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MEMBERS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD:

AWAKE! COME TO YOUR SENSES!

**OUR CHURCH IS SUFFERING
SHIPWRECK!**

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CHURCH NEWS
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THE AGONY OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

In connection with the tragic events of the criminal seizure by the Moscow Patriarchate of the Monastery at Abraham's Oak, the international press, the Internet and e-mail innumerable accounts were published, often describing the events from personal points of view and, therefore, not always accurate. Consequently, due to the amount of material received regarding this case, the editorial office of "Church News" decided to publish mainly official information or that which seems to be reliably correct.

Perhaps readers of "Church News" remember that in 1995 {Issue # 5A (48)} we related the very disturbing situation of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, which resulted in very strained relations between Chief of the Mission, Archimandrite Theodosios, a sympathizer with the Moscow Patriarchate, and Abbess Juliana who opposed it. Even at that time, instead of giving her full support, the Synod of Bishops intended not to remove a pro-soviet Chief of the Mission, but the Abbess, who was defending the basic positions of the Synod. Only due to a storm of protests from different sides was the Synod forced to let the Abbess stay on (until the next convenient moment) and even to replace Archimandrite Theodosy with Archimandrite Bartholomew, who started to cooperate with Mother Juliana.

In 1994 (it seems) the Synod of the ROCA sold a piece of real estate belonging to the Palestine Orthodox Society in which was the Tree of Zacheas. At least this is what was reported by the Russian language newspaper "Novoye Vremia" ("New Time") published in Jerusalem (# 23/97). At present this question is under investigation by the POS's lawyers. News of the loss of Jericho plot became known only in the 1995. In February of 1997 Bishop Anthony (Grabbe) while meeting with Arafat's representatives in connection with the seizure of the land containing the Tree of Zacheas, accidentally found out that the Chief of the Mission, Archimandrite Theodosy, already had concluded an agreement with the mayor of Hebron, to "rent" large plots of land around the Abraham's Oak for 99 years for a lump sum of \$140,000. After receiving a copy of the mayor's letter addressed to Archimandrite Bartholomew, Bishop Anthony immediately, through Fr. P. Holodny (charged with overseeing the Mission's financial affairs) forwarded it to the Synod of Bishops, at the same time offering the Synod his full cooperation in the event of a legal suit to defend this place. The Synod of Bishops did not honor him with any reply. Hoping to in some way to direct concern of the Synod of Bishops to this matter, the editorial office of "Church News" sent a copy of the same letter to the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Archbishop Laurus, but here again there was no reaction. The Synod of Bishops also in no way reacted to the seizure of the Zacheas Tree and its handing over by Arafat to the Moscow Patriarchate, although it was, without doubt, aware of this.

Between the appearance of the Moscow Patriarch at the gate of the Convent on the Mount of Olives on the Holy Spirit Day (June 15th) and the seizure of Abraham's Oak nearly 3 weeks passed. The brave Mother Abbess spent them in Hebron, staying there almost alone, with only a few nuns, one invalid monk and Fr. Andronik, constantly being threatened by the Arab police. In spite her efforts during all this time to get in touch with the Synod, it pretended not to exist. As it was discovered by one of the priests, who took pity on the hopeless state of Mother Juliana, that Metropolitan Vitaly (at the peak of the tragedy developing in Hebron) went on vacation... in France. The Deputy Secretary of the Synod, Bishop Gabriel, due to family circumstances stayed in Australia, and the Secretary of the Synod, Archbishop Laurus himself could not advise on how to get in touch with the Metropolitan and in general showed a very limited interest in this matter. Only when Hebron was irrevocably lost, did there (in absentia of the Metropolitan) appear, very characteristic of the Synod of recent days, an "Urgent Directive to All the Priests and Faithful." These directives were written in English only, had no date and outgoing number and instead of a genuine signature by Metropolitan Vitaly a facsimile in Russian was affixed! It was sent out immediately after the seizure of Hebron on July 5th.

The directives stated that the priests, after Sunday Liturgy, were to serve a moleben and then reprint and hand out the copies advising how to write protests to American senators and congressmen. To whom this moleben was to be served and what petitions were to be said was left to the invention of the individual priests.

However, as if having second thoughts, *exactly a month later* after the first "urgent directive" on August 5th the Synod office sent out to all the parishes a "petition for the Augmented Ectenia of molebens or the Liturgy". The priests received without any covering letter a sheet with following text:

"We also ask Thee, our Lord and God, to help us and our brethren, the residents of the holy monastery which is in Hebron, and to return to us our property, so that our brethren, expelled by the authorities at the instigation of servants of the church who trampled on conscience and fear of God, might live there again.

"We also ask for forgiveness of our transgressions for the sake of Thy mercy and to return our property, the holy monastery in Hebron, which was unjustly seized, so that in it again would be elevated the prayers of our brethren, glorifying Thee our God, glorified and worshipped in Holy Trinity."

Throughout all these actions, or more accurately this criminal inaction, of the present leadership of the ROCA it is evident that it totally ignored the very basic principles of its own existence. It has forgotten that the holy confessor Patriarch Tikhon anathematized the Communists and all those who collaborate with the godless authorities. During the first glorification service for the new Martyrs and Confessors of Russian Church, the Synod's protodeacon read this Patriarchal epistle from the ambo. This anathema was never lifted. And the Moscow Patriarchate never mentions it,

while the present leadership of the ROCA pretends never to have heard it. This, although for a good ten years in each of the services to the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia there is chanted at Vespers: "Weeping, sadness and woefulness: behold the scroll of Hezekiel, which filled your soul, Holy Tikhon, our patriarch. Let us now hear also your voice: brethren, archpastors and pastors, call your children to defend the Orthodox Church. Let the destroyers of the churches of God hear your fiery word... by the authority given to us by God, we anathematize you. O terrible everlasting excommunication! Behold the anathema, which can be lifted by no one! Behold the patriarchal boldness!" This service was composed by Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco, who at present sees no obstacles to unification with the Moscow Patriarchate. Metropolitan Anastasy's testament, which at the time made was made widely known -- now considered to be outdated -- states:

"As far as the Moscow Patriarchate is concerned and its hierarchs, since they are in close and active voluntary union with the Soviet Government, which openly confesses its complete godlessness and which urges implantation of atheism among the Russian people, therefore the Church Abroad guarding her purity, should not have any canonical or prayer or even social relationship with them, at the same time leaving each one of them to final judgement by a future Council of the Free Russian Church."

