

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC & FOREIGN RELATIONS
of the
SYNOD OF BISHOPS
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA
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PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH IN THE SOVIET UNION

The bulletin of the Keston News Service for December of the past year reports that Fr. Gleb Yakunin has been sent into exile to Yakutia, a locale of particularly severe climatic conditions, where the ground is covered with snow for eight months out of the year and the temperature falls to -60° C. Fr. Gleb's relatives, who live in Moscow, are, for all practical purposes, unable to visit him, for they could only reach Yakutia having journeyed thousands of miles; once in Yakustsk, they would have to hire a plane to take them to the village nearest Fr. Gleb's place of exile, the little village of Irnishkhi. If they were unable to hire a plane, they would have to walk a tremendous distance on foot. Under such conditions the priest must live for five years. He has asked that warm clothing be sent him.

From the same sources it has become known that Fr. Vladimir Fedorenko has been sentenced to five years' forced labor in a camp in the Ukraine. This Orthodox priest was arrested in his church late in 1981, and was at that time cruelly beaten. He has been charged with speculating in icons.

Vladimir Poresh, another Orthodox Christian, has been sentenced to an additional three years hard labor for "instigating disobedience to the orders of administrative personnel in corrective labor facilities." Poresh is one of the founders of the Christian Seminar in Petrograd. He was arrested in 1980 and sentenced to five years hard labor in the camps, to be followed by three years internal exile. In 1982, however, he was removed from his camp and incarcerated in the Chistopol'sk Prison; and instead of being exiled to some remote place, a new investigation is now being made of his case, the result of which is not yet known.

THE GRIEVOUS STATE OF THE LAVRA OF POCHAEV

In its December, 1984, issue, the magazine Possev cites the report of a certain pilgrim who visited the Lavra of Pochaev in the summer of 1984. The famous Lavra of the western border-region of Russia is now on the verge of being closed down by the godless. The cells are empty, since most of the monks have been denied residence permits by the police.

Local inhabitants told the pilgrim that, beginning with late 1983, the persecution of the Lavra began to intensify, and not only with respect to the monks, but the pilgrims as well. The chief enemy of the Lavra is Lieutenant Ivan Morozovsky, who was recently appointed head of the police passport division, and who bursts into church while the services are being conducted, to check the documents of those attending. Morozovsky has twice beaten the Lavra's herdsman unmercifully, demanding that he leave the monastery; a third time, the herdsman, just

released, had to leave the monastery, although he is a pensioner and has nowhere to go.

On Pascha of 1984, Morozovsky conducted a check of the documents of all who were attending services in the Cathedral of the Dormition. Beginning with 1984, all who want to obtain a job as an electrician or even as simple watchmen, must obtain special permission, although the law does not envision any special permissions for employment in such jobs.

At night-time, after midnight, militia-men patrol the main monastery living quarters, often in a state of intoxication, sometimes demanding that the monks admit them to their cells.

The monks are not permitted to carry out necessary construction or repairs. When bricks were brought to Pochaev for building purposes, they were removed the next day.

In the Rovno District, a detachment of men sent by the authorities also dismantled an entire church in one night's time.

CONDEMNATION OF FR. PAUL (LYSAK)

A foreigner who has returned from Moscow and desires to remain anonymous, reports that, during his stay in the city, early in December, the monk-priest Paul (Lysak), who is highly respected by Christian believers and had lived in Moscow for a considerable time without a residence permit, was brought to trial. Relatives and friends were not permitted in court; nevertheless, some information did reach his well-wishers. One of them attempted to force his way into the court-room and was arrested and held for ten days for "hooliganism."

Fr. Paul's cassock was removed and he was dressed in a smock; this was his only clothing apart from his underwear. Prior to the trial he was held in a prison cell which he shared with two murderers, and slept between them on the floor. He was accused of "malicious violation of passport control", i.e. an extended stay in Moscow without a residence permit. As is well known, in the Soviet Union, even in a monastery, it is the militia, not the ecclesiastical authorities, who control residence.

