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CHURCH NEWS
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AN IRREPLACEABLE LOSS FOR THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD

During the night of October 17/30-18/31 the guardian of the miraculous myrrh-streaming Portaitissa Icon of the Theotokos of Iveron (celebrated on Nov. 24), Jose Muñoz-Cortes, was viciously murdered in Athens. Known throughout the Russian diaspora, he belonged to a family of hereditary Spanish diplomats and was born in Chile, where his father served as ambassador. When still quite young he was attracted to the Orthodox Church in Santiago, became closely acquainted with Archbishop Leonty and converted to Orthodoxy. He is survived by an elderly mother, two sisters and a brother, who is an ambassador to one of the Scandinavian countries.

Since the time when Jose in a miraculous manner received the icon (to which he was very attracted) from one of the sketes on Mt. Athos and which after a few weeks started to exude myrrh, Jose became the faithful guardian of this sacred icon and took upon himself the podvig of wandering. Never leaving the icon alone, for 15 years he constantly traveled with it, visiting parishes of the Church Abroad which are scattered not only over many countries, but even various continents. Once he said that it was very rare for him to spend 3 consecutive weeks in his own apartment in the course of a year.

These travels, which he was constantly undertaking for the comfort of the faithful, very seriously undermined his health, although he appeared to have a Herculean constitution. Suffering from a severe case of diabetes, a heart condition and a chronic middle ear infection, he overcame all these ailments and would readily accept any invitation to visit parishes (and sometimes even very sick individuals) and without objection went wherever he was asked to go. Being extremely compassionate toward anyone's miseries, Jose often would give the needy all the money he had in his wallet, although he himself had to live on a very humble income. Due to his constant travels, he only occasionally could fill an order to paint an icon, although he had quite a few requests.

Only after his violent death did it become known that he had been secretly tonsured on Mt. Athos in the same skete from which he had received the miraculous Icon, for only very few selected friends knew of this.

Fr. Joseph went to Greece because he had to retrieve a letter left for him from his elder, who reposed not long ago. At the same time, being a talented iconographer, he wanted to see an icon exhibit in Thessalonica. But he, as well as Fr. Alexander Iwaszewicz were not permitted to enter Mt. Athos.

The last person to see him alive was Fr. Alexander Iwaszewicz from Argentina. As they sat in a small tearoom at the hotel where Jose was staying, he was approached by a Romanian man, who said that his visa had expired, but that he badly wanted to go to Canada and asked Jose to help him. Jose, who would never refuse a request, went with him to his room to write down information. It seems that the next day the Romanian asked him to go to his room in another hotel, where he was murdered. Some time after midnight, this man hastily walked from the hotel and said to a porter that he wanted to buy some water and soon be back. He never came back, but in the morning Jose's body was discovered in his room, lying on a bed. His arms and legs were tied up and mouth sealed with a tape. It is suspected that this killer of short build had an accomplice.

Just briefly before his martyric death, Jose, together with Fr. Alexander visited the island of Andros. In one of its monasteries there is an myrrh-flowing icon of the Theotokos and as well as an ancient fresco, also of the Theotokos with the Christ Child, which sometimes sheds tears. The service had finished when they arrived, but one monk opened church for them so they could pray. At that time he noticed that the icon was crying, which had not happened during the morning service. The monks have noticed that this icon cries only when something terrible has happened or is about to happen in the world. As Fr. Alexander wrote: "We, with Br. Joseph, understood that this event is connected with us or with our Church. After that Br. Joseph on several occasions told me that he felt that something terrible would happen and very soon, but he did not know what. He spoke of it quite calmly. I believe," Fr. Alexander concludes his account, "that without any doubt the Icon cried because of the death of Br. Joseph, but not just because of his death, but because his death is the present, visible part of a giant iceberg."

Those who hate the sacred and the saints on many occasions threatened Fr. Joseph by telephone in Canada.

Now that he has perished, his immaculate reputation is being suddenly besmirched by someone with loads of sordid insinuations, although when he was alive nothing of the sort was ever said of him. The vile slanderer-murderer was arrested.

It is hard to reconcile oneself to the thought that Fr. Joseph is no longer with us and that the Icon, which he guarded with such love and veneration probably will no longer visit all the little corners of the Russian diaspora and the cotton wads saturated with myrrh -- which he so generously gave out all over the world -- may disappear with time. But one thing is clear. No matter where there is a photograph of this icon, those who pray before it, without doubt, will remember in their prayers its guardian, Fr. Joseph, as we know him now.

According to information given on the Internet by the Synod office, the Icon is in a safe place and Fr. Joseph was buried according to his desire in the cemetery of Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville on Nov. 6/12. Archbishop Laurus officiated with 18 priests. Another 20 clergy were present as well as a multitude of the faithful. After hesitating about opening the coffin, it was decided to go ahead. And when the plastic covering around the body was opened a sweet

fragrance was noted by some. It was also noted by some that although he had reposed almost two weeks earlier, there were no signs of corruption.

ABOUT GOOD INTENTIONS AND SORRY REALITY

Our editors received the following from a priest of the RFOC outside Moscow who was a noted journalist and whose family is well known in Russia.

"Vestnik (The Herald) of the Diocese of Germany" (#4, 1997) published an extensive article by Archbishop Mark, entitled "The Strength of the Church Lies in the Unity of Faith and Love". It describes the possible rapprochement and final unification of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate.

For a person distant from church related problems the reasoning of the Archbishop may appear objective and persuasive. But the reader who is acquainted not by hearsay with the present situation of Russian Orthodoxy, will react to the article of Vladyka Mark with caution. It is not that there is present in the article direct falsehood, but rather it is evident that many things are passed over in silence, and this in particular permits the author to display a decided optimism, in spite of the very sad reality which surrounds us.

