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„RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA (ROCOR).
Beginings, History, Union with the Mother Church and
Possible Perspectives of the future”

ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, ROCOR, Bishops Synod, Archbishop Sobor, metropolitan ANTONIE (HRAPOVICKIJ), metropolitan ANASTASIE (GRIBANOVSKIJ), Moscow Patriarchate, Paris Exarchate, North America *Metropolia*, ROCOR (A), BOSV, metropolitan EVLOGHIE (GEORGIEVSKIJ), metropolitan PLATON (ROŽDESTVENSKIJ), URSS, Canonical Comunion, Russia.

This paper titled „The Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia (ROCOR).¹ Beginning, history, union with the Mother Church and possible prospects for the future” is intended to be a thorough and detailed research to bring to light the historical truths about this Church that has undergone many difficulties and persecutions in the twentieth century.

Founded after the political power in Russia was taken over by the Communists, the ROCOR authored itself as a Russian Orthodox Church inheriting and continuing the Russian Orthodox tradition and as a Church of Resistance against the Atheist Russian Communist regime, as witnessed by St. John MAXIMOVIC. As the name suggests, it was active especially outside the borders of the Soviet Union (USSR) and it was profiled as part of the Orthodox Diaspora developed in the twentieth century, especially in the West of Europe, the Far East, North America and in Australia. ROCOR has significantly contributed to the knowledge of Orthodoxy in the West, as well as the development of orthodox theological research in the twentieth century.

The specialized historiography in Romania is quite inaccurate as far as the history of ROCOR is concerned. This is due, on the one hand, to the linguistic difficulties faced by the researcher in addressing such a theme, and on the other hand to the inaccessibility of documentary sources and studies that bring to light the historical truth about this Church.

In spite of all the efforts made over the last three years to try a historical presentation of the ROCOR, I am aware that this work does not claim to be complete and is not lacking in some inherent leaks in the drafting and presentation of a topic of such magnitude.

The history of ROCOR has not yet been the subject of a synthesis work in Romania. There is no study in the literature to address the founding, evolution and historical and judicial

¹ The acronym comes from English „Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia”.

issues of the ROCOR, the relationship between it and the Moscow Patriarchate and the rest of the Russian Orthodox Diaspora.

From a chronological point of view, the period we occupy includes a century. We began with the Russian Revolution and the Holy Archbishop Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow (1917-1918) in which the Patriarchate was restored and I stopped today.

The theme of this doctoral thesis combines historical research with the analysis of recent ecclesial and ecclesiological-political events. It combines, at the same time, the living, working and dynamic history, but also the tumultuous and somewhat controversial ROCOR with the need to analyze the current situation of Orthodoxy, especially in the Diaspora.

The purpose for which we chose in this research theme was to fill a gap in specialized historiography and to make known the historical reality of this great Church of the Russian Orthodox Diaspora.

It also sought to systematise and clarify the different periods of ROCOR evolution. Here we can mention the period of establishment of the ROCOR from the early 1920s, the difficult period of the Second World War, the crucial moment of reunification with the Patriarchate of Moscow on 4/17 May 2007, and the updating of the events spent within it and in relation to the other Churches.

The purpose of such in-depth research is also to analyze the fundamental documents relating to the establishment, history and development of the ROCOR. So I want to give the general public and the academic environment a monography about ROCOR's evolution over the decades.

The research methods underlying this paper are: historical, structural and comparative-analytical.

I tried to present the ROCOR history based on monographies and archive documents.

Because the period of the treaty is extremely extensive, this work does not primarily aim at exhaustively treating all the stages of organization of the Russian Orthodox Diaspora. That is why I considered it appropriate to present this theme as a historical monography of the ROCOR, covering the most important stages of the emergence, history and development of this russian diaspora Church. I tried a neutral approach, pointing out and elucidating the most important issues, even if confused in the history of this Church.

The sources on this subject are mainly from sources, monographs and studies written in languages such as Russian, English, German, and French, Serbian, Ukrainian, Italian, and so on. The great advantage for me was the knowledge of these foreign languages, especially of Russian, which greatly facilitated my study and facilitated my access to the original sources.