At the trial, in response to the accusations made against him, Fr. Paul said: "I am a monk, and I must live in a monastery; but they would not give me a permit to live in any monastery. Intervene in my behalf, and I will gladly go to any monastery whatever." To the question as to why Fr. Paul had not worked for a long time, he replied: "When they tonsured me, I was told that my work is to pray. And so I have been working ever since—I pray: O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner!" While saying this, Fr. Paul made the sign of the Cross over himself. He also said to the judges: "I know that you are not condemning me; rather, it is the KGB."

As the trial was about to begin, the Patriarchate of Moscow indicated to friends of Fr. Paul its refusal to cooperate in any way whatsoever, even so far as sending a transcript of his seminary grades and other vital data.

A certain deacon who, on his own initiative, made a deposition in favor of Fr. Paul, was immediately expelled from his monastery, the Lavra of the Holy Trinity & St. Sergius at Zagorsk, outside Moscow.

CHANGES IN THE STAFF OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF MOSCOW

The February 7 issue of the Keston News Service's bulletin reports that the Synod of the Patriarchate of Moscow has adopted a resolution on a number of changes appointments of diocesan bishops.

First to be transferred was Archbishop Kirill of Vyborg, Rector of the Leningrad Theological Academy, who is now Archbishop of Smolensk. Archbishop Kirill is well known among the people for his piety. The Theological Academy owes him much for raising its standards in general. In the opinion of the Keston News Service, he enjoyed not only the respect of his colleagues, but of his students as well. The bulletin's writers presume that his great successes rendered him unacceptable to the Soviet authorities.

According to the same report, two years ago one of the rectors of the Moscow Theological Academy, located on the grounds of the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, who also won the respect and love of his students, was replaced. His successor was a man who lacked any qualifications for his position whatever.

Archbishop Melkhizedek, Exarch for Western Europe, whose see is in Berlin, has been transferred to the modest city of Sverdlovsk (the former Ekaterinburg). He completed his studies at the theological academy in 1950 and became a circuit priest, visiting many villages and towns, everywhere attracting admirers, thanks to his eloquence and deep spirituality. In 1963, he was tonsured at the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, was rapidly consecrated a bishop and, within two years, was sent to Vienna, where he headed the parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate until as late as 1970. From 1978 until the present he was an archbishop stationed in Berlin. He is replaced by Archbishop Theodosy of Smolensk, of whom it is said in the Furov Document that he belongs to the second category of bishops, who cooperate with the authorities, but are suspected of doing so only out of necessity. There is now, however, information to the effect that he has become so diligent with respect to the wishes of the regime that on May Day and on the Anniversary of the Revolution (7 November) he stood with representatives of the Soviet government on the parade reviewing stand. He is also well-known for requiring his priests to donate large sums to the "Fund for Peace."

According to unsubstantiated rumors, Archbishop Chrysostom of Kursk, whom the Furov Document places among the worst bishops of the Patriarchate of Moscow, is being transferred to one of the dioceses in Siberia. This is understandable, from the point of view of the godless. Keeping in mind the fact that he was the second deputy to Metropolitan Nikodim, who then headed the Department of External Affairs, his transfer to a remote province cannot be viewed as other than a fall into disfavor with the powers that be.

ON THE RETURN OF THE DANILOV MONASTERY TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF MOSCOW

In August of 1983, the Patriarchate of Moscow announced that, at its request, the government of the Soviet Union had agreed to turn over to it for its use the ancient monastery founded by the holy Prince Daniel which, apart from its spiritual value, is also considered a landmark of Russian architecture. The Danilov Monastery, now more than 700 years old, is designated as the site of the Chancery of the Department of External Affairs of the Patriarchate of Moscow and a hostel for ecumenical guests and banquet halls.

However, to speak of it in terms of a "monastery" one must confine oneself to the remote past. A certain German reporter for the newspaper Der Spiegel has written an article and illustrated it with photographs of the "monastery" he himself took on the site. From them it is apparent that the bell-towers and walls are partly demolished, and the entire site is in a state of terrible ruination.

After the Revolution, the Danilov Monastery was closed down by the Bolsheviks, and subsequently its buildings were used to house an

orphanage, a prison for juvenile delinquents, an umbrella factory, and a branch of a refrigerator factory.

