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Corrections: On the first page in the 3rd line in the third paragraph we referred to the newspaper "Novoye Vremya." We received a copy of the article from Jerusalem and only after sending out that issue to you did we learn the paper is published in Russia.

On page 7, the second paragraph, the first sentence should read: 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 [**wrote**] 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[**this**] is due exclusively to her efforts and often visitations of this holy place."

We request that our readers note the necessary corrections and we apologize for these oversights.

Please remember that both the Russian and English versions exist only on the basis of the voluntary support of our readers. We will gratefully accept any donations to cover the costs of publishing, mailing and maintaining subscriptions to our various sources.

CHURCH NEWS
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THE VICTORY OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE ASSISTED BY ROCA ARCHBISHOP MARK OF BERLIN

On July 29th and 30th a meeting of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA was convened. The newspaper "Russian Zhizn" ("Russian Life") published on August 14th an extensive report from the Chancellery of the ROCA Synod of Bishops with the latter's version of the recent events in the Holy Land. Due to its length (almost a full newspaper page), we will not publish it, especially, since our last issue was almost fully devoted to this problem and the Chancellery's information gives very few new details. However, it has a number of very "slippery" explanations. The Jewish paper "Novoye Russkoye Slovo" also reacted to the events in Hebron by publishing on August 12th information entitled "Synod Establishes Order in the Holy Land." After a brief description of the tragic seizure of the Hebron Trinity (Abraham's Oak) Monastery in the Holy Land, the report states:

"The Synod made the following decisions:

to relieve Barnabas, Bishop of Cannes, of all his duties in the Holy Land;

to relieve Archimandrite Bartholomew of the position of Chief of the Mission in Jerusalem and direct him to Canada to be in obedience to the First Hierarch;

to relieve Abbess Juliana of her duties as Superior of Christ's Ascension Convent on the Mount of Olives, and order her to return to Chile;

to appoint Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany to oversee the affairs of the Ecclesiastical Mission and monasteries in the Holy Land;

to appoint Archpriest George Larin as temporary administrator of the Mission's affairs. After the Feast of the Transfiguration, Archimandrite Alexis Rosenthul will arrive in the Holy Land as temporary Chief of the Mission;

to send to the Holy Land Gabriel, Bishop of Manhattan, to facilitate the quick implementation of these directions."

"Novoye Russkoye Slovo" also informs us that according to "The Jerusalem Post" the leadership of the Palestinian Authority "apologized for the incident" and gave assurance that "the monastery will be soon returned to the ROCA".

Will not it be returned when due to the persistent efforts of the very same Archbishop Mark the ROCA unites with the Moscow Patriarchate? His actions as President of the Synod's Committee in the Holy Land amazingly reminded us of methods of investigative committees of the KGB and were supported by his like-minded peers carefully selected well in advance. This is obvious not only from the letter of Abbess Juliana to Metropolitan Vitaly, but also from other trustworthy sources.

A member of this Committee, known abroad as well as in Russia, Archpriest Victor Potapov in one of his interviews given to the Israeli press declared that the efforts of the inhabitants of the Monastery of the Holy Trinity in Hebron were undertaken "in violation of all our rules and regulations... And even more, *we declare outright that we consider the Church Abroad to be an unalienable part of Russian Orthodoxy and that we would like to give over to Russia everything that we have available, and in particular also here in the Holy Land*" ("Nezavisimaya Gazeta - Religii" ["The Independent Newspaper-Religions"] of July 24th, 1997).

The Synod of Bishops of the ROCA could not have published a more shameful act of capitulation before the Moscow Patriarchate!! By the way, in a number of publications, including the exclusively Jewish ones, reports were published very sympathetic to those who defended Hebron from the attack of the Palestinians and the Moscow Patriarchate, but after the humiliating Synod apologies to the invaders, they decided there is no need to defend a place which the owners themselves do not bother to defend. It is absolutely beyond doubt that the American senators and congressmen, amongst whom there is a very substantial number of Jews, would be all too happy to have an opportunity to once more pressure Arafat if they were asked for help at the right time.

As it has become known directly from Jerusalem, Archbishop Mark, whom the Synod entrusted with the oversight of the affairs of the Ecclesiastical Mission, is already again in Jerusalem and in his new position gave several orders. In particular, when two monks from the Holy Trinity Monastery in Hebron (Fathers Elias and Vladislav) expressed a desire to accompany Abbess Juliana to Chile, Archbishop Mark permitted them only to help with transporting her luggage, and then with a definite order that they return within no more than three weeks, because he had assigned them to Hebron as soon as the monastery is returned to the Church Abroad! He threatened them, that the responsibility for the Church Abroad not receiving back the monastery would be upon their consciences precisely because he has no one else to send there. Both of these monks have only Russian passports and Abbess Juliana became very concerned that they might be deported from Israel by force. Therefore, she applied to the Director of the Department of the Ministry for Christian Denominations, Mr. Uri Mor, asking him to suggest to Archbishop Mark that he not send those monks to Hebron. He promised this and at the same time expressed his astonishment that the Church Abroad would believe in the highly improbable possibility of Abraham's Oak being returned to her. Mor was also astonished that Archbishop Mark would appoint two monks with only Russian passports and who, therefore, might be very easily deported to Russia due to her friendly relations with the Palestinians.

Archbishop Mark is not ashamed to be cunning: on the one hand, he fosters among the trusting members of Church Abroad the unrealizable hope of the return of Abraham's Oak seized by the Moscow Patriarchate and, on the

other, he is not afraid to send off to the punishment of the Moscow Patriarchate two monks who happened to oppose it. It seems he "falls between two stools": having the intention of delivering to the Moscow Patriarchate all the properties of the Church Abroad, and at the same time he is trying to avoid being called simply a traitor!

