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"THE GERMAN DIOCESAN HERALD" ABOUT "CHURCH NEWS"
"EXCAVATIONS" BUILDING IS BURNED ON THE OUTSIDE
ARCHBISHOP MARK IN LATVIA
ABOUT THE FUTURE PAN-DIASPORA COUNCIL
ARCHBISHOP VALENTIN OF SUZDAL AND VLADIMIR IN ENGLAND
UNEXPLAINED BITTERNESS
MUTUAL CONGRATULATIONS OF KGB-ists
METROPOLITAN KIRILL S TRAVELS
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE WESTERN REGION OF RUSSIA
THE CORNER STONE
FROM THE LIFE OF THE SERBIAN CHURCH
END OF SCHISM IN THE BULGARIAN CHURCH
THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND ITS ECUMENISM
MOSLEM SYMPATHIES IN EUROPE
DEDICATION OF A SYNAGOGUE ON "RELIGION HILL"
THE WCC AND HOMOSEXUALITY
UNREST IN THE GREEK ARCHDIOCESE IN AMERICA

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"THE GERMAN DIOCESAN HERALD" ABOUT "CHURCH NEWS"

Recently, the editors of "Church News" received a photocopy of page 28 from the "German Diocesan Herald" which published an "Announcement Regarding Two Disinformation's" signed by the "Diocesan Administration of the German Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia." Below, we reprint in English translation a complete text of this "Announcement" carefully retaining the text and punctuation as published.

In issue # 6(73) of a periodical published in the USA under the name of "Church News" (further, "Ch.N.") it was stated (on page 1) that supposedly our Archpastor, Archbishop Mark, while in the Holy Land from July 6 to July 11, met in there with the representative of the MP, Cyril (Gundiayev), which is a plain disinformation. See page 18 of the above mentioned "Herald" about the presence of Archbishop Mark in the Holy Land. Archbishop Mark did not meet with Metropolitan Cyril. The information published by "Ch. N." was received not from an official source, but, as is typical of "Ch. N." "directly from Jerusalem", without naming the informant, and therefore in this particular case one may suppose that the editorial office was misled. In another "information" published in the same issue on page 4, referring to "the foul role played by him (Archbishop Mark, Ed.) at the seizure by the MP of Hebron" one may not excuse by a similar error. The absurdity of such an accusation is obvious to anyone who has followed the events "during the seizure by the Moscow Patriarchate of Hebron." Archbishop Mark simply was not there. Archbishop Mark was appointed to oversee matters in the Holy Land after Hebron was seized and in particular to see to it that Hebron was returned to the ROCOR.

Also previously in "Ch. N." many insinuations and insults were published about our Vladyka, but we didn't feel it was necessary to react to them, since "Ch. N." belongs to the kind of publication with which, to engage in polemics, would mean to lower oneself to the same level. But in this case we decided to refute these routine slanders, since they not only besmirch the good name of our ruling hierarch, but also the unity of our whole episcopate. The compilers of "Ch. N." declare: "His (Archbishop's Mark, Ed.) re-election to membership of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR (after the vile role he played in Jerusalem after the seizure of Hebron by the Moscow Patriarchate) is a blatant insult by the Council of Bishops of the First Hierarch." In other words, this is an attempt to provoke a split in the conciliar unity of our Church with slander and lies against a hierarch, by contrasting him with the First Hierarch and the Council. One can only wonder why people, who consider themselves to be of churchly character, would not abhor using such shameless lies. Is it possible that this lie was made in the hope of using the age-old method of slandering the innocent, "slander, slander, and something will be believed" still might find favorable ground?

Since "Ch. N." attempts to speak in name of the "faithful children" of the ROCOR and purports to defend the interests "of all its fullness," one must, therefore, say something about this publication.

This is not an official publication of any of the dioceses (or even ecclesiastical organizations). Yet, from one issue to the next, "Ch. N." devotes a central place to the life of the ROCOR, but describes it in a very biased manner, such that its editors do not refrain from gossip and unverified rumors. Vladyka Mark is not the only hierarch of the ROCOR under the attack by "News" – others are no less so. The conciliar decrees of the ROCOR are ridiculed and ignored by "Ch. N.", but the activity of such schismatic groups as the so-called "Boston schism" and especially the "Suzdal schism" which is headed by the defrocked former Bishop Valentin (Rousantsov), who is called by "Ch. N." an Archbishop, are presented with obvious sympathy. But "Ch. N." deliberately falls silent (for example, see page 7 of "Ch. N.") about the fact that he is not in communion with the ROCOR. Not long ago it also reported with similar sympathy on Archimandrite Anthony (Grabbe), defrocked some time ago, who is termed a bishop by "Ch. N." This ideological solidarity with those who have fallen away from the unity of the ROCOR and to propagandize their activities by people who at the present time also try to introduce schism into the ROCOR, is normal [for "Ch. N."] and exposes the truth about the "churchly" nature of publishers of "Ch. N." and their real relationship to the ROCOR.

"Ch. N." calls itself "an independent publication of Orthodox Church opinion." But "independence" is a concept not known to the Church and the holy Fathers. In church language independence from the conciliar unanimity and Conciliar decrees is called arbitrary and unauthorized.

The Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR as early as 1994 during its meeting on August 17/30 heard "About the anti-church activity of the editor of "Church News," Anastasia G. Schatiloff, about whom the following is said: "while distorting the truth in her own way in the so-called "Church News," A. G. Schatiloff enters upon a dangerous path of schism, leading the church's people into confusion and deception, by this tempting of the church's flock. By her anti-church actions she puts herself outside of the Russian Church Abroad and joins the ranks of those who would harm the Church." ("Church Life" # 5-6, New York 1994, p. 3-4). The Synod issued a decree according to which "pastors should in every way shelter unwitting parishioners from the deliberate distortion of the truth in this tabloid (that is, 'Ch. N.')."

The ukaz quoted in the Announcement of the Administration of the Diocese of Germany of the ROCOR regarding "Church News" was published in full as soon as it became known to us, although the Editor in Chief and publisher, A. G. Schatiloff, never received it directly from the Synod's Chancellery and found out about it only half a year after the fact via the Synod's publication "Church Life."