As we reported before in one of our Newsletters, according to information we have received, only half-ruined walls remain of the ancient historical monument, which the Patriarchate of Moscow is brazenly calling a monastery, although there are no monks there and it is not foreseen, apparently, that any will be brought in.

Of all the monasteries closed down after the Revolution, the Patriarchate of Moscow has gotten only one back: the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, and that for propaganda purposes. Of the more than 1,100 monastic communities in Russia, no more than 15 remain open (including those along the western border and in the Baltic Republics).

THE GRIEVOUS STATE OF THE CHURCH OF GEORGIA

A letter has reached the West, addressed to Elias II, Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia, and signed by Metropolitan Shio (Avalishvili) of Batum & Shemokmeda and Bishop Ambrose (Katamadze) of Nikortsmino, dated 30 June 1980. Apparently, the publication of this letter was timed to coincide with the millennial anniversary of the autocephaly of the Church of Georgia.

The letter is written in a very correct form, its language having the flowery quality characteristic of the Orient; yet at the same time it in no wise justifies the Patriarch's abuses of his position.

The authors of the letter begin by describing what responsibilities the Patriarch has within the Church, and then proceed to explain that the Church of Georgia is in great danger.

"A very sad and shameful event has taken place," write Metropolitan Shio and Bishop Ambrose. "Our Church is filled with homosexuals and, not only full, but they occupy in it the dominant position and, under your open sponsorship, openly commit their sins of sodomy."

Further on, it becomes apparent from the letter that there are four homosexual bishops among the current hierarchy of the Church of Georgia. Most notorious for indulging in this sin is Metropolitan Nikoloz (Makharadze), who was driven out of the Diocese of Sukhumi-Abkhazia for this and was subsequently appointed by Catholicos Elias to a see in the Kutaisk District. The new metropolitan brought with him his "lovers" and soon complaints began to be made against him from all quarters. The Catholicos himself transmitted six such complaints to Metropolitan Nikoloz for reply. The accused Metropolitan "took measures" to seek out those who had complained against him, while at the same time the Catholicos, on his own authority, gave him the right to wear a second panagia.

Simultaneously, the Catholicos is accused of allowing his own brother to wield the power of a second patriarch and, with his sister, to govern the Church of Georgia. The depravity within the episcopate is spreading also to the rank-and-file clergy. Usury, embezzlement and mismanagement have reached the point where, during the six years the Catholicos Elias has headed the Church, 5,000,000 rubles have been embezzled from the Patriarchate's funds, while the historic churches of Georgia are collapsing because of lack of renovation.

Five bishops of the Church of Georgia, alarmed by the moral and financial ruination underway, wrote the Catholicos a joint letter, begging him to compare the questions they were raising with Article 19 of the Constitution of the Church of Georgia. The Catholicos, however, at first declined to respond to this collective letter; much later he announced that it would be necessary to discuss the matter with the Plenipotentiary for Religious Affairs, in Moscow. Three days later, he told the authors of the letter that everything had been resolved and that the homosexuals would be excommunicated from the Church; but five

days later he announced that the request of the five bishops had not been dealt with by the Plenipotentiary.

"Since that time," the bishops write, "having secured for themselves your firm protection, the homosexuals are continuing their terrible deeds and the plundering of their dioceses. Metropolitan Nikoloz (Makharadze) even deigns to stoop to hooliganism and to associating with people who speculate in narcotics. Not long ago they took a statement from him in the Kutaisk militia headquarters in connection with the outrage perpetrated upon a female school-teacher; and in possession of a certain Maizer, who lives with him in debauchery, they found a large quantity of opium."

The complaints of these bishops elicited the sharp displeasure of the Catholicos, and, in one case, they were ejected from his office without ceremony; in another case, they were subjected to abuse in the Patriarchate on the part of several employes, including a woman.

At the conclusion of their presentation, the bishops demand that the Patriarch depose four homosexual bishops and send them to a monastery for penance, that he send away all his relatives from the Patriarchate who are not in holy orders, that he remove from the walls of the Didubsk Cathedral of the All-holy Theotokos his own protrait and those of his "apostles" and set up icons in their place. They also want the Patriarch to do penance for his own activities and set up a normal Synod, which would guide the Church of Georgia out of its present cul-de-sac.