I used mainly the archives in Moscow and St. Petersburg where I had the privilege of studying different papers and resolutions that were unacceptable to the public. Access to these archives, even if for academic purposes, was not an easy one. Often, approvals and recommendations from the Department of Foreign Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, were needed.

I also studied in several archives in Germany (Tübingen, Munich), but especially in the archives and libraries in Berlin in the past two years.

I have used a combination of historical sources and recent documents in a confrontation with the views of established authors and careful observation of the present situation.

The paper is structured on three major parts, each of which has several chapters with subchapters. Before the first part, the paper also contains an introductory chapter on the current state of research. Here are the documents of the world's archives classified by country in order of their size and importance. There are also the specialized papers and the most important monographs related to the presented topic.

The first part contains nine chapters.

Chapters 1 and 2 of the first part, with an introductory role, deal with the beginning and early years of formation, existence, and organization, first of all by the Supreme Ecclesiastical Authority of Southern Russia (AES) and then by ROCOR acquis. Here, especially the first meetings, which were later developed in the Archbishops Synods, contributed to the development and establishment of the ROCOR principles. Also here are the works of the first General Sobor of the entire Russian Orthodox Diaspora in 1921, held in Sremski-Karlovcy, where the metropolitans EVLOGHIE (GEORGIEVSKIJ) and PLATON (ROŽDESTVENSKIJ) were present too.

Chapters 3-6 deal with the church problems faced by the Russian Orthodox diaspora at that time. On the one hand, there was the acute persecution of the Orthodox Church in Russia, and on the other, the risk of divisions inside the diaspora was imminent. Here I deal with the jurisdictional conflicts of the Synod of Karlovcy with the *Metropolia* of North America and

with the Paris center headed by Metropolitan Evlogy (GEORGIEVSKIJ). Starting in the mid-1920s, both will become centers of rivalry of the ROCOR's Archbishops Synod.

The last three chapters of the first part deal with the controversy surrounding Metropolitan Serghie's (STRAGORODSKIJ) "1927 Declaration". According to historians, this year is the time when the rupture of the eucharistic communion between the Russian Orthodox diaspora and the Moscow Patriarchate took place. In parallel, the internal conflict inside the Diaspora was maintained, failing to overcome the judicial crisis.

1935 is one of great importance for ROCOR. In chapter Eight, the conflicts over the jurisdiction issue and the attempt to overcome misunderstandings due to the authority of the Patriarch of Serbia, VARNAVA (ROSIČ), are mentioned. This was attempted on the occasion of the organization of the Archdiocesan Council in Karlovy in 1935.

In the ninth chapter of the first part I wrote about the death of the first leader of the ROCOR, the metropolitan ANTONIE (HRAPOVICKIJ) and the election of the new Primat, in the person of the metropolitan ANASTASIE (GRIBANOVSKIJ). This would mean continuing the work of his predecessor in order to preserve communion with the rest of the Orthodox world and strengthen the ROCOR status at world level.

The second part of the paper contains chapters 10, 11 and 12 dealing with the period between 1939 and 1964. The period of the Second World War includes the common history of various hierarchs both within the jurisdiction of ROCOR and under the *Metropolia*, The exarchate of Paris and the exarchate of Moscow Patriarchate in the West. During this period, ROCOR experienced various losses, especially after 1944, when many hierarchs, clergy and laymen came under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. Chapter 12 mentions the move of the ROCOR administrative center in Europe to the US and the judicial development that followed in the years to come. Before the end of this period, ROCOR chose the third Primat in the person of Metropolitan FILARET (VOZNESENSKIJ). With the death of Metropolitan ANASTASY (GRIBANOVSKIJ) in 1965, and with the death of archbishop IOAN (MAXIMOVIČ) of Shanghai and San Francisco in 1966, a great chapter in history was concluded for ROCOR. These two great hierarchs symbolized the last pillars of the first wave of emigrants, thanks to which the ROCOR was still recognized by the Orthodox world.