In his article Archbishop Mark, in particular, touches on an acute issue -- the involvement of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ecumenism. He writes: "Today we see on the part of a substantial number of clergy and laity in Russia a decided repulsion toward unhealthy developments in the field of contacts with the heterodox."

But, alas, not a single word is mentioned about the people, called "neo-renovationists" in Russia, who over the course of decades have propagated (not without success) the idea of blending all confessions. Nothing is said about the substantial numbers of the episcopate of the Patriarchate that are protégés of Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) of sorry memory -- one of the pillars of contemporary Ecumenism, and nothing is mentioned about one of the main ecclesiastical schools of contemporary Russia, namely of St. Petersburg, which was and remains a hothouse of this "pan-heresy".

Vladyka Mark writes: "... We are guardedly observing the form taken on the part of the Moscow Patriarchate in her cooperation with the contemporary Russian government, when the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate tries to support with her authority the thoughtless and inconsistent policy of the government. Are not the splendid ceremonies involving the participation of church hierarchs and distinguished political personalities, which are broadcast on television, a dangerous imitation of the 'symphony' of Church and state?"

And again silence. One cannot suppose that the Archbishop is totally ignorant of the shameful facts of collaboration by the hierarchs in business fields -- the trade in oil and diamonds, a scandalous affair involving the sale of tobacco and alcohol, the story of "a Christian bank" which cheated all its depositors and so on and on.

And meanwhile, just because of this very close unity of "business partners" with "treasury embezzlers" the Patriarchate is unable to fulfill the function which is so pressingly required from the Church in our times: to become a force which would take the lead in the rebirth of Russia -- spiritually as well as patriotically.

His Eminence laments, "It is sad that the glorification of the New Martyrs and in particular of the holy Passion-bearers -- the Imperial Family -- proceeds so slowly. The arguments about this proceed by convoluted paths that are strange to us. Until the last bishops' council it seemed, even judging by documents published by the commission for glorification, that the long awaited move would come, for there were signs that the glorification would take place at the Local Council. So far there is no movement."

We already publicized a sentence which was spoken in a private conversation by one influential Moscow hierarch: "All of us -- including the Patriarch -- acknowledge that Tsar Nicholas is a saint. But we cannot glorify him, because both the 'democrats' and 'Communists' will be against us." In the light of this open declaration, "the convoluted paths" and absence of "the long awaited move" become quite understandable. The reason for it is the very same cowardice and obedience to the authorities which the adherents to the sorry memory of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) have displayed since 1927.

At the end of his article Vladyka Mark puts forward a number of proposals which, in his opinion, could help unite the separated parts of the Russian Church. The first is to convene an all-diaspora Council, which would "occupy itself with issues of the relationship with Moscow Patriarchate and further development of that relationship."

But, alas, one has to say that the Church Abroad has come to such a degree of degradation and administrative chaos that a true "all-diaspora Council" which could equal those of former times is out of question. What happened last summer in Hebron testifies to this more than eloquent words can say.

In addition, the German Archbishop proposes starting "the serious work of preparation for the all-Russian council". And this is a totally absurd idea. It is a common knowledge that there is no conciliarity whatsoever in the Moscow Patriarchate, because the full power belongs to the Synod and it in general answers to no one and has 150 obedient and voiceless bishops. So how can one in such an situation dream of a general Council?

The very last proposal of Vladyka Mark is "to thoroughly investigate the kind of thinking of such a venerable hierarch as New Martyr Metropolitan Cyrill (Smirnov) of Kazan, whose blameless ecclesiology permits, while retaining an uncompromising approach to the purity of the canons and dogmas, also distinctions in the practical forms of their embodiment."

Probably, the author has in mind here an opinion which was expressed by Metropolitan Cyrill in his letter of 2/15th of May, 1929: "...The blame for the commemoration of the name of Metropolitan Sergius cannot be placed upon lay people and should not serve as an obstacle to their attendance at the services and receiving the Holy Gifts in churches which are under Metropolitan Sergius, if there is no church in their neighborhood which preserves unimpaired its canonical relationship toward the Deputy of the Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne."

This opinion of Hieromartyr Cyrill is common knowledge, but it was expressed in those distant times when the "Sergianist Church" had not yet immersed itself in Ecumenism, corruption, business and her bishops were not appointed by the Lubianka... [the infamous headquarters and prison of the KGB]

Undoubtedly, this article by Vladyka Mark was dictated by the very best of intentions. But one should not forget that such intentions, if not conjoined with sobriety and sound reasoning, quite often lead not to the "unity of faith and love" but to the place, where there is heard "the wailing and gnashing of teeth."

November, 1997 Moscow

Archpriest Michael Ardov

A BRILLIANT STRATEGIC CAMOUFLAGE BY ARCHBISHOP MARK OF BERLIN AND GERMANY

"Vestnik (Herald) of the Diocese of Germany" #4 (1997) published a long article by Archbishop Mark, entitled "The Strength of the Church Is in the Unity of Faith and Love". This article of 5 pages is too long for our publication to reprint it in full, but we will quote the most important statements.

It seems, that Archbishop Mark himself attaches great importance to it because the author's name is not only printed above the title, but we find his handwritten signature also at the end of the article. The direct citations, to make them clearer, we have put in italics, while using bold face for the most important sentences. Our commentaries on this text are in regular print.

The thoughts which are expounded in this document collected over several months of the first half of 1997. The expulsion at the beginning of July of our monks from Holy Trinity Monastery near Abraham's Oak in Hebron in front of representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate who, as if mocking the angelic habit, were dressed in monastic garments felt like a knife piercing my heart.

