

## Controversy surrounds first Synod meeting of Ukrainian nationalist church



The first meeting of the “Holy Synod” of the Ukrainian schismatic-nationalist church on Tuesday did not pass without serious conflicts and discrepancies, thanks, in part, to the personality of Philaret Denisenko.

According to the Ukrainian site Glavcom, several bishops of the so-called “Orthodox Church of Ukraine,” including some who took part in the session, were dissatisfied with who attended and its organization. Some influential bishops have not ruled out the possibility that the Ecumenical Patriarchate could reject the Synod’s decisions.

It is noted that the bishops invited to the meeting at St. Sophia’s Cathedral did not even know for sure beforehand that it was to be a meeting of the Holy Synod.

“Everyone was just invited for a meeting,” a source close to “Metropolitan” Epiphany Dumenko said.

“The first meeting of the Synod of the new church... we don’t know the agenda... Nobody spoke to me about positions. We don’t even know who will be members of the Synod today,” said Simeon Shostatsky, the former canonical Metropolitan of Vinnitsa who defected to the schismatic church, before the session.

The list of members participating in the session raised questions among many participants. “Archbishop” Evstraty Zorya, formerly the speaker for the schismatic “Kiev Patriarchate” (KP), attempted to explain the situation, though he only made it clear that there are discrepancies in the founding documents, with different

hierarchs interpreting them differently.

According to Zorya, Epiphany consulted with Pat. Bartholomew to ensure that there was no violation of the church's statutes, written by the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, or the tomos, which dictate the makeup of the schismatic church's Synod. "This composition of the Synod corresponds to the order in the Patriarchate of Constantinople and which is introduced by the statutes of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine," Zorya said.

However, not everyone agreed with this conclusion, including "Metropolitan" Michael Zinkevich, who was the favorite to win the primacy of the schismatic church before Philaret Denisenko insisted that he step aside in favor of his protégé Epiphany Dumenko.

"According to the statutes and tomos, I should be a member of the Holy Synod. But I wasn't invited to the meeting, and I wasn't there. I have no idea what kind of meeting it was that they held on February 5," Zinkevich said, stressing that the gathering could be called an episcopal gathering, but not a Synod.

The church has to live by its tomos, he said, "Everything else is not canonical, incorrect; it has no legal capacity."

Archimandrite Cyril Hovorun, a member of the canonical Ukrainian Church but vocal supporter of the schismatic church, also noted that Epiphany Dumenko is not meant to appoint Synod members as primate, but to pinpoint who has seniority of consecration and invite them to the Synod, in accordance with the church's guiding documents.

The discrepancies about the makeup of the Synod were not the only reason for conflict at the Synod.

"There is one person who will not give up and who leads as he likes," complained the former primate of the schismatic "Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church" (UAOC) Makary Maletich, who suggested that the Synod's decisions could be appealed.

OrthoChristian previously reported that Denisenko was appointed to rule the Kiev Diocese, despite that the primate bears the title of "Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine."

Makary Maletich had also expressed serious concerns that the "unification council" would not take place because of Philaret's stubborn insistence that everything be

done his way. Constantinople had to take over the process of arranging the “council” because the KP and UAOC could not work together. Last month, Makary refused to accept the title of “Honorary Citizen of Lvov” together with Philaret.

“I spoke my opinion, as a former primate, that this shouldn’t happen anymore, because no one consulted with anyone [regarding the appointment of the members of the Synod—O.C.]. There are many consequences here. There are bishops, let them appeal, if they wish, to the Ecumenical Patriarch. It’s their right.”

Further, there are bishops of the schismatic church that consider this first session not a Synod meeting but only a “rehearsal,” according to “Bishop” Adrian Kulik, as the Union of Orthodox Journalists reports.

In his view, and that of other bishops, the new “Synod” was in reality merely an extended KP Synod. “I can only share the opinion of hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). Despite the fact that Philaret and his Synod (of the former KP) decided to brazenly enter the newly-created OCU, in essence it was a Synod of Philaret, with three votes added, taken together from the other Churches... I want to say that the hierarchs of the OCU do not consider the Synod of February 5 to be authoritative, but only a rehearsal.”

Adrian Kulik himself is a highly problematic figure, having been a priest in the UAOC, then joining the OCA in America, then the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church of North and South America and the Diaspora, then returning to the UAOC, before finally being admitted into the KP in 2013.

([Source: Orthodox Christianity](#) / Photo: pomisna.info)