The third part starts with chapter 13 and covers the period between 1965-2007. It is a time when the new leader of the ROCOR imposes a new orientation for the Archbishops Synod and draws an increasingly radical stance towards the Patriarchate of Moscow. If its

predecessors, the metropolitans ANTONIE and ANASTASIE tried to preserve the canonical status and recognition of the ROCOR by other Orthodox Churches, Metropolitan FILARET (VOZNESENSKIJ) would distance itself from the rest of the Orthodox world and move closer to the schismatic movements of old calendaristic style, first from Greece, then from Bulgaria and Romania (BOSV).²

Under the leadership of the new Primat, several Russian saints and confessors were canonized who gave their lives for Christ during the persecution of the atheist communist regime in Russia. Another sign of distancing and at the same time a clear demonstration of an extreme position was the decision of the 1981 Sobor, by which ROCOR anathematized the ecumenical movement and broke the connection with all those who were in touch with it. The same decision no longer recognized the Patriarchate of Moscow as canonical.

The 1980s, known as the years of global political and social change, have also made major changes in the ROCOR's "missionary policy." Non-canonically and unilaterally, the ROCOR leadership decided to set up new dioceses in the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate. This deepened the rupture between the two Churches.

It is only from 2001 that ROCOR has experienced a new period, with the choice of a new Primat. This was Metropolitan LAVRU (ŠKURLA), known to be more conciliatory and willing to fulfill the union of the ROCOR, which has been declared from the very beginning inseparable from the Church suffering from Russia.

After the fall of the communist regime in the USSR and the disintegration of this atheist state, the Russian Orthodox Church (BORu-MP) began to rebuild and revitalize. While the Communist regime has not officially existed, the ROCOR and the Russian Orthodox Church have begun a process of negotiations for reunification. This process was undoubtedly supported by President V. V. PUTIN from the beginning. In 2004, the first official meeting was held in the negotiation process between the two sides. In subchapter 13.6. the most important moments in the whole process of restoring canonical communion are presented, and ultimately the very moment of the union and signing of the „Act of Canonical Communion” of May 17, 2007 held in the "Christ Savior" Cathedral in Moscow. Although the Russian Orthodox Church succeeded in restoring Canonical Communion to ROCOR, the process of integrating the latter into a much deeper level would be longer. Despite union, there was a small part, ROCOR (A), who preferred

² The acronym comes from „Biserica Ortodoxă de stil vechi” de la Slătioara (România).

to exist further as an independent ecclesiastical entity. This was schismatic and it was unfortunately afterwards the source of the formation of other para-schismatic structures. Ds

The last chapter (fourteenth) presents the administrative-organizational side of the ROCOR. Here the emphasis was placed on the eparchial organization and the presentation of the ROCOR hierarchy, both of the defunct ones and those of today, as well as of those who passed to other jurisdictions.

Much of this last chapter was dedicated to the organization of church life and theological education. Another aspect dealt with here is related to the missionary activity of the ROCOR in the world. Being a dynamic church, the ROCOR set up new parishes on both the North American continent and Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. The mission of the ROCOR was a very vivid and fruitful one. For ROCOR, the mission remains one of the perspectives in the future.

Last but not least, chapter 14 presents the position of ROCOR over the calendar issue of 1924. Here I deal with the ROCOR (A) report on the Romanian stylistic movement (BOSV), as well as the relation of this remnant ROCOR to the entire old calendar movement .

Finally, the paper contains some very important annexes that are closely related to the subject being treated.

The conclusion is that we would like to structure it in three parts, according to the three parts of the paper.

The first years, from the establishment of the AES and until after the 1921 Sobor in Karlovy, was a very difficult one. Not a few times the Russian Orthodox hierarchs of the diaspora were placed in a position to deal with the internal church problems that arose at that time, despite the fact that there was no way of communicating with the church's supreme church in Moscow.