The Administration of the Diocese of Germany complains that "Church News" published information on the supposed meeting of Archbishop Mark with Cyril Gundiayev, "as is customary with "C. N.", received " 'directly from Jerusalem'." "Church News" uses information received from this or that source without naming the informant in extremely rare instances. Yet in the journalism field sometimes the need occurs to use this means in order not to put this or that informant under some kind of reprisal. Many newspapers (even of such respectability as "The New York Times") almost daily report information noting that it was "received under a promise of anonymity." What is important is how much this or that publisher trusts the received information to be factual and also the trustworthiness of the informant.

The sentence about "the vile role played by Archbishop Mark in Jerusalem at seizure of Hebron" seemingly especially offended the authors of this "Announcement", since they quote it twice and the only justification of Archbishop Mark's role they see in a fact that the "Special Synod's Committee" chaired by Archbishop Mark happened to arrive to the Holy Land as a result of the seizure of Hebron by the Moscow Patriarchate a few days ahead of time. In another words, the Administration of the Diocese of Germany totally ignored our critique of the behavior of Archbishop Mark in Jerusalem and just relies on the **timing** of his appearance in the Holy Land.

Yet, in spite of the official reason for the appointment by the Synod of Archbishop Mark as overseer of matters of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem "in order to have returned the Monastery at Abraham's Oak to the administration of the ROCOR" – his behavior was really outrageous and humiliating to the Church Abroad. After the seizure of Hebron by the Moscow Patriarchate through the agency of Arafat, all the international media and first of all the Israeli press, quite strongly attacked the aggressors. In the daily newspapers, radio and TV there were interviews, comments and news stories which were very damaging to Arafat's and the MP's positions. The aggressors were on the verge of retreating. But then, unexpectedly to the Mission's personnel, Archbishop Mark arrived who, to the palpable astonishment of the media which was so angered by the seizure by the Palestinians and the MP of our property, he, as President of "the Special Synod Committee," abruptly turned the matter to the benefit of the aggressors. After arriving in the Holy Land accompanied by several persons (by the way, also no opponents of the MP, at best), Archbishop Mark immediately surrounded himself with supporters of the MP and totally excluded from participation in the work of his Committee the Chief of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, Archimandrite Bartholomew, and began his activity with humiliating apologies in name of the First Hierarch not only before Jerusalem's Patriarch, but even Arafat himself! With his absurd actions (only absurd?) – he immediately put an end to all the media protests. During this unattractive activity, he paid a visit to the American Consul, who promised to the Mission all support he could give. This Consul is married to a Russian Orthodox lady, who years ago was a student at the Synod's Saturday school in New York. As became known later, Archbishop Mark did not follow a single suggestion made by this sympathizer to our Mission.

How should one, in the opinion of the compilers of the "Announcement" by the Administration of the Diocese of Germany, evaluate such actions of Archbishop Mark in the Holy Land?

But this is not all. Archbishop Mark literally crushed the Mission's administration, by immediately removing all those persons who by all the means at their disposal had tried to defend the rights of the ROCOR in the Holy Land from the MP. The courageous Chief of the Mission Archimandrite Bartholomew was immediately replaced first by Archimandrite Alexis (Rosenthui) and then by another Alexis (Biron). Both are known for their pro-Moscow sentiments. The nun Moiseya, in her day suspected by the Israeli government of being a USSR sympathizer, took over the position of the bold Abbess Juliana.

A visit paid by Archbishop Mark to the Jerusalem Patriarch with his apologies for not permitting to enter territory of the Mission by his guest (Alexis Ridiger, KGB code name: "Drozdov") – even more greatly lowered prestige of the Mission. Starting in the year 1943 our Mission never permitted on her territory any representative of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Jerusalem Patriarchate was fully aware of this and nevertheless, especially between the years 1976-1986, was as friendly toward our Mission as never before. The letter to Arafat, which, one can say, was forced from Metropolitan Vitaly as a result of Bishop Mark's raising his voice to his First Hierarch (which he himself admitted during a trapeza in Gethsemane) – remains a disgraceful and permanent stain on the Church Abroad.

"Church News" on its front page clearly states that it is an "independent publication of Orthodox Church opinion" and nowhere ever attempted to represent "the faithful children of the ROCOR" or, even less, "in all its fullness." This assertion by the authors of the Announcement is nothing but "the fruit of idle fantasy."

Our remark that the re-election of Archbishop Mark to membership of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR was a "blatant insult from the Council of Bishops to the First Hierarch" – has solid grounds. At present, a majority of hierarchs of the ROCOR (in differing degrees) sympathises with the Moscow Patriarchate and Archbishop Mark personally proved to be its very active and convinced supporter, while Metropolitan Vitaly expressed himself quite strongly against any kinds of negotiations with it.

There has always existed freedom of speech in Orthodoxy, from individuals as well as from various organizations and no one has the right to force silence. The Church's truth never was regulated through decrees of this or that local Church and if the Synod of Bishops or even the Council would produce canonically right and grammatically correct decrees, no one would have a reason to ridicule them. If there were at present more people familiar with the canons and basic principles of church administration, the "ridiculing" of contemporary conciliar and synodal decrees probably would not be so constant an event.

Regarding the statement of the German Diocesan Administration that "Church News" "deliberately avoids maintaining" that the Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir, Valentin, "is not in communion with the ROCOR" – this matter does not need mentioning; from all the official epistles and similar documents in the name of the Suzdal-Vladimir Diocese and also from constant remarks about him by the church administration of the ROCOR – this is more than obvious and is not known, probably, only to those who have no interest in church matters.

The questions of the "defrockment" of Archbishop Valentin, as well as of Archim. Anthony and the matter of the so-called "Boston schism," in all three cases, were absolutely clear acts of extremely clumsy violations of canons and legal-investigative procedures on the part of the Synod of Bishops and the Council, as a result of which the relationship to them by the editors of "Ch. N." (and them only?) is to be explained not as an "obvious sympathy" towards them, but as a strong assurance that their case is righteous.

