

## IMYASLAVTSY UNDER SIEGE

### **Retaliation Against St. Andrew's**

Immediately on the twelfth Jerome mailed to the Russian embassy in Constantinople a written report of the "rebellion". A copy of it he sent to the embassy in Thessalonica along with one of his most zealous supporters, the monk Clement, who returned ten days later with Vice-consul Shcherbina. The latter, having heard and believed only one side of the story, went to St. Andrew's not to investigate but to demand that the brotherhood take back Jerome as abbot as well as all of the expelled monks. They adamantly refused. They would concede to giving Jerome a kind of severance pay of five thousand rubles, would give one hundred rubles to each of the others, and would consider accepting back some of them in a year's time if they would repent -- but there could be no question of accepting Jerome back as abbot.

Threatened "punishments" were then carried out. The Russian foreign ministry instituted a "blockade" of St. Andrew's intended to force it to capitulate, a move generally attributed to the decision and authority of Russian Ambassador to Constantinople Girs and effected locally through Shcherbina. All mail going to or coming from St. Andrew's was cut off. Money being sent to the skete, even to individual members of it, was redirected to Jerome instead. The Greek port authorities were ordered not to allow St. Andrew's provisions already received and in storage to be delivered to the skete or even to be given to any of its members who would come to pick them up. When two monks were later sent to Constantinople to purchase food for St. Andrew's, they were arrested and their twenty thousand rubles confiscated. At first the consequences for the skete were not great, but in the ensuing months its food and financial resources began to run out, and it found itself in a serious predicament. It was not until May, more than three months later, that Fr.

Antony's intervention with the Russian Ministry of External Affairs in St. Petersburg resulted in Girs' orders being countermanded.

As has been seen, Jerome's complaints had also been received sympathetically by Vatopedi. Its representatives who had arrived at St. Andrew's on the ninth had pretended to accept as in good order the deposition and replacement of Jerome but actually were on his side, arguing in his behalf after returning and bringing back with them his written complaint. Not only that, but while still at St. Andrew's they had sent a letter to the Protat (the council at Karyes) informing it that "those around the heresiarch Ieroskhimonakh Antony forced the fathers of the skete to swear to a new dogma concerning the divinity of Jesus ..." (Papoulidis, ΟΙ ΡΩΣΟΙ 79) The Vatopedi authorities' double-dealing on the twelfth has already been recounted, and they acted similarly on the fourteenth. On the same day when they gave the representatives from St. Andrew's a letter promising to come in a few days to install David as abbot, they sent another to the Protat, in which they listed the names of twenty-six "rebel monks" and requested that police be sent to arrest them and send them off to Thessalonica for judgment. When on the eighteenth an embassy from St. Andrew's was sent to Vatopedi to conduct its officials back to their skete for the installation of Fr. David, they were informed that due to a request from the Russian embassy in Thessalonica Vatopedi would delay it for several days. The officials never came and David's election as abbot was never officially approved.

Having received these letters from Vatopedi as well as letters and personal pleas from Jerome after the events of the twelfth, the *Iera Koinotes* itself joined the fray. It had sent police to St. Andrew's immediately on the day of the expulsions, but by the time they arrived the fighting was over, the gate was locked, and they were not admitted to the skete. In the succeeding days a four-member delegation composed of monks from four different monasteries was sent there twice to investigate but each time was locked out. A permanent police guard was set on the besieged skete. Meanwhile the Protat was still hearing from Jerome, from Vatopedi, and from other expelled monks charges of heresy against Fr. David, Fr. Antony and their followers. It sent a letter to St. Andrew's asking that the skete's monks come to Karyes for an investigation into these charges (since the Protat's investigators had not been permitted to enter the skete). It received in response a letter from St. Andrew's requesting that the *I.K.* identify the accuser and the charges in writing, to which the skete would in turn respond in writing.

To that the Protat finally responded with an official letter on January 29 excommunicating the entire brotherhood of St. Andrew's. The letter did not specify the doctrinal reasons for the decision but mentioned only that it was "a religious quarrel concerning the second person of the Holy Trinity"; that the confession signed on the tenth and sent to the Russian Holy Synod was evidence of their unorthodoxy (κακοδοχία); that Jerome seemed quite orthodox to them though called a heretic by the rebels; and that the rebels were guilty of upsetting the order and calm of the Holy Mountain. Therefore from then until an ecclesiastical court could be established to investigate the matter, it proclaimed Fr. David, Fr. Antony, and the entire brotherhood of St. Andrew's to be unorthodox. And in order to prevent the evil's spread it warned that henceforth anyone having any contact with them would also be considered unorthodox. The announcement was to be proclaimed by posting it on the skete's main gate.