The Moscow Patriarchate once more showed its Soviet origins, an imperialistic spirit and that her power structures are ready to trample on the dignity of Church and person with deception and violence -- and seemingly it would be natural just to close the question of our relationship with the Moscow Patriarchate.

I refused to follow such a simple solution, although I expect that once again I will face slander. As before, I believe that we are responsible for our ecclesiastical course before all the Russian Orthodox people, and not only -- and even less so -- before those structures incorrigibly accustomed to a thirst for power, which, unfortunately, successfully use the name of the Russian Church to cover themselves up. Therefore, I publish my thoughts on this theme in the same manner as they occurred prior to the events in the Holy Land, which, unfortunately, disgraces the whole Russian Church.

Now: what part of the Russian Church in particular does Archbishop Mark have in mind? The Moscow Patriarchate or the ROCA, or maybe both of them?

The thoughts collected by Archbishop Mark during the several months of the first half of 1997, demand a very concentrated and repeated re-reading of his article in order to be able to appraise his basic theme. He has mastered the Russian language perfectly and therefore his reticence and sometimes unclear phrasing make one believe that this is done on purpose.

Archbishop Mark starts his article with information about his well known visit to Tver and the correspondence between him and Metropolitan Vitaly, which was widely publicized. Then he briefly lists the facts regarding the Ukaz of

Patriarch Tikhon issued together with the Synod and Supreme Church Council dated November 7/20, 1920, #362. He writes:

The Russian Orthodox Church is our common Mother Church -- and this is indisputable. Yet, by "mother" one understands a birth-giving principle. The ruling structures of the Moscow Patriarchate, such as they have been since 1927 and as they have defined themselves in regard to the Russian Church Abroad until now, may not pretend to bear the name of a birthgiving mother. Simplifications are convenient in worldly politics, which attempts to detrimentally infiltrate the life of the Church, but they are out of place in matters concerning Christ's Church, and in particular, the much-suffering Church of Russia. For those who speak about "reunion with the Mother Church", it would be better not to self-assuredly assume for themselves this lofty title, but to turn with filial love to the very same Russian Church from which all of us, having lived for more than 7 decades now in quite different circumstances, in one way or another, received our beginning.

In this last rather unclear sentence (which is lacking a subject, while adjectives and verb remain) it is impossible to understand whom does Archbishop Mark have in mind when he says "those who talk about reunion with the Mother Church"? Does he mean here the Moscow Patriarchate, or is he humbly speaking of himself as an ardent supporter of union with this Patriarchate? Also who, namely, and to which part of the Russian Church should one turn "with filial love"?

Then he says that in every part of the Russian Church there occurred some dislocations which "were produced by unique psychological settings."

*...In the contemporary conditions of relative freedom in Russia, **since it is necessary** for us, the Bishops, to pose the question of the possibility and even that it is time to summon a Council, we should consider its goals and the manner in which it will be conducted.*

Then Archbishop Mark states that no one has a recipe for overcoming the Church's discord and admits that *there could not be such an recipe, because in order to establish unity there must be a labor-intensive, prayerful and repentant podvig.* The only question is -- who has to repent and for what and to whom?

We find out from Archbishop Mark also that

For every one of us this path will demand a rejection of inertia in the images we have of the Church's life, which has developed in the state of separation, a rejection of inherited stereotypes and clichés. And precisely now, when there is opening up a new possibility to overcome everything alien and unnecessary for the Church through a purely ecclesial approach, there arises a new danger -- the conservation of a habitual separation. It is necessary to actualize our freedom and be determined to make bold steps in order to overcome opposition and to direct all the positive powers of Church life and to funnel them into the one channel of the Russian Church.

Archbishop Mark feels that the following questions should be immediately resolved:

1) *The question of the relationship of the Orthodox Church with heterodox cultures and the issue connected with them of Ecumenism ;*

2) *The question of the relationship of ecclesiastical public figures, priests and hierarchs with theomachistic governments and organizations and in wider sense -- the relationship of the Church towards the state in general.*

3) *The question of the glorification of the holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.*

In a chapter entitled "What divides us?" Archbishop Mark writes:

1) *Unfortunately, there arise doubts first of all in the dogmatic area. The question has not be resolved about what sort of communication there might be between members of the Russian Church and the heterodox, who call themselves Christians, in another words -- where the boundaries of the Church lie. **Representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, especially her structures which operate abroad or are in contact with it, went all too far here, permitting the unpermissible... Ecumenical contacts are not a new phenomenon and long ago were in need of a evaluation in principle.***

Then Archbishop Mark quite correctly states: *Today we see on the part of a substantial number of clergy and laity in Russia a decided repulsion toward unhealthy developments in the field of contacts with the heterodox and he thinks that in this area the experience of the ROCA could bring about a beneficial input towards a truly ecclesial resolution of this problem.* It is worthwhile to note that Archbishop Mark not once characterizes Ecumenism as a heresy.

As we have known for a long time, the "evaluation in principle" of this matter was made by the Council of Bishops of the ROCA when she anathematized the heresy of Ecumenism and its adherents. While referring mostly to "structures" of the Moscow Patriarchate "which operate abroad or are in contact with it", Archbishop Mark craftily is silent about the fact that the very same Patriarchate, in addition to "Ecumenical contacts", has signed Ecumenical agreements which consider heretical monophysites to be Orthodox. It also has signed the "Balamand Union" with the Roman Catholics.

2) *The problem of the cooperation of bishops and other public figures of Moscow Patriarchate with the godless government is disturbing. Patriarch Alexis has already tried to address this issue by expressing a general repentance and giving a critical evaluation of the "Declaration" of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky)... Especially painful is **the warning of the presence in midst of the Church in the past and at present of active collaborators with the state security organs.** To the degree to which these still keep their positions, the Moscow Patriarchate is denying to herself the fruits of*

genuine repentance. But, just because of the principles involved in this problem, it must be approached with extreme care.

