

Scientific article

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Specifics of Liquidation of the Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem in 1879

Abstract

The fond of the Chief Prosecutor of the Holy Synod in the Russian State Historical Archive

contains a file “On the transformation of the Jerusalem Ecclesiastical Mission into a priorate at the consulate in Jerusalem.” The file has not yet attracted the researchers’ attention; its materials have not been published. The documents dated 1878–79 clarify the events that led to liquidation of the Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem in 1879, Chancellor A. M. Gorchakov’s report to Alexander II of February 13, 1879, in particular. The resolution on the document shows that the report was approved by the emperor. The Spiritual Mission was transformed into a priorate at the consular church in Jerusalem, and thus shut down. The decision was caused by long-term conflict between the Spiritual Mission and the consulate. Both institutions were subordinate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; its Palestinian Commission was in charge of building infrastructure for pilgrims. Their spheres of activities were not demarcated clearly, resulting in rivalry. The liquidation of the Mission was prompted by the fact that its head, Archimandrite Antonin (Kapustin), acquired land in Palestine with donations sent from Russia. Among the documents there are letters of consul in Jerusalem N. A. Ilarionov and Ambassador to Constantinople A. B. Lobanov-Rostovsky. They shed light on the purchase of land in Palestine by Archimandrite Antoninus. The land procurements were made in the name of a Turkish citizen, an employee of the Spiritual Mission Yakov Halebi, which could have resulted in serious legal and political problems. Antonin ignored all requests of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Holy Synod to straighten out the land title. The consulate had no control over the lands acquired by Antonin, and could not force the archimandrite to transfer them to the Russian government. It was decided to resolve the conflict between the two institutions by lowering the status of the Mission. The project was drafted at the Palestinian Commission with the B. P. Mansurov’s participation. The Holy Synod was notified of the liquidation of the Spiritual Mission when the decision was approved by the emperor. Another important document in the file is a letter from Archimandrite Antonin (Kapustin) to A.S. Norov dated January 10, 1879. The letter informed of the upcoming liquidation of the Spiritual Mission. This letter was handed over by Norov to the Empress Maria Alexandrovna and reported to the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod. However, this did not prevent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from transforming the Mission into a priorate. Until 1881, the Mission was titled priorate in all documents. The efforts of the future founders of the Orthodox Palestinian Society, E.V. Putyatin, K.P. Pobedonostsev, and V. N. Khitrovo, managed to halter and, later, to cancel the decision.

Keywords

Historical sources, source studies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Holy Synod, emperor, ambassador, consul, Spiritual Mission, Palestinian Commission, Jerusalem, Russian Palestine.

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