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CHURCH NEWS  
639 Center Street  
Oradell, NJ 07679-2003 USA  
Tel: 201-967-7684

## "THE GOVERNMENT SEEKS PROPERTY ABROAD"

Under this headline in the newspaper "Commerçant" of November 20, 1998 # 217(1620) a long article was published regarding property belonging to the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission and the Orthodox Palestine Society in Jerusalem.

In a sort of short introduction to the article by Vladlen Sirotkin, a Professor of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry for Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation and a President of the International Export Council of the Russian Foundation for Culture and Valuables Abroad, we find the following information: it is revealed that "the problem of the return of Russian Property located abroad has been studied since 1991."

In this introduction it is stated that "in the *anti-crisis program of the government* there is a following: 'to discover and prove the rights of ownership of Russia to properties of the USSR and the Russian Empire'. Today in the Ministry for International Affairs there will be a meeting of 'a small board' which will discuss ways to solve this problem. Russia already has successfully made known and proven her rights to two holdings of real-estate in Jerusalem. The most direct participation in this action was by the present Premier Eugene Primakov [Finkelstein, ed.], the Minister of the Foreign Affairs [emph. by "Ch. N"].

The article gives some brief information on the source of the rights of ownership of the REM and the OPS in Jerusalem in 1917.

In a chapter named "Return" it is reported that "in the beginning of the 30's the British authorities who after the end of World War I occupied Palestinian lands, at that time seized all the real estate in the Holy Land which had once belonged to Russia." Yet in the very first years after revolution, already in the early 20's, the Temporary Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration established abroad, took measures to put in order the legal and financial situation of the church property in Holy Land and very quickly sent Archbishop Anastassy (Gribanovsky) who later succeeded Metropolitan Anthony. Archbishop Anastassy spent a bit more than 10 years in the Holy Land and during this time not only put in order the situation of the Jerusalem Mission, but also gained an extraordinary respect in Jerusalem Patriarchate and military circles of the "British mandate" as well as having a close personal relationship with the contemporary Patriarch Damian.

In the mid-50's when Patriarch Benedict came to New York and Metropolitan Anastassy paid him an official visit in the hotel, it was noted that two patriarchal archdeacons fought over the Metropolitan's staff in order to have the honor to hand it to the Metropolitan at his departure.

Sirotkin relates that "the matter moved forward in 1991, when there was established an International committee of experts for material and cultural valuables abroad." In 1993 this committee of experts made a list of Russia's real estate holdings. Among them, the Israeli government already has returned to the Russian Federation, free of charge, two holdings: Holy Trinity Cathedral and building of the REM. At that time it became known that a representative of the Israeli government told Sirotkin, "it is better to give it to you, rather than to the Palestinians. We need you more." What sort of legal rights Israelis and Palestinians have to Russian properties in the Holy Land is a puzzle in the game of contemporary diplomats.

Yet Sirotkin does foresee some difficulties in seizing this property, since some members of the House of Romanoff were members of the OPS and he does not exclude the possibility of a court trial with their heirs.

The article refers to 27 holdings to be seized by the Russian Federation. Among them are the so-called "Excavations" and Gethsemane Convent (both property of the OPS) as well as the already seized Hebron Monastery and the huge garden in Jericho with the Zacheas Tree. As soon as this became known last year, the President of the Jerusalem section of the OPS, Bishop Anthony, immediately filed a court case demanding the return of Jericho garden. Certainly, the Mt. of Olives Convent as well as all the property of the REM and the OPS are under the same threat.

The main reason for the seizure of these properties doubtlessly is the financial situation of the totally bankrupt present government of Russia. The value of the properties preserved through the efforts of Metropolitan Anastassy and the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR is estimated to exceed at present 100 billion dollars! It is no wonder, then, that the heirs of the international political crooks have dreams of getting this property into their hands. This is obvious from the expression "the government's anti-crisis program."

Sirotkin's article finishes with a characteristic sentence: "Therefore, one has to hurry!"

It seems that Mr. Sirotkin and Co. (in spite of his impressive titles) are not aware that in the international law only embassies and consulates are considered to be government property. All the rest were registered according to local laws in the name of private persons. But churches and monasteries always were considered to be Church property, except in extraordinary cases, when they could belong to private individuals.

