quite the right way to pose the question. The fact is that Patriarch Kirill has been trying to "fix" the situation of church divisions in the Russian emigration for quite some time. By the early 1990s, when then Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad Kirill was appointed chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, in addition to the de facto independence of the Sourozh diocese there still remained three notable centers of Russian Orthodoxy abroad: the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) and the Russian Exarchate (ER CP) in the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Dismantling the emigrant heritage or, as they preferred to say then, "overcoming the divisions" was the greatest concern of Metropolitan Kirill in the beginning of the 1990s. First in line was the OCA, as at the time, or so it seemed to Metropolitan Kirill, it enjoyed the closest and most trusting relationship with the Moscow Patriarchate. He acted fairly straightforwardly - in the offline

gathering of one of the ecumenical meetings he proposed to the representatives of the OCA to voluntarily relinquish its autocephalous status and submit to the Moscow Patriarchate. Then, a quarter of a century ago, he received a polite but firm refusal, but did not give up his attempts. Ten years later, one of the closest aides of Metropolitan Kirill said that the autocephaly of the OCA should be recognized as a mistake. Subsequently, he was forced to apologize for saying this, but the trend is clear: Metropolitan Kirill is not going to give up his intentions and is willing to wait as long as it takes.

The new opportunity presented itself to Metropolitan Kirill soon after the election of the new Primate of the OCA, Metropolitan Jonah (Paffhausen). It is hard to say what had been promised to Metropolitan Jonah by the Moscow Patriarchate, but he tried to take steps towards giving up the autocephaly. The Synod of the OCA did not support him, but Metropolitan Jonah continued to act in this direction. Soon it became one of the most important reasons for his removal from the office of the Primate of the Church. Today, the OCA's position remains unchanged: there are no reasons for the voluntary liquidation of autocephaly. In short, in this area the Patriarch suffered a complete defeat.

Metropolitan Kirill's efforts in Europe have also mostly failed. The Russian Exarchate, whose congregations are located mainly in France, has not been seduced by proposals for self-disbanding, despite the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarchate was at some point not opposed to such a development. ER-CP belongs to a canonical jurisdiction and, seemingly, force cannot be applied to it, and success can only be achieved via a process of negotiation. However, all negotiations and appeals to reunite with the Moscow Patriarchate were met, to say the least, with pretty cold responses. The only achievement of the Moscow Patriarchate was the creation of the OLTR (Mouvement pour une Orthodoxie Locale de Tradition Russe), the movement of some romantically inclined Russian emigrants of several waves, but things developed no further than

conversations and declarations, as is the custom of the Russian emigration.

As a result, other, harsher forms of "reunification" have been chosen, including lawsuits against the Exarchate and reclaiming of church buildings for Moscow. The most famous case was the court decision in 2010 to transfer the St. Nicholas Cathedral in Nice to the ownership of the Russian Federation with the subsequent transfer to the Moscow Patriarchate.

But beyond that, a lucky accident has helped the Moscow Patriarchate in France. A plot of land had been put up for sale in the center of Paris on the Quai Branly, which ended up being purchased by the Office of Affairs of the President of the Russian Federation for the construction of the Russian cultural center and the Orthodox church. In 2016, construction of the complex was completed. Its opening had been timed to the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to France, and Patriarch Kirill on his way from London was also supposed to stop over in Paris and open the cultural center together with the President. However, Putin's visit was cancelled, and the Patriarch also decided not to come to Paris. This very clearly illustrates the situation - the church has no independent value. The Patriarch can send one of his young bishops to the opening, and not show up himself, because without the President of Russia there can be no demonstration of the triumph of "symphony" of state and church authorities. However, all these notions - the "symphony", and the newly-discovered "spiritual superiority" over the Russian Exarchate - are quite transparent.

What remains is the Church Abroad, but it will be easier to dismantle. The process of its destruction has already been put into action. In 2003, Vladimir Putin met with the bishops of the Church Abroad, and [made it clear](#) to them that he considered their reunion with the Moscow Patriarchate not only as an internal church matter, but also as a political task of concern to the state. In 2007, ROCOR became part of the Moscow Patriarchate, and the dismantling of the weakening traditions of the Russian emigration became a matter of

the next 10-15 years. After the older generation of bishops and priests leaves, and the young starts to emulate the bishops and priests of the Moscow Patriarchate, ROCOR will be almost impossible to distinguish from the MP.

And then the embedding of those foreign communities that the MP has managed to reach into the ideological monolith of "Russian world" will be complete.