

DOI: 10.17223/23451785/1/2

New Documents on the Activities of Bishop Benjamin (Fedchenkov) in Subcarpathian Rus' in 1923 to 1924

Ju. V. Danilets

Uzhgorod National University
3 Narodna Sq., Uzhgorod, 88000, Ukraine
E-mail: jurijdanilec@rambler.ru

***Нові документи про діяльність єпископа
Веніаміна (Федченков)
на Підкарпатській Русі у 1923–1924 рр.***

Ю. В. Данилець

Published in: Rusin. 2011. Vol. 24. Is. 2. pp. 52–69 (In Ukrainian).

URL: http://journals.tsu.ru/rusin/&journal_page=archive&id=1222&article_id=20698

The reorganization of the Orthodox Church administrative structures began in the Subcarpathian Rus' after World War I. On March 4, 1923, Patriarch Meletios of Constantinople (Metaxakis) consecrated Archimandrite Sabbatius (Vrabec) as the Archbishop of Prague and All Czechoslovakia. The Tome (Tomos) confirming the above appointment was issued two days later, on March 6, 1923. Patriarch Meletios decreed that three dioceses, namely, Prague, Moravian and Subcarpathian were to be formed on the territory of Czechoslovakia. Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky's official letter informed about the issuance of the Tome. On June 1, 1923 the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church acknowledged it. The Serbian Holy Synod made a vigorous protest against the Constantinople Patriarch's policy. To comply with the provisions of the Tome and spread the canonical influence on the territory of Subcarpathian Rus'/Ruthenia, Archbishop Sabbatius (Vrabec) invited Bishop Benjamin of Sevastopol (Fedchenkov) to become his assistant.

The appointment of the Russian Bishop called in support of the Transcarpathian local clergy. In a short time Bishop Benjamin managed

to attract many priests of the Serbian jurisdiction. Bishop Benjamin tried to stop religious struggle of Greek Catholics and Orthodox Christians over the churches and Church property. He worked on the preparation of theological training. At the meeting of clergy in Uzhgorod on November 1, 1923, a decision was made about the opening of the theological school. Theological courses were founded in the village of Bushtyno, Tyachiv district, under the leadership of Archpriest John Chernavin. Individuals of 17 years of age and over took several months-long course of study. The first course was held from February 18 to September 20, 1923.

Due to the Yugoslavian Government's pressure, the Czechs were forced to admit the Serbian Orthodox Church within their borders. The recognition of the Serbian Church jurisdiction by the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic evoked Bishop Benjamin's response. On March 20, 1924, he convened a meeting of the Orthodox clergy in Khust, where they discussed the issue of recognition of Serbian jurisdiction by the Czechs and the functioning of the Constantinople jurisdiction in a new environment. The government stopped funding Bishop Benjamin's activities in Subcarpathian Rus'. On April 18, 1924 in Mukachevo the Bishop was given the document according to which he had to go to Prague by order of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After this incident, the Bishop left the Republic and went to France.

Thus, while in Subcarpathian Rus', Bishop Benjamin (Fedchenkov) tried to organize the religious life of the Orthodox communities and to raise the educational level of the clergy. However, becoming a hostage of the complicated international situation, he was forced to leave the Republic.

Keywords

Benjamin (Fedchenkov), Bishop, the Orthodox Church, Greek Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Rusins, Subcarpathian Rus'.