As is well known, there has been no Council of the Russian Church which would judge hierarchs who collaborated with the godless government. Objections, on the pretext that now the Church is free and everything has changed for the better, can be accepted only on the basis of a desire to ignore the actual situation and with the goal of uniting with the Moscow Patriarchate under any conditions. For example: it is common knowledge that all the churches in the Kremlin and the large monasteries do not belong to the Moscow Patriarchate, but are government owned museums, with whose agreement the Patriarchate occasionally is permitted to hold services in them. The Moscow Patriarchate continues to confess the Sergianist heresy, which was condemned in 1927 by the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia as well as by the ROCA. It has signed the so-called "Balamand Union" and remains an active member of the WCC, which represents all the existing heresies in the world. The goal of this organization is to unite all the Christians and by the year 2000 to establish "one world religion." Now there are even non-Christians participating in this organization.

In 1979 priest G. Yakunin managed to send abroad a copy of a report by the Deputy President of the Council for religious matters, V. Fourov, who presented it to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Fourov divided the whole episcopate into three categories (the main bishops of every group listed by name). In the first group are:

*"The ruling Bishops, who by words and deeds testify not only loyalty but also patriotism toward the **socialist** society, strictly observing the laws about cults and bring up in this spirit the clergy and faithful. are conscious of the reality that our state is not interested in elevating the role of religion in society and, understanding this, do not show any special effort in order to spread the influence of Orthodoxy among the populace. Among them can be included: Patriarch Pimen, the Metropolitans: ALEXIS OF TALLIN (the present Patriarch since 1990), Youvenaly of Tula, Pallady of Orlov, Sergius of Odessa, Joseph of Alma-Ata; the Archbishops: Nikodim of Kharkov, Pitirim of Volokolomsk, Meliton of Tikhvin, Jonathan of Kishenev, Gregory of Mukachevo, Alipy of Vinnitsa, Leonty of Simferopol; the Bishops: Jonas of Stavropol, Platon of Voronezh, Nicholas of Perm and in recent times, also Metropolitan Seraphim of Krutitsa."*

Thanks to the same Yakounin, we learned a whole number of KGB agent code-names for those collaborators with the godless government and, in particular, we know now that the agent code-name of the present "patriarch" is "Drozdov"!

Is not it astounding that the majority of the hierarchy of the ROCA would make such an effort to unite with Moscow Patriarchate, ignoring the testaments of the three former Chief Hierarchs and closing its eyes to the fact that the present Head of the Russian Church is nothing but a very large scale KGB agent?!

A steadfast woman Abbess Juliana, Arab by nationality, does understand something our Russian hierarchs do not want to understand, and who instead of honoring her for defending, at the risk of her life, the basic principles of existence of the Church Abroad, managed to accuse her of "disobedience" and began to persecute her.

When the tragedy of transfer of the property of the ROCA was completed, only then did the Synod of Bishops send to Jerusalem a large committee chaired by... Archbishop Mark, who is a main agent active in completing the plan to unite the ROC with Moscow Patriarchate! He was joined from various places (supposedly to negotiate with Arafat the return of Abraham's Oak, but as is evident from future documentation, just to apologize to Arafat): Bishops Gabriel and Kyrill, Archpriests Potapov and Larin (Archpriest V. Lukianov fell ill and could not go) and even the Protodeacon E. Burbelo. The arrival of former Chiefs of the Mission, Archimandrites Alexis and Theodosios was also expected.

During a conversation of the editors of "Church News" with two prominent mitered archpriests of the Church Abroad on July 5th, both priests tried to assure us, that there is no reason to be alarmed, because both are "in immediate contact with Jerusalem" as well as among themselves and will take all the necessary measures to save Hebron!

It seems that the priest of the Church Abroad, Archpriest A. Lebedev took upon himself to be a spokesman for the Synod of Bishops on the Internet. On July 7th, in name of the Secretary of Synod of Bishops, Archbishop Laurus, he published the following press release:

"On the morning of Saturday, July 5 (Jerusalem time) the civil and armed forces of the Palestinian Authority arrived at the Russian Holy Trinity monastery "Abraham's Oak" in Hebron. This monastery is the property OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA, an American legal church body, duly incorporated under the laws of the State of New York, U.S.A. quartered at 75 East 93rd Street, New York City, N.Y. 10128, Telephone (212) 534-1601.

"The armed forces demanded the occupants of our Monastery vacate the property "within an hour and a half". Upon their refusal, brute force was employed, resulting in the hospitalization of the Abbess as well as bodily injury to other monastics.

"One of the occupants, a cleric of our Church, an elderly, sick man, was not permitted to leave and is being forcibly detained. We are unable to communicate with him and are concerned for his welfare.

"This action is in flagrant violation of international law and we urgently appeal to our United States officials, both at home and in Israel, to take whatever legal steps necessary to redress this moral outrage and return our property in Hebron to our legal monastic residents.

"Archbishop Laurus, Secretary, Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. July 7th, 1997."

The very same Archpriest A. Lebedev on July 19th, 1997 made through the Internet an announcement to the press which stated regarding the committee chaired by Archbishop Mark:

"...The Synodal Commission in the Holy Land reported to the Synod of Bishops that during their meeting with the President Arafat on July 12, Archbishop Mark expressed his displeasure over the refusal of a small group of our monastics at 'Abraham's Oak' monastery to allow the Patriarch of Moscow into the grounds of Monastery. *The Synodal Commission expressed to President Arafat its apologies for this incident and explained to him that during its spring session, held in New York on May 13th, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia instructed the administration of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem to admit to its holy places the Patriarch of Moscow during his visit to the Holy Land, and treat him with dignity and respect. Unfortunately, this directive was followed only in part.*" (Emphasis by "Ch.N.")

In a letter to President Arafat, the First Hierarch of our Church, Metropolitan Vitaly, wrote the following:

"We deplore the fact that as a result of the disobedience to the Synod of certain members of our Mission, Your Excellency feels aggravated, and we sincerely ask you to accept our most humble apologies. We will, in turn, take disciplinary action against those responsible for this improper behaviour, and see to it that such incidents will never be repeated." (Emphasis by "Ch.N.")

