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Documents of A. Kukulevsky of Late 1940s Reflecting Aspiration of the Orthodox Church in America for Autocephality

Abstract

The article studies circumstances of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) in 1940s, as well as preserved in the archives projects of A. Kukulevsky to reform the North American Archdiocese. A. Kukulevsky analyzed the decree of the Moscow Patriarchate no. 94 in May 1945, and over a year later, made a detailed assessment. His comments discussed reasons for the decree, religious situation in the USSR, relationship of the Russian Church and the archdiocese in the United States. Kukulevsky declared infringement of the OCA, sustaining his claim on the U.S. laws. He took notice of mythologizing foreign audiences, deplored lack of debates on the terms of subordination to the Moscow Patriarchate. This rebuke came from living in a democratic country. The OCA wanted autonomy to avoid politics. The Moscow Patriarchate was blamed for the severance which was ascribed to the following causes: ignorance of the circumstances of the Soviet Church and of religious legal base, propaganda, forgery, blackmail. The protopresbyter acknowledged the differences in the Church life under different political systems and outbreak of the cold war. The documents provided rationalization for the OCA independence and argued that demands for loyalty to the Soviet government were illegal. Kukulevsky listed instances of hostile actions of the Soviet government towards the

Church. He accused the USSR of totalitarianism, condemned communism, claimed that the Soviets used the Church as a weapon in the war. In 1946 the reformer contended that the victory in the World War was achieved by the Russian people, not the government. Thus, while in 1945 Kukulevsky blamed the ROC, which had surrendered to totalitarianism, in 1946 he accused the Soviet regime, and saw the Church as a victim. Protopresbyter justified the archdiocese and considered its relations with the Patriarchate (Soviet propaganda, Moscow ambassadors, the head of the Council for the ROC were blamed). In 1945 Kukulevsky underscored the law abidance of the Church, in 1946 focused on the achievements of the OCA. His concluded that the metropolitanate was punished not its crimes, but for its nonconformity to Soviet ideology.

Keywords

Archives of the Orthodox Church of America, Alexander Kukulevsky, reform projects of the North American Archdiocese in 1940s.

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