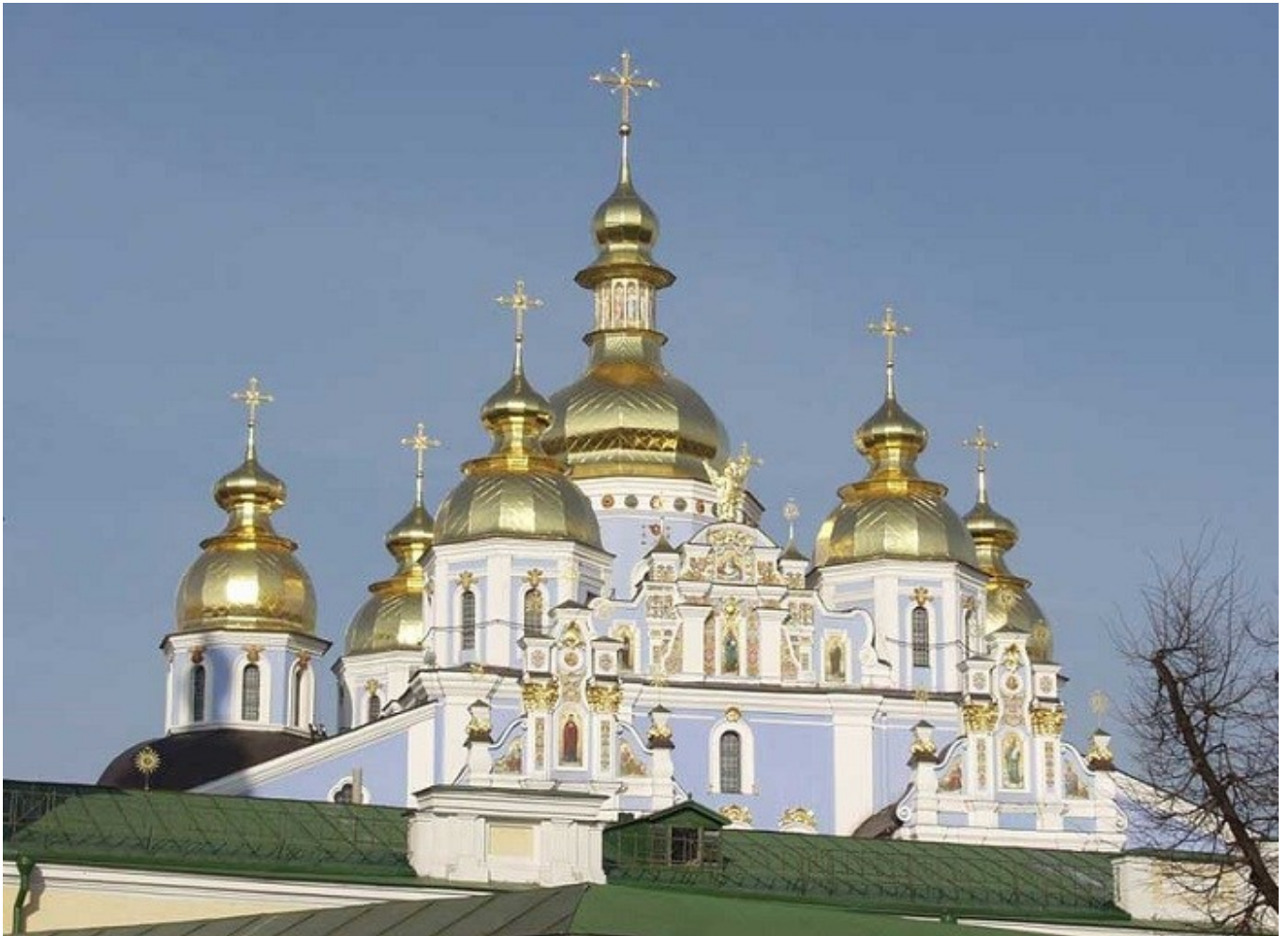


Kyiv says 506 churches have shifted from UOC-MP; Moscow says only 61 have



Since the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) was formed and granted autocephaly by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople last year, both it and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate agree that a number of churches have shifted their allegiance from the Moscow-affiliated Church to the Ukrainian one. But they disagree as to how many.

A month ago, the OCU said that 340 parishes had shifted their allegiance, while the Moscow Church said only 36 had. Now Moscow acknowledges that the number which has shifted has increased to 61; but the OCU says that 506 have done so.

The Ukrainian figures are almost certainly closer to the mark – too many journalists are checking these reports for them to be off by as much as Moscow claims. That means that, four months into the process, one of every 24 churches formerly

subordinate to Moscow in Ukraine is now part of the autocephalous Church.

Given the enormous share of Russian Orthodox Church-affiliated churches that is in Ukraine, and given Moscow's desire to muddy the waters so that no one will be certain as to exactly how fast this process is going or at least will always cite the Moscow figures along with the Kyiv ones in the name of "objectivity," the Russian Church has every reason to understate the numbers.

That will become even more the case when the number shifting from Moscow to Kyiv has reached a tipping point in the regions. When a certain critical number of churches has changed allegiance, others follow at a rapid rate – and that tipping point is now within reach in many but not yet all of Ukraine's oblasts.

As a result, it is important to keep track of these developments on the two competing maps, not because the Moscow figures are accurate but because they will be used by the Russian government to try to undercut Ukraine given that that most of the Western journalists who cover Ukraine do so from Moscow rather than Kyiv – a fact that Moscow certainly recognizes and uses to its advantage.

— Source: ukrweekly.com