The Keston News Service's bulletin adds to this report some further information, that in October of 1982, a similar letter was sent to the Catholicos-Patriarch in the name of eighty laymen who also insisted that the Patriarch send the homosexuals to monasteries and said that they had long known of this tribulation in the Church of Georgia, but had kept silence, desiring to uphold the good name of their Church in the face of her enemies. "We hope that our petition will prompt you to act to defend the Church which remains great even today," the authors of the letter conclude.

STATEMENT OF PATRIARCH DIODORUS OF JERUSALEM

In its March 16 bulletin, the Ecumenical Press Service reported, on the basis of information received from the Orthodox press in Paris, that Patriarch Diodorus, in an interview he gave, said that he sees "not the least hope of success in dialogue" with either Roman Catholics or Anglicans. His Beatitude noted further that his earlier complaint about what he considers efforts by Roman Catholics to entice people away from Orthodoxy has not changed the situation, and that before Christmas Roman Catholics "systematically visited Orthodox households" to encourage them to take part in Roman Catholic liturgical celebrations.

RETURN OF THE RELICS OF THE GREAT-MARTYR THEODORE THE TYRO TO KHOPOVO

Pravoslavlye, a periodical of the Patriarchate of Serbia, reports in its February 1 issue that, on the feast of the Protection of the All-holy Theotokos, monks of the monastery of Khopovo conducted a solemn procession in which they carried the relics of the holy Great-martyr Theodore the Tyro, which had been removed from the monastery during World War II and has spent forty-three years in the Yaska Convent. The relics of St. Theodore has been enshrined in the Monastery since 1555.

Nuns of the Yaska Convent accompanied the reliquary, which was borne into the monastery's church; there vespers and matins to the Great-martyr were chanted immediately. A choir of nuns participated in the chanting.

After the conclusion of the service, the abbot of Khopovo, the Protosyngellos Ilarion, addressed a panegyric of thanksgiving to the faithful of the city of Irigo for having preserved this great sacred treasure during a period of danger and for so many years.

For our Russian people from Belgrade, the Khopovo Monastery is fondly remembered, for during the years of the emigration the hospitality of the Church of Serbia placed the monastery at the disposal of the nuns of our Lesna Convent.

CONCERNING THE RELICS OF THE HIEROMARTYR COSMAS OF AITOLIA

The newspaper Pravoslavye, an official periodical of the Patriarchate of Serbia, reports in its February 1 issue that in Albania a rumor has spread that the relics of St. Cosmas of Aitolia (+18th cent.) were there. The Greek government then addressed a request to the government of Albania, asking permission to send a commission to investigate the authenticity of the relics, and should the rumor be found to have merit, to obtain them. About 400,000 Greeks live in southern Albania, but not a single Orthodox bishop is there who could undertake the necessary review of the facts. Of all the countries of the Communist bloc, Albania is the one most opposed to religion. All of its unfortunate citizens are categorically forbidden to manifest their religious feelings in any way whatever. A prison sentence of ten years' duration is the penalty for any open show of faith.

To the Greeks' amazement, the government of Albania unexpectedly acceded to them and agreed to transfer the relics to the Orthodox in Greece. A Greek government official recently visited Albania, and the Greek colonies in particular. The transfer of the relics of St. Cosmas was to have taken place in February.

Hieromartyr Cosmas suffered in 1779, being martyred by the Turks for his preaching activities. His relics rested in the Monastery of the All-holy Theotokos near the city of Berat.

HEAD OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH A GUEST OF PATRIARCH GERMAN OF SERBIA

Glasnik, the official periodical of the Serbian Orthodox Church (which, like the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, reaches America several months late) reports in its July, 1984 issue, that, at the invitation of Patriarch German of Serbia, Archbishop Robert Runcie of Canterbury arrived in Belgrade.