It is simply impossible to believe that such an disgraceful letter in the name of the First Hierarch of the ROCA addressed to a Muslim, who desecrated an Orthodox Church could be signed indeed by the Metropolitan himself! Is it not possible that his secretaries affixed to this outrageous letter a facsimile without his knowledge?

As a result of these events Abbess Juliana on July 4/17th, the day commemorating the Holy Imperial Martyrs, wrote to Metropolitan Vitaly the following letter in Russian on the Mt. of Olives Convent stationery:

"Your Beatitude, Holy Vladyka: Bless!

"I am now writing you a recapitulation of the events to which I was a witness. I had heard of the Synod's decision that we were to receive Patriarch Alexis II and his group, so that they could serve a *pannikhida* for Archimandrite Antonin. [Archimandrite Antonin Kapustin, Head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem from 1865-94, had been responsible for purchasing most of the land owned by the Mission in the Holy Land.] But I acted according to my conscience. I, personally I, refused to deliver the speech to the Patriarch, since, standing there before the television cameras, I would have disgraced myself before the whole world!!! As far as I can recall, the text of the written greeting went something like this: 'We greet you not as the Patriarch of All Russia, but as the guest of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Diodoros.' *This seemed to me absurd.* Any sort of greeting is, after all, still a greeting; and while I stood there holding the piece of paper in my hands, the reporters would have put totally different words into my mouth. *And by the very nature of the affair, I would have been obliged to take his blessing.* By greeting him, even if insincerely -- out of obedience, *I would have acted against my conscience.* We have hanging here on the wall the *Ukaz* of the Synod of Bishops of April 19, 1994, which I quote verbatim: 'The clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate and other jurisdictions are not permitted to perform any services whatsoever on the territory of our monastic communities (i.e., they are not to don an epitrahillion, perform lities, molebens, etc.).'

"QUESTION: When, at what time, was this standing *Ukaz* abrogated? Since when do we have dealings with the Moscow Patriarchate? After all, this was the arrival in the Holy Land of representatives of the ecclesiastic hierarchy on whose conscience are tens of millions of tortured and murdered Russian clergymen and laymen. The days of their sojourn in the Holy Land are days of mourning. Just recently, only six months ago, you wrote in your letter to Vladyka mark: 'My three predecessors, the Metropolitans of blessed memory, have precisely and clearly indicated to us the correct path. I am merely striving to hold to their instructions and to continue to follow the true, uncompromising path.'

Holy Master, one should not blame Vladyka Barnabas alone, as Archbishop Mark and his secretaries at Gethsemane are doing now, a month after the event, thus attempting to blacken his name before the whole world. It was my personal decision, since I have my principles, my policy, which I have always adhered to, and which had always been professed by our Church. This is not simply my own opinion; there are many people, both abroad and in Russia, who to this very day do not wish to have any contact with the Moscow Patriarchate until she repents. Many, both from abroad and from Russia, anxiously begged me not to receive them [the Patriarch and entourage].

"Fifty years ago, by deceitful means, his predecessor of the same name, Alexis I, divided the convent at Gorny [in the New City of Jerusalem]. He placed Abbess Antonina in the Soviet side. Our church was shut. We lived with them like that for three years! And then we were forced to flee, flee in the night, to flee wherever our legs would carry us. *I cannot forgive them for Gorny -- the cradle of my monasticism.*

"In like manner, (before the present incident in Hebron, when the frenzied women soldiers dragged me along the floor like some criminal), *they not only offered me, but at first for a long time sought to convince me, and then threatened to use force to compel me to live together with the Soviets in peace and harmony!!*

"These are people of a spirit foreign to us, yet... it is interesting that from among those who accompanied Vladyka Mark, one respectable and venerable figure from Synod lost his self-restraint, and in the hearing of all expressed himself thus: '*They didn't beat them enough!!!*' All of our woes here in the Holy Land began with the visit of the Patriarch Alexis and his group on June 12. One Igumen of the Church Abroad, Fr. John Magramm, 'by chance' found himself at the Lord's Tomb at seven in the evening, when the Greeks were receiving their Guest. He has no excuse.

"According to Vladyka Mark, he learned of all that had taken place only on the eve of his arrival here, and then only from the newspapers and from those not directly involved, not from his fellow hierarchs. He abandoned everything to come here and save our position; his diocese, the monastery and a series of feast days of his churches -- the Imperial Martyrs, St. Sergius of Radonezh, the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God. The Head of the Mission and I met him. He is staying here with us at Eleon. On the third day Vladyka Kyrill of San Francisco arrived; he too is here at Eleon, where the Head of the Mission, Fr. Bartholomew, and his chancellery are located.

"We are awaiting Fathers George Larin, Victor Potapov, and Eugene Burbello. But for some reason, for some inexplicable cause, everyone is conducting business at Gethsemane (at trapeza Vladyka Mark even apologized to all that he is seen here in passing) -- except for the Head of the Mission. They do sometimes come here to pay calls on the latter.

"We learned that for two days now the Fathers George and Eugene have been staying at Gethsemane. They supposedly brought forty kilos of the Mission's papers and documents. For some reason these papers are not being returned to the chancellery of the Mission at Eleon, to their proper place, from which they were removed by someone at sometime. They [the documents] are being examined in Gethsemane, whither the two hierarchs and the head of the Mission himself descend each day. His chancellery is practically empty: there is *nothing* in the files!

"How can we believe that all this took place without the knowledge of those who are working so intensely behind the back of the Head of the Mission appointed by you and the Church? (Vladyka Kyrill arrived in order to give the group a more weighty appearance. But he is not well-informed concerning this matter, and by his nobility of soul and by his upbringing he is ill-suited for arguments and unpleasantness. And the Potapovs, Larins and loud Burbello won't give him an opportunity to speak anyway.) Was not all this, which is now taking place on the occasion of the so-called 150th anniversary of the Mission, [the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission which opened in Jerusalem in 1847] planned long ago? They very much wanted to draw us together with the Moscow Patriarchate -- despite our own wishes -- and therefore at the last session of the Synod they strove so intensely to obtain the ukaz that all our monasteries should receive the Soviet Patriarch, and 'over a cup of tea' at that.