"EXCAVATIONS" BUILDING IS BURNED ON THE OUTSIDE

According to information from Jerusalem an outside wall of the "Russian Excavations" building there was found burnt on the surface up to the second floor and the windows were covered with graffiti. There was a strong smell of smoke inside the building, but thank God no fire occurred. Members of the Orthodox Palestine Society immediately called the police, which inspected the building and promised to be back with Colonel Saham, who is in charge of the safety of the Holy Places in Jerusalem. By the order of the President of the O. P. S., Bishop Anthony, and in agreement with the municipal police, on the wall of the "Excavations" building an announcement was placed forbidding littering. Besides, the police promised to begin patrolling this area for the full 24 hour period.

ARCHBISHOP MARK IN LATVIA

We received a photocopy of a letter by Archbishop Mark to Metropolitan Vitaly regarding his unexpected trip to Latvia. In the letter, dated July 21/Aug 3 of this year, Archbishop Mark reports: "Last week I urgently had to go to Latvia, because our priest, Priestmonk Ambrose Kliavinsh reported a disturbance among the Orthodox clergy and some of them wanted to meet with me. The reason for this unrest is that the Latvian government decided to reinstate the 1940 status regarding real estate matters. The Orthodox Church at that time was called Latvian Orthodox Church and was under the omophorion of Constantinople. I met also with representatives of the Department for Religious Affairs. They take a neutral position towards us and towards the Moscow Patriarchate, but they understand very well that we have no property rights according to above-mentioned law. Immediately ahead of us in this department a meeting was held with Riga's Bishop Alexander of the MP. Therefore, we met him at the entrance. He insisently invited me to visit him for a cup of tea during my stay in Riga and upon learning from our Archimandrite Cyril that Bishop Alexander twice spoke with him about the transfer of our Church even before Fr. Cyril did, **I agreed to visit him** (emph. "Ch. N."). The meeting was interesting but without results since he is obviously a weak-willed hierarch. There were three priests with him, of whom the most unpleasant was an ancient old man, who was confined in the camps for 11 years. He excused everything with this imprisonment and the others hid behind this using it to justify themselves. In spite of this, we spoke very intensely for two hours and in my opinion and that of Fr. Ambrose this was useful, since in many respects they had to agree with our position, which they previously misunderstood."

While informing Metropolitan Vitaly about his trip, which often happen to him "unexpectedly" or "urgently," Archbishop Mark failed to let him know that the Moscow hierarch Alexander Kudriashov at this meeting presented him with a panagia. In the past, his predecessor on the German cathedra (the late Archbishop Paul) was careless enough to accept a gift of panagia from a hierarch of the Moscow Patriarchate who was visiting Germany. Yet, upon insistence of Metropolitan Philaret he had to return this gift.

And regarding the neutrality of the Latvian government toward ROCOR and the Moscow Patriarchate, on example of the Free Latvian Church (which for several years now has unsuccessfully attempted to get from the government acknowledgment of her legal right to be registered) she does not receive this specifically because the Moscow Patriarchate enjoys privileged status and the government makes no secret of it.

ABOUT THE FUTURE PAN-DIASPORA COUNCIL

The bulletin "Vertograd-Inform" published in St. Petersburg under the jurisdiction of the ROCOR in its issue # 9 (42) for September in a condensed manner reports that "The Fourth Pan-Diaspora Church Council, the idea of which for year 2000 was agreed to in full by the last Council of Bishops of the ROCOR, **will be probably held in Australia, where the preparations for this historic event have already started**" (emph. by "Ch. N.").

The choice of Australia as place to convene the Council seems to us to be far from accidental. In former years Councils with participation of clergy and lay people were held near the headquarters of the Synod of Bishops. Thus, two Councils were held in Sremski Karlovci and a third one in Holy Trinity monastery – within the borders of the diocese of the First Hierarch of the ROCOR. Therefore, convening such a Council in Australia would be an unheard of novelty for the ROCOR.

It is a known fact that the idea of holding a Council with the participation of clergy and laity was introduced by Archbishop Mark, who has proved himself a zealous supporter of a union of the Church Abroad with the MP. Therefore, to have the Council in his diocese could provoke suspicion undesirable for Archbishop Mark. Australia happens to be the most profitable step for the conspirators. The diocese is ruled by Archbishop Hilarion (Kapral), who grew up and was raised in Canada in a parish of the Moscow Patriarchate to which his family belonged for decades. He seems to be the only member of this family to join the ROCOR.

The Australian flock consists of a considerable number of refugees from Shanghai and Harbin, regions which once were under occupation of the USSR army. Many of them graduated from a 10 year schooling program under this regime and also do not have anti-Moscow sentiments.

Archbishop Theodosios, when he participated in the Council of Bishops in 1971, at that time addressed the Council asking for support in his struggle against pro-Moscow sympathizers in his diocese. It seems, at that time they were numerous enough to give the diocesan Archpastor concern over the problem.

The organizers of the future Council work according to a plan developed to the last details. Thus, the last Council of Bishops (May, 98) in name of the clergy of the Diocese of Germany was presented with request to convene a council to include clergy and laity and along with it, a "possible list of reports to be deliberated at the proposed forthcoming Council of the ROCOR". The list contains 2 pages single spaced. At the very end of it (in a section titled "possible practical steps") in paragraph 7 about "technical steps" it states:

- The acceptance of a decision by the Council
- Creation of organizational committee (before the end of June 1998)
- Creation of working plan (before end of July 1998)
- Creation of organizing committee by the Fall of 1998 and Spring 1999
- In March 1999 – definition of place for the convention of the Council and creation of the local organizational committee "

It is interesting to note that the Synod of Bishops made no official obligations regarding a council with participation of clergy and laity. In the so-called Epistle of the Council nothing was mentioned about an agreement to convene such a Council, but undoubtedly "Vertograd-Inform" did not by itself invent the information that "the preparation for this historical event has started" in Australia.

To have the council in Australia has at least two advantages against holding it in New York. First of all, there is no way that the considerable part of the necessary archives, a must in such cases, could be transferred there and in this way the participants of the Council would be deprived of information on documentation regarding earlier regulations and principle decisions of the Church Abroad, especially concerning the heresy of Sergianism.

And secondly, the cost for a trip to Australia is so high, that only a few dioceses would be able to afford to send delegates to participate in the Council and thus, one must expect that previously well screened delegates will be operating with the votes of the financially strapped dioceses

An astonishingly clever action!