When Mother Juliana left the Mt. of Olives Convent she temporarily stayed with her relatives near Jerusalem. Immediately after the Feast of the Dormition she left for Chile.

All those who would like to help her financially or write to her may do so using a temporary address: Mother Juliana, c/o Mrs. Vera Kravchenko; P.O. Box 991, Jerusalem, Israel. All her mail will be then sent to her permanent address.

It is worth noting that "The Official Publication of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad" -- "Pravoslavnyaya Rus"-- in both of its July issues *did not have literally even one word about the events in Hebron!* This magazine did not publish even the official press release of the Synod's Chancellery of August 4th, 1997. And yet, all the international media published information about Hebron including the press in Russia!

Is not the reason "Pravoslavnyaya Rus" has not informed its readers about the events in Hebron that this would prompt a number of different questions which the editors would have difficulty answering, all the more because the information from the Chancellery of the Synod has several very slippery elements?

THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND THE YELTSIN GOVERNMENT

The international media long ago noticed the close cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate and Yeltsin's government. Much space is devoted to it in connection with legislation which is about to be signed into law regarding "freedom of conscience and religious organizations." An exchange of greetings between Yeltsin and the Patriarch on the occasion of the consecration of the Church of Sts. Boris and Gleb on Arbat Square in Moscow was devoted to this theme. This close cooperation of the Patriarchate and the governmental authorities was thus demonstrated with exceptional clarity.

As a result the New York newspaper "Novoye Russkoye Slovo" on August 7th published an article entitled "The Church and Yeltsin Are Relatives -- No Joke." Yeltsin attended the ceremony of the church consecration with a large retinue. He greeted Alexis Ridiger in a speech that thanked him for his cooperation, his peace making efforts (one may not omit this even now), his educational and charitable acts. Yeltsin said: *"our cooperation will grow stronger for the benefit of Russia and no obstacles which have arisen in recent times will ever separate us."* (Italics by "Ch N")

In return, the Patriarch declared that "Rus is being built on the foundation of the faith of the fatherland" and then he addressed the issue of the law on freedom of conscience which had been already passed by the State Duma, but still not signed by Yeltsin. This law states that all religious groups not officially registered prior to 15 years ago would be considered illegal.

The draft of this legislation practically turns the Moscow Patriarchate into a state religion, while severely restricting the "freedom of conscience" of other religions. If the Moscow Patriarchate were indeed a Russian Orthodox Church and not an creature of Stalin set up in 1943, which has deceived the majority of Orthodox, and which long since professed a number of heresies, starting with Sergianism (unlimited obedience of the Church to a godless government), signed the "Balamand Union" with Catholics (while supposedly fighting against them), accepted the possibility of agreement with Monophysites and crowned all those apostasies with active participation in the Ecumenical Movement -- a concentration of all the heresies that have existed from the world's creation -- we could only hope for such a law. Yet, it will inevitably expose to attack all the dioceses of the Free Russian Church, which does not recognize the authority of the Moscow Patriarchate. Undoubtedly, the Patriarchate will immediately declare the Free Russian Church to be a dangerous sect and thus deprive her of all her churches and rectories and it will be forced again to go underground.

On June 27th, Keston News published an interview, given to them on June 24th by Priest Michael Makeev regarding the future law on "freedom of conscience and religious organizations."

Explaining to the journalist of Keston News the current situation, Fr. Michael said that if this draft were signed by the President into law, it would mean the immediate cancellation of a lease for a church in Golovine Cemetery in Moscow, since the Russian Orthodox Free Church was registered less than 15 years ago and therefore would be considered illegal. The Russian parishes in the jurisdiction of the ROCA would also be subject to this kind of attack.

According to Fr. Michael, "This legislation was passed with one goal: to enable the state to officially register only those confessions which recognized Stalin." He also said that under such a law the Church will have to live in illegal conditions and worship in the private flats of believers, because the churches will be confiscated from them and then the only "bastion" left might be the Church of Bishop Victor in Latvia. If in addition to this legislation the Duma accepts these proposals of the Patriarchate for "the restitution" of church properties, then the parishes which the ROFC gained, and restored, for example in Suzdal or other places, will be lost for the faithful who preferred to be affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Free Church rather than with the Moscow Patriarchate.

Of course, a Protestant organization like Keston News wanted to find out how he feels towards the restriction of such heterodox denominations as, for example, the Baptists. Fr. Michael Makeev answered that Russia ceased long ago

to be an Orthodox country and only a small part of the population are convinced Orthodox. (The Moscow Patriarchate pretends to a supposed membership of 80 million faithful, yet actually "this year only about 700,000 Moscovites -- about 7% of the city's population -- attended Orthodox services on Easter, the holiest day of the church calendar... My preference for church-state relations is that we not interfere with each other".

Fr. Michael thinks that the church in Golovine Cemetery (registered 5 years ago) exists only because of its distance from the Moscow center. There are 100 steady parishioners in the parish of the Martyr Tsar Nicholas. He himself is the second priest there. The rector is Fr. Michael Ardov, who just recently in his appearance on TV opposed the new law of "freedom of conscience," which evidently only the Moscow Patriarchate would benefit from as one of the government's departments.

In 1990 Alexis Ridiger -- alias "Drozdov" -- very actively campaigned for Yeltsin's election. Probably he is now being paid back for the favour he did some time ago.

Fr. Michael also informed the reporter that there are more than a hundred parishes and five bishops in the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Free Church, but he did not mention the existence in it of a hundred additional "catacomb" communities.

It is still a major question whether Yeltsin will sign the new law on "religious freedom". The Duma voted for it by 2/3 of its membership (337 affirmative votes and 5 negative). President Yeltsin vetoed this draft and returned it to the Duma for reconsideration, but certainly not out of any personal conviction. He was strongly pressured in this direction from abroad. The "Ecumenical News International" of August 6th reported that groups of Baptists, Pentecostals and Mormons petitioned President Clinton to pressure Yeltsin not to sign this law. As was published in the press, the US Senate threatened to stop all subsidies to Russia if this draft becomes a law. The Vatican also became very agitated. The Roman Pope characterized this law as posing "a real threat to the pastoral activities of the Catholic Church in Russia and to its very survival."