"And now that this plan has miscarried, that we naturally did not want to meet with them (even Vladyka Gabriel, in parting, said that he would not permit them to cross the threshold of the Synod building -- would *you really* allow them to, Vladyka?) -- well, now a way out of this predicament, caused by the fight in Hebron and arranged by order of the infuriated Moscow Patriarchate and Arafat, has been found. And now this group which is hastening this rapprochement is compelling you to ask forgiveness of Arafat, i.e., *by this means you are giving Arafat the green light to transfer our property to the Moscow Patriarchate. You are being compelled to apologize, to discredit your authority, before the very ones who have inflicted blows and insults upon your own representatives in Jerusalem, Fr. Bartholomew, upon the monks, the abbess, and the sisters.* Is then the path to reconciliation strewn with beatings, insults, and abuse? Holy Master, this blow was struck not at us, but, in your person, at the entire Diaspora at the head of which you stand! It is *they* who should make a prostration to the ground before you and ask forgiveness. To this I should like to add that those surrounding you give you false information; they seek to frighten you.

"In summary, this is how we perceive all that has taken place:

"Their original plan miscarried on the Monday of the Holy Spirit. When the armed soldiers and Patriarch Alexis entered the monastery, Evseev (the traitor-novice) alone remained of that group which had prepared this 'peaceful reception' (to quote the Synod's decision) or unification. Evidently they were not expecting us to come there, since Hebron was not mentioned on the Patriarch's program. *Evseev (the traitor-novice) was counting on not being the only*

one of them there. Post factum we learned that he had often received the Head of the Soviet Ecclesiastical Mission and Fr. Gury of the Moscow Patriarchate, that he had often received the Russian Ambassador, that he often chatted on the telephone with Abbess Anna, and that he had paid visits to her at Gethsemane. Our fortuitous presence at Hebron prevented all these people from coming there for the arrival of the Patriarch. And Evseev, being a mere novice, did not dare to ask the Patriarch to receive the entire community and himself under his guardianship on the basis that there were no Russian monks in the Russian monastery. There are Americans, Australians, Frenchmen, etc. Following the unsuccessful visit of the Patriarch, Evseev did not accept the ukaz of the Head of the Mission concerning his transferal, did not permit him to cross the threshold of his cell, and even dared to be rude to him.

"On the Monday of the Holy Spirit the Moscow Patriarchate did not arrive to seize our own real estate from us; she acted as the sovereign owner. On July 5, forty-eight hours before the seizure of the monastery by storm, it became clear at the Land Registry Office in Hebron, that in February of 1997 a warrant of power of attorney had been submitted to that office by Patriarch Alexis in the name of Sergei Ivanovich Vasnev, i.e., the Head of the Soviet Mission, Fr. Theodosy. Abbess Anna had received a telephone call from Sergei Ivanovich (Archimandrite Theodosius) and had informed the Synod, without saying a word to her immediate superior, the Head of the Mission [of ROCA].

"Holy Master, in light of the above, the affair is clear to everyone in the Holy Land: how do your letters to Arafat and to Patriarch Diodoros appear now, with the proffered distress over the unsuccessful reception of Alexis II, with your deferential assurance to them that those guilty will be punished and that such deplorable events will not happen in the future? Apart from the censure of our firm stance -- following the example of the many millions of Russian martyrs before the representatives of the pseudo-Patriarch, these letters give assurance to any conspirators that for the future they can act unimpeded.

"Holy Master, these letters have astonished everyone in the Near East. The result being that, in official circles where our Church was until very recently regarded for her courage, she has now lost her holy face.

"Holy Master, can it really be that all is over, and that there is no more hope of returning to our Church the spirit of confession according to which she lived and raised her children until this very day? Return it to Her, return it, Vladyka! We are perishing.

"Your Beatitude's servant, Unworthy Abbess Juliana, and Sisters"

After not receiving any answer from the Metropolitan to her letter, (or even from his Secretary on his order), Mother Juliana on July 8/21 again wrote Metropolitan Vitaly the following short letter:

"Your Beatitude, Holy Vladyka: Bless!

"I urgently ask you to respond to the questions posed by me in my letter to you of July 4/17, since I very much need your instructions in deciding problems which face us here daily. Vladyka Mark's presence here is not clearing the situation up, since he does not inform either the Head of the Mission or us what sort of measures he is taking, and he keeps everything a secret.

"I ask for your holy prayers and blessing. Your Beatitude's servant, unworthy Abbess Juliana, and Sisters."

Evidently Mother Abbess did not receive any answer to this letter either.

On July 12/25th Abbess Juliana widely circulated an English language OPEN LETTER TO ALL ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS, quoted here in its entirety and exactly as written:

"Dear Friends in Christ!

"We have received many messages regarding the present crisis in our holy monasteries, [sic] everyone seems dismayed but also supportive of us: however there is naturally confusion and we hope to clear up what we can by this explanation. As time passes we are realizing that under the simple but savage and illegal seizure of our Hebron monastery lies a more complex web of intrigue in high places which cannot be unraveled completely yet but which is obvious. Though caught in its snares, we do trust that God will bring truth to light in His own [sic] time; meanwhile we understand this much:

"1. Before leaving Russia to visit the Holy Land the Patriarch of Moscow said openly that he intended to take over the Holy Sites which have continuously belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. This alerted us and we resolved to guard these Sacred Places carefully as the official stance of the ROCA has repeatedly re-affirmed that, as written in the Ukaz of our Synod of April 19, 1994, "THE CLERGY OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO CARRY OUT ANY KIND OF DIVINE SERVICE (that is, put on an epitrahilion, perform a litiya or prayer service, etc.) ON THE TERRITORY OF OUR MONASTERIES.

"2. Therefore, when the Moscow Patriarchate appeared at the gate of the Convent of the Ascension with his entourage including hierarchs of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem and television cameras, and requested entry for the purpose of conducting a prayer service at the tomb of Archimandrite Antonin, Abbess Juliana, flanked by

Vladyka Varnava and Archimandrite Bartholomew, Chief of the Russian Mission [to Jerusalem of ROCA], simply told him that she could not open the gate to him. She could not have done otherwise in good conscience without scandalizing all who trusted in the integrity of the ROCA nor could she submit to be shown on TV reading a 'welcome' to a Patriarch -- and taking a blessing from him -- with whom our Church is not in communion.