After being appointed Chief of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem in 1968, Archimandrite Anthony (Grabbe) very quickly put the Mission's documentation in order. At the recommendation of the Supreme Council of the OPS he was elected to the post of Deputy President of the OPS and in the name of the REM and the OPS filed a suit against the Israeli government which lasted nearly 15 years. The OPS was once under the protection of the Russian Imperial government, and according to existing documents, the Israeli government had to acknowledge that this is a self-governing lay organization, which was not subordinate even to Russian church authorities. As is known, Archimandrite

Anthony won the court case against the Israeli government, which illegally handed over the property of the REM and the OPS to the government of the former USSR, and thus he quite clearly proved the ownership of the Jerusalem Mission and the OPS.

Nevertheless, at present, it is the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR which "has to hurry" to urgently take measures to prevent this attack on part of people who have nothing to do with the Orthodox Church and who would in no time squander the Russian historical property in the Holy Land.

At the same time, the question of the church property in Bari remains unresolved. The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of January 20th devoted two full pages to this matter. The article reports that "Until now an emigre church, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which broke away from the Moscow Patriarchate in the 1920s over the latter's cooperation with the Soviet government, has had exclusive control of the Bari building."

The three story building of churches and quarters for pilgrims was started in 1911 by the OPS, but because of the Revolution in Russia was completed only in 1925 by efforts on the part of the ROCOR. However, after some time, the OPS was unable to pay back all the loans made in order to complete the building and had to sell it to municipal authorities. As the bulletin reports, now "the Moscow Patriarchate and the New York based Synod both claim to be the legal successors to the pre-revolutionary Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society."

During December of last year the Moscow Patriarchate in the person of Metropolitan Cyrill of Smolensk (Gundiayev, code name in the KGB: "Michailov") signed an agreement with Mayor of Bari to have cost free use of the building and even appointed Priest Vladimir Kuchumov as rector of the 3rd floor church. The Patriarchal priest is to head a town house for the MP in Italy while it is expected that the ROCOR will get use of the chapel on the ground floor.

Kuchumov declared, "This is a restoration of historical justice. The building was constructed with Russian money, and it is not our fault that it became municipal property." The Patriarchal representative certainly fails to admit that at a time when his previous Soviet government was closing and destroying churches in Russia, Russian refugees abroad donated their last pennies in order to complete a structure which was started before the Revolution by compatriots in Russia who by that time had become less fortunate. In another words, the building was completed and to a certain degree saved by Russian refugee emigres.

The bulletin's reporters got in touch by telephone with Archbishop Ambrose of Vevey, a hierarch of the ROCOR, who told them that he has no knowledge of an agreement between the city administration and the Moscow Patriarchate. He also said that for some 18 months he has had no access to the church on the second floor because the municipality of Bari is undertaking restoration there.

He said, "Officially, I have not received any information from the municipality. At the moment, I consider myself the ruling bishop over the whole [Russian] church in Bari."

There is no doubt that the ROCA in this matter will not permit the MP to seize this property of the Russian Church, which she has faithfully guarded for almost 80 years. Meanwhile, the MP makes great plans for opening a home for the elderly there and, most importantly, for establishing a center with official representation for her connections with the Vatican.

## AN UNEXPLAINED HUSH UP

After the solemn translation of the relics of Metropolitan Philaret (third First Hierarch of the ROCOR) in November of last year at Holy Trinity Monastery, which proved to be incorrupt, many of his admirers expected some written information about this event in at least the monastery's publication, "Orthodox Russia." Yet, to everyone's surprise, even up to the very end of the year, the Holy Trinity Monastery did not feel it necessary to write about it even briefly. Only a bulletin published in Russia, "Vertograd-Info" under the jurisdiction of the ROCOR, reacted joyfully to this news.

It seems by now that the official publication of the ROCOR, "Church Life," has quietly ceased to exist: during the last year only one issue for January-April came out.

Meanwhile, the newspaper "Radonezh" in the December issue # 18 (84), 1998 (having the same name as a radio program) with ties to the MP in Russia published rather detailed information about this event and characterized him as a hierarch "known for the loftiness of his spiritual life."

It is beyond comprehension why Metropolitan Vitaly did not feel it necessary to participate in such an occasion and why Archbishop Laurus did everything in his power to hide from the faithful this manifestation of the Lord's mercy and did not give it any sort of significance?

Maybe one of the participants of this event guessed correctly the reason for this hushing up, when he told Archbishop Laurus on the portico of Holy Trinity Monastery Church that it seems Metropolitan Vitaly was ashamed to look into the face of Metropolitan Philaret.