Earlier this month representatives of the European Union presented the Russian Foreign Ministry with a formal diplomatic note which expressed concern that "this legislation will severely restrict the religious freedom which now exists in Russia and which is guaranteed by the constitution."

President Yeltsin, when returning this draft of the new law to the Duma for reconsideration, in spite of the wishes of the Duma and the insistence of the Moscow Patriarchate to leave it as is, declared: "It was a very hard decision to make... Many provisions of the law infringe on the constitutional rights and freedoms of the individual citizen, establish inequality among different confessions, and violate Russia's international obligations"... "We cannot have a democratic society if we violate the constitution, and fail to defend interests of any minority of our citizens."

FROM LIFE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (Under the jurisdiction of the ROCA)

The bulletin "Vertograd-Inform" in its May issue # 6 (27) relates in detail the disasters experienced by the Epiphany Parish in the city of Ryazan, which the Moscow Patriarchate has persistently tried to seize.

For several years the parish was ministered to by Fr. Maxim Zuev, who enjoyed the love and respect of the parishioners. The second priest appointed to this parish, Dimitry Goltsov, was ordained within the fold of the ROCA. Using the opportunity of the absence of Fr. M. Zuev, Priest Dimitry Goltsov joined the Moscow Patriarchate and started to use every means (including breaking the locks of the church) to hand it over to the Moscow Patriarchate. Then he approached the local authorities, who demanded its return to the Patriarchate under the pretext that the parish has not been sufficiently quick nor done a good enough job in restoring this architectural monument.

At a recent meeting of the Episcopal Council in the village of Saratovskaya it was decided that another priest should be sent to Ryazan. "Yet, as is stated in their declaration, the members of the community are very sorry that for a whole month, from June 4th until July 4th, in the most difficult days for our church and its parishioners, they were visited by not one priest and were forced to keep up the fight for the church with their own means, without pastoral guidance, without worship services of full validity and with almost no hope for help."

Then the Epiphany Parish sent a messenger with a report addressed to Archbishop Lazarus which described in detail all the efforts of Moscow Patriarchate to seize the church in Ryazan. In particular, they say:

"Holy Vladyko, we again turn to you with this supplication:

1. To appoint to our church at least a temporary priest so that the community would not feel abandoned and orphaned. Since our church is in constant danger of seizure, the members of our community more than ever are in need of pastoral care: the church sacraments. The prolonged absence of a priest creates circumstances favourable for the sermons of the Moscow Patriarchate, which promises to send a priest immediately and to institute a normal liturgical life.

2. To issue an ukaz defrocking, or at least suspending, D. Goltsov who renounced his holy orders on March 5th,

- 1997.

3. If possible, to personally visit our church so as to re-establish connections with your suffering flock.

4. To inform the entirety of our Church about events in Ryazan, so that we would feel fraternal support.

We are sure, Vladyko, that you will not stay indifferent to your flock and will do everything possible to prevent this ancient church from being handed over to the heretics for desecration..."

The bulletin also published letters of sympathy received by the Epiphany parish.

The very first one, limited to a laconic expression of sympathy, is from the Secretary of the Synod of the ROCA, Archbishop Laurus, as follows: "We wish you God's help in your cause -- preservation of the church. May the Lord preserve and bless you!"

A letter by Archpriest L. Lebedev is indeed written in a pastoral and sympathetic tone.

Sympathy for the parish also came from Abbot Cyril, "Vicar" to Bishop Benjamin of Chernomorje and Kuban. One cannot but be amazed by the fact that a bishop can have a "vicar" of abbot rank. More normal would be an abbot in the position of secretary to a ruling bishop or, at least, secretary to his diocese. After expressing his sympathy (however, not in the name of his bishop), Abbot Cyril requests that the parish send him the addresses of those "organizations responsible for creating disorders for our church" with the promise to send protests.

Priest-monk Arseny from St. Petersburg responded warmly to the disaster of Ryazan Parish.

According to "Bulletin Vertograd-Inform" # 7 (28), the Epiphany Church in Ryazan was sealed shut and for more than a month there were no services held in it.

On July 20th the former rector of this church, Fr. Maxim Zuev, arrived in Ryazan and with the blessing of Archbishop Lazarus on Saturday July 26th served a moleben at the doors of the church. The arrival of Fr. Maxim very much inspired the parishioners, especially because the Moscow Patriarchate had spread rumors that he had deserted his flock and gone abroad.

Fr. Maxim, accompanied by the church warden A. Soldatov (the editor of this Bulletin) and a member of the parish, A. Shepelev, met with Mr. Florov, the director of a "scientific-manufacturing center". At this meeting it became known that Archbishop Simon, a ruling bishop of the Patriarchate's Riazan Diocese, in addition to demanding the "return" of the church to him -- a church which never belonged to the Moscow Patriarchate (established by Stalin in 1943) and was closed in 1930 -- at the same time guaranteed a complete restoration. Florov told the delegation that this case will be turned over to the courts for arbitration. The representatives of the parish showed him their plans for restoration and then he said that, if the parish is able to restore the church, the decision to hand it over to Moscow Patriarchate might be postponed.

Unfortunately, one has to note that not once did one hear or read that the dioceses in Russia under the ROCA ever made any sort of protests either to local or federal authorities. No protests are known of from Archbishop Lazarus, or Bishops Benjamin, Agathangel or Evtikhy. Also, the Synod of Bishops of the Church Abroad could appeal for help to international organizations which deal with religious persecution. They could also turn for help to representatives of American authorities to pressure the Yeltsin government. Even Archbishop Laurus, who has under his control the publication "Pravoslavnaya Rus," does not publish any details of the present alarming situation of the Church caused by the pressure upon local authorities by the Moscow Patriarchate.