P. S. The editor of "Ch. N." approached one of the hierarchs (a member of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR) to ask his opinion about information on the Pan-diaspora Council in Australia, published by the very well informed bulletin "Vertograd Inform." This hierarch responded with total ignorance of this matter.

ARCHBISHOP VALENTIN OF SUZDAL AND VLADIMIR IN ENGLAND

At beginning of September, at the invitation of the Archangel Michael Parish in the city of Guilford, England, the Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir Valentin arrived in England and accepted this community under his omophorion. Vladyka spent four days in England. Arriving in Guilford on Friday, on Saturday he baptized in a river two parishioners and served a Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Archangel Michael.

On Monday Archbishop Valentin gave an interview to a local newspaper and returned to Suzdal.

UNEXPLAINED BITTERNESS

A priest of the ROCOR, Fr. Steven Krasovitzky, and Mr. Roman Vershillo widely distributed a leaflet entitled "How Christians Are Killed."

After studying the leaflet, it is obvious that it is not concerned with any killing of Christians, but is about a bishop of the ROFC, Theodore, who baptized one man, (also his wife and two children) who very much doubted the validity of his baptism in the Moscow Patriarchate.

The leaflet is full of very rude attacks against the hierarchy of the ROFC and very inappropriate references to some the Holy Fathers of the Church regarding heretical baptisms. There is also added a number of vicious fantasies on the part of the authors of this disgraceful document. For example it states: "But we ask Christians to reflect on this: those false bishops do not consider that they themselves need to be baptized! This means, that according to their own convictions they are pagans, and not Christians. But these pagans are concerned about our Christian purity, while washing off the seal of Holy Spirit. And these pagans dare to insist that they perform the saving Christian Mysteries.

"We do not know the reason for this their evil intent, but let them not think that they, who did not obey the church authority, which deprived them of their sacerdotal rank, that they will with the similar ease avoid God's judgement."

This amazing composition, "bewildered by its ridiculous conclusions and hysterical tone" an former parishioner of the killed priest Alexander Zharkov, who sent a letter to Dr. Michael Ardov and asked him for an explanation. Fr. Michael informed her that the family baptized by Bishop Theodore left the Church Abroad since it became frightened by the clearly intended rapprochement of the Church Abroad with the MP. The person, who became a parishioner of Fr. Michael, on several occasions expressed his concern about the validity of his baptism, since he was standing among a group of people who were "baptized" not even by a pouring water over their heads, but simply sprinkled with holy water. Fr. Michael directed him to Suzdal for a consultation with the Bishop. His Grace Bishop Theodore decided to baptize him, by using the quite legitimate form in the Orthodox Church "the servant of God (name) is baptized in case he is not baptized in Name of Father... and so on."

In his explanation Fr. Ardov wrote: "The most amusing and at the same time sad thing in this situation is that the fury of the authors is directed to the wrong address. I know for sure that in the Church Abroad in the diocese of the First Hierarch people who come from the Moscow Patriarchate are re-baptized (the fact is, that Metropolitan Vitaly does not recognize the grace of the Mysteries of the 'Red Church', but in one of his most recent interviews he stated that Apostolic succession there was broken). Just recently Fr. Victor Potapov was deprived of his status of Dean just because he was forbade the clergy under him to re-baptism all those who joined the Church Abroad from the Moscow Patriarchate."

It is amazing that while being under influence of such a vicious anger against Archbishop Valentin, Fr. Krasovitzky, who once was so instrumental in his being ordained a bishop, is not frightened to stand before the altar and continue his ministry.

MUTUAL CONGRATULATIONS OF KGB-ists

The newspaper "Russian Mysl" (Russian Mind) of Sept. 23, in # 4237 published information about the relationship of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Yeltsin government.

As the paper reports, Alexis Ridiger ("Drozdov") on September 14 extended congratulations to Eugene Primakov on the occasion of assuming his new duties as President of the government, in which he says: "Together with all the Orthodox people I lift up my prayers that after we have been subjected to storms and temptations, our ship of state again will find stability and the people of Russia again would taste the salvific gifts of well-being, peace and prosperity."

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" on October 7 quoted Neville Kirke-Smith (a director of the Catholic charitable organization Church in Need) as expressing his concern that Primakov might be a dangerous enemy of Christians in Russia, because he was a very high level KGB executive and he was known to be in the past of even "a much harder line background" than Chernomyrdin. In 1991 Primakov was head of the KGB's directorate for foreign intelligence. In Smith's opinion, at present the Moscow Patriarchate is seeking to accommodate the resurgent Communist Party.

The newspaper "The Jewish Press" of September 24th also is extremely disturbed by Primakov's appointment, but for quite different motives. As it turns out, Primakov in reality is a son of a Jew with the name of Finkelstein, but... he "evades questions regarding his lineage." This newspaper on several occasions has expressed concern that the significant number of Jews in the Yeltsin government may provoke a Jewish "pogrom" backlash in Russia.

Another colleague of the KGB-ist Ridiger/Drozdov also would not be left behind. On the same day, the Chairman of the Department for External Relations of the MP, Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad ("Mikhailov" in KGB terms) also joyously greeted his co-worker, declaring that "in this extremely difficult and dangerous period, at the head of the Russian cabinet of ministers stands a man who has a solid and well earned reputation of a wise and responsible statesman, who for many years labored in various fields and is marked with the seal of devotion to the country and

people." Further, Gundiayev/Mikhailov expressed the "hope in the future continuation and development of good interaction between the Church leadership and the Russian government in common cause of the revival of Russia."

Exactly as in the fable of Krylov: "The cuckoo praises the rooster because he is praising the cuckoo!"

