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## **Ukrainian authorities feeding Pat. Bartholomew false information, Orthodox assembly President concludes after meeting with him**



Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople is sorely misinformed about events in Ukraine and about the desires of the Ukrainian people, Sergei Gavrilov, the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy, commented after meeting with the Patriarch and members of the Holy Synod in Constantinople.

As Gavrilov told RIA-Novosti, Pat. Bartholomew believes the “unification council” that will unite Ukraine’s two schismatic confessions will be held in December, and moreover, that it will be held “in a quiet, peaceful atmosphere with the participation of all Orthodox.”

Gavrilov offered the Patriarch a frank response: “I told him that it’s an illusion, that the support of the schism under the conditions of martial law will increase the pressure on Orthodox Christians and the suppression of their civil rights and freedom with the seizure of churches, with possible bloodshed.”

“And such a council will not serve for peacemaking, but for the deepening of the conflict in Ukraine,” the Assembly President and Russian State Duma Deputy said,

reflecting the frequent warnings of Ukrainian clergy.

The Assembly President traveled to Constantinople in a spirit of peace and frank, open dialogue, “to talk about our vision of the situation and to draw attention to our common responsibility before the millennia of Christianity, to God, and to the fate of our Orthodox peoples,” he explained to RIA-Novosti.

Pat. Bartholomew does not have all the correct information to objectively assess the situation, Gavrilov concluded after their meeting.

“He believes that everyone in Ukraine wants autocephaly although no one from the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church appealed for it. It is obvious that the Ukrainian authorities are misleading him, saying that ‘all of Ukraine supports this,’ and that ‘Ukraine is waiting for this council and it will serve for peacemaking,’” Gavrilov commented.

Pat. Bartholomew “has no completeness of information and no understanding and responsibility for the multinational Ukrainian flock,” Gavrilov told Interfax-Religion.

In fact, surveys consistently show that only about 30% of Ukrainians want autocephaly, while the other 70% are either firmly against it or simply don’t care about it.

However, Pat. Bartholomew remains willfully ignorant of such information, merely dismissing it as “black propaganda.”

Among the false information that Pat. Bartholomew not only believes but also spreads, is that the push for autocephaly was initiated by the Church in Ukraine. During his recent visit to Romania, he commented that the Church of Constantinople had decided to create an autocephalous church in Ukraine “on the request of the ecclesiastical body in Ukraine.”

However, as Gavrilov noted, the canonical Church did not petition for nor does it support the initiative for autocephaly, and, moreover, even the schismatic groups that do support Constantinople’s actions acknowledge that the initiative and appeal actually belongs to Poroshenko, and not any religious body.

“Archbishop” German Semanchuk of the schismatic “Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church” commented on Ukrainian television earlier this month that, “From the very beginning, the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko and government officials were directly involved in this process because the discussions with His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch, with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with

the bishops of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were conducted primarily on behalf of the Presidential administration.”

Gavrilov also warned Pat. Bartholomew and the other bishops that granting autocephaly would have detrimental consequences for the whole of Orthodoxy, because each Local Church could then be faced with the same situation: “This is the legalization of schisms, the creation of quasi-churches, and so on.”

Pat. Bartholomew acknowledged that his flock is small and it is difficult for him to assess what consequences will come from actions concerning Ukraine, Gavrilov told RIA-Novosti.

The Deputy also expressed concern that the aggravation of such crises only weakens Orthodoxy’s authority in the world. “I think this is the point for the many initiators [of autocephaly—OC], especially those overseas, to blow up the unity of Christianity, to suppress it, to reduce the authority of Christianity, of Orthodoxy in the modern world.”

Gavrilov gave it one more shot to lead Constantinople to dialogue, but to no avail: “We believe there is still an historic chance to stop... The only way out is to restore the status-quo and resume direct dialogue. But, in my opinion, as the discussion showed, Patriarch Bartholomew is still confident in his rightness.”

As Gavrilov explained to Interfax-Religion, Pat. Bartholomew apparently does not see the need to return to the status-quo, because he believes that the Russian Church’s decision to break communion is only a temporary measure anyways, and will be overcome.

The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy was created in 1993 by the initiative of the Greek Parliament and assembles delegations from 25 countries. The leading roles in the Assembly are played by Greece and Russia.