But we do hear and read of protests sharply and decisively expressed only by the hierarchy of the Russian Free Church (Archbishop Valentine, Bishop Theodore) addressed to local, regional and federal governmental institutions with a demand to stop these oppressive measures (for example the seizure of a church in Udmurtia), the groundless refusal to hand over half-ruined churches and the Convent of the Deposition of the Sash of the Theotokos in Suzdal. Also His Grace Bishop Victor makes ceaseless protests, insisting that he be granted the legal registration of his diocese in Latvia, appealing with this matter not only to the highest authorities in Latvia, but also to international organizations who assist in cases of religious oppression and persecution.

WHAT DO SOME PUBLIC FIGURES EXPECT FROM THE ROCA IN RUSSIA?

An Orthodox magazine "Vozvrashcheniye" ("The Return"), under the jurisdiction of the ROCA, published information about a meeting of the "Episcopal Council of Russian Bishops" on January 12th and 13th, which was convened under the presidency of the most junior bishop in order of consecration, Michael of Toronto, a vicar of Metropolitan Vitaly. The participants were Archbishop Lazarus and Bishops Benjamin, Agathangel and Evtikhy.

The council with regret confirmed "the existence of differences of a canonical nature with the Greek old calendar Synod of Metropolitan Cyprianos of Oropos and Fili," although nowhere it is hinted what is in mind. However it is known that Cyprianos has a representative in Russia.

Among the decrees about matters of secondary import there is a curious one: "In connection with pronouncements and actions of some representatives of the ROCA, to ask the Synod of Bishops to *clearly and precisely declare its position vis a vis the Moscow Patriarchate.*" (Italics by "Ch N")

After the publication of the correspondence between Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Mark and the documentation connected with the events in Hebron, one can believe that it is doubtful if the Russian hierarchs will ever receive an answer to their request.

The bulletin "Vertograd-Inform" # 7 (28) also includes a declaration in print by Priest Stephen Krasovitzky, which he distributed under a pompous title of a "Leader of the Mission of ROCA in the territory of Russia," in connection with the seizure by the Moscow Patriarchate of the Monastery in Hebron and the assault on a priest in Dormition Church in Moscow (in Pechatniki) of which Priest Kochetkov is rector.

"It should be acknowledged with sadness," writes Priest Krasovitzky, "that the ROCA did not formulate a clear and precise relation toward the new satanic regime which enslaves Russia." Fr. Krasovitzky notes that among the clergy and lay people of the ROCA in the West there is a wide spread illusion about "changes in Russia" which supposedly might bring a "spiritual rebirth". It is timely to remember that Fr. Krasovitzky during the hottest period of presidential campaign in Russia, urged people to vote for the Communist Zuganov and expected from precisely the Communist Party a "spiritual rebirth" of the Homeland.

A SECOND MYRRH-GUSHING ICON OF THE THEOTOKOS IN BRAZIL

On August 4/17th, Metropolitan Vitaly sent to his clergy the following announcement with a short cover letter:

"Dear Father:

"Herewith I enclose a report by Fr. Constantine Busygin. It is a mercy of the Lord toward our Church, so that we would not lose heart and in this seeming isolation would feel the protection over us of the Theotokos, who through this miracle in a way is telling us: Do not fear. small flock of My Son, by His mercy I am with you"

"Signed: Metropolitan Vitaly."

"St. Nicholas Cathedral
San Paulo, Brazil
Tel-fax (55-11) 278-1004
San Paulo, August 2/15th, 1997

"To His Eminence, Vitaly, Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York, the First Hierarchy of the ROCA
from Priest Constantine Busygin, Deputy Rector of St. Nicholas Cathedral in San Paulo, Brazil

A REPORT

"Your Eminence:

Bless!

"In accordance with my promise during our telephone conversation, I hasten to describe to you the circumstances under which there was revealed to us a great mercy of the Lord toward us sinners.

"During the visit to Brazil of the [Iveron] Myrrh-Gushing Icon of the Theotokos, Brother Joseph agreed to accept from us a new icon case for the sacred Icon, at the same time, leaving the old case here. We ordered from him a copy of the Iveron Mother of God and he agreed to paint one. But so that the case would not remain empty until the new painting arrived a copy was made (on paper) glued to cardboard and covered with self-adhesive plastic. On the day of the departure of Brother Joseph to Canada we placed this copy on the original. For a whole week the case with the copy stood on analogion in our dining room, exactly where the Myrrh-Gushing Icon itself rested.

"Yesterday morning I served a Liturgy, after which I also blessed water. After dinner our maid excitedly called me (a very pious Brazilian Catholic). While the Myrrh-Gushing Icon was with us, she daily prayed before it and, after the departure of Br. Jose, she continued to come and pray before the copy, which was in the case in the same place.

"At first I could not understand what was the matter. Then she tells me: Look! there is oil on the Icon! It was hard to believe one's eyes. Indeed, from the head of the Saviour and running down to the outstretched hands of the Theotokos there was a visible stream of myrrh. Looking carefully, we noticed that the whole image of Mother of God was covered with myrrh and in some places drops formed.

"Immediately in presence of my Matushka Tatiana, a church warden of our Cathedral, Xenia Alexandrovna Karderelli, my brother in-law Vladimir Bibikov and the servant of God, our cleaning woman Eliette, I served a thanksgiving service with an akathist. Then I called Fr. George Petrenko and he immediately came here. Carefully inspecting the icon, he verified what seemed to be impossible. Father served a second moleben with an akathist which was attended by his son and members of our family who also arrived.