"HOWEVER; WHAT WE DID NOT KNOW WAS THAT ON MAY 13, '97, METROPOLITAN AND THE SYNOD REVOKED THE PREVIOUS UKAZ AND INSTRUCTED THE MISSION IN JERUSALEM TO 'ADMIT THE PATRIARCH TO OUR HOLY PLACES, TO TREAT HIM WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT AND GIVE HIM TEA'! That this was a well-kept secret seems clear in that when a Sister inquired of Vladyka Mark regarding rumors that Abbess Juliana was to be punished, [asking,] 'Why? Are we in communion with Moscow?' Vladyka Mark, who had arrived suddenly, assured her that 'we are not.' It is interesting therefore that yesterday (July 11/24) before leaving us Vladyka said that the Ukaz had been revoked. Confusing, is it not? There is more.

"3. We are puzzling over faxes sent by Metropolitan Vitaly regarding the violent seizure of the Hebron Monastery. To the Apostolic Delegate, Mgr. Nougente, to Mgr. Sabah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and to the Armenian Patriarch Mankooian, he wrote for support in this time of 'illegal seizure and inhumane and brutal maltreatment of our monastics, etc.' While to Patriarch Diodoros and to Arafat in very different style, humbly begging pardon for the 'disobedience of some members of our Mission' and promising punishment of them.

"Certainly very contradicting [sic] messages regarding the attack incited by the Moscow Patriarchate and accomplished by Arafat's armed thugs!

"In sharp contrast to the many messages of support and encouragement we are receiving from all sections of the Orthodox Christian world, we are surrounded here by inexplicable hostility and slanders which are beyond belief, especially coming from clergy and monastics whom we would expect to display, if not open support, at least fear of God! Some examples: Metropolitan Vitaly, who surely knows better, has said of Abbess Juliana that she is 'very emotional and has no diplomacy and doesn't speak the truth!' He also says that she 'must be replaced.' We have kept the Metropolitan fully informed of the happenings here and can only assume that those persons near him are misleading him with lies for their own purposes.

"Bishop Varnava returned to France soon after the episode at the gate of the Mt. of Olives Convent, having shown support for the Abbess's decision not to admit the Patriarch. Bishop Kyrill of San Francisco was our guest for a short time but did not become involved in the conferences held daily in the Gethsemane Convent. For two weeks Vladyka Mark attended these and on occasion the Chief [of the Mission] was present but not usually. Although both hierarchs were guests of Abbess Juliana, they rather ignored her to spend entire days in sessions with Abbess Anna of Gethsemane and others of similar antipathy toward her. One of Vladyka Mark's few 'efforts' in our Convent was to forbid Abbess Juliana to receive or make any telephone calls regarding the situation, saying that he would handle them himself. It also transpired that Abbess Anna intervened in these calls. During this time the monks who had been beaten and driven out of Hebron Monastery were also required to be present at the meetings held by Abbess Anna and they confirmed that everyone there showed hostility toward Mother Juliana, presumably for 'interfering in the plans.'

"It is most unpleasant to report such a situation but it is necessary to present the truth insofar as we have been able to observe it ourselves. At this point it appears inevitable that these mysterious 'plans' will result in great and regrettable changes here in the Eleon Convent. For instance, it seems likely that the present Chief of the Russian Mission will be replaced by Archimandrite Alexis [Rosenthu] (now in Australia). In the interest of truth it is necessary here to remark that many among our Sisters have suffered from him when he was here before and will run from here if he returns. Father Theodosy has earned the same reputation and both of these men will be very useful in the service of antichrist, whose eager servants are so busy preparing for his arrival in his capital city.

"FINALLY, Abbess Juliana and the Sisters who share her pure Orthodoxy and her love for immortal souls will have to leave this convent so loved and cared for, with deep sorrow and compassion for those who must remain. We beg your holy prayers for them and for us who must continue to follow Christ. May we all pray as He did in His suffering, 'Father, forgive them FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO!' "

A postscript to the above in the hand of Mother Juliana:

"12/25 July,

"I had [sic] phone call from Met. V. who said that 'the Greeks (Patr. is not here, he is in Greece) & Arafat want them (Synod) to take me & Fr. Barth. out -- we are evicted already! A Moslem interferes in our Synod's decisions. I said, 'Many will leave with me.' 'let them' -- It is a very strange and difficult to understand situation, sure, the time of Antichrist is at hand! We thought it is far away. No! We do need financial help to take our books & tickets, maybe go by ship back to my beloved Chile or where? I think 12-15 people will go with me. Pray for God's will be done! I am sorry for the rest of the sisters. Abb. Juliana"

Abbess Juliana in her open letter refers to two former Chiefs of the Mission, Archimandrites Alexis (Rosenthu) and Theodosy (Clare). Each of them, with their departure, left behind a very sorry memory. Archimandrite Alexis did not hesitate to enter nuns' cells, open their chests of drawers and turn upside down their lingerie. He forbade the nuns to wear certain articles of their lingerie.

Archimandrite Theodosy not only persecuted Abbess Juliana for her opposition to his politics of communications with the Moscow Patriarchate, but in October 1995 the Archpriest Michael de Castelbajac, Priest Quentin de Castelbajac and Protodeacon Ivanoff-Trinadzaty were writing to Metropolitan Vitaly that "Abbess Juliana deserves rather to be rewarded and thanked, and not dismissed," because if at that time "we did not loose Hebron is due exclusively to her efforts and often visitations of this holy place". Probably intending to hand over Hebron to the Moscow Patriarchate, Archimandrite Theodosy let 5 or 6 monks from Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra live there. He was the one who asked for a loan of \$250,000 from a bank (which has deposits from the Moscow Patriarchate) in order to repair a wall around convent on the Mt. of Olives. In 1995 he petitioned the Synod of Bishops to remove Abbess Juliana and replace her with Nun Moisseya. Some time ago the Israeli police made it known that they list her as an agent of the former USSR. In addition, she was a member of the Synod commission which met with Arafat regarding the Hebron case. It is very possible that this particular nun will be appointed Abbess to replace Mother Juliana.