St. Andrew's replied with a letter explaining that the issue was not "a doctrine about the second person of the Holy Trinity" but the dishonoring of God's name; the skete had not received the *I.K.*'s representatives for fear Jerome would come and cause trouble; and it would be glad to send its representatives to Karyes if it were first given a written safe-conduct (this out of fear that Antony and David would be arrested). In conclusion it affirmed that it did indeed desire reconciliation with the *I.K.* But the latter was not in a conciliatory mood; it not only refused the request for a written safe-conduct, but also added that no reconciliation would be possible until the brotherhood of St. Andrew's would repudiate its unorthodoxy in writing. Predictably, no rapprochement was ever effected between the imyaslavtsy of St. Andrew's and the *Iera Koinotes*.

Jerome and the *I.K.* were in contact with Constantinople as well, where a new patriarch, Germanos V, had replaced Joachim III. In an official letter to the *I.K.* dated February 15, the patriarch blamed Fr. David and Fr. Antony for the proceedings at St. Andrew's, called them to Constantinople for a church court, and declared that only the former leadership of the skete was the lawful one. Fr. Antony had already left to defend his cause in Russia and so never complied. When Fr. David finally did go to Constantinople after a couple months' delay, the old, uneducated, and relatively weak-willed monk bowed to patriarchal pressure to abjure his error and promised not to promote it any more or to act as abbot. The latter promise he kept, but a month or so after returning he went back on the former.

The *I.K.* also carried on a correspondence with St. Panteleimon's, similar in content to the communications with St. Andrew's. There could be no charges of "rebellion" against the latter since Misail was still abbot, but some of the eight expelled monks brought news to Karyes of heresy and anarchy at the Rossikon. And Misail himself sent a letter on the third of February stating that he had been forced to sign the January 23 confession of faith and asking for police measures against a number of monks whom he named. His own authority was so limited that he had not even been able to place the monastery's seal on his letter. Police were sent, but finding peace and all apparently in order they took no action. The *I.K.* was eventually able to secure an agreement from St. Panteleimon's to receive back the exiled monks, but Misail's hold on power remained tenuous at best.

### **Archbishop Antony Gets Involved Again**

Meanwhile Abp. Antony had been informed of the events on Athos, and the opponents of the imyaslavtsy were encouraged by a series of personal letters sent by him that attained wide distribution and were later published. In a letter dated February 11 and addressed to one of those exiled from St. Panteleimon's named Fr. Denasy, he lamented "the strengthening of heresy, more precisely gangs of lunatics (шайки сумасшедших) led by an ambitious hussar". (Kosvintsev 478) Promising that a trustworthy person from the Ministry of External affairs would be sent, he added "but here the matter is not for trust but rather to bring along three companies of soldiers and lock up the scoundrels (заковать нахалов)" and concluded:

Of course the Bulatovichites will all be expelled and deprived of monastic rank; their victory is for two weeks. But it is sad that as a consequence of the khlystic rebellion there might occur an attempt of the Greeks to expel from Athos all Russians, which will not be so difficult under the Greek government.

This fear that the Greeks would use the dispute as an excuse to expel all Russians from Athos was to be repeatedly expressed by others too, but there is no evidence that the Greeks of Athos ever contemplated such a thought. No doubt they would have rejoiced at a decrease in Russian numbers and influence, and some might have seen it as golden opportunity to aid that decrease, but that they either could or would use such an excuse to expel all Russians is inconceivable.

The talk of settling the matter by force was no idle threat, however. There are reports that Girs soon after the events of January 12 had unsuccessfully requested the patriarch's permission to send soldiers to Athos. Apparently permission was indeed granted later, for on April 1 the *I.K.* received word that the Russian embassy planned to send a high official with soldiers in the company of a patriarchal exarch in order to get rid of the troublemakers. But this time Karyes proved the impediment, asking that the expedition be delayed while it tried to settle the matter itself. The patriarch's change of heart may have come about in part due to pressure from the Russian Holy Synod; in a letter to Jerome dated March 7 Abp. Antony assured him that the Holy Synod was not only asking Patr. Germanos to confirm his predecessor's decision in this matter, but also that he would permit it to "send to Athos a Russian archbishop for admonition of those troubled by the stupid heresy". (Pakhomy 63)