"Today Fr. George came again and already in the church, attended by quite a few people (during the night, after the telephone conversation with you, we tried to inform our parishioners), has served another moleben with akathist. Wonderful are the works of God! One feels frightened by such great mercy received from the Queen of the Heavens.

"In the evening we again served a moleben with an akathist which was attended by the faithful. With the blessing of God, we hope to serve molebens with akathists to our diligent Intercessor until the end of the Dormition Fast.

"Fr. George Petrenko asked me to bring the Icon to Holy Trinity Church on Villa Alpina during the next week, on Wednesday, August 7/20.

"Entrusting myself to your First-hierarchical prayers, I remain Your Eminence's unworthy servant, Priest Constantine Busygin."

In the appearance of a new myrrh-gushing Iveron icon of Mother of God certainly one has to see a special mercy of the Queen of Heaven, but one also has to note the rightful remark of Metropolitan Vitaly in his short cover letter, when he states that the mercy of God has been shown to us so that we "would not lose heart" in a seeming isolation. The latest events in our Church life abroad call for a special protection of Mother of God and Her Divine Son.

The experience of our church, specially in the last century, demonstrates that such miracles happen precisely to *encourage the small flock* in periods of especially difficult times for the Church. Thus, on the day of the abdication of Tsar Nicholas there appeared The Sovereign Icon of the Mother of God: during the first years of the Russian Revolution, all the cupolas of the Kremlin's cathedrals unexpectedly renewed themselves overnight; on the Nicholas Gates in Moscow, a rag, put up to conceal from the people the icon of St. Nicholas, suddenly turned to shreds and the Icon became visible. In the same Kremlin, for several days a rose hung on the face of an icon of the Saviour painted on the wall of one of the churches. This rose was thrown by a blasphemous Red Army soldier, who turning to the icon screamed: "Here! Hold it". We also know of mass self-renovations of icons in the churches of Kharbin and Shanghai (even those on the monuments in the cemeteries) when they were occupied by the Soviets. During the "liberation" of Belgrade by the very same Bolsheviks, in one of the main streets of the capital, self-painted icons of Christ and Holy Virgin appeared on the glass of the windows. Communists tried to wash them off, but they remained. Then they removed the glass and replaced it with new glass, but on the next day the same icons appeared on the same windows. Therefore, while rejoicing at this newly appeared icon, one has to keep in mind not only the mercy of Queen of Heaven, but also the purpose of this mercy.

THE SEVENTH CONVENTION OF CLERGY, MONASTICS AND LAY PEOPLE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX FREE CHURCH

From August 5th to 7th a convention was held of clergy, monastics and lay people from the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Free Church in Suzdal. The participants were: the presiding bishop: Valentine, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir; Theodore, Bishop of Borisovo and Sanino; Seraphim, Bishop of Suhum and Abhasia; and Victor, Bishop of Daugavpils and Latvija. There were more than 40 priests and a number of deacons present, altogether about a hundred participants.

In connection with the proposed new law on "freedom of conscience" the Convention addressed President Yeltsin, expressing its "concern about the acceptance by the State Duma of the Russian Federation of an unconstitutional and undemocratic law on religious organizations. It is obvious," says the letter, "that in event of the adoption of such a discriminatory law, religious persecutions will continue in Russia."

"Our Church is not a new and untraditional religious organization in Russia. Until 1990 we were not permitted to have legal rights. Yet, after receiving those rights, we nevertheless are severely persecuted by the Moscow Patriarchate, which summons to assist its state officials and the institutions of internal affairs. One cannot identify the Moscow Patriarchate with all the faithful in Russia. Our Church preserves the traditions of the pre-revolutionary Orthodox Russian Church and has as its members the believers who were persecuted for their loyalty to Patriarch Tikhon and for non-acceptance of the Moscow Patriarchate. From the point of view of the present law on freedom of conscience, the ROFC has the very same rights as other religious organizations. To deprive us of those rights in order to please the Moscow Patriarchate, which turned to the Communists of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and demands a 'special status' -- is equivalent to annihilating constitutional freedoms."

This letter was signed by 97 participants.

A similar letter, but with the request to "let the law of freedom of conscience be carefully rewritten" was sent to the State Duma of the Russian Federation, also signed by the 97 participants.

At the same time, the Convention adopted the following RESOLUTION:

"We, the undersigned members of the Convention, after deliberating upon a new law of freedom of conscience declare that the new draft of this law, accepted by the State Duma of the RF, blatantly violates the rights of believers. The acceptance of this law contradicts the Constitution of the RF, present legislation and the norms of international law. Confirmation of this law by the President would become a tragic error and result in religious conflicts, the forcible seizure of churches by the Moscow Patriarchate, the limitation of the rights of a considerable part of the Orthodox inhabitants of Russia. All this will undoubtedly lead to civil disobedience and unforeseen consequences.

"1. The Convention considers it necessary to address the appropriate institutions to resolve the question of the legal succession of the Russian Orthodox Free Church from the pre-revolutionary Russian Orthodox Church, together with other Orthodox Churches, dioceses and communities, not under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. Such a formulation of the question corresponds to the spirit of the Russian Constitution.

"2. The Convention appeals to clergy and lay people to widen the charitable, missionary and publishing activity in their parishes.

"3. We, the participants of the Convention, resolutely protest against the acceptance of the proposed law on religious organizations, approved by the State Duma and call upon the President and State Duma to adopt legislation which does not violate personal rights and freedom.

"4. The Convention proposes to turn to Russian and foreign organizations which defend human rights with the request to let world opinion know about the status of human rights in our country.

"5. The Convention resolutely condemns the actions of Patriarch Alexis II in the Holy Land and expresses sympathy with those who innocently suffered at the hands of the Palestinian Authority.

