

**REMINISCENCES OF A RUSSIAN CLERGYMAN
ABOUT SAINT PHILARET
METROPOLITAN OF NEW YORK,
THE NEW CONFESSOR.**
(Primarily About His Years in China)

ONE

From 1904 to 1945 the Japanese occupied Manchuria. The Japanese tried at all costs to keep this Chinese province in their hands, since it supplied huge supplies for Japan and gave them a foothold on the continent, and to them this made strong international military-political sense.

But the Japanese were hampered by the Russian immigrants, who had a different mentality. To use the Russian young people in the military the Japanese first attempted to destroy the social-religious mentality of our immigration. To this end they placed an idol of the goddess Amaterasu opposite St. Nicholas Cathedral so that the Russian people, going to the divine services, had first to bow to the idol, and then they could go to pray to Christ God.

Metropolitan Melety reacted immediately: he issued a proclamation in which he explained the inadmissibility of bowing to an idol. Then the Japanese began to accuse Metropolitan Melety and the clergy with contradicting their authority. Archimandrite Philaret especially decisively objected to the Japanese. The Japanese seized him and began to torture him. They lacerated his cheek and almost tore out an eye, but he survived the torture.

The head torturer then said to Fr. Philaret: "We have an electronically heated tool, under whose influence all have agreed to fulfill our requests; you will agree also! (Fr. Philaret personally told me this himself.) The torturer brought out the glowing electrical tool. Then Fr. Philaret prayed to St. Nicholas the Miracle-worker with the words: "Holy Hierarch Nicholas, help me, otherwise I might fall into betrayal."

It was time for the torture. The torturer bared him to the belt and began to burn his back with the hot iron. And, O, the miracle! Fr. Philaret smelled the smell of the burned flesh, but he did not feel pain. Happiness was in his soul. The tormentor did not understand, why does he keep silent, why does he not scream, why does he not writhe in unbearable pain? Then the tormentor turned and looked at the face of Fr. Philaret. And when he saw his face, he threw up his hands amazed, and muttered something in Japanese, and ran off, conquered by the superhuman force of patience. No one could endure such tortures without Christ's divine aid. But the tortures were so cruel that he was close to death. The

almost dying Fr. Philaret was given back to his relatives. This will give you some idea of it: later he said to me: "I was in hell itself."

But God did not let him die. The wounds healed, only his eye was somewhat deformed. And the Japanese no longer demanded the bows from Orthodox people. All this I heard from Fr. Philaret, but I said nothing since I thought everyone knew all this.

TWO

In 1945 Soviet troops occupied China and established total Soviet control. The Soviet regime immediately named all the Russian emigrants "enemies of the people," and in six months arrested 50,000—young and old. All 50,000 from Harbin China were deported to the USSR. At the station of Atpor they shot 14,000 of them, and the remaining 36,000 they sent into the concentration camps, where they were starved to death.

Every third young person in Harbin was seized by the Soviet regime, and was taken to the USSR and annihilated in the concentration camps. The Soviet totalitarian tyranny annihilated them for their Orthodoxy, for non-recognition of the Sergianist heresy, which teaches one to obey the God-fighters conscientiously. Generally, the Soviet regime killed nearly 70 million Orthodox people, destroyed more than 30,000 church buildings, took away the land and property, arranged the genocide of the Orthodox people, introduced social hostility, blasphemed God, and tore out belief in God by fear and terror. Who could obey this authority in good conscience and collaborate with it?

The Russian people remaining in Harbin were coerced into accepting Soviet citizenship. However this Archimandrite Philaret openly refused to do so. And when he served the Divine Liturgy he never commemorated the Soviet regime. Instead, he delivered thundering sermons about truth and lies, after the hearing of which it seemed to us that it would be the last day of his life. He served a public memorial service for the slain Tsar Nicholas II and the entire Imperial Family, and the main thing he said in the sermon was that the Great—Martyr Tsar Nicholas shared the mind of Christ, therefore he was not brainwashed, he did not have the ruinous spirit of anti-Christ, which took hold of the entirety of Russia. Also he arranged a youth circle, at whose meetings he explained Christ's teachings.