METROPOLITAN KIRILL'S TRAVELS

The Chairman of the Department for External Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk, spent the end of July in Communist Cuba, in order to organize parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate. In Cuba he met with Cardinal Ortega. During a long conversation, the situation of Catholics in Cuba was discussed and also the recent visit of the Roman Pope. During this visit, Kyrill Gundiayev/"Mikhailov" saw several museums and placed a wreath on the monument to Soviet soldiers who lost their lives in Havana. In the embassy in Havana he conducted a thanksgiving molieben with a blessing of water and met with representatives of the Russian colony in Cuba, approximately 14, 000 people of Russian lineage live there, who stayed first on orders to strengthen Communism in Cuba but now, mainly, because of mixed marriages. Nevertheless, these people want to have a Russian priest and services in their own language. Between 1961 and 1975 they had a church dedicated to Sts. Constantine and Helen, by now long ago closed and made into a theatrical studio. It is self evident that Metropolitan Kyrill visited representatives of high ranking Cuban governmental officials.

Not long ago, he was also in Canada, in which there are some 22 MP parishes, of which he visited 12. In Edmonton, which has 2 ROCOR parishes, one MP parish (to oppose them?) has increased in strength and started weekly services, since in most of their parishes in Canada the services are conducted (depending on the size of the community) only once a year.

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE WESTERN REGION OF RUSSIA

The newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" ("Russian Mind") of September 17-23 # 4237, published an interesting interview of Bishop Sergius of Ternopol, which he gave to Mr. Nicholas Mitrokhin. The newspaper also printed a photograph of this MP hierarch who has an monastic, ascetic face, so rare for bishops of this Church.

As the interview of Bishop Sergius makes clear, when he was appointed to the Ternopol Diocese he thought he would have 800 parishes, but then more than a half of them became Uniates. At present his diocese has 126 parishes for which he has 124 priests. Yet, the church situation in this era is confusing to the point that Bishop Sergius has a dean, also is considered to be dean by the autocephalist Ukrainians and in the neighboring diocese of Kamenets-Podolsk yet!

In the city of Ternopol itself Bishop Sergius has only one parish, which is busy with building a church, because the Nativity Cathedral which had been his before was taken over by the Philaret self-ordained.

Asked what is happening in the famous Pochayev Lavra, Bishop Sergius related that since 1996 city of Pochayev is in the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Vladimir (MP). This was done in order to prevent its seizure by the Uniates. They united with the autocephalists, Cossacks and some intellectuals and in 1995 decided hold a church procession in order to seize the Lavra. When this became known, the Ukrainian Bishops declared a three day long fasting and prayers for Pochayev and this march did not materialize. In memory of this, which one might call a miracle, in Pochayev now after every evening service there is a procession around the church.

In almost all the churches under Bishop Sergius the services are conducted in Church Slavonic, but there are also some parishes which use Ukrainian translations, but these are few, because the Bishop himself defends the use of Church Slavonic.

In this interview there is also an amusing statement by Bishop Sergius. Asked about his relationship with autocephalists and other groups, he answered that there are none, because there is nothing to talk about. Yet, when once Bishop Sergius asked them: "Well, yes, here we quarrel, but in heaven, shall we be together?" And they said to me: "There we will not be together with the Moscow lot!"

According to information, given by a seemingly very worthy Bishop, the situation at present has stabilized. During the last year only one of his priests left and that was for personal reasons and a number of priests (without parishioners due to fear of fanatical authorities) are petitioning him to be accepted again.

Speaking about the episcopate, Bishop Sergius quite correctly said, "The episcopate has to have a solid understanding of what we want. And in accordance with this concept conduct their work with priests. And for a long time, some fool with the heads of their priests, saying that supposedly we will have autocephaly, just wait a bit... And why not say outright that there will be no autocephaly? Why should we say something that we feel inwardly is incorrect? After all, it is people outside the Church who suggest these ideas to us. When our episcopate in December 1966 unanimously (1 vote opposed) said that it is too early to raise the question of autocephaly and unnecessary and that we are staying within the ROC, many were flabbergasted."

Asked what kind of relationship exists between the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate, Bishop Sergius replied, "We have enough rights. It is time to think how to use them wisely, without undermining the unity of the Church."

Speaking about himself personally, Bishop Sergius said that he had to live in the world and in the monastery, but "although a monk can be useful to the world, people want him to be in a parish. But his main activity is prayer, which is concealed and spiritual. He is a spiritual warrior and not an administrator. I rather prefer that people in the world would behave as if in a monastery."

The very same journalist Nicholas Mitrokhin in mid-August held an interview with another worthy bishop of the Western Region: Bishop of Lemberg and Drohobych, Augustine, whose quotations from his excellent announcements we happen to use occasionally.

Mitrokhin asked Bishop Augustine to characterize for him the present situation in the Lemberg diocese. Answering his question, Bishop Augustine said it is tragic. In 1990 the diocese had 1260 parishes, while some other dioceses had only a few. Yet, by 1992 the official number was 8 parishes and actually, even less: the diocese was crushed by the Philaretites and Uniates. His predecessor Bishop Andrew (Gorak) joined the self-ordained Philaret together with all the property of the diocese and even all the diocesan documentation which was deprived of its registration. "I believe," said Bishop Augustine, "that in the Holy Synod they didn't know that the diocese has lost the registration. If they knew, I certainly would not be consecrated as Bishop of Lemberg. When the diocese was taken off the registration, it was done secretly. And when I came here, I was not even told about it then -- only in the past several weeks. So, we had to apply for a new registration. At present, in reality I have about 40 parishes although officially there are 50." Some priests who left, as in the case of Bishop Sergius, ask to be received back, yet they left with their parishioners who by now are accustomed to other regulations and do not want to return.

Comparing a spiritual father with a worldly physician, Bishop Augustine properly said that if a physician does not treat his patient properly, it will be soon obvious on his skin or with internal ailments, but errors made by a spiritual father one can evaluate only in the other world, in Hell. Bishop Augustine also complains that it is easy to explain to lay people the demotion of an military doctor, but a suspension of a cleric is very hard to understand.

It seems that the views and moods of both bishops in the Russian Western Region are identical. It is a pity, that there are so few of this kind of bishops!

THE CORNER STONE

The newspaper "Christian News" of October 5 published information that a group of Jews, headed by Gershon Solomon and which is calling itself "The Temple Mount Faithful" has the goal of rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple (which was sacked and destroyed in accordance with Christ's word) and has set a date of October 7 as the day for laying a corner stone for a new temple. So far nothing is known about the actual fulfillment of the ceremony, a basic polished marble block weighing 5 and a half tons with knowledge and permission of municipal authorities is already located in the middle of a traffic circle, which was especially built for this purpose. The circle is not far away from the Damascus Gate and close to the monument for soldiers killed during the Six-Day War.