"The Convention expresses its full support for the brethren in Latvia's Orthodox Free Church and calls on the Latvian Government to stop discrimination against the faithful and recognize de jure ten communities of the LOFC, independent from Moscow Patriarchate."

This resolution was also signed by all 97 participants of the Convention.

The Convention also sent a special letter to the President of Latvia A. Cepanis and the Deputies of the VIth Seim of the Latvian sovereign state, asking them "with all seriousness and attention to regard the legitimate rights of believers in their country and *in practice* to carry out 'The Declaration of the Liquidation of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination against Religions or Beliefs'."

A HAPPY PHENOMENON

The newspaper of the Serbian Patriarchate "Pravoslavlje" (Orthodoxy) on June 15 published two full pages of an interview given to Reporter Jurishich by the Serbian Orthodox Hierarch, His Grace Artemije, Bishop of Rashka and Prisren.

Within Bishop Artemije's diocese is Kosovo Polje (Kosovo Field), a place sacred to every Serb which in its importance is equivalent to the Russian Kulikovo Polye. Both sites involve events in the 1380's relating to the subjugation of the Orthodox inhabitants to the Moslems. The former is the site of the Serbian defeat before the Ottomans, the latter the site of a Russian battle with the Tartars. In remembrance of the former, Serbia commemorates "Vidovdan", a holy day dedicated to its events. On this field, in a battle with the Turks the Serbian Army perished gloriously and with it the Serbian aristocracy, headed by St. Prince Lazar. On Kosovo Polje the Serbs -- in spite of horrible losses -- realized that the enemy was not invincible (as did the Russians under Prince Dimitry Donskoi in time of Batya Khan on Kulikovo Pole). St. Prince Lazar was given the choice in a vision of either winning the battle and gaining a temporary, earthly kingdom, or losing it and by perishing gaining an eternal, heavenly one. The incorrupt relics of St. Prince Lazar indicate the results of his choice and are characterized by the peculiarity that all his joints easily bend.

Bishop Artemije makes extensive use of this day as an opportunity to have church celebrations which are combined also with the national celebrations by the Serbs. He attracts a multitude of guests. At his invitation a choir comes from Valjevo and many clergy, and mothers, who have five or more children are awarded with the "Mother of Jugovichi" award. She lost at Kosovo 9 sons and her husband. There is a very poetic and beautiful epic about this whose literary quality is no less than that of the Russian epic about grieving Yaroslavna, "The Lay of Igor's Campaign".

A journalist Alexandra Yurishich asked Bishop Artemije to describe in more detail the situation of parishes around Kosovo, from where, according to Vladyka, about 100 thousand Serbs were expelled. "There are few Serbs at present, but thank God, the ones who still remain, are united into several oasis-groups and hold well together. In this region there were about 10 Serbs per hundred Albanians. As result of aggression, there are now some 800 purely Albanian villages. Near the City of Podujevo, of the former 78 Serbian villages in 1963, there are now none left.

Jurishich also said that it is obvious that the Church is doing everything possible to instill in people the ideals of St. Prince Lazar and asked him if he sees any improvements after staying on as head of the same diocese for a number of years.

Bishop Artemije very modestly replied that he sees some results. For example, for 50 long years almost no one was married and all those families lived in a state of adultery. In his diocese, the clergy started pressing for having a church weddings. In the beginning it went very slowly and with difficulty, but then people got used to this requirement of the Church and the amount of those who marry increase with each year. So, on the week of The Myrrh-bearing Women in the monastery near Prisren 173 couples were wedded, in 4 sessions, 50 couples at time. The wedding service was performed by more than 10 priests. The Bishop said he has done this now for several years.

The reporter was interested to learn how the weddings of so many couples were performed.

Bishop Artemije explained that it is done in the same manner as when a single couple is married. One priest reads all the prayers using a microphone and when the moments for exchanging rings, drinking from the same cup and putting on the crowns come, then each priest (10 or more officiating) gets 5 of his own couples and performs the sacrament. During the hymn "Isaiah rejoice" all those marrying once go around the church building, where there are put

many analogions. The Bishop radiantly noted that this is an quite extraordinary spectacle, especially on a sunny day, when the heads of 50 couples there shine 100 golden crowns.

The thoughtful journalist did not miss asking about the question of monasticism in the diocese of Bishop Artemije. Here also he could give very encouraging information.

Bishop Artemije said that, in general, male monasticism is flourishing (before World War II, Serbia had mainly convents). At Kosovo there are already 4 monasteries with 50 monks. This, as the Bishop said, is specially noticeable in Visoki Dechani in which instead of the former mere 3 monks barely subsisting, at present are more than 20, who live on their own fields and are quite well provided for materially. This monastery is on the "Internet" and is distributing and receiving information. The diocese has its own magazine, "St. Prince Lazar," and number of other publications. Booklets are printed of 20 to 30 pages in amounts of 25 thousand which are distributed by priests among the believers. In this manner booklets were published about repentance, Confession, the importance of fasting in the Orthodox Church. Those booklets became so popular that the requests are coming not only from many individuals, but also from some other dioceses. Bishop Artemije also opened a diocesan library.

He also managed to found 3 convents.

It is obvious that having as a leader such an outstanding hierarch, this Serbian diocese is developing with an amazing speed. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you." (Mat. 6:33) Bishop Artemije of Rashka and Prizren is struggling on behalf of the doctrinal Truth of the Kingdom of God and steps forward firmly against the heresy of Ecumenism and the Lord is visibly rewarding his archpastoral efforts with great success.

DIFFERENT VIEWS ON ECUMENISM IN THE EPISCOPATE OF THE SERBIAN CHURCH

In connection with the appeal of monastics of the Serbian Church to withdraw from the WCC, the monastery Visoki Dechani published a declaration, entitled "'Democracy'. Belgrade June 21-22" with the subtitle "The Bishops Have Opposite Attitudes". We print it below exactly in its original language.