It seems that Archbishop Mark is counting on (unfortunately with good reason) the remarkably limited knowledge of the common members of the Church Abroad of the official declarations of the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate. According to his statement, "Patriarch Alexis has already tried to address this issue by expressing a general repentance and giving a critical evaluation of the "Declaration" of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky)".

"The repentance and explanations" of Alexis Ridiger regarding the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius were given by him in an interview to the newspaper "Izvestia" in 1991 in the following words: "First of all, **I would not like to be put in the position of seeming to deny it.** This Declaration is a part of our history... Did this Declaration help our Church in those difficult days -- let history be the judge. **I would not like to evaluate the actions of Metropolitan Sergius.** In that [Soviet] night we could only weep with him. This much we can say: he was offered the alternative of either signing or facing the execution of several hundred bishops, already arrested... The tragedy of Metropolitan Sergius was that he attempted to reach an understanding on the basis of the "word of honor" of criminals who happened to grab power... But today we are in a position to declare that **the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius lies in the past and we no longer abide by it.**" (Quotation taken from the "Suzdal Diocesan Register" #1. Sept. 1997).

Unfortunately, in letting a trusting reader accept his information about a "general repentance" of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archbishop Mark in a substantially palliates the fact that not only the leading hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate were the paid agents of the KGB, but the false Patriarch Alexis II himself has the agent name of "Drozdov". According to the authoritative statement of the reporter A. Nezhny, given a few years ago, 85% of the Moscow hierarchs were official agents of the KGB.

...Therefore we are guardedly observing the form taken on the part of Moscow Patriarchate in her cooperation with the contemporary Russian government, when the leadership of Moscow Patriarchate tries to support with its authority the thoughtless and inconsistent policy of the government. Are not the splendid ceremonies, involving the participation of church hierarchs and distinguished political personalities, which are broadcast on television, a dangerous imitation of the "symphony" of Church and state?

In the third paragraph Archbishop Mark expresses his sadness over the prolonged matter of the glorification of holy New Martyrs and in particular, the Imperial Family.

In a chapter entitled "What unites us and which problems call for a common solution?" Archbishop Mark quite correctly states that *"In my opinion doctrinal purity stands in the first place. When it is established that there are no doctrinal differences among us, the existing temporary separation has to come to an end... But... in order to correctly evaluate the situation, we should get acquainted with one another and learn more about the path we have traversed. Every churchly person can turn to Christ's truth and bring his experience to the future development of the one Russian Church and this right should be acknowledged. However, this approach does not mean a denial of the possibility of calling a sin -- a sin and a lie -- a lie.*

After four pages of these Jesuitical dialectics, the tactics of Archbishop Mark become, one may say, more obvious.

*In my opinion there must be a **ALL-DIASPORA COUNCIL** so that the Russian Church Abroad could finally, after free deliberation and discussion, determine in a conciliar manner the positions of the diaspora clergy and flock on contemporary church problems. And after that, there must follow the future work of preparing for an ALL RUSSIAN COUNCIL.*

Archbishop Mark does not dare to acknowledge that he has in mind a joint council with the Moscow Patriarchate, but this idea logically follows, otherwise he would not tell us that after the all-diaspora council **"there must follow the future work of preparing for an all-Russian council."**

The all-diaspora council has to consider the matter of our relationship with the Moscow Patriarchate and future development of these relations:

- *establish what unites us and what separates us;*
- *what manner of unity is possible and desirable;*
- *is Eucharistic union possible, while retaining total autonomy, or,*
- *what is the connection between Eucharistic union and administrative unity.*

Besides unilateral approaches, which give rise to confrontations and extremist assertions, in the Russian Church there exists also another tradition, the interpretation of which could help to arrive at temporary transitional decisions on the way to the sought-for unity.

Will not, to a majority of the readers of the article of Archbishop Mark, the most attractive of all his ideas about union with Moscow Patriarchate be that which describes a Eucharistic union while retaining autonomy?

While speaking of the necessity to call two councils: firstly an all-diaspora and then an all-Russian -- Archbishop Mark is careful not to bring to his readers' attention to the fact that at Church councils all the decrees have to be made unanimously (or in cases of the absence of unanimity -- by a majority vote), otherwise such a decree cannot be considered a conciliar decision. The hierarchy of the Church Abroad consists of 17 bishops, of whom at least 5 are

incapable of work being elderly. However, the Moscow Patriarchate has 146, if not even more, bishops! So, what sort of decrees are we to expect from this future all-Russian council as planned and proposed by Archbishop Mark?

To support his theories, Archbishop Mark offers his trusting readers to *thoroughly investigate the kind of thinking of such a venerable hierarch as New Martyr Metropolitan Cyrill (Smirnov) of Kazan, whose blameless ecclesiology permits, while retaining an uncompromising approach to the purity of the canons and dogmas, also distinctions in the practical forms of their embodiment.* Interestingly enough, here the author did not feel it necessary to cite even one line from his works (which are, probably, letters from exile) of the, indeed, very authoritative Metropolitan Cyrill, but who perished at the hands of the goddess in the years when the heretical and perfidious "Moscow Patriarchate" established by Stalin in 1943 still did not exist.

While putting to his readers abroad a number of questions which in his opinion need to be commonly deliberated, Archbishop Mark knowingly omits acknowledgment that all of them have been resolved for many years by a number of bishops' councils (even all-diaspora ones) of the ROCA.