## INFORMATION REGARDING THE MURDER OF BROTHER JOSE MUÑOZ-CORTES

Archpriest Victor Potapov on December 23, 1998 stated on the Internet that he, Archpriest Michael de-Castelbajac and a few other persons went to Athens, Greece, to attend a two day long trial regarding the murder of brother Jose Muñoz-Cortes

Accused was a Romanian, Christanel Chiaru, whom this group met personally. Chiaru strongly denied committing this murder, although Archpriest Potapov had the impression that he was one of participants in this crime. This suspect was released for reasons of lack of direct evidence. However, the court charged a second Romanian, Tundor Popa with murder. His finger prints had been found in the hotel room where the murder was committed.

Now there will be another trial and a new court case. Fr. Potapov's lawyer plans to present to the court a number of documents and some witnesses.

At the same time, Archpriest Potapov clarified that, according to investigators, Jose was martyred in the attempt to get from him some information, and the autopsy reports categorically deny that this murder involved sexual assault. It was also verified that Jose's body was not embalmed in Greece or Canada nor in the USA.

## FROM THE LIFE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

### Suzdal-Vladimir Diocese

According to information from the Suzdal-Vladimir Diocese ruled by Archbishop Valentin, it was learned that just recently this Church obtained official registration in the Ministry of Justice. Now the parishes have started a process to be individually registered as well. Archbishop Valentin and his clergy are constantly showered with pails of smut and anger from the MP through her recently established newspaper "Orthodox Suzdal." Lacking any valid accusations, it blames him even for "being the first in the city to offer 'humanitarian assistance' - giving parishioners on the holidays packages of used clothing from abroad", and also constant feeding specially needy citizens regardless of their faith or participation in another parish. One of the appeals in the editorial section emotionally cries: "People wake up! This is all about profanation of our Russia, which may be weak, yet stand up in faithfulness to our mother-homeland" (?!). The archbishop committed another crime when he donated a video-camera to the childrens' center "Istok" and organized for school children a visit to Germany (not with diocesan funds) to see the sister city of Rottenburg. And what prevented or prevents the Moscow Patriarchate now from doing charitable work? Is it possible that there is a shortage of funds?

The Nativity and Theophany services in Suzdal were conducted very beautifully and with a lot of faithful present in spite the fact that recently the MP began a very heavy propaganda campaign against the Russian Church which refuses to accept her authority.

This year, on January 21, Vladimir's TV station presented some highlights from the Nativity service conducted by Archbishop of Vladimir and Suzdal Eulogy (a hierarch of the MP) and also showed Mr. Vinogradov, the communist Governor of Vladimir, who with his entourage attended the service. After exchange of greetings between the governor and MP clerics, Mr. Vinogradov addressed those present and said: "On Christmas day people exchange gifts and I also want to present you with a gift of 17 churches in the Vladimir Region with the future possibility for restoring them." Immediately his assistant handed to Archbishop Eulogy folders with documents. The TV commentator added that the Vladimir Diocese has more than 200 churches and monasteries and, now, 17 more have been added to them.

At the same time, the Russian Orthodox Church can not get even two churches in villages of Liakhovitsy and Krapiry. A committee in charge of giving back the churches informed the administration of the Suzdal and Vladimir Diocese that there is no objection on its part to giving it those churches, but supposedly, the correspondence about this was lost somewhere between Suzdal and Moscow. According to the correspondence from Suzdal, "in a democratic country like Russia all religious organizations are equal, but some are more equal than others. For Mr. Governor the faithful of the Suzdal Diocese are second class citizens and they do not deserve such a magnificent gift."

According to Suzdal practice, introduced by Archbishop Valentin, the services on the eve of the Nativity start at midnight with three bishops concelebrating. In this service children also participated, who read on clerics and even have their own childrens' choir. At the end of the service, according to local tradition, Archbishop Valentin and all the participating clergy and faithful sang carols near the Nativity icon. The early Divine Liturgy started at 2:00 AM.

The festive period lasted in Suzdal for 5 days with different childrens presentations, trapezas and the giving of gifts. All these events were attended by Archbishop Valentin and clergy.

In spite of limited means, more than 250 people received modest gifts: children got candy and adults some things.

Suzdal and Vladimir Diocese is specially concerned to imbue in her faithful the importance of the Julian calendar, which the MP considers to be a relic of the past. The Patriarchate even ahead of time posted an announcement about a night service and moleben according to "the New Calendar." Through the efforts of Archbishop Valentin the New Year evening services and service on the feast day were conducted with special care. After the midnight service, a New Year's evening was held in the Sunday school hall, where the children by themselves organized a presentation. Afterwards, near the brightly illuminated Tsar Constantine Cathedral the Suzdal citizens exchanged greetings.