"In relation to the Appeal of 280 monks to the Holy Synod of Bishops of the SOC requesting withdrawal from the WCC.

"Belgrade -- On the recently held Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church it was agreed that there is a very serious crisis in the Ecumenical dialogue. The delegation of the SOC, headed by Bishop of Bachka Ireney (Bulovich) is appointed to attend the Ecumenical conference of the WCC in Graz this month. Many think that the future attitude of the SOC about the Ecumenical Movement and its membership in the WCC will largely depend on the results of this conference.

"The Synod of the SOC has already sent its written attitude to the Ecumenical Patriarchy in Constantinople with a special request that a Pan-Orthodox Conference on this issue is convened as soon as possible.

"The Bishop of Sabac and Valjevo, Lavrentye (Trifunovich), the member of the General Committee of WCC has given a statement about Ecumenism and eventual withdrawal of the Serbian Orthodox Church from this international organization.

" 'The other members of the WCC are more active in charitable activities while we Orthodox are more insisting on liturgical and missionary issues. There are lots of things we can learn from one another. The WCC has been supporting financially the Serbian Orthodox Church. The dialogue with the Council has also given certain satisfactory results while at the same time dogmatic and liturgical traditions of the Orthodox Church are preserved. The Synod has not taken into serious consideration this Appeal because other Local Orthodox Churches should be first consulted about this matter. When everyone is looking for friends we reject them, so I think that it would be a real madness to withdraw from this organization.'

"The Serbian Bishop of Budapest, Daniel (Krstich) belongs to that group of Bishops who do think that WCC is supporting certain activities which endanger vital interests of the Orthodox Church. He said:

" 'It is impossible to accomplish the true mission of Orthodoxy unless we leave this Movement which is led by two heterodox confession -- the Protestant from Geneva and the other one from Rome. With our withdrawal from the Geneva Movement we would show our sincerity towards the Christian community. We cannot make compromise with secular culture of our age especially when certain demonic elements of that culture are present in the Ecumenical Organization. We can retain balance by conservative keeping of our Orthodox Tradition on one hand and by bold acceptance of certain new things on the other. I believe that eventual union can only be attained according to the evangelical principles of truth and not by the principle of the majority.'

Certainly, the statement by Bishop Daniel is quite acceptable, but one does not feel in it church Truth of a zealot, which we observe with Bishop Artemije.

THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE AND "THE WOMEN'S QUESTION"

From May 10 to 17th, in Istanbul a Conference of Orthodox and "oriental Orthodox" women from all continents was held, entitled "Discerning the Signs of the Times: Women in the Life of the Orthodox Church", hosted by the Ecumenical Patriarch. This is the third such conference in connection with the "Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women", which was initiated by the WCC. The culminating point of such WCC gatherings will be its next, the Eighth Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe in September of 1998. Among the 50 women delegates were also representatives of Russia and Serbia.

The Conference heard and discussed such matters as the role of women in the Church, their theological education, revision of some prayers and "practices" and also possibility of their ordination.

The newspaper of the Greek Archdiocese in America "Orthodox Observer" for July states that the Ecumenical Patriarchate itself appointed four women-theologians as its official representatives. The themes of the reports given were on women in the contemporary Church, saints as spirit-bearers and models for women, the relationship between Jesus Christ and women, women in contemporary ecumenical discussions, a spiritual understanding of the "sin" of sexism, the role of priests' wives and so on.

The conference noted a decline of interest in common social life and para-church organizations.

The delegates stressed the necessity to *continue a theological dialogue of the Orthodox Church with the "oriental Orthodox Churches"* (here are meant the heretic Monophysite Churches).

Various Church rites were criticized (especially the prayers on the 40th day after giving birth and the churching of infants), prayers connected with still-born babies, abortions and restriction of access to the sacraments for biological reasons.

There was very serious discussion of the question of reinstatement of deaconesses. The delegates decided that "the incorporation of deaconesses in the Church will contribute to the atmosphere of love and learning."

A newspaper of the Serbian Church in America, "Path of Orthodoxy" also for July, noted the protests of women against the 40th day prayers, and cited the conviction that "these practices and prayers do not properly express the theology of the Church regarding the dignity of God's creation of woman and her redemption in Christ."

The problem of the ordination of women is addressed rather carefully in the following recommendation: "*Some participants at the consultation welcome the idea that an inter-Orthodox conference on the ordination of women to the priesthood be organized where women and men will have the opportunity to examine this topic in greater depth from both the theological and spiritual perspectives.*"

Upon invitation of the WCC, the women delegates petitioned their Churches to have women participants at the Eighth Assembly number at least 50 %.

After a service conducted by the Ecumenical Patriarch, which was attended by all the delegates, he himself proclaimed it open and then some time later sent a telegram to the General Secretary of the WCC, Konrad Raiser, in which it was stated that: "*It had been a blessing and joy to receive the participants. Their discussions were very valuable and will prove beneficial for our holy Orthodox Church.*"

The newspaper "Orthodox Observer" states that "*His All-holiness had also noted the call for the full restoration of the order of women deacons. This recommendation echoes a similar one coming from the Inter-Orthodox Consultation in Rhodox in 1988. The order of women deacons is an undeniable part of tradition coming from the Early Church. Now, in many of our Churches, there is a growing desire to restore this order so that the spiritual needs of the People of God may be better served. There are already a number of women who appear to be called to this ministry.*"

It is interesting to find out, how soon will we see deaconesses (and probably also women priests) within the Ecumenical Patriarchate... This is exactly how the Episcopalians started a female priesthood, and they by now have a substantial number of women "priests" and even several women "bishops".