The matter concerning the Moscow Patriarchate was resolved by a number of councils of the ROCA based on the 30th Apostolic Canon: "If any bishop comes into possession of a church by employing secular rulers, let him be deposed from office, and let him be excommunicate, and all those who commune with him also." Besides, on the basis of this Canon not one of the decrees and rulings of Moscow Patriarchate until now (this includes the elections of their Patriarchs) have been recognized as valid. Besides this, the Communists and their supporters were anathematized by Patriarch Tikhon, and some time later also by the Catacomb Church. Can one have any doubts that the Moscow Patriarchate closely collaborated with the godless government of the former USSR? This anathema (a solemn announcement that this or that person or group no longer belongs to the Orthodox Church and, therefore, there can be no Communion with them) can be lifted only after **the repentance** of all those who were anathematized and only by a council of the same level of authority as the one which proclaimed the anathema. In our days it could be lifted only by a free local council of the Russian Orthodox Church with the participation of the Catacomb Church and the ROCA. As we know, the Moscow Patriarchate has not repented of her collaboration with the godless (Sergianism), of her leading role in the Ecumenical movement and of unwillingness to glorify the New Martyrs, who for the most part suffered as a result of its collaboration with the godless government. Also, there has been no free local council of the ROC, which could lift this anathema.

Also, the question of glorification the holy New Martyrs and Confessors, including the Imperial New Martyrs was resolved. They were solemnly glorified in 1981.

Therefore, one is justified in asking Archbishop Mark again: who, namely, should repent and for what and to whom. Should it be the ROCA, who for 75 years carefully preserved the purity of doctrine and faithfulness to the canon law of the Universal Church -- before the Moscow Patriarchate, who betrayed Orthodoxy?

A LETTER OF EXPLANATION TO THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS BY A FORMER CHIEF OF THE JERUSALEM MISSION

The bulletin "Vertograd-Info", published in Moscow, in its issue # 8-9 published an "Address" of Archimandrite Bartholomew, the former Chief of the ROCA Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem during the days of the seizure of the Abraham's Oak Monastery in Hebron. The Archimandrite's letter has no date and reads:

Your Eminences, Your Graces, bless.

Right now throughout the entire world there is a great wave of protests against the lawless acts of the Soviet Moscow Patriarchate, who through the hands of the Palestinian police accomplished the seizure of our monastery in Hebron. Now, the leaders of the Palestinian Authority apologize for their lawless actions and speak of the necessity of returning the monastery to its lawful landlords, the ROCA. The main cause of the uproar in the world community is the use of force on the part of the Palestinian police against the unarmed inhabitants of our monastery, which was described in detail by the mass media.

In connection with this one can only wonder about the behavior of the "commission" chaired by Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany. The members of the "commission" expressed their displeasure because of our actions against lawless claims of the MP. On several occasions Patriarch Alexis declared in his speeches that soon the property of the ROCA in the Holy Land will be returned to it. We heard about the preparations for this provocation and naturally took measures to frustrate their plans and in part we were successful. And if ever the return of this monastery in Hebron were to happen, it will be the result of our resistance and of the help of the world community.

One has to say that unfortunately among the members of our ROCA there are persons who assist the efforts of Moscow Patriarchate to unite the Church Abroad with MP. Why not "reunion"? -- because the Soviet church sprang up in 1927 by accepting the Sergianist declaration, which handed the Orthodox Church over to the atheistic Communist government. It is also a common knowledge that the

MP continues to faithfully serve an anti-popular government, which changes its outer appearance. One recalls the words from a parable: "although you are in an different skin, your heart is still the same."

And the members of "committee" zealously rush to whitewash the actions of the Soviet church (some of them already propose to accept a compromise and share the Hebron monastery with the MP).

And no wonder: our whole ROCA has read the correspondence between Archbishop Mark and Metropolitan Vitaly, and a majority of her children, together with the Metropolitan, condemned Archbishop Mark's meeting with the false Patriarch Alexis II and his contacts with the Moscow hierarchy. And one should not wonder at seeing efforts to discredit the actions of defenders of our properties in Holy Land and loud demands to punish them!

Although the members of "the commission" make contacts with different officials, diplomats, they do this secretly, while trying to cast a shadow on the decisive actions of the Abbess of Mt. of Olives Convent, Juliana, who contributed to not admitting the false Patriarch to Mt. of Olives. At the same time, they try in every way to exaggerate the "merits" of the Abbess of Gethsemane Convent, Anna, who in spite of her declaration to the contrary, met with the false Patriarch and accepted his blessing.

The real purpose of the actions of this "commission" is to attempt to replace the leadership of the Mt. Of Olives convents of the Ecclesiastical Mission and appoint to the top positions their own people -- in another words. the people with "far-reaching" goals.

There is another interesting side to this. The multitude of documentation which Priest Peter Holodny received from the former lawyer Matrin, for some reason was not returned by him to the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, but was brought to New York. And now he has handed these documents (weighing about 80 lbs) to Priest George Larin, a member of the Commission. In this case, as well as in many others, it is obvious that the Chief of the Mission was ignored because he is not of their own, not pro-Moscow.

Signed: Archimandrite Bartholomew, the Chief of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem

QUOTATIONS FROM THE LETTER OF SR. MARINA (CHERTKOFF) TO METROPOLITAN VITALY

The very same bulletin "Vertograd-Inform" also published a letter of Sr. Marina Chertkoff addressed to Metropolitan Vitaly. Due to lack of space, we can give only the most important quotations from it. Sr. Marina worked for a number of years for the office of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem.

"...As soon as the Synod received in 1986 through the lawyer Zezulin the documents of the REM (during the tenure of Chief Fr. Vladimir Scalon) in the Holy Land, a policy was immediately initiated, supposedly in name of our Church, of rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate and the extensive sale of our properties.