We young people living in China under the Soviet regime and experiencing its violence and fear of death, rapidly grasped its anti-Christian nature. We understood that if God does not stop it, then everyone would spiritually break, would become zombies, and would have to serve this world-

wide evil. It became clear that in the Declaration of 1927 that Metropolitan Sergius, on the advice of flesh and blood, from fear of losing his life, had fallen into delusion [prelest], and issued a call for us to obey the Soviet regime in good conscience and to collaborate with it.

If the Lord said: "Of what benefit is it to a man, if he gains the whole world, and harms his own soul?" (Mk. 8:36), then Sergius by his Declaration tried to save the bodies of people, without being attentive to the eternal damage to their souls. In this we find precisely a pagan concept of good and evil.

The answer to the question "What, then is Sergianism?" became clear to me. It is a modification of Orthodox consciousness by the pagan understanding of good and evil, through violence and the fear of death of the population by the Soviet regime with the aid of the highest Church leadership. An uncomfortable answer, but it is taken from personal practical life, and the obvious case of the life and service to the Russian Orthodox Church of Archimandrite Philaret. Father Philaret and Metropolitan Melety with the entire clergy did not bow to the idol of Amaterasu, but Metropolitan Sergius bowed to the godless government, leading the entire clergy and people into error and sin.

Fr. Philaret took another path. He rejected Sergianism; he did not collaborate with the government...and gained immense authority as a spiritual leader in the Russian emigration in Harbin. Then the Soviet regime, in October, 1960, full of spite, decided to destroy him with fire.

THREE

This is how it happened: one night, from Saturday to Sunday, Archimandrite Philaret arose at about 2:00 a.m. because of a strange smell in his house, and he went into the living room, in the corner of which was a storeroom. As he said, smoke was coming from under the doors of the storeroom with a caustic, bitter smell. He went into the bathroom, poured a basin of water, and returned to the storeroom, and, after opening its door, splashed water towards the side where the smoke was coming from. Suddenly, there was an explosion and a fierce fire. The fire burned him and the force of the explosion was so great, it lifted him up and threw him across the entire length of the living room so he struck against the door. Fortunately the door opened outwards, because the bolts were torn away by the impact of his flying body, and he fell to earth stunned, but alive. After coming to, he saw the house, which was burning like a torch. Archimandrite Philaret understood that a fire-bomb had exploded, which burnt the house down in a matter of minutes.

On this night, a certain Zinaida Lvovna, one of the sisters from the church of the House of Mercy, left her house about midnight, situated opposite the church and saw fire engines in the street near the church—but no fire. This incomprehensible and extraordinary group of fire engines amazed her. Two hours later when the sound of the bomb explosion woke her, she immediately went out into the street and saw the almost entirely burned house, which the firemen already had stopped putting out. But Archimandrite Philaret stood on the church porch, shaking from the cold, and suffering from severe burns and contusion. Zinaida Lvovna immediately understood that the fire had been arranged by the Soviets for the purpose of killing Fr. Philaret. She rapidly crossed the street and invited him to come to her house.

But the Chinese fire authorities, seeing Archimandrite Philaret alive, blamed him for starting the fire and wanted to arrest him. However, the resourceful Zinaida Lvovna quickly turned to the Chinese authorities and said: “Does this fit with the fact that you previously brought up the fire engines, knowing that the fire would start? Who told you in advance about the fire?”

The leader of the firemen was at a loss and could not answer. But meanwhile Zinaida Lvovna together with Archimandrite Philaret went into her house in which there was a room with no windows. She put Archimandrite Philaret there because she knew that the Soviet murderers could come through the window and kill him.

The next day, Sunday, some young people arrived early for the service, but the church was closed, and the house where the rector lived was burnt to the ground. I was able to find Zinaida Lvovna and learn from her what had occurred that night. I asked permission to see Fr. Philaret.