Thus, after the establishment of the AES in southern Russia and continuing with the AES of the Russian Orthodox diaspora, this church administrative body assumed the responsibility of an autonomous church, taking very important decisions such as the creation of new dioceses, the ordination and transfer of bishops, restoring relations with the Sister Churches and fighting the Bolshevik regime.

Despite the fact that His Beatitude Patriarch TIHON issued the Ukase No. 362 of 7/20 November 1920, which provided a temporary autonomous status to all the dioceses in restraint,

yet this document was known to the Russian Diaspora much later. Meanwhile, the Russian hierarchs learned about the indirect acknowledgment of the AES by the patriarch either through the Ukase No. 424 of April 8, 1921 or the contents of the various letters. However, throughout this period, both during his temporary stay in Constantinople and during the years of his stay in Karlovcy, Yugoslavia, ROCOR retained his church identity, always being an integral part of the Russian Orthodox Church in Russia³ and subordinated to Patriarch TIHON.

The meeting of the First Sobor of all the Russian Diaspora was an important moment in the history of this Church. Particular emphasis was placed on church issues and, inevitably, later on on political issues. Two documents were issued: one addressed to all immigrant communities around the world and the letter addressed to the Geneva Conference. The latter symbolized the living voice of the Russian Orthodox Church as a whole, which the Bolsheviks were trying to destroy.

Then followed the arrest of Patriarch TIHON (BELLAVIN) and the timing change following the Pan-Orthodox Conference of 1924, to which ROCOR had to expose its position. Another turning point for ROCOR was the year 1926, when a double schism in the interior of the Russian Diaspora took place following the Archbishop's Sobor of the same year. This was due to both the misunderstandings of metropolitans PLATON (ROŽDESTVENSKIJ) and EVLOGHIE (GEORGIEVSKIJ) vis-à-vis the ROCOR Archbishop Synod, and to the influential circles behind these hierarchs, who were very much concerned with the autonomy of their dioceses. An addition to this misunderstanding was the declaration of the Metropolitan SERGHIE (STRAGORODSKIJ) of July 29, 1927, by which the Church and the clergy underwent full loyalty to the Bolshevik power. This statement provoked many criticisms in the Russian diaspora, but the greatest objections were from the ROCOR Synod. According to several historians, the year 1927 is considered the moment when the Eucharistic communion between the ROCOR and the Patriarchate of Moscow broke out.

The problem of unification for the two jurisdictions in North America and the union of the exarchate of Western Europe with the jurisdiction of the ROCOR was made very seriously in 1935. This was possible by organizing an Bishops Council at the initiative of the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, VARNAVA (ROSIČ) . This whole process first started with the decisions of the Archbishop Sobor of 1935 and the establishment of the document "The

³ *Законодательство Русской Православной Церкви Заграницей (1921-2007)*, Составитель Д. П. АНАШКИН, М.: Изд. ПСТГУ, [*Zakonodatel'stvo Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Cerkvi Zagranicej (1921-2007)*], Sostavitel' D. P. ANAŠKIN, Izd. PSTGU, Moskva], 2014, pp. 471, 489.

Temporary Position of the ROCOR", which would be the act of the unity of the entire ROCOR. At the same time, the Archbishops Synod agreed to the four half-athonomous metropolitan areas: 1. "Sremski-Karlovy", 2. "Western Europe", 3. "America" and 4. "The Far East".

The 1935 Unionist Council marked the climax of bringing all Russian jurisdictions closer to dialogue. Although throughout this long process the unity of the jurisdictions has collapsed, each jurisdiction, but especially ROCOR, understood that the application of prohibitions or other church-related punishments brought people closer, especially serving together in the Divine Liturgy and equality between hierarchs .

Later, time would prove that this union was not a very lasting one, which began to crack from the letter of Metropolitan TEOFIL (PAŠKOVSKIJ) in 1937. The inevitable schism between the two jurisdictions finally came to an end in 1946, when the relations between hierarchs have reached high odds. Just as in the case of the Western Exarchate along with Metropolitan EVLOGHIE, ROCOR has decided that although the rupture of the jurisdictions has occurred, however, the eucharistic communion between the hierarchs remains. As proof, in 1960 in San Francisco, Bishop IOAN (MAXIMOVICI), canonized in 1994 by ROCOR, served the Holy Liturgy with Archbishop IOAN (ŠAHOVSKIJ) and so they venerated God together.