The Chief of the Mission, Archimandrite Bartholomew via e-mail related many details of the brutal seizure of Hebron, namely that monastics had their hands twisted, were beaten, thrown to the floor of a truck or forced into passenger cars. All of this did not prevent the Moscow Patriarchate from making statements to the press that "the members of the Palestinian security forces were "acting properly" and that "all the keys from premises were voluntarily given to the authorities present to be transferred to the [Patriarchate's] Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem." This was said on July 15th by a spokesman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for Foreign Affairs to a reporter of "Commersant-Daily". Not wishing to left out of the false statements of the Moscow Patriarchate, the General Secretary of the Jerusalem Orthodox Patriarchate, the Metropolitan of Lydda, Timotheos, on July 17th, 1997, published his own press release entitled "Russian monastery in Hebron is returned to its legal owner -- the Moscow Patriarchate". Metropolitan Timotheos shamelessly asserts, regarding the eviction of representatives of the Church Abroad from the monastery of Hebron, it should be noted that *"after the voluntary handing over of the keys to the local authorities, they were offered the opportunity of leaving the monastery. However, they refused to follow directions, which forced more drastic measures be taken against them, which were carried out by the security forces in order to execute the decision of the leadership of the Palestinian National Authority."*

The church located near Abraham's Oak was completed, in fact, only AFTER THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION with offerings from Russian refugees and consecrated in 1921 by Patriarch Damian and Metropolitan Anastasy, later the second First Hierarchy of the ROCA. The monastery building was already built.

The assault on the inhabitants of the Monastery and bloody face of Mother Juliana were shown around the world on the TV news channel CNN, reported in all the international press and only the Moscow and Jerusalem Patriarchates are not ashamed to insist before the entire world that the keys from the monastery were "voluntarily handed over" to Arafat's forces by the owners!

All the international press which reported the tragedy in Hebron unanimously stressed that this was an extremely important victory of Alexis Ridiger. Some publications just reported the events and some offered their congratulations to the Moscow Patriarchate.

Metropolitan Timotheos, in the name of Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, congratulated Archimandrite Theodosy, the head of Moscow's Mission and asked that his congratulations be forwarded to the Moscow Patriarchate. The head of "The Orthodox Church in America", which gained its "autocephaly" (recognized to this day by no one else from the same Moscow Patriarchate, also joyfully greeted the victory of the Patriarchate in his letter to Alexis Ridiger of July 11. Only the Serbian monastery in Visoki Dechani expressed through the Internet their sympathy with the ROCA from Bishop Artemije.

On July 3, 1997 Archpriest Alexander Lebedev published on the Internet a short historical essay on the establishment of the ROCA, based upon the Ukaz of Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20, 1920, #362. Upon finishing his explanations. He quite correctly notes, that "the ROCA did not 'arrive' in Russia in 1990! It has always been an integral part of the Russian catacomb church (in fact, many, if not most of the catacomb communities commemorated the First Hierarchy of the Church Abroad at their services." Yet he immediately confesses that "there is much more constructive dialogues going on between the ROCA and the MP (at all levels) than some of these posts would indicate. The Archdiocese of Germany and Great Britain has held a series of round-table discussions with participation by bishops, priests, and laymen from both sides. There is a ROCA protodeacon now completing his "candidate" studies at the Moscow Theological Academy (with the blessing of his bishop). Many priests of the ROCA correspond by letter, e-mail, or telephone with MP priests, and a great number of contacts occur during visits to Russia by Synodal clergy and laity. The decision of the Synod to receive Patriarch Alexei as part of the delegation of the Jerusalem Patriarch at our churches in Jerusalem is another indication of attempts at reasonable solutions. This does not mean that there are no difficult questions to resolve."

Among the various material received by our Editorial Office was the following letter:

"To His Eminence, His Beatitude Metropolitan VITALY, the First Hierarch of the RCA from Protodeacon Germain IVANOFF-TRINADTZATY", dated July 14/27, 1997.

"Your Eminence, Dear Vladyka Vitaly, bless:

"Dear Vladyka, you know my feelings for you.

"For me you are our BANNER. And for us, the rank and file, there is nothing more painful than to see our Commander, the First Hierarch, in error.

"We know WHAT YOU think, and we are grieved when we see how you are being MISINFORMED, how you are being MISLED, how your authority is used, tricking you into signing INSANE documents on the pretext of some kind of 'higher diplomacy.' This diplomacy is familiar to us from a long time.

"While passing through Lyons you told me that Abbess Anna should be punished because she admitted the false-Patriarch Alexis. And at this time you expressed your deep personal convictions, based upon our uncompromising relations toward the treacherous false-Patriarchate. Your inspiring Paschal Epistle was based upon this healthy confessional view of the situation.

"But WHAT is evident from the letter to Arafat which was given to you to sign? We 'apologize' to him for... breaking down the doors of our church, assaulting our monks and nuns and handing over our property to Soviets! And after all that we are assured that all those who showed a uncompromising stand against the false-Patriarch will be punished.

"Rest assured that this letter is ALREADY in Moscow and soon will be known to the entire Orthodox world and we will become the laughing stock throughout the world... It pains me to write this, but this is the very truth, which we have to realize because only in this way can we recover. A mistake was made, a grave mistake, but it does not mean we have to persist in it.

"Tomorrow the Meeting of the Synod of Bishops will open. Probably the very same disinforming powers will be influencing and persuading you to appoint a new Chief of the Mission and replace Abbess Juliana.

"Fr. Alexis Rosentul is an outstanding iconographer, a good rector in Cabramata he attracted to the church a multitude of young people, but, as the late Archbishop Anthony of Geneva used to say, one should not appoint a "cowboy" to a convent. He is one, and another of his characteristics is that he is very compliant toward the Moscow Patriarchate, that is exactly what the ENEMIES of the Church Abroad want and in particular what we SHOULD NOT PERMIT.

"I am not acquainted with Fr. Archimandrite Bartholomew, but I know only that he bravely showed himself to be a uncompromising member and representative of the Church Abroad. In our [spiritually] destitute times, this is not a common occurrence and so one should keep him as the apple of one's eye.

"Abbess Juliana is respected and loved by her sisters. Is it possible that we want to destroy the Mt. of Olives Convent, a bulwark of our Church, with our own hands?

"If we renounce being the BEARERS OF AN IDEAL, we are going to lose the right to exist as a free part of the Russian Church. We will turn into some kind of pitiful Evlogians, the dangerous foreign branch of the Soviet Church. [Metr. Evlogy was the leader of a schismatic movement in Europe before World War II.]