### The Free Orthodox Church in Latvia

The diocese of the Free Orthodox Church in Latvia again received a refusal to be registered from the Department for Religious Affairs of the Justice Ministry of the Latvian Republic. By now more than four years have passed for the diocese of the Free Church in Latvia, which in spite of countless appeals to various agencies of this "independent" republic still has not received the right to legally exist in its own country. The very latest request for government defense and assistance against the arbitrariness of the authorities was addressed to the President of the Latvian Republic. The President, without giving it a second thought, referred this appeal... to the Ministry of Justice, the very same governmental institution about which the Free Latvian Church so bitterly complains. All the refusals are motivated by the names which Bishop Viktor offered for registration of his diocese and which supposedly are too close a reminder of those which were already registered previously. That is the Church, headed by the Moscow Patriarchate Archbishop Alexander Kudriashov. As was reported by the newspaper "Latgales Laiks" of October 13, 1998, "the Administrator of the emigre Latvian Orthodox Church in a letter to a department of the Ministry of Justice was informed of the legality of the excommunication [of Bishop Viktor, Ed. "Ch. N."]. The Administrator also noted that the religious organization named 'The Latvian Orthodox Church', 'Latvian Orthodox Apostolic Church', 'Latvian Apostolic Church' in the understanding of the World Orthodox Church [?!] is a non-Christian, uncanonical group. At the same time, Kontuzorovs in his registration request noted that the Latvian Free Orthodox Church may use any one of the above listed names and in its by-laws has defined its religion as Orthodox. The Ministry of Justice believes that in the matter of the above mentioned Church and her 11 communities, it is important to respect the canonical norms of the Orthodox confession and the principle of separation of Church and state, which is part of constitution of the Latvian Republic."

There is no doubt that, as in case of the attacks by the MP on Russian Orthodox Church in Russia, so too in the "independent" Latvian Republic in the face of democratic laws "some are more equal than others" and everything runs into the obstacle of the criminal Moscow Patriarchate which is strongly supported by both governments.

### ICON DESECRATION IN MOSCOW

Several Russian newspapers reported almost simultaneously an outrageous and blasphemous exhibit in the "Art Manege '98", which opened in Moscow on December 4, 1998. A portion of this exhibit entitled "The Young Atheist" was arranged by Avdei Ter-Oganian. This particular exhibition was a stand, covered with icons and, as was advertised in a widely distributed flyer, the icons were put up for the express purpose of being desecrated. A special "bill of fare" was also advertised. "The respected judges of contemporary art" were offered "material for blasphemy." So, desecration of the icon of "Christ not made by hands" was valued at 200 rubles; of icon of the Vladimir Mother of God at 150 rubles; of Christ Pantocrator at 120 rubles. Further, the organizers offered for an additional 50 rubles to give personal instruction on how one can desecrate an already purchased icon and advice on how to desecrate an icon at home for a fee of only 10 rubles!

It is interesting that according to the very detailed description of this event in the newspaper "Radonezh," # 18 (84), 1998, the artistic director of the exhibit, Yelena Romanova was perfectly aware that Avdei Ter-Oganian had previously caused with a similar blasphemy a scandal in Montenegro and was even anathematized for it by the Serbian Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, she justified permitting this exhibit with the excuse that "Avdei is a very good artist. And further, formally there is nothing wrong with it!"

The Russian state newspaper "Zavtra" (Tomorrow) in # 49 (262) for December, 1998 and newspaper "N.G. Religions" in #11 (21) for the same month reacted with no less disgust for this blasphemy.

Fortunately, Moscow's citizens have had enough of this impudent godlessness that the directory of the manege, after a visit to this "exhibit" slapped the face "the art adviser," and in order to avoid further scandal, was forced to quickly stop this blasphemy.

### TSAR SYMEON IN BULGARIA

The official publication of the Serbian Orthodox Church, "Pravoslavije" of January 15, reported that the Bulgarian Tsar Symeon, Tsaritsa Margarita and Princess Calina visited their country and during the patriarchal service at the Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevski participated in the Epiphany Divine Liturgy (New Calendar) with a recitation of the Creed. He and his family were standing behind the throne in the "lodge", which was made by Tsar Ferdinand.