It was supposed that the ceremony would start with covering the block with a prayer shawl (tallith) and then will be moved to the designated place accompanied by priests in white vestments specially prepared some time ago, made in accordance with Biblical requirements. Priests were also to anoint the stone.

The leader of this group, Solomon, who hopes that the temple will be soon restored and ready for services, said: "We want to renew everything which belongs to the Temple and Biblical tradition. We know that we are living in a special exciting time of redemption of the people and the land of Israel, the Temple Mount and Jerusalem. We feel and live the special significance of this time. The members of the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement dedicated themselves to fulfill the wish of the God of Israel and prophecies of the prophets of Israel for the end times."

The members of this organization believe that their Messiah will come as soon as the Temple will be rebuilt and the worship services will start. The process of rebuilding the Temple is halted at present only by the numerous Muslim Arabs and, partially, because of some European countries.

FROM THE LIFE OF THE SERBIAN CHURCH

The official publication of the Serbian Church "Pravoslavlje" of September 15 reports the restoration of a diocese in Dalmatia, which was badly hurt as result of the Communist regime and civil war.

Bishop Longin in 1996 sent Priest Elia Karajevich, who reported that some 15,000 people were still living there and that it was possible to restore this diocese. In 1997 a diocesan office was established in Dalmatia (with the diocesan administrative center in the city of Shibenik) and then Bishop Longin was able to return to his diocese. He happened to be one of the first Serbian Bishops who after exile was able to return to his diocese. With him Bishop Mitrophan of

Western America came to Dalmatia. Both hierarchs, after an interruption of many years conducted a service in the Sts. Constantine and Helen Cathedral.

In every parish and monastery visited by Bishop Longin, who had ruled this diocese for almost 30 years, he was met with tears of joy and gratitude. Believers at all these places expressed hope, that Bishop Longin with his energy would assist them in rebuilding and restoring destroyed churches, monasteries and other church buildings. A book published in 1997 by Slobodan Mileusnich entitled "Spiritual Genocide" with documented information about the destruction of 797 churches and monasteries of unfortunate Serbia.

Alongside genuinely Orthodox Serbian Bishops (such as Bishop Artemije of Rashka and Prizren) -- inside the Serbian Patriarchate there are also such traitors to Orthodoxy like Bishop Irinei of Bachka, who do not stop even at dialogue with Jews.

Internet information from the MP reports that in mid-September Bishop Irinei accompanied by another Serbian Bishop Athanassy of Herzegovina arrived in Moscow and started their visit to Russia from the diocese of Metropolitan Kirill, ("Mikhailov" in the KGB) Chairman of the Department of Foreign Relations of MP.

After serving a Divine Liturgy with Metr. Kirill, the Serbian guests went to Moscow where they, together with their host spoke at a press conference, specially arranged in order to make an official statement on the subject: "The relationship of the Serbian Orthodox Church to the Ecumenical Movement."

Participants underscored their unified opinion about the ecumenical movement which was formulated at the Pan-Orthodox meeting in May in Thessalonica, Greece. Bishop Irinej complained that the Russian press supposedly incorrectly states the official position of the Serbian Church in this matter.

This ecumenist declared that "In the case of the condemnation of Ecumenism, zeal not tempered by wisdom shows in an irrational fear of the heterodox. The essence of Ecumenism is in the striving for the lost unity of the Christian world by people who confess Christ as the Lord and Saviour. Therefore our duty is to witness about Orthodoxy in this fractured world as well as an example of brotherly love toward those who are not our fellow-believers."

Here, Bishop Irinej repeats the very same idea, which Ecumenists like bait on fishing rod threw at the days of establishment of the Ecumenical Movement. Serbs have a wonderful proverb: "an old song to a new tune."

While in Russia, the Serbian Bishops were received by Alexis Ridiger, they also visited St. Sergius Holy Trinity Lavra, Christ the Saviour Cathedral and also a factory in Sofrino.

END OF SCHISM IN THE BULGARIAN CHURCH

According to information published through the Internet by sender Orthodox Christianity on October 9, in Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, there was a meeting of all Patriarchs and autonomous Churches in some cases represented by delegates of episcopal rank to which were also invited hierarchs who separated from the official Bulgarian Church in 1992 and were chaired by Metropolitan Pimen of Nevrokop. He demanded the resignation of Patriarch Maxim, who was appointed to this post (in the same manner as the Moscow Patriarchs starting with Sergius Stragorodsky in 1943) in violation to the 30th Apostolic canon. Metropolitan Pimen was joined by a number of hierarchs who shared his opinion and declared him Patriarch.

Bishops who separated themselves from Patriarch Maxim, together with Metropolitan Pimen accepted the invitation and arrived for the pan-Orthodox conference. As a result, as is stressed in the official minutes, they were offered a chance to repent and by applying "extreme leniency," all the sanctions and anathemas were lifted after they declared their repentance and the whole group was accepted back. Repentance was offered by the Patriarch Pimen himself, all the bishops who joined him and even those, who were ordained by him during the schism. All the clergy ordinations were also declared valid. All who repented retained their former titles and posts and even Metropolitan Pimen was permitted to use the title of "former Metropolitan of Nevrokop." It seems that according to a resolution, his diocese will be ruled by already appointed Bishop Nathaniel. What the future position of Metropolitan Pimen is not at present is not clear.

The decree ending the schism in the Bulgarian Church was signed by all the participants of this Council on October 1.

THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND ITS ECUMENISM

A newspaper "Rus Orthodox" in issue # 7 (13) on the first page published an extensive unsigned article headlined "Whom, Then, Are You With, Your Holiness?"

The article very thoroughly criticizes the pro-Ecumenical and particularly pro-Catholic sentiments of the Moscow Patriarchate. In the first part of this article (the Balamand Union in action) is discussed a recent agreement of Patriarch Alexis Ridiger /"Drozdov" to the appointment to Russia of another two Catholic bishops. Now there are four in Russia!

"Rus Orthodox" frequently uses material published by the Catholic Russian language paper "Russkaya Mysl" ("Russian Mind").