"As you have written so often, nothing in the life of the Church is accidental. Everything happens according to Divine Providence. THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW, July 16/29th, is the 70th anniversary of the Declaration of Loyalty [of Patr. Sergius to the Soviet atheists]! I wrote an rather long article in our French magazine 'La Voie Orthodoxe.' I VERY MUCH HOPE that the Synod will officially mark this 'jubilee.' We must utter a thunderous word, a forceful word. The events near Jerusalem give us an opportunity for it. Is it possible that we will mark these 70 years of pandering to the Sergianist Patriarchate with the punishment or removal of the UNCOMPROMISING Archimandrite Bartholomew, Abbess Juliana, Sister Marina and those with them? May this not happen!

"Not New York, but Jerusalem is the center of the world. The history of our Church is being written there TODAY. We will be respected, we will be taken into account, only if we remain true to ourselves. And if for the sake of a 'higher diplomacy' we abandon our positions, we will be despised and we will deserve it.

"Dear Vladyka Metropolitan, I do not want to say anything insulting, but we must look straight at reality and have no right to deceive ourselves and others: if the Synod reaches a decision that is not in accordance with our conscience and the testaments of your great predecessors but to please some sort of interests, then the VERDICT OF THE HISTORY will be severe. In the history of the Church it will be concluded that during the tenure of Metropolitan Anthony, Anastasy and Philaret the Church Abroad stood as an uncompromising herald of the TRUTH OF THE CHURCH but in the later days... the Church Abroad did an about face of her position and began to punish those who defend the anti-Sergianist policy. MAY THIS NOT HAPPEN!

"Understand, Vladyko, that I know perfectly well the purity of your convictions, but unbiased history as well as many of our enemies will bring forth JUST SUCH A VERDICT. Do understand that with this letter I want to defend all of us, our Church and YOU PERSONALLY. It can be easily imagined how your authority will topple in the consciousness of

so many people both in Russia and Abroad (already now many do not understand our decisions and actions in Russia) if, God forbid, your name were to be connected with the abandonment of our positions in this Jerusalem matter.

"I assure you, that everyone with whom I happened to discuss this matter, not a single member of the Church Abroad, understands what the situation is there, what is at issue. One thing is CLEAR TO EVERYONE: Archimandrite Bartholomew and Abbess Juliana deserve the warmest praise from the supreme church authorities for their defense of the truth and the interests of the Church.

"I will say openly: I and many others cannot understand, when there exist so many jurisdictions, Churches, trends, why all those who tirelessly want us to draw near to Moscow and Constantinople do not themselves join them and leave us in peace. It would seem that the existence of the Church Abroad indeed disturbs many. And glory be to God!

"Asking for your holy prayers, I remain your obedient and loving disciple and of one mind with you, Protodeacon Germain."

Sadly, this emotional letter of Protodeacon Ivanoff-Trinadztaty to Metropolitan Vitaly has come at least some ten years too late. He does not understand that even in 1986 the Church Abroad became a victim of the cleverly conceived KGB plan to gradually wear away all her basic principles and now we are witnessing the results of this secret work of the previous decade: the tragic collapse of all the principles and moral standards which have been willed to her by three former First Hierarchs. As the main executor of this satanic plan one should name Archbishop Mark, who long ago showed his pro-Moscow sympathies. Unfortunately, the criminal inaction of a whole series of bishops and clergy of the ROCA helped Archbishop Mark to achieve a splendid victory for the Moscow Patriarchate. It is quite clear that Metropolitan Vitaly does not agree with this new line of action, but due to his advanced age and also his character, he is not in position to fight for the principle ideology of the Church Abroad and now, disgracefully has abandoned all her basic positions.

The fundamental change of relations of the Church Abroad with the Moscow Patriarchate, supposedly was dictated by "higher diplomacy" and had in view to better the relationship with the Jerusalem Patriarchate, which invited Ridiger, and with which Metropolitan Vitaly in 1988 was seriously impolite by not visiting the Patriarch and asking his permission to serve in the Mission's churches. However, Archbishop Mark and those hierarchs with him managed to anger the Patriarch. They briefly visited the Patriarchate, but never met with the Deputy Patriarch, since the Patriarch was absent, and did not get permission to serve in his patriarchate. As a result, the General Secretary of the Synod threatened in the name of Patriarch, that all the clergy of Mission might be suspended. The end result of this "higher diplomacy" brought Mother Juliana into the hospital and then exile to Chile, assaults on a number of monastics and the probable departure of 12 to 15 nuns with Mother Juliana, the deposing of the Chief of the Mission, Archimandrite Bartholomew who, because of all the stress was also placed in hospital!

Appeals by Mother Juliana and Protodeacon Ivanoff-Trinadztaty to Metropolitan Vitaly have had no effect whatsoever. A Jewish paper, published in Jerusalem "The Jerusalem Post" dated August 4th, very briefly stated that: "The Abbess of the Russian Orthodox Convent on the Mt. of Olives, who refused to admit Alexei II Patriarch of Moscow, when he visited together with Patriarch Diodoros I has been relieved of her duties and sent back to Chile, the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA said this weekend... Archimandrite Bartholomew has been relieved of his duties at his own request. Bishops Barnabas of Cannes who has been responsible for the expatriate church also has been relieved of that responsibility."

What an horrible and inglorious end to the Church Abroad!

FROM LIFE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX FREE CHURCH

The Diocesan magazine "Suzdal Palomnik" ("The Suzdal Pilgrim") in its issue # 32 published an interview, granted by Archbishop Valentine to reporter V. Troshin in connection with decisions of the last Council of Bishops of MP.

Question: Your Eminence, could you please clarify for our readers your feelings toward the latest events of the Russian Orthodox Church and in particular, its decision deposing you?

Answer of Archbp. Valentine: For me, the Moscow Patriarchate is a heretical organization and actually, I do not care of what those heretics decide on their, that is to say, "robber councils", where they raise and deliberate some questions. Their decisions affect me as much as would decisions of heretic "non-Christians". All of it is an "empty shot". I very well understand, what stands behind it and by who's directives all of it was done. Well, the Lord will be their Judge.

Not to depose me would mean to ignore those who greatly desired it, those with whom I did not enter into agreement, did not go on to betray Orthodoxy, their perfidy.

In history there is no shortage of cases when heretical hierarchs and the mighty ones of this world "deposed" even such great hierarchs as St. Archbp. John Chrysostom, St. Athanasios, St. Patriarch Tikhon. By the way, not so far back they were afraid even just to mention the name of Patriarch Tikhon, because he was a vigorous "anti-Soviet", and

now they canonized him and pray to him. Also Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky was "deposed" by the heretic Sergius Stragorodsky. Therefore, I sort of feel flattered that I also happened to be in such lofty company.