On August 14th, the Orthodox News on the Internet gave information on the arrival during this autumn of Ecumenical Patriarch and his schedule. He will stay in the USA for a whole month. On his schedule there is a four day stay in Washington, including a visit to President Clinton, then on to Baltimore, San Francisco and a number of other cities. In San Francisco the Ecumenical Patriarch will meet with Cardinal William Keeler. The Patriarch will also head a prayer service at the Roman Catholic Basilica of the Assumption in Baltimore. As is noted in the information, this will be "the first time an Orthodox patriarch will preside at a service in a USA Catholic Church."

"This visit will constitute an encouragement for all Christians to work for closer cooperation," said Archbishop Spyridon, who only in June of last year made an excellent report to the diocesan convention of the Greek Archdiocese in USA, giving a very good characterization of Ecumenism and how depressively it affects neophytes in Orthodoxy who become scandalized when they observe of the True Church in a relationship with a heresy, they just leave.

It is clear, that for him beautiful words are one thing, but practice quite another.

"THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES" AND THE WCC

While in Yerevan (Armenia) the Ecumenical Patriarch at a press-conference on July 21st declared, "We are sorry indeed about the hasty decision of the Georgian Church... [There is] no doubt that things orthodox churches do not

agree with occur in the World Church Council. But we must be there to correct those mistakes." At the end of the conference, the Patriarch Bartholomew expressed his hopes that the Georgian Church would again return to this Council.

The World Council of Churches became very alarmed by the sudden and unexpected by them movement of several Orthodox Churches against Ecumenism. This concern (not without a shade of threat) was expressed by the General Secretary of Conference of European Churches in Graz, Jean Fischer. He said that the recent withdrawal of Georgian Church from the WCC was a demonstration of "the gravity of the struggle fundamentalist forces are waging within that Church." Then Fischer added that "the threats of suspending relations or withdrawing from the CEC family are mentioned too frequently for us to ignore them or disdain them." He also said that "the Anti-ecumenical forces were organizing, consulting with each other" throughout Europe and were using "confusions and untruths to attack and weaken the ecumenical movement."

He pointed out that in 1994 and 1995 the Conference of European Churches was forced to lay off 7% of its employees because of lack of funds. Now the situation has stabilized and 1997 will conclude without a deficit.

Despite the fact that a meeting with the Roman Pope did not materialize, Alexis Ridiger went to attend a Conference of European Churches in Graz (Austria). As was reported by the "International News Ecumenical" of June 25th, "Patriarch Alexei was very interested in meeting the Pope, but pressure was applied from church circles abroad and in Russia for the Moscow Patriarchate to withdraw from the plan."

According to information published in the newspaper "Orthodox Observer" of the Greek Archdiocese in America for August, the Moscow Patriarch fainted near the end of a three hour service in the Vienna's Russian Orthodox Church and only after 45 minutes did he recover enough to participate in an ecumenical "vespers service".

A BIT MORE ABOUT THE APOCALYPTIC HEIFER

In our April issue # 4 (60) we reported that an American farmer, Jackson, in the state of Mississippi raised a special breed of red heifer which interested several rabbis in Israel. Now, the same newspaper "The Jewish Press" of July 11th reported that in Israel itself there was discovered a red heifer which generated a lot of discussion since its qualifications have to be approved by a group of rabbis if it is to be recognized as appropriate.

As is obvious from an article in "The Jewish Press" by Rabbi Abraham Stone that for the duration of the entire history of Israel, until the destruction of the Temple, only 9 heifers were sacrificed and burned. Jewish tradition ascribes the preparation of the ashes of the first to Prophet Moses, the second, according to tradition, was by Ezra, the restorer of the second Temple, then there were seven more until the destruction of the Temple and the next one is to be prepared by "the King Moshiach, may he speedily be revealed" (that is, the King Messiah). As the paper stated, "May we all see the speedy revelation of Moshiach who will prepare the 10th heifer in the new and eternal Beit Hamikdash [the Holy Temple] in Jerusalem."

According to Stone's description, the ashes from the heifer were placed in three different places: one part was put in the outer side of Temple's wall, another was stored on the Mt. of Olives and the third was distributed among the 24 divisions of priests who used it for purification purposes. These ashes were preserved in a special container for immediate use. Ashes of the heifer prepared by Moses were to be used only by the High Priests. To them were added ashes from the other heifers. The preservation of the ashes explains how it was assured that the priest who prepared the new ashes could be sprinkled with the ancient ash. The High Priests took special care to make sure that ashes were preserved from the very first heifer, called by the Jews Moses' Heifer.

HOMOSEXUALS AND CONTEMPORARY "CHRISTIANS"

During the last decade, the sodomites have persistently worked to obtain not only legislative equality of rights but also the priesthood. This horrible contemporary phenomena forces "Christian" denominations to react to it in various ways.

The Roman Catholics began with the permission to have special parishes who minister to these perverts with "understanding". Now, nearly all confessions have begun to deliberate about the possibility of having them ordained into the priesthood.

At the end of July the newspaper "Boston Sunday Herald" reported that at the Episcopal Church Convention in America it was proposed to recognize same-sex marriages. This proposal failed to pass by only one vote. This encouraged America's perverts so much that they decided to try their luck again on the next Convention.

On July 26th, another newspaper, "The Philadelphia Inquirer" states that the Episcopal Church officially apologized to 2 1/2 million Episcopalian homosexuals and lesbians "for years of rejection and maltreatment by the church... The 72nd General Convention apologizes on behalf of the Episcopal Church to its members who are gay or lesbian... We look forward to these words of apology being translated into deeds of tolerance and inclusion." This

Convention resolved to continue further studies of the possibility of same-sex marriages. The attending clergy voted 56 for and 57 against!

A little more encouraging information was published by the magazine "Newsweek" of July 28. It reported that the General Assembly of Presbyterians condemned sodomy and called upon the 6 1/2 million members of their sect to preserve fidelity in marriage and boycott the Walt Disney Company for its promotion of homosexuality in its films.