"As is common knowledge, in the Mission's office the folders [of documents] are missing concerning those properties which may yet be sold. The 'rapprochement' with the MP and sale of properties are not conducted in a normal manner, openly -- but in a hush-hush manner. Who receives the money -- this is not known. In any case, we sisters of the convent were told that the Mission has no funds. Many sisters suffer tooth ailments and walk in sandals full of holes.

"The present troubles, supposedly connected with the so-called 150th anniversary of the Mission (a historical falsehood) -- are a serious and crude attempt by a group led by Archbishop Mark to arrange a union with the MP. If Archbishop Mark, who without the knowledge and blessing of Synod and First Hierarch of the Church Abroad during last winter visited false Patriarch Alexis of the MP, still retains his position as a member of the Synod's Church Abroad, it means the Church Abroad has become a branch of the Soviet church with all of the consequences of that...

"...Archbishop Mark is doing everything to 'return' to us the Monastery in Hebron on half and half terms, that means he wants to force the members of our Mission to live there with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. He has not succeeded in it so far, but also, he doesn't want to part with the halo of a bishop of benevolence. Therefore he persuaded our First Hierarch (who has been deceived since 1986) to remove Fr. Bartholomew, who following his principles refused to have any connections with the MP, and to send in his place the very rude and very impertinent Archimandrite Alexis Rosenthul, who brawls as badly as the Palestinian police...

"...Then Vladyka Mark flew in and told us that he found out about our events from the newspapers. He called himself a "commission", took the administration entirely out of the hands of Fr. Bartholomew and started to work by himself, as a "commission". As a result, Fr. V[ictor] Potapov declared that we have to live in Hebron with the MP, we have to 'make room for them' (?). The Moscow Patriarchate is not stingy in rewards. We know it from experience with Archimandrite Theodossy (Clare)...

"So now the ROCA is turning into a branch of the Sov[iet] church and works together with their mafiosi. Where are the last wills of the First Hierarchs of blessed memory: Metropolitan Anthony, Anastassy, Philaret? (Vladyka Mark has the boldness to say that all their wills are their personal opinions!!)..."

At the end of the letter of Sr. Marina there is a postscript by Abbess Juliana: "I agree with everything written by Sr. Marina. Unfortunately the wills of the First Hierarchs have already been forgotten or are being forgotten. Unworthy Abbess Juliana. July 11/24, 1997)"

The same bulletin published also an Ukaz from the Synod to Abbess Juliana which is characteristic of our times.

"July 17/30, 1997

#11/35 -- 1/20/78

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church h e a r d:

A report of the special Committee on matters of our communities in the Holy Land and particularly on circumstances in the Mt. of Olives Convent and the events which have taken place in Hebron Monastery. The Synod of Bishops after deliberating in detail on the disturbances which arose there r e s o l v e s:

To relieve you of your position as Abbess of Christ's Ascension Convent on the Mt. of Olives for your stubborn disobedience and opposition to your Supreme Church Authority, and also for insults to Patriarch Diodoros, as the Head of the Local Church. You are obliged to surrender to the Deputy Chief of the Mission. Archpriest George Larin and your Deputy Nun Raphaela the following:

- a) all convent documentation connected with the administrative department of the convent,
- b) all monetary savings.

After handing over the above, you are to return to Chile, to the orphanage to your former position.

D e c r e e d : To send you an Ukaz about the above-mentioned so that you may fulfill its stipulations.

President of the Synod of Bishops, Metropolitan Vitaly
Deputy Secretary, Bishop Gabriel.

After publishing this official documentation, the bulletin "Vertograd-Inform" (in the same way as "Church News") expresses in a postscript great surprise, stating:

"The total silence of the July issues of 'Pravoslavnaya Rus' the main periodical of our Church is totally perplexing concerning facts of its being persecuted in the Holy Land. Against the background of countless publications in the Russian and international press such silence becomes too eloquent. While the whole world speaks and shouts about the crime in Hebron of the MP and the Palestinian Authority we simply have no right to be silent."

NEW AGGRESSION OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

Shortly after the criminal seizure of the monastery in the jurisdiction of the ROCA in Hebron, another such effort in the Holy Land became known and apparently this time without the direct participation of the Moscow Patriarchate. Due to the vigilance of the Israeli police this seizure did not take place. According to information from the Holy Land, within the territory of the former Lavra of St. Khariton, two "fishermen" showed up who sat with fishing rods near a very small creek, running through this property. This is a deserted place without a watchman. Only once a year, on St. Khariton's day a service is conducted in a small chapel built on the ruins of the former Lavra. This territory is controlled by the Palestinians, although there is a spot belonging to Israel.

An Israeli policeman noticed a man and a woman "fishing" at a creek where there can be no fish and started to watch them carefully. Then he saw a sign stating that this place is the property of the Russian Federation. When the "fishermen" pulled out a portable telephone, he called his police station. That station intercepted the conversation and when the representatives of consulate appeared at the former Lavra, they were met by a police squad. Therefore they had to retreat.

It also became known that one of the well distributed newspapers in Russia "Sevodnia" (Today) published an article in which is laid out a new plan for seizing the property of the Church Abroad, this time in Germany. There are a number of pre-revolutionary churches there, which the Moscow Patriarchate has laid claim to. The new plan's goal at present consists of making the German Government revoke a 1938 law which recognized the ROCA as the sole legal owner of all the pre-revolutionary churches in Germany. The government of the Russian Federation insists that this law should have no legal force, as it was issued by the Nazi government, and with all her massive weight is pressuring the German Government to hand over to her all the churches in Germany. The Patriarchate did not hesitate to seize a cathedral in Berlin which was built and consecrated in 30's and yet never belonged to Russia.

