

Constantinople's new Ukrainian church doesn't commemorate Moscow due to secular politics



“Metropolitan” Epiphany Dumenko, the head of the Ukrainian nationalist church created by Constantinople on December 15, caused waves when on December 17, at his first Liturgy as primate, he commemorated the heads of all the Local Orthodox Churches except for His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Going straight from His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem to His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia, skipping the head of the Russian Church, Epiphany highlighted the Ukrainian nationalist character of the new church.

While the Russian Church has broken communion with Constantinople, the latter has explicitly not reciprocated in a bid to paint the Russian Church as the aggressor in the ongoing crisis situation. Thus, Patriarch Bartholomew commemorates Pat. Kirill, and thus so should the Ukrainian Church it handcrafted.

However, in a recent interview with the Ukrainian channel “Live,” Epiphany revealed that he refuses to commemorate Pat. Kirill due to events in the political world.

Conflating the secular and ecclesiastical spheres, Epiphany explained: “At the

moment I do not commemorate him because we are in a state of war, so the Ukrainian people would not accept if the newly-elected primate commemorated the name of the Russian Patriarch.”

Epiphany’s explanation further highlights the political nature of the new church. The appeal for autocephaly was made precisely by Ukrainian President Poroshenko with the Parliament’s backing, and, along with Constantinople, Poroshenko was the main architect of the new church, as the groups involved were unable to work together.

Poroshenko entered St. Sophia’s Church in Kiev on December 15 for the “unification council” to the ringing of the cathedral bells—an honor that no bishop enjoyed that day. Following the robber council, it was Poroshenko who introduced the new primate to the crowd outside the church, with the Parliament Speaker Andrei Paruby on stage with them. None of the three Constantinople hierarchs who were in Kiev for the sole purpose of holding the “council” were present on stage.

Hailing the creation of the new church, Poroshenko exclaimed: “What is this church? This is a church without Putin. What is this church? This is a church without Kirill,” and in an interview given shortly after the “council,” he again emphasized the creation of the church as part of his political strategy.

The nationalist and political nature of the new church, made up of the schismatic “Kiev Patriarchate” and the schismatic “Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church,” highlights the reality on the ground that has prevented the schismatic groups from reconciling with the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church for 30 years.

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Photo: spzh.news