The head of the Anglican Communion was accorded an exceptionally warm and honored reception. At the airport, Archbishop Runcie was met by the Patriarch himself, his Synod and the staff of the Patriarchate. Also present to greet him were the President of Parliament, the Secretary of the Commission for Religious Affairs, and others. The Patriarch and Archbishop Runcie exchanged speeches of greeting right at the airport. The day following the guest's arrival, official talks were begun between the Orthodox and the Anglicans. The talks were conducted in an amicable tone, despite the fact that the Patriarch noted that the Anglicans were ordaining women to the priesthood and had far from unanimously removed the "Filioque" clause from the Creed. The Patriarch expressed the opinion that the ordination of women was probably a question of a temporary nature and, thus, in the future would not constitute an obstacle to the establishment of closer ties with the Anglicans. Archbishop Runcie assured the Patriarch that there were no women being ordained in England, and that there would never be. (N.B.: Archbishop Runcie apparently unscrupulously misled the Patriarch. It is highly doubtful that he could be unaware of the mood of his Anglicans, who four months earlier, at one of their general Conferences, had raised the question of priesthood for

women; at that time it turned out that, of 41 bishops, only 6 were opposed; of 131 priests, 98 were opposed; and of 135 laymen, only 79 opposed the ordination of priestesses. For more information, see our article on priestesses among the Anglicans). Women priests, they said, were only permitted in Hong Kong, because there are not enough male priests there.

Afterwards, the Patriarch held a large reception in honor of the guest of the Church of Serbia in the Patriarchate headquarters. High-ranking government bureaucrats and the civic administration of Belgrade were present.

The hospitality of the Patriarch with respect to the Anglicans extended so far that he even placed at their disposal the Chapel of the Holy Cross in the Patriarchate so they could celebrate their eucharistic service. Archbishop Runcie served, in the presence of the Patriarch and his colleagues, after which the Anglicans partook of their eucharist, as did Presbyterians and others; five people received confirmation according to the Anglican rite. Later, a recital of religious music was given by three choirs, in honor of Runcie.

Runcie and his entourage, accompanied by the Patriarch, were also received by the president of the government and parliament.

Archbishop Runcie also visited the Theological School, again accompanied by the Patriarch. The guests were greeted by a choir of students who chanted "Is polla eti despota" and the Lord's Prayer in English.

Fr. Amphilokhy, the dean of the Theological Faculty (a former disciple of the famous theologian Fr. Justin Popovich) greeted the Anglican delegation with a warm speech, in which, among other things, he said: "Greeting you, Your Grace, we lovingly venerate, in your person, the martyr's blood of St. Alban, the apostolic zeal of Sts. Patrick and Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury, being mindful at the same time, and deriving inspiration from the poetic gift of the wondrous Shakespeare."

Archbishop Runcie responded to the speeches of greeting with a lengthy speech of his own, in which he pointed out that "The Anglicans and the Orthodox have much in common in their understanding of the role of the Church and the people. People form the Church, but the Church makes the nation. But we know from our history that abuses may come about. Sometimes the Church may fall into the self-enclosed circle of its own history, starting to serve nationalism more than the people. Here the ecumenical movement can set us aright and set before us a broader horizon of the plans of God, while the heritage of Christian divisions exists to incite contemporary antagonism."

Bidding his guest farewell at a formal banquet, the Patriarch greeted the English Ambassador Scott, saying: "The divine service which His Grace served in our Church of the Holy Cross, the presence at it of the distinguished people of your religious community, the communion of them all, has produced a remarkable impression upon me. I watched with enthusiasm the conduct of Mr. Scott before communion. Knowing what the bishop signifies in the Church, he received holy communion on his knees. This was very reassuring."

The Patriarch gave a number of parting gifts to Archbishop Runcie and his entourage, and Runcie himself gave the Patriarch a donation towards the construction of the new wing of the Theological Faculty in Belgrade.

This is by far not the first such ecumenical encounter organized by the Church of Serbia, alas. From the official periodical of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North & South America, The Orthodox Observer (21 Nov. '84), the World Council of Churches organized an encounter of the Commission on World Mission & Evangelism at the Diocesan

Center of the Serbian Church near Hildesheim, West Germany. In the course of several days, the Serbian church of the Dormition of the Mother of God was used for daily ecumenical services with the close cooperation and support of the host of the meeting, the Serbian Bishop Lavrentije of Western Europe.