### **The Ecumenical Patriarch Takes a Stand**

Before giving that permission, however, Germanos had decided a more detailed investigation was in order. This he entrusted to a committee of seven professors of the patriarchal theological school in Khalke, and their answer, in the form of an official report signed by all of them, was forthcoming on March 30, 1913.<sup>21</sup> The report states that the committee, while lacking time to go through all the materials sent to it<sup>22</sup> because of their great volume and their being in Russian only, "thinks that it understood the spirit" of them, if not all the details. Speaking specifically of *Na Gorakh Kavkaza*, that spirit is mysticism, "which, as is known, emerges from a vital religious feeling and manifests living faith and love" but which all too often strays from the church's dogmas and teachings because "in the investigation and understanding of religious truths it follows the dictates of the heart and of direct feeling rather than the mind".

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<sup>21</sup>References under ΓΝΩΜΟΔΟΤΗΣΙΣ. The report was signed by: Germanos P. Strenopoulos (the dean), Archimandrite Ioannes Eustratios, Archimandrite Georgiades, Deacon Basileios Stephanides, Basileios Antoniadis, and Pantoleon Komnenos. Apparently only Mr. Komnenos knew Russian.

<sup>22</sup>Two letters from the patriarch requesting information are mentioned, one of February 15 and one of March 20; if the latter was the one asking for a formal report then they had but ten days in which to prepare it. In an introductory letter the dean of the school states that the committee met eight times.

As for their brief exposition of what the imyaslavtsy actually believe, it is somewhat simplistic but not entirely inaccurate. It recognizes that they are not concerned solely with the name "Jesus," much less that name abstracted from his person, and that they do not speak merely of "letters and syllables". The central issue it sees to be the claims that God's names as divine revelation are energies of God and are therefore God himself:

It is superfluous to note that such a conclusion [i.e. that God's name is God himself] agrees with the idea they formulated concerning the divine names as energies of God, but this very opinion, that the names themselves are energies of God, is newly-appeared and new-sounding, and their argument that every word of God as an energy of his is not only a giver of life and spirit but is itself spirit and itself life and thus itself God -- this argument applied generally leads to conclusions (i.e. "the name of Jesus is God ... every divine word in the Gospel is God himself"<sup>23</sup>) which, in spite of all their denials, smell of pantheism.

These are the most condemnatory words offered by the Khalke professors, and they are reminiscent of Patr. Joachim's letter in their lack of decisiveness. "New" and "smelling of pantheism" are far from "heretical" or even "false."

What's more, the report observes that the blame for the quarreling lies in part on the opposing party because it:

... proceeded to such an interpretation of the scriptural phrase "in which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12), as if they too believed that one is saved in the name of Jesus, as a name, but that one must not venerate (προσκυβεῖν) the name but only Jesus himself. Thus they gave cause for opposing argument.

In conclusion it merely expresses hope that those who have chosen "the tranquil and quiet life" will stop debating and arguing and attend to sanctifying themselves in the traditional worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Strangely, when five days later Patr. Germanos sent his decision on the matter to Karyes in the form of an official decree, all ambivalence had been abandoned. The "newly-appeared and

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<sup>23</sup>Quoting Fr. Antony Bulatovich's August 27, 1912 letter to Patr. Joachim III. Calling words "spirit and life" was in fact not an invention of Fr. Antony's but came directly from scripture where it is placed on the lips of Jesus: "... the words I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." (Jn 6:63)

vain-sounding<sup>24</sup> teaching" is condemned outright as "impious and soul-corrupting" and as constituting "blasphemous unorthodoxy (κακοδοχία) and heresy". Germanos instructs the *I.K.* to "require on behalf of us and of the Church that all abjure completely the blasphemous error and refrain henceforth with prayer from various and foreign teachings." As for those who might refuse:

... concerning such [people]: being heretics and rebels against church discipline, the measures determined by the holy canons will be taken, and in no way will it be acceptable that such [people] remain and through their plague corrupt your pious place ... (See ΟΙ ΙΕΣΟΥΑΝΟΙ)

One can only conjecture at why the patriarch would so definitively condemn the imyaslavtsy just five days after receiving an ambivalent and ambiguous response from Khalke even containing a reproach for the opposing side. Some have suggested that anti-Russian sentiment was involved, and it may well be that an opportunity to lessen the Russian population of Athos seemed attractive -- but to take advantage of that opportunity the patriarch almost certainly was encouraged by Russians themselves. As has been seen, there is evidence that at Abp. Antony's prompting the Russian Holy Synod had already asked Germanos to confirm Joachim's decision. And it is known how firmly the Russian embassy in Constantinople was in favor of Jerome's side in the dispute. So it is not difficult to imagine that pressure from both sources was brought to bear on the patriarch -- perhaps economic, perhaps political, perhaps both.