From an interview given by the papal nuncio to the paper's correspondent Sakharov it is clear that "a previous appointment to Russia of two Catholic bishops in 1991 did not stimulate delight on part of Moscow Patriarchate. Until recently, the hierarchs of the Russian Church were officially stating that the number of Catholic bishops in Russia clearly exceeds a realistic necessity. And yet, contemporary appointments did not provoke any official objections. Even more, in church circles rumors started about cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Vatican." (RM #4226). According to the same papal nuncio, he personally informed the Moscow Patriarch and the Chairman of the Department for Foreign Relations of MP Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk that Catholics want to have an additional two bishops due to huge dimensions of Russian territory and "they understood the necessity of this... They did not object. And when the Holy Father appointed new bishops, I considered it to be my duty to inform His Holiness the Patriarch. His Holiness Alexis II listened to everything with Christian love and understanding. We do very much appreciate such understanding on the part of the Orthodox Church."

One of the newly appointed Catholic bishops to Russia, a Pole Jerzy Mazur, in the interview he gave to newspaper "NG-Religions" on July 15th, he admitted that in Russia at present there are registered and function four Catholic religious orders: firstly the Society of Jesus, then the Franciscans, Dominicans and a women's order of Theresa "Missionaries of Charity." The crafty Catholic noted that "it is nice if monks are working in the schools, hospitals and orphanages. This is beneficial to the individual as well as to the state."

The same paper reports also the arrival in Moscow of the Foreign Affairs minister of the Vatican, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, the Catholic hierarch closest to the Pope. The reason for his visit was the official opening of a new mansion for the papal representatives in the very center of Moscow. Interestingly, before the Russian authorities realized it, a plaque appeared on the Catholic mansion with the inscription "Embassy." The Ministry for Foreign Affairs immediately made a formal protest. Tauran paid a visit to Primakov and was successful in many respects. So, it seems, that the diplomatic status of Catholics in Moscow has been raised to a higher level, although Primakov did not make any special commitments. All the heretics who enter Russia to propagandize of their religions will have an easier time in getting entry visas. In case of difficulties, they have the right to appeal directly to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Until now the visas were granted to different propaganda carriers only for a three month period.

At the same time, the newspaper "Rus Orthodox" in the second part of the article, entitled "Change Without Change," points out to the reader that in the matter of Ecumenical activities, the Moscow Patriarchate Synod in spite of various and clear protests by Orthodox believers in Russia, totally ignores them and in its May session "expressed satisfaction with results of the fifth theological discussions of representatives of the RC and German Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church on the subject of 'Unity and diversity of the Church' and 'Borders of the Church.'" As is stated in the article: "One can have no doubt that the participants of those discussions agreed on the opinion that "diversity of the Church" includes Orthodoxy as well as Catholicism. And "the borders of the Church" in their interpretation are wide enough to include on equal footing Christ's truth and the Papists' heresy."

This newspaper also lists another two cases for "satisfaction" on the part of the Synod of the MP: an Ecumenical meeting with Evangelists in Germany and the sending of a delegation for discussions with Evangelists in Finland.

The article ends with the statement that "the joy of pious zealots of Orthodoxy after the decisions of the conference in Thessaloniki was a short lived one. Nothing has changed! Through the efforts of the 'Nikodimites' the pro-Ecumenical policy of the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate returns 'to its circles' evoking the challenge to Alexis Ridiger himself: whom, then, are you with, Your Holiness?"

MOSLEM SYMPATHIES IN EUROPE

Not a single religion is spreading at present as fast as Islam. Even Europe has been captured by a multitude of Moslems, who build their mosques and quite successfully spread their propaganda amidst Christians. Only a few years ago in the center of Catholicism, Rome, the largest mosque built in Europe.

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of October 7th reports that the retired political activist Dr. Yan Slomp (a specialist on Moslem matters) and also a prominent activist of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands declared, that it is time Christian theologians recognized Mohammed as a prophet. Slomp used to work in Pakistan as a clerk regarding Christian-Moslem matters and said that by now many "theologians" and "Churches" agreed that Mohammed may be compared with the Old Testament prophets.

He made the announcement because the Moslem religion is wide spread in Netherlands and many Moslems send their children to Christian schools. "If the children ask their teacher what he or she thinks about Mohammed and the teacher answers that he is a false prophet, the teacher falls out of favour with the Moslem parents. If the teacher says he (Mohammed) is a real prophet, the teacher will probably get into trouble with his or her own pastor." At present in the small country of the Netherlands there are 500 thousand Moslems.

A "Christian," Slomp thinks that "We should say Mohammed is a prophet, and that he must be treated with respect. For centuries Mohammed has been considered a false prophet by the Christian tradition, but Islam did not say such things about Jesus." Yet he does not expect at present that Christian Churches will make a special joint declaration on this matter.

Several years ago, Patriarch Parthenios of Alexandria went even further with his pro-Moslem sympathies than Slomp when he declared Mohammed to be not only a prophet, but even an apostle! Interesting, that after this outrageous declaration, not one of the "Orthodox" Churches condemned him nor considered it necessary to break communion with him.

DEDICATION OF A SYNAGOGUE ON "RELIGION HILL"

The newspaper "Novoye Russkoye Slovo" ("New Russian Word") on October 4th choking with excitement reported the dedication on "Religion Hill," Moscow, of a synagogue, headlining this announcement as "Youri Louzhkov has incarnated a dream of Jews throughout the whole world." This synagogue stands next to an Orthodox church and a mosque.

The dedication of the synagogue occurred after the end of the Jewish Congress in Moscow. The members of this Congress were disappointed that the ceremony was not attended by American President Clinton, who was expected by them, but "the podium of honorary guests was not empty: the celebration was attended by Yeltsin and Moscow's Mayor Louzhkov" who with the same diligence builds Christ the Saviour Cathedral and a "memorial synagogue "

The President of the Jewish Congress V. Goussinsky said that "Yeltsin for ever will be remembered in history as the first elected President of Russia who began a difficult and painful process of reform and who came to the dedication of the synagogue." The truthfulness of Goussinsky's words cannot be disputed.