A NEW PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS IN THE U.S.S.R.

Kuroedov, who has persecuted the Church in Russia for many years, has gone into retirement, apparently because of his advanced age; in his place the 50-year old Konstantin Kharchev has been appointed.

MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE APPOINTS NEW REPRESENTATIVE TO THE W.C.C.

The Orthodox Observer, official periodical of the Greek Archdiocese in America, reports that the Moscow Patriarchate has appointed as its representative to the World Council of Churches in Geneva Bishop Sergy of Solnechnogorsk, who is barely thirty-five years of age. He now replaces Archpriest Vitaly Borovoi, who has occupied that position since 1961. Archpriest Borovoi has been appointed Vice-President of the Patriarchate's Department of External Affairs and has been enrolled among the clergy of the Patriarch's Cathedral of the Theophany.

ANGLICAN PRIESTESSES

In November of last year, a General Convention of the Anglican Church took place in England, at which the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood was raised openly for the first time. The majority of the votes (41 bishops for, 6 against; 131 priests for, 98 against; 135 laymen for, 79 against) decided that it was essential to take steps toward the ordination of women to the priesthood. However, despite such a numerical advantage with respect to Conference members who desire the ordination of women, partisans of this outrage maintain that at the next Conference, in 1986, they will scarcely manage to win the two-thirds necessary to enact this resolution, which, in order to become law in England, must pass all three legislative chambers of the Synod.

In passing such a resolution, the Anglican Synod did so against the advice of its own head, Archbishop Robert Runcie, who considered it to be "unwise", although he is now convinced that the controversy over the question of the ordination of women has reached its apogee and that it is inevitable; but he would not like to see it become a reality, having in mind that Anglicans "have a duty not to be seen to be acting in abrasive and unfraternal disregard of very large Catholic bodies with whom we share the very fundamentals of the Faith...." The fact that some Anglican churches ordain women and some do not reflects "a tentativeness about so radical a change which makes it much easier to defend, explain, and commend to Orthodox and Roman Catholics.... The ordination of women by the Church of England would make the Anglican position considerably more absolute and might undermine this experimental quality," he noted.

Archbishop John Habgood of York enunciated his own indecisiveness with regard to the other point of view. He called the debates "the wrong debate at the wrong moment," although, in his opinion, the introduction of this question for the consideration of the Synod "would be a crushing blow to a cause in which I believe."

The first Anglican woman was ordained in Hong Kong in 1944 on the pretext that there were not sufficient clergymen after the War; the second was also ordained there, in 1971. Ever since women have been ordained in various countries, wherever there are Anglicans, yet not in England itself. In 1975, the General Synod affirmed that "there are no fundamental objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood," yet then, and again in 1978, this decision did not become law.

NEW HEAD OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Phillip Potter, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, has submitted his resignation, and is replaced in office by Emilio Castro, who was born in Uruguay in 1927. Castro was baptized a Catholic, but became a Baptist in his youth. On completing his seminary studies in 1950, he became the pastor of a small Methodist parish in Bolivia, and afterwards was transferred to other South American countries. He speaks German, English, French and Spanish fluently.

In an interview given to the press, to the question as to how he envisioned the role of the Orthodox in the W.C.C. in the future, Castro replied that "The Orthodox churches need to be recognized in their distinctives as one main branch of the total Christian church. It is true that they represent one family, one spiritual attitude, a common doctrine—and as such they bring a very old tradition that is fantastically useful for the younger churches in the Third World and also for many churches in the West who have lost track of their tradition.

"Although the Orthodox have already assumed a fair participation in the Central Committee and other committees, in its day-to-day operation the W.C.C. is almost unavoidably Protestant. A fundamental challenge before us is to get the number of Orthodox staff members in the W.C.C. to a point that does justice to their belonging and participating in the Council. I hope that this could not only give us a greater appreciation of tradition, of history, but also help to create a greater awareness, feeling, sensitivity to the churches in Muslim countries.

"My dream is that the Orthodox will be fully represented in all areas of the W.C.C.'s life, bringing their contributions and at the same time risking themselves to be penetrated by the total ecumenical encounter."