From the first glance I saw that Fr. Philaret was completely exhausted physically and in pain. His burnt face was dark brown. But his eyes expressed a firm submission to the will of God and a joyous fearlessness to serve Him and the Orthodox people. I was speechless from the shock of his appearance, and it was immediately understandable that he was a hairsbreadth from death. He had avoided death by some miracle. Then suddenly I heard his greeting: “I greet you with the Feast.” He said this greeting the way we say on Pascha: “Christ Is Risen!” Tears came to my eyes instead of an answer. I had not cried from my youth. But now being a twenty-year old adult, I knelt before him speechless, with tears rolling down my face, and kissed his blessing hand.

I understood that, like a fourth Babylonian youth, he had remained unconsumed by the Chinese furnace heat of the 20th century set by the God-fighter Khrushchev seventy times hotter than the Babylonian furnace, lit by Nabuchodonosor in the sixth century B.C. It was obvious that the grace of God

had saved Fr. Philaret for the resolute and fearless fulfilment of holy Patriarch Tikhon's legacy.

FOUR

Two months went by. He again began to serve, and after half a year could already live independently in the separate balcony above the church. But suddenly, he again went to Zinaida Lvovna's. She told me privately that on one occasion Archimandrite Philaret got to his cell after a service, unlocked his door and went in. But suddenly he saw the toes of two large boots protruding from under the curtains. After understanding that a murderer was standing there, sent by the Soviets, he went to a chest of drawers and took something for appearances' sake, and rapidly left the cell, after locking it up. After this episode men from the Chinese police came to Zinaida Lvovna to ask "Why does Archimandrite Philaret not pass the nights in his cell?" She immediately understood what was up and answered: due to his physical weakness and indisposition.

Soon after this Fr. Philaret with spiritual clairvoyance revealed that under the altar in the church of the House of Mercy was a portrait of satan. The portrait was immediately removed. The Soviet godless authorities did not know how to deal with and how to mock a man that has apostolic boldness and faith, which made him a bearer of the unconquerable Grace of God.

A third time there was an attempt on his life in the 70's, at Pascha, when he already had become Metropolitan and First Hierarch of the ROCOR and lived in the USA. But the attempt did not succeed. The fourth attempt occurred aboard a ship, when Metropolitan Philaret was returning from France, after visiting the Lesna convent.

Sailing back to New York City, an extraordinary phenomenon in the boiler of the steamship occurred: suddenly, in broad daylight in the firebox of the boiler there burnt a fire with such force that a pipe heated white hot. The captain of the steamship, not seeing any way to extinguish the fire that threatened to melt the pipe which would then spread the fire over the entire steamship, consuming all on board, went at the critical minute to Vladyka Philaret and asked him to pray, because, in his opinion, only God could save the ship and passengers. Vladyka Philaret listened to the captain and immediately began to pray to God. Ten to twenty minutes passed and the pipe began to redden. But in an hour it had already returned to black. Rescue was given by

God! The captain again went to Metropolitan Philaret, kissed his hand, and emotionally thanked him for his prayers...

Now let us ask ourselves, how could the heat of the boiler acquire such catastrophic force? Did this occur by itself? Or, as before, did the evil hand of the KGB interfere in order to destroy Vladyka?

After passing through all temptations, after passing through fire and water in the spiritual and literal sense, Saint Philaret obtained from the Lord this gift: whoever might turn to him with a request about any matter, by his prayer the Lord fulfilled that request.

And this gift only increased after his repose.

By his holy prayers may the Lord preserve us
in "the Faith one delivered to the Saints" (Jude 3),
and grant us His heavenly Kingdom. Amen.

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(From the Russian Newspaper

"Nasha Strana", No. 2791, pp.5-6. March 2006)

On-line in Russian: <http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&id+53968&type=view>

On-line in English at our diocesan page:

<http://www.homb.net/SaintPhilaretinChinaFULL.pdf>

Source for the English:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/orthodox-tradition/message/85454>

THE END