In any case, the epistle itself indicates that doctrinal considerations served as an excuse for the condemnation and were not the cause for it. There are but two short statements that specify the substance of the heretical teaching:

[The teaching is] about the name "Jesus," as being Jesus himself and God and inseparable and, so to speak, hypostatically identified (συνταυτιζομένου) with him ... [it is] about the name "Jesus" as being Jesus himself and God, essentially contained (εμπεριεχομένου) in his name.

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<sup>24</sup>The patriarch's letter reads "κενοφωνος" (vain sounding) where the Khalke report read "καινοφωνος" (new sounding or newly heard of). One or the other is probably a mistake; words are easily confused because they sound identical in modern Greek.

The Khalke report had plainly recognized that the dispute, while primarily concerned with the name of Jesus, was really about all of God's names, but the patriarch spoke as if only "the name 'Jesus'" was at issue. And placing the name in quotes as he did suggested an emphasis on the very letters and sounds which the Khalke commission recognized was definitely not at issue. Nor did Khalke make any intimation that the imyaslavtsy were equating God's name with his essence, yet the phrase "essentially contained" blithely accuses them of idiocy. Such misrepresentations may have come from Abp. Antony, from official communications of the Russian Holy Synod inspired by him,<sup>25</sup> from Jerome, from other Russian opponents of the imyaslavtsy, or even from Greek Athonites -- but his choosing to use the testimony of any of those over his own best theologians can only be explained by referring to ulterior motives.

Be that as it may, this was the official dogmatic decree long desired by Jerome, Misail, and their partisans. Unlike Joachim's letter, this one was unambiguous and met all the formal requirements for such a decree, so there could be no arguing that it was merely a private peace-making letter. And the *I.K.* did not take it that way. At a meeting on April 29 it declared that anyone who continued to believe the heresy would have to be expelled from the Holy Mountain. But first it had to see to the task of promulgating the patriarch's decree. In the case of the besieged fortress St. Andrew's this was no mean task -- so the Protat sent a copy to Vatopedi and told them to do it.

To St. Panteleimon's a delegation of two was sent. They arrived on May 2 and arranged to read the epistle publicly in both Greek and Russian at a meeting of the whole brotherhood on the next day. They described the result in their report to the *I.K.*:

... during the reading calm and full silence predominated, then the monk Ireney of the heresiarchs took the stand and sought to debate about the opinion of his followers. But the *Iera Koinotes* [i.e. the delegates themselves] informed him that since there existed an ecclesiastical decision all debate was superfluous and urged them to study it, and the next day to declare if they would conform to it or not. (Papoulidis, ΟΙ ΡΩΣΟΙ 104)

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<sup>25</sup>There are, however, other reports that while trying to reach a decision Patr. Germanos twice telegraphed the Holy Synod asking for an opinion and received no reply. See Ivol'gin, *Наша Дипломатия и Афон*.

To them it looked like the monks were going to sign the form provided, but then the "heresiarchs" advised them not to do so, arguing that the epistle was a fake and that those at the patriarchate and at the *I.K.* were heretics. Other reports say that they added the numeral values of the letters in "Χαλκη" together, didn't get what they wanted, so changed it to "Χαλκει" (a misspelling that would sound the same) and found that it totalled 666, the mark of the antichrist. The delegates expressed dismay also that:

To top it all they took down the venerable patriarchal epistle which was framed and printed in gold letters and prepared for public reading in the front yard of the monastery -- and destroyed it. (Papoulidis, ΟΙ ΡΩΣΟΙ 105)

Although the *I.K.* delegates said that a "sufficient number" (ι&κκονοι) eventually did sign the forms affirming that they "received" the patriarchal letter and "agreed in every way with its spirit" (Papoulidis, ΟΙ ΡΩΣΟΙ 107), that "sufficient number" must actually have been quite small. Or perhaps many signed merely to avoid trouble with the Karyes authorities. In any case, when another task force came in June to try to convince the imyaslavtsy to recant it was estimated that even then they constituted three fourths of the monastery's population.

The *I.K.* delegates called police to remove the ringleaders, but upon arrival the police found calm and peace and said that they could not do anything without orders from Thessalonica. So a permanent post of two of them was established to maintain the peace and a request for the necessary orders sent. Such orders never arrived, however, for the Russian church and government were taking steps of their own which would soon make Greek police superfluous.