Question: Vladyka, and why in turn should the Synod of Bishops of the Free Russian Church not depose this heretic Alexis Ridiger? Even more so, that, as far as I know, you were tied with him by more than a decade of friendship, that to say, from times, when in Estonia he was an archimandrite and you a monk in Vilna monastery?

Answer of Archbp. Valentine: Yes, I knew him for 25 years. One cannot definitely say that we were friends, but in many cases he helped me restore churches and build rectories. For some reason I feel, that he remembers my "gratitude" to the present day, which he was urging me to express. This "gratitude" was in a form of valuable antique miter, also antique and valuable panagias, crosses, chains, not to mention very valuable foodstuffs, which he supposedly needed in order to supply foreigners and Piukhtitsa monastery.

And as far as the deposing matter is concerned... You know, my co-brethren and co-celebrants on numerous occasions approached me as the President of our Synod of Bishops with exactly the same question. I personally feel that if we are to depose Alexis Ridiger, then not him only, but a whole constellation of bishops of "the post-Nicodemus" era. But the point is that by receiving their orders not according to will of the Holy Spirit, but from will of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the KGB, they are already defrocked according to the 30th Apostolic Canon: "If any bishop comes into possession of a church by means of secular rulers, let him be deposed from office, and let him be excommunicated. And all those who are in communion with him as well."

THE CHURCHES IN SUZDAL-VLADIMIR DIOCESE OF THE ROFC IN DANGER OF CONFISCATION

Archbishop Valentine, on April 20, 1997, mailed the following letter numbered # 64:

"To the President of the Legislative Council of Vladimir Region, Kotov B. Y.

"Honorable Vitaly Yakovlevitch;

"The Suzdal Diocesan Administration of the Russian Free Church respectfully asks you to interfere in a case which requires your decision, because it refers to a most important sphere of the community -- the general peace and harmony. Within the Vladimir Region there is a *violation of one of the inalienable rights* of citizens of the Russian Federation, guaranteed by the constitution of the R[ussian] F[ederation] and international agreements of RF -- the right of *freedom of religion*.

"During the past several years the Suzdal Diocesan Administration of the Russian Orthodox Free Church, the parishes and individual parishioners of the ROFC have suffered all sorts of oppressions and insults from the leadership of Vladimir Diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate's Archbishop Eulogy (Smirnov), who is supported by individual clergy of the Vladimir Region administration, state properties and local [church-]restoration committee. By this the RF law "of freedom of religion" is violated.

"Clergy and faithful of the Suzdal diocese of the ROFC, urged by the love of homeland, their region and its history, without any help on part of the state, with their own funds and own labors, have restored in the city of Suzdal ten churches (of Tsar-Constantine, the Holy Virgin of Sorrow, Holy Cross-Nikolsky Lazarus Antypa, Dormition, Cosmas & Damian, Tikhvin, Epiphany and John the Baptist) and also churches in the villages of Kideksha, Borisovsk, Pavlovsk Ivanovsk, Omutsk and Ves in the Suzdal region. Once again the divine beauty began to shine, our beautiful Orthodox history was revived, peace and prayers reigned in these churches restored from being ruins. But it does not please the Moscow Patriarchate and all those, who for decades have been persecuting the faithful, inculcating in our society atheism and loss of the memory of our history.

"Archbishop Eulogy throughout all the years he has been the head of the Vladimir Diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate accused us in the press sometimes of being Catholics, sometimes of Protestantism, called us schismatics, heretics, who have sold ourselves for dollars. We were threatened with being deposed and today Archbishop Eulogy even managed to threaten to 'excommunicate' not only the clergy, but also faithful of the city of Suzdal.

"But this is also not enough for him. Today, his efforts and intrigues in the corridors of the government brought upon us a danger from the Vladimir regional administration. We are accused being supposedly the invaders of those churches which we restored. These churches are claimed as an "everlasting property" of Moscow Patriarchate's administration (established by Stalin in 1943), and the faithful of Suzdal, supposedly have nothing to do with them. To our arguments, that we have spent huge amount of money and efforts in restoration of our churches, we hear that it is better to see a pile of stones, than to hand over a church to the Free Russian Orthodox Church.

"The Suzdal's Diocesan Administration of the Russian Orthodox Free Church is duly registered in the Ministry of Justice of the RF (#239) as a religious Orthodox society, independent from the Moscow Patriarchate and all the accusation against us as being supposedly 'schismatic' remain on the conscience of our accusers.

"The RF law 'on freedom of conscience' quite strongly forbids the stirring up of enmity for religious reasons. [Here the 6th, 10th and 15th paragraphs of the law are quoted.]

"Archbishop Eulogy Smirnov and the regional clergy supporting him with impunity and without any obstacles trample over these law.

"Is it that the Vladimir's Diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate has communities which lack churches? There are no such communities, but there are ruins of churches and not one of them did the leadership of the Vladimir Diocese of the MP restore. Yet it encroaches on something that does not belong to it, now with the help of the local administration.

"We do not pretend to monopolize the ownership of churches, we serve Christ and the Homeland and believe, that the enmity and hate coming from the leadership of Moscow Patriarchate in the Vladimir Diocese serve only to deepen the disagreements in society and may evoke a counter reaction and a new opposition. Who is to gain by this? Is peace worse than quarrels and enmity?

"We beseech you to take measures to bring to an end these insults to our religious feelings and the kindling of enmity and hate on the basis of religion, to stop this humiliation and restore the rights of faithful people in accordance with the constitution of the RF and the law 'on freedom of conscience.'

"Our patience is not endless and in case of a continuation of these insults and deprivation of our rights, we will be forced to turn to the Russian and international organizations for defense of our rights. We may hope that the regional organizations have more important work than the enmity toward the Orthodox people, who are concerned with rebirth of their Fatherland, its culture and monuments.

"Respectfully, the President of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Free Church,

"Valentine, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir."

In the next our issue we will cover the law concerning restrictions of religious activities of some denominations on Russian territory, which at present has not been signed by President Yeltsin. There is a grave suspicion that the Russian Orthodox Free Church will also be included among the forbidden religions, since it happens to be the only important and ideological opponent of the heretical Moscow Patriarchate.