The attempt to draw the Orthodox into a closer intimacy with ecumenism using as bait the promise of a more active role in the workings of the W.C.C. will probably meet with great sympathy on the part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The new General Secretary of the W.C.C., according to a report in the Washington [D.C.] Times, "with W.C.C. resources, will help establish socialist states everywhere." The Rev. Dr. Carl McIntire, a well-known anti-Communist activist, is of the opinion that "Under his leadership he gives to the Soviet churchmen, the Russian Orthodox and Russian Baptists, the support they need as they actively build their so-called classless socialist society." McIntire holds that Castro represents a much greater danger for the free world than his predecessor, Philip Potter.

A DAY OF PRAYER

The newspaper Russkaya Zhizn' (Russian Life) published the announcement that President Reagan decreed that Thursday, May 2, was to be kept as a "national day of prayer" in the United States.

In declaring this, he said: "We are all the work of God's hands, and each of us individually, throughout the entire land, must offer prayer unto God."

ECUMENICAL CONSECRATION OF A CHAPEL IN ROME

The Ecumenical Press Service reports in its January 31 bulletin that in Rome there has been consecrated a chapel dedicated to St. Henry, a Bishop of Uppsala martyred in the 12th century. The chapel is located in the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

Participating in the divine services were Lutheran Archbishop John Vikström and Orthodox Archbishop Paavali (Paul) of Finland, as well as the Roman Catholic Bishop Paul Verschuren.

The ecumenical service, apparently composed by Protestants, did not fit at all within an Orthodox framework. It commenced with a reading from the prophecy of Jeremiah (31: 31-34); then Psalm 134 was sung, after which followed a reading from the Epistle to the Romans (12: 1-10).

The Gospel according to St. John (16: 23-26) was read in Finnish and Italian, after which Archbishop Paul of Finland provided a "meditation." Then, all participants in the prayer service read the Nicæan Creed (without the "Filioque") and followed it immediately with the Lord's Prayer, which Archbishop Paul read himself.

The prayer service concluded with a blessing and the singing of a final hymn.

After this remarkable service, the participants were received by the Pope of Rome, who remarked that there had never before been an occasion for the heads of several different churches from the same country to visit the Vatican.

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM PERMITS WOMEN TO ENTER THE RABBINICAL RANKS

In mid-February of the current year, the Council of Conservative Rabbis decreed that women could be ordained to the position of rabbi. During the voting, which was conducted by written ballot, it became clear that 636 rabbis were in favor of the change, as opposed to 267 against. Eighteen women currently study at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, but Amy Eilbery is, apparently, the first to be ordained. Rabbi Alexander Shapiro, President of the Rabbinical Council, has stated that "I believe that we are about to enter into a whole new, rich era. I am extremely happy, and it is my prayer that those who opposed this decision will join us in making this historical moment a time of reconciliation." The decision of the Conservative rabbis was reached only after ten years of debate.

This resolution, however, widened the divergence between Conservative and Orthodox rabbis. Rabbi Hersh Ginsberg, director of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis in the United States & Canada, stated that this decision is in no way a "great step" for the Orthodox, because the Conservative and Reform rabbis have long been leading thousands of Jews astray. "According to Jewish law," he said, "Reform and Conservative men can't even be rabbis, nor can divorces, marriages and conversions performed by them be considered valid....They have continually done everything to break down the law, which says that even an Orthodox woman can't be a rabbi."

The question arises of itself: What exactly are Conservative Jews, then?

A NEW COUNCIL FOR ROMAN CATHOLICS

In late January, the Pope of Rome announced that he intends to convoke a new council in the near future. This council would review the decrees of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). As is well known, this council introduced major changes in the area of the catechism and the practical life of Catholics.

Josef Cardinal Ratzinger (of West Germany) remarked on this subject, that at present the spirit of the church has passed from "self-criticism to self-destruction.... It is incontestible that this period has been decidedly unfavorable for the Catholic Church." He explained that of themselves the resolutions of Vatican II were not bad, but that their interpretation and implementation embodied the belief that "everything which is new or presumed new" would "always and anyway be better than what already exists."