In 1938 the second Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Diaspora was organized. Two letters were issued here: one addressed to the suffering people in Russia, and one addressed to the entire Russian Orthodox diaspora, emphasizing her mission to preserve the Russian spiritual and national values and to pass them on to future generations. The Sobor also drew attention to the various misdeeds of faith that circulated in the diaspora. Another very important aspect of the Sobor was that it probably meant the greatest church event of those times, thus representing the voice of the entire Russian Orthodox Church and appealing to the whole world to help stop the bloody persecution of the ROCOR in part of the atheist communist regime. It was the Sobor who once again condemned socialism and emphasized the incompatibility of communist and materialist ideology with Christianity.

The outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939 would have meant a new page of history for both political life and the fate of the Church in general.

Part two covers the period from 1945 to 1965. This, like the others, was not an easy one.

First of all, the importance of the personality of the Metropolitan ANASTASY and of the Bishops Synod in general must be mentioned here. This hierarch managed to overcome the

church crisis, gradually consolidating this church structure. Thus, the contact between the dioceses and the Bishops Synod was restored, and ROCOR remained that free voice who supported the Orthodox Church in Russia and fought for its freedom.

During this period, however, they tried to unite with the Patriarchate of Moscow and other church structures from the Russian Orthodox diaspora. The desire to return to the mother's Church was revealed by the *Metropolia* of North America led by Metropolitan TEOFIL (PAŠKOVSKIJ) and the Exarchate of Western Europe of Metropolitan Evlogy (GEORGIEVSKIJ).

Since 1950, the Bishops Synod, along with Metropolitan ANASTASY (GRIBANOVSKIJ), moves to America, setting up an administrative center in New York. This, as in 1945, required the ROCOR to define its canonicity and the recognition of this jurisdiction by the other Sister Orthodox Churches.

In the circumstances of the 21st century Church knew how to meet the needs of that time, but especially the needs and situations of the Russian emigrants. ROCOR has once again demonstrated that not respecting acresiveness of principles is the basic mission of the Church, but pastoral care of parishioners, and the salvation of their souls. She has managed to cope with all the challenges of this period, maintaining her vertigo of Soviet propaganda. The same position will keep it until 1965, when the new Primat ROCOR will change.

Between 1950 and 1964, the ROCOR's church leadership decides to definitively separate the Moscow Patriarchate and speeds up the reception of clergy in this jurisdiction by applying various methods of repentance. This was because the KGB secret services made considerable efforts to have their own "servants", and some of them were actually sent to the West to infiltrate in the diaspora.

ROCOR will gradually separate itself from the Orthodox world, and especially from the ecumenical movement, which after 1960 comprised the majority of the local Orthodox Churches. On the other hand, it will approach rapidly with different old ecclesiastical calendar structures in south-western Europe. The support of these "churches" and the ever more open communion with them will determine the future course of the ROCOR since 1965.

The period covered in Part Three is both tumultuous and fruitful for the ROCOR. The year 1965 begins for ROCOR by electing the new Primat, Metropolitan FILARET (VOZNESENSKIJ). The period after the retirement of Metropolitan ANASTASY

(GRIBANOVSKIJ) and up to 2000 can be considered as a time when the ROCOR departed from the rest of the Orthodox world and came close to the old calendaristic schismatic movement.

Under the leadership of the new Primary ROCOR, Metropolitan FILARET, was held the third General Sobor of the Orthodox Diaspora in 1974, which was the first such Sobor organized in North America. There followed a series of canonizations such as St. John of Kronstadt in 1974, St. XENIA of Saint Petersburg in 1978, and 1981 the New Russian Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Orthodox Church of XX century.