Having absolutely no weapons against the Church Abroad, the MP for decades has used the same argument at any opportunity to accuse her of sympathy with the Nazis, of which the main evidence is a thank-you speech to Hitler for his enormous assistance in building a cathedral in one of the best locations in the capital. Of course, no one mentions that Hitler showed his true colors only several years later. Here is a short history of this address:

When the cathedral was ready and 48 hours before the consecration ceremony Metropolitan Anastassy arrived in Berlin, he was given an artistically decorated thank-you speech to sign. The Metropolitan found the text to be too florid

and asked to change it. Yet, the organizers had already sent a copy of it to the Internal Ministry and therefore there was no way to make the desired corrections.

It is most amazing and quite beyond understanding that in spite of this absolutely clear aggressive policy of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany (whose diocese is first in line to be seized) continues to ceaselessly work on a union of the Church Abroad with the heretical and criminal MP. Although, maybe he has in mind that for his services, the MP will be very patient and not grab his entire diocese immediately.

A SOLEMN CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH IN LAKEWOOD

On Friday and Saturday (October 17 and 18) in the town of Lakewood, N.J. there was a solemn consecration of the Church of St. Grand Duke Alexander Nevsky. The festivities were presided by the First Hierarch of the ROCA Metropolitan Vitaly and concelebrating Archbishops: Anthony of San Francisco and Western America, Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain and Hilarion of Sydney, Australia and New Zealand, also Bishops Michael of Toronto and Gabriel of Manhattan. Some 30 priests concelebrated with the bishops and a multitude of faithful was present.

Also the miraculous Kursk Root Icon of the Theotokos was brought to this celebration.

In all respects this church undoubtedly can be called the best of those in the Church Abroad. Not only is this church adorned with paintings of Hieromonk Andrew (Erastov), who by now has surpassed his famous teacher Archimandrite Cyprian, but also with outstanding wood carvings. The church is unique and outstanding in having very completely thought through every single corner and the separate rooms. For example, there is a wonderful baptistry for adults, which is invisible if one does not know its location. Water from it, as well as from the sinks next to the altar is let out by underground pipes, sending it to a nearby creek. All the advantages of modern technology are marvellously utilized, without being in any way visible. Between the clerics, the altar and the belltower there is both a telephone and electronic connections.

The newly erected church should serve as a prototype for all future churches, because it is very evidently the fine work of a priest who in one person is also a professional engineer. Years ago Fr. Valery has left a successful career as an engineer in order to become a priest. How many times does one see churches designed and built by engineers who do not understand any of the practical needs of serving priests. One of the standard defects of churches built abroad is that the altar is too small and without a water supply.

The rector, as an acknowledgment of his achievement in building an outstanding church was awarded the rank of protopresbyter. As his right hand Fr. Valery has his son Protodeacon Serge, who established and runs a very good bookstore. The former smaller church, at the request of the town to preserve it as an architectural monument, will serve as a chapel for minor services. Through the efforts of Fr. Valery, his parish has a very well established Saturday school, also with its own building, very well designed and built by him. All of this is located on a huge property. According to contemporary laws, a special ramp was built to permit wheel-chair access to the church. That cost the parish some \$40,000!

Both churches, new and old, stand next to a very large asphalt covered parking lot.

ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX FREE CHURCH

The New York Times Sunday international section of October 12th published on its first page (with a continuation on p. 10) a long article by Michael Gordon entitled "Inside the Onion Dome of Russian Orthodoxy, Many Layered Faiths Chafe". Under this rather complicated title, one can find some details about the situation of the Diocese of Suzdal and Vladimir of the Free Russian Orthodox Church. The article on the first page is supplemented with a photograph of several clergy standing in front of one of Suzdal's churches. Michael Gordon got interested in the Suzdal situation in connection with the law recently signed by Yeltsin on "Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations."

The reporter starts with the statement that Suzdal with its domes makes an impression of "quiet serenity", but it is a deceptive picture. It is a place struggling to save 15 churches, fully restored by Archbishop Valentin with his and his parishioners funds and which are claimed by the Moscow Patriarchate.

As Archbishop Valentin told the reporter, the MP "does not want the closed and half-destroyed churches in our region. It wants the churches that have been restored from the ruins at our expense and by the hands of our believers."

Mr. Gordon quite accurately reports that "The religious law that Mr. Yeltsin signed on Sept. 26th was not just to protect the Russian Orthodox Church against competition from Roman Catholics, Protestants and other rival faiths from the West. It is also part of a brewing internal struggle for the control over the Orthodox churches, cathedrals, seminaries and religious schools. The Russian Orthodox Church under Patriarch Alexy II in Moscow insists that it simply wants to protect its spiritual heritage from self-appointed clerics".

Further, he mistakenly reports that "It (the ROFC) has drawn support from the Orthodox Church in America, the largest Orthodox Church of Russian descent in the USA, which complains that breakaway groups have gained control of religious property in the confusion that followed the breakup of Soviet Union."

The church buildings were handed over to the Diocese of Suzdal and Vladimir in an absolutely legal manner but the local city authorities and in every single case of the transfer of a church building there is an agreement, signed by the city authorities and Archbishop Valentin. Therefore, to speak of some sort of seizure of those buildings -- is absolutely improper.

In support of the pretensions of the Moscow Patriarchate, Fr. Daniel Hubiak, who represents the "Orthodox Church in America" in Moscow, angrily declared that these churches "were built by Russians in the Russian Orthodox Church hundreds years ago, not by a splinter group." But, these churches were received and restored not by any foreigners, but by the very same Suzdal inhabitants who are descendants of the people who built these churches!

The journalist reports also the existence in Russia of representatives of the Ukrainian "Patriarchate" and also of the ROCA and Old Believer communities.