Louzhkov greeted Moscow's Jews with the word "shalom" which made all present quite ecstatic and said: "For me this is a happy day. A dream of Moscovites was realized [Really?! "Ch. N."], the dream of Jews in Russia and the whole world." As is related further, the Moscow's Mayor "discussed with such care and responsibility the needs and prospects of Jewish society in Russia, that even the rabbis were agitated." Louzhkov presented the Chief Rabbi for Russia Adoif Shayevech with an ancient Torah scroll and concluded his triumphal speech with the greeting in Hebrew. The distinguished guests left accompanied by singing of the synagogue choir.

"Vertograd-Info" in # 9 (42) notes the presence at this ceremony of representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, but gave no names nor their rank. It would be strange if indeed the Patriarchate were not represented, having in mind, that the President and Mayor Louzhkov were there.

THE WCC AND HOMOSEXUALITY

According to the bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of October 7th, on September 19th in Amsterdam a symposium was held to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of WCC in Holland called "Faith in the City -- Fifty Years of the WCC in a Secularized Western Context." This Ecumenical organization, which has 330 members groups of various religions, including "Orthodox" according to its General Secretary Dr. Konrad Raiser, has to solve among other problems also the touchy matter of homosexuality, which is by now (although not happily) recognized by a majority of Western faiths as "a way of life." This matter with extreme acuity was discussed during the last Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church, which was held last August. Almost the whole conference was dedicated to discussion of this matter.

In the coming December in Zimbabwe a festive jubilee Assembly is to be opened of the WCC and her leader Raiser is very much concerned by a statement made by the country's President, who condemned a sin of homosexuality as a tradition foreign to Africa. Most denominations in Africa do not accept homosexuality. Therefore a number of "Churches", including the "Orthodox" feel that this matter should not be raised by an organization like the WCC. Yet, the General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Holland Ineke Bakker said that the WCC already successfully resolved problems regarding "social ethics" and there was "still a lot of work for the WCC and the Churches on the issues of personal ethics, including homosexuality."

Dr. Anton Wessels, a professor of religion history at Amsterdam University called upon "the three Scripture-based faiths -- Islam, Judaism and Christianity -- to reread their holy books and to question their condemnations of homosexuality... We are facing a common problem of reference to holy books. These holy books are quite difficult because of the discrimination of women and discrimination of homosexuals. **It might be necessary to delete some sections because they are the product of their times.**"

Raiser said that the latest researches prove that the majority of the churches which changed their views about homosexuality, did so not because of Scripture studies, had done so not because of a new studying of scripture, but

because "change occurred in society, and that obliged churches to take another look at the issue." He thinks that "Churches should be aware that their moral stance was 'cultural' and not rooted in scripture as they believed" previously.

Evangelical Lutherans of the Kingdom of the Netherlands declared that they will not send their delegates to the Assembly because the President of Zimbabwe, Mr. Mugabe, made insulting remarks regarding homosexuals.

Nevertheless, the so-called "Orthodox Churches" will send their delegates in order (as they claim) to make a number of protests to the WCC and among them also a protest for support of homosexuals.

The Moscow Patriarchate numerically is the largest Orthodox Church in the WCC and it is under very strong pressure on part of genuinely Orthodox people who insist that the MP exit from this abominable organization. As the "Ecumenical News International" of October 7th believes, "The Orthodox leadership has generally tried to resist such extreme views, preferring a policy of constructive (?! "Ch. N.") criticism of the WCC."

A reporter of a Polish newspaper "Rzeczpospolita" asked Alexis Ridiger about his relations with the church groups in the Western Region who now are seeking national independence and, as a result, also ecclesiastical independence. Alexis II answered: "I think the independence of this or any other Orthodox Church doesn't always depend on whether a particular country is sovereign or not. Besides that, the fact that the canonical territory of one Orthodox Church embraces several independent states is perfectly normal on the Orthodox world."

Ridiger also told the reporter that he hopes to continue dialogue with the Roman Catholics, but by all means not with Pope John Paul II until the revived Uniates in Ukraine stop "the disgraceful discrimination and persecution of Orthodox Christians."

How does Alexis Ridiger expect to exclude the Pope of Rome from his dialogues with Catholics, without whom no traditional Catholic may make a single step -- is a secret known only to the Moscow Patriarch. But no matter what, there his trip to Poland is already scheduled for January next year. The newspaper notes that this would be the very first visit to Poland by a Moscow Patriarch.

UNREST IN THE GREEK ARCHDIOCESE IN AMERICA

From the time Archbishop Iakovos was retired and Archbishop Spyridon was appointed to his post, very soon within the Greek Archdiocese serious problems began. The new Archbishop started making drastic changes in the rules and methods of his predecessor and that soon enough led to major conflicts. From the first days of his appointment he made changes in the body of professors in Holy Cross Theological School. This act immediately provoked numerous protests from the body of professors. At the same time rumors started about the desire of the new Archbishop to sell this very large property which is located in a beautiful part of Boston.

In accordance with American laws on corporations, lay people were accustomed to considering themselves owners of parish and even diocesan property. Lay people began to protest the now long standing rules and started to accuse Archbishop Spyridon of expropriating \$50,000 from a will which totaled \$116,000. The new Archbishop also expressed a wish to purchase for himself a building costing one million four hundred thousand dollars and from the diocesan funds he made a non-refundable down payment of \$139,000. In regard to this property 15 trustees of the diocese voted against the purchase and only 1 for. Because of this the down payment was lost. Now, the lay people sue the Archbishop for 8 million dollars. In return, the Archdiocese is suing a group of people for using the diocesan address lists to mail their protests.

It seems, that the abuse of power by the new Archbishop reached even far away Istanbul and Patriarch Bartholomew appointed a Bishop Demetrios to America who will resume a number of duties, including liaison to International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) and the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMOC). He is also to be responsible for the Ecumenical Affairs Office, the Standing Conference of (Canonical) Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOBA) and Home Missions. As is known, Archbishop Spyridon was not retired and replaced in return of his promise to the Patriarch not to make any important decision without first consulting the Patriarch.

One wonders: what activity is left for Archbishop Spyridon?

("Ecumenical News International" of October 7th and the "Voice of Orthodoxy" for August 1998)