As one might expect, conservatively disposed Catholics rejoiced

at the Pontiff's wish, but liberals were terribly disturbed. Conservative Catholic Paul Johnson, who has written two historical works on Popes John XXIII and John Paul I, said "One of the purposes of this synod would be to remove some of the dangerous illusions and mythology that have grown up around Vatican II."

The Pope has announced that Catholic bishops from all nations will be present at the council, as well as representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Vatican officials have been unable, or unwilling, to answer the question as to which of the Orthodox would attend the Catholic council.

The Pope's conservative intentions, however, could meet significant opposition among the episcopate, although formally a council among the Catholics is merely an advisory body, and the Pope has the right to ignore any of its decisions completely.

DIAKONIA CEASES PUBLICATION

The Catholic periodical Diakonia, the purpose of which was to bring Orthodox and Catholics closer together will print one issue in 1985 to complete publication for 1984, after which it will cease publication, according to its editor, the Jesuit priest George Mahoney.

The cessation of publication of this magazine, which has at times had a harmful effect on poorly informed Orthodox people, is necessitated because of financial difficulties.

BAPTIZED BY MISTAKE?

The parents of a seven-year old boy Robert Roffman (the Catholic Maria Isabel Castrillo and the Jew Barry Roffman) divorced in Florida. The child stayed at times with his mother, at times with his father, while the divorce proceedings were underway. At a convenient moment, the Catholic mother had the child baptized. This subsequently became known to the father.

Barry Roffman demanded of the Catholic Archdiocese an immediate annulment of the baptism, on the grounds that his son was raised as a Jew and at the time of his baptism did not understand what was going on.

The father's demand was successful. In September of last year, he received an official communication from the Archdiocese, in which he was informed that the baptism was annulled and that "the priest was not aware that the mother had told the child that the baptism would place a shield over him so that he would not go to hell. Nor was he aware that the child considered himself to be Jewish." The annulment of the baptism was made on orders from Archbishop Edward McCarthy. The priest who baptized the boy stated that he thinks that this is the first case known to him of a baptism being declared null and void.

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STATE OF THE ST. NICHOLAS PARISH IN TEHERAN

During his stay in New York, Archimandrite Anthony reported to the Synod of Bishops on the situation of Russian people living in Iran, who belong to the parish of St. Nicholas in Teheran.

As is apparent from his report, the situation of Christians in that land of fanatic Moslems has become particularly difficult. All women without exception must wear the "charda", a floor-length, shroud-like garment which covers the entire body. All teaching (including Catechism) must be conducted in the Persian tongue. No teachers with such capabilities have been found among Christian missionary groups. As a result, the regime has sent textbooks of its own version of the Catechism (not a translation of an existing catechism) to all schools. The Catholics have lodged a protest, and the regime has had to withdraw its demand.

The Ministry of Religions is appointing Moslem principals to Christian schools. In September of 1983, the Ministry issued a catechism in which the doctrine of the Savior is set forth in accordance with the teaching of the Koran. A translation of the Bible has been made into Persian and printed in Hong Kong, but the regime will not permit it to be distributed in Iran; an attempt to publish a Bible in Iran itself have also proved fruitless.

A little chapel belonging to our Church has had to be closed at the demand of the government; the cross atop its dome has been removed. Its icons and everything else possible have been transferred to St. Nicholas church, which, thank God, has not yet been touched.

In the absence of a resident rector, our faithful gather in church to pray, reading the services and the typical psalms, chanting as much as they are able.

It has become as difficult to leave Iran as it is to leave the Soviet Union. It is permitted to take out only personal items (clothing, linen, toiletries, etc.). The Iranis forbid the removal of money and valuables. A sizeable indemnity must be paid for the privilege of leaving.

The largest Christian group in Iran is the Armenians, who excite the suspicions of the Irani authorities in particular; for they continue to preach in Armenian, and the regime fears their openly expressed national character.

SYNOD BOOKSTORE MOVES

The Synod Bookstore, which has since its inception been located on the third floor of the Synod Building, has now moved to more spacious quarters on the basement level of the Building. Its business hours remain unchanged. A certain amount of disorder is an unavoidable circumstance, for which we apologize to those who visit us. We hope to have everything in order very shortly.