Michael Gordon stresses that the new law greatly increased the clout of the Moscow Patriarchate, which does not tolerate any competition. Any who do not agree with the new law even within her own midst have already suffered wrongs. For example, a long time teacher of the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy was removed from his position only because his superiors found out about his written opinion on a draft of the new law, which criticized it as limiting the rights of believers.

Gordon finishes his long article (well written by a non-Russian with a limited acquaintance of church matters) with the sum total of the consequences of this new law. While talking with him, Archbishop Valentin pointed to a huge brick building which already has a spacious church in case the diocesan churches are seized and said that if need be this will be his base. Next to this very attractive and of interesting building is also another -- a hotel for visitors to the diocesan center in Suzdal. Local people already speak of him as of "the Builder Bishop "

A representative of Moscow Patriarchate, Andrei Zolotov said: "I am absolutely sure the Moscow Patriarchate will continue to pursue its efforts to unify the church under its aegis. It wants to prevent new Valentins from happening."

Several weeks after the appearance of this article, the same reporter asked Archbishop Valentin for another interview. Mr. Gordon arrived from Moscow in Suzdal, attended a church service which he videotaped on several cassettes. At this interview Archbishop Valentin was able to make some corrections to his published article.

AGAIN ON THE CHURCH OF GEORGIA (Seizure of the monastery of Zarzma)

The Georgian Church which "departed" from the WCC, nevertheless most viciously punishes all those who forced her to make this step. All of them are suspended, removed from their posts and even excommunicated.

Among those who disobeyed this order by Catholicos Ilia is Archim. George, beloved and respected by his people, the abbot of the monastery of Zarzma.

The Catholicos appointed to this position of abbot Archimandrite Joachim, who is to oversee 5 monasteries and who on August 24th demanded that the lawful abbot leave the monastery within 24 hours, otherwise, he would use force.

On September 4th, about 6 PM at the walls of monastery Levan Khorzevanidze, the representative of the Georgian Ministry of the Interior, appeared who said that he is also a Chief of the criminal division of the Ministry of the Interior. He was accompanied by the chief of police for the Alkhalitiskhe Region, Michail Maisuradze, of the Agydeni area, Gela Kokhodze, and the Public Prosecutor, whose name is unknown.

Wishing to gain the sympathy of the poverty stricken local villagers, the Catholicos sent them a truckload of flour, but they returned it with the message: "We will not sell our spiritual father for a truckload of flour".

As a result of all these persecutions, the fathers of Georgia's Church joined the Synod of the reposed Old Calendar Greek Bishop Auxentios. The leader of this Georgian Orthodox movement, Archimandrite John Sheklashvili, traveled from Georgia to Boston and was officially accepted by Bishop Ephraim. Since he with his brotherhood was exiled from the monastery and they had no place to live, some wealthy donor in the USA purchased a house and some land for the fathers who have established a Dormition of the Theotokos Monastery in their country.

Probably, other monasteries will find themselves in a similar situation and will be forced to look for different dwellings.

In the same manner as in the Russian Federation or in Latvia, the Georgian government refuses to register those Orthodox who oppose heretics as a religious organization. It is known that Georgia for some 3 years now has illegally stopped registering religious groups who, as a result, are denied the right to own property and, of course, churches.

In mid-October the editor of "Church News" sent a letter of protest to President Shevarnadze, the President of Parliament, Zurab Zhvania, and the Georgian Consul in the USA.

In reply, on October 31st we received the following fax of Document # 154 from the Deputy Secretary for the Council of National Security and the Defense of Human Rights, Rusudan Beridze:

"Mrs. Schatiloff,

I was authorized to respond to your letter to President of Georgia Mr. Shevernadze. You have expressed your concern in connection with contradictions within the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Paragraph 9 of the constitution of Georgia reads as follows: 'The state recognizes the outstanding role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the history of Georgia and at the same time declares complete freedom of religious convictions and faiths, the independence of the Church from the State'.

According to the Constitution, the State may not interfere in the internal affairs of the Church. It can interfere only if there are violations of the rights and freedoms of clergy as citizens of Georgia.

There were no such violations. The State may not make a judgement on the legality of appointments or excommunications of clergy.

We are one of the most ancient Orthodox countries in the world. We respect and honor our faith (of course, while respecting other faiths also).

The state assists religion, but does not interfere in its internal matters.

Respectfully, signed.

This reaction of the Georgian Government to our expression of astonishment that it is possible to persecute 70% of its own Orthodox population is in no way different from the declarations typical of the Moscow Patriarchate. Exactly the same kind of answer could have been sent by the Patriarchate or the government of the Russian Federation!

Is it that because the Georgian Government "does not interfere" in Church's internal matters that it sent to the monastery of Zarmza on September 4th a representative of the Ministry of the Interior, Chiefs of Police from two regions and an Public Prosecutor, who certainly did not come there unaccompanied?

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF ATHOS AND WOMEN

The newspaper of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA, "The Path of Orthodoxy" for October-November published an article entitled "All-male Status of Mt. Athos Challenged".

Since the Greek Government is being more and more pressured from outside to turn the Holy Mountain into a tourist attraction and at the same time the feminists demand that they be admitted to Mt. Athos, this question was raised at a recent meeting of the European Union foreign ministers in Brussels.

The Greek government is still afraid to violate too blatantly this ancient status and requested an amendment to the Amsterdam Treaty on European Union to reaffirm Mt. Athos' special status. Two ministers (of Sweden and Finland) strongly protested such a proposition, claiming that the Holy Mountain violates the principles of equality and freedom of movement within the European Union. But the Holy Mountain had two defenders in the persons of the Greek Anna Karamanou and the Italian Luciana Castellina. Both women hold leftist opinions and are defenders of "women's rights", but even they protested the use of force against Mt. Athos.