The beginning of the 1990s constituted a great change for ROCOR due to hierarchs with a conciliatory vision. This was due to Archbishop MARK (ARNDT) from Berlin and Germany and the opening of the hierarch for dialogue with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. Such an informal dialogue began in 1993 and lasted until 1997. It should be remembered that at the beginning of the 2000s, the new President of the Russian Federation, V. V. PUTIN, attended a meeting of the hierarchs in both jurisdictions. Without being involved in the political spectrum of the president, we just want to mention that due to his initiative and his involvement, it was possible to establish a solid foundation for a future formal dialogue between the two sides of Russian Orthodoxy.

An essential moment for the restoration of the canonical communion was the Jubilee Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2000 held in Moscow. Here it was decided: 1. The Canonization of the New Russian Orthodox Martyrs and Russian Confessors during the Communist regime; 2. the document "The foundation of the social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church" was approved; 3. The document "The Fundamental Principles of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Relationship with the Heterodox World" was approved.

After one year in 2001, ROCOR would change her Primate. The new leader is elected Metropolitan LAVRU (ŠKURLA), known for his gentleness and purpose to achieve union with the Mother Church and restore the Eucharistic communion with her. The same path was greatly desired by his predecessors metropolitans ANTONIE (HRAPOVICKIJ) and ANASTASIE (GRIBANOVSKIJ), as well as by St. John (MAXIMOVIČ), Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco.

In 2004, in Moscow met the First ROCOR primate, metropolitan LAVRU (ŠKURLA) and Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, ALEXI II (RIDIGER). Several meetings were held, focusing in particular on the process of approaching and establishing an official dialogue

to negotiate for the restoration of canonical communion. There were altogether eight joint meetings between the Moscow Patriarchate Commission for dialogue with ROCOR and the ROCOR Commission for dialogue with the Moscow Patriarchate. Issues such as: The 1927 Statement of Metropolitan. SERGHIE, the canonization of the New Martyrs, the relationship of BORu-MP to the heterodox, the ROCOR eparchies on the canonical territory of the Russian Federation, the name of the Patriarch at the Divine Liturgy, the question of the clergy passed from one jurisdiction to another, etc.

According to the testimonies of those who participated directly or indirectly in that dialogue, all were convinced of the particularly keen desire of believers on both sides to restore canonical communion.

The full restoration of the Eucharistic communion between the two sides of Russian Orthodoxy on May 17, 2007 began with the signing of the "Act of Canonical Communion" by the All-Russian Patriarch ALEXEI II (RIDIGER) of Moscow and All Russia and by the President of the Bishops Synod ROCOR, Metropolitan LAVRU (ŠKURLA). Then they continued by committing for the first time the Divine Liturgy at the Christ Savior Cathedral in Moscow.

The act signed on that day was based on the principle "one chalice at two administrative centers" proposed by the very Patriarch ALEXE II (RIDIGER). This was the most important thing, namely the restoration of the Eucharistic communion between the Diaspora Church and the Church in the Homeland. At the same time ROCOR retained its status of autonomy, the church structure, remained independent administrative and financial from Moscow, had its First Hierarch who was elected by his own Bishops Sobor. On the other hand, the name of the Patriarch of Moscow and of all Russia was to be mentioned at the Divine Liturgy in all the ROCOR churches.

According to the words of His Beatitude Patriarch ALEXEI II (RIDIGER), with the signing of the "Canonical Communion Act" of 17 May 2007, a point was made in the history of the Russian civil war. This event ended an extremely painful and tragic rupture in the life of the diaspora Church, which lasted for several decades.

Of course, as a result of a separation of more than 80 years between the two branches of the Russian Orthodox Church, it will take time, perhaps even a certain number of years, until there will be a union and interpenetration in the deep sense of the word.

However, it must be stressed that both branches of Russian Orthodoxy have shown much mutual understanding and interest in resolving misunderstandings, but the fact that the unification has been successful, and has succeeded in restoring Eucharistic communion, is first of all proof that God's Grace is present and active in His Church.