After Tsar Symeon recited the Creed, the Patriarch and Bishops read a prayer for the health of the Tsar and chanted for him "many years." At the end of the service, the "Tsar's Hymn" was sung, after which Tsar Symeon kissed the hand of Patriarch Maxim and declared that only he, the Patriarch, is recognized by the Universal Church as canonical Patriarch of Bulgaria.

According to Bulgarian custom, on the day of Epiphany all military banners are blessed. On this feast the Defense Minister and the Chief of the General Staff were present.

As with the Greeks, Bulgaria also has the custom of throwing the Cross into a river at the end of the service, after which young people dive to retrieve it. The winner, besides congratulations, gets also a monetary reward.

For May the first Local Council is scheduled of the Bulgarian Church following the end of the schism and the acceptance of the former schismatics. We gave details about this schism in our October-November issue # 8 (75) 1998. It is planned to divide the Chervensko-Dorostol Diocese in two and also to hold a discussion about the production of candles. The main income of the Church comes from candle sales, but their production unexpectedly has drastically decreased: instead of the former 1800 tons, during the last year only 40 tons were produced. The reason for this is the illegal production of candles within Bulgaria itself. There are many complaints about very poor candle quality: they do not burn, but melt down and also the smoke irritates not only the eyes but ruins precious frescoes.

#### "THE MESSIANIC OR JERUSALEM SYNDROME"

The newspaper "The Jewish Press" of January 1 published an article which discusses the variety of possible phenomena which might occur in connection with the second millennium of Christianity. Authorities estimate that they expect as many as 4 1/2 million to 8 million "Christian" pilgrims of all kinds and are making advance preparations for accepting that many people and describe not only the different committees, but also the practical and psychological measures needed. It is reported that for this 400 special police will be assigned to guard just the holy places.

Richard Landes, a professor at Boston University, considered to be a renowned specialist in field of Medieval history, said that in 1033 (which was considered to be the millennium of Christ's death) a multitude of pilgrims packed Jerusalem and quite a few refused to leave it. He is expecting the very same phenomenon to be repeated again.

In one of his lectures, entitled "Tourism and Psychopathology" connected with the special year, Landes said that he and his colleagues will be closely watching the effect of such a huge number of pilgrims in Israel.

The Israel Psychiatric Society and the Israel Medical Association brought in some 150 psychiatrists and other related specialists and declared that "'The Jerusalem Syndrome' is the condition, usually temporary but sometimes permanent, in which religious pilgrims, non-Jewish or Jewish, with a history of mental illness or no, tour holy sites and begin to display strange behavior, sometimes proclaiming that they are ancient religious figures sent on a mission to Jerusalem. Most of them are treated at the capital's Kfar Shaul Mental Health Center and sent home."

Landes is also concerned that sects, which believe that the time of the Second Coming of Christ is here, may try to convert local Jews to their religions.

The Health Ministry Associate Director-general Dr. Boaz Lev, who is in charge of the welfare of pilgrims said that so far he is in no way alarmed. Lev is an active member of the ministry's committees which have various sections: tourism, religion, internal security and a number of others.

Another Jewish activist is worried that pilgrims will come into Israel and then refuse to leave.

While considering what is only the latest matter to disturb the Israeli government about an expected influx of pilgrims, one inevitably begins to ask: are not the Israelis themselves victims of the "Messianic-Jerusalem syndrome"?

#### THE ROMAN POPE IN AMERICA

Towards the end of January the Roman Pope John Paul II visited the USA. He stayed for four days in St. Louis where he met with President Clinton and Vice President Gore.

TV programs and the press covered the Pope's visit in detail and all his speeches called for plainly socialistic ideals: wealthy countries have to share their wealth with the poor, the gap between poor and rich has to be narrowed and so on. The Pope very strongly declared himself to be against capital punishment, but also insisted on the impermissibility of abortion, divorces and the frivolous and irresponsible life of contemporary Christians.

It was expected that his mass would be attended by some 100 thousand Catholics, yet, in spite of very mild weather in fact there were many fewer people than anticipated. Along some fences there were only about 6 people in depth and some places were empty. Because of this those checking the people who came to attend Pope's mass took much less time than expected. All the participants were very strictly checked by the security services.

The newspapers report that about 60% of the Catholics questioned by reporters in no way support the Pope's conservative views in the area of morality. They also disagree with efforts to do away with capital punishment. The Pope said that the USA is a unique and mighty super-power and it has to be an example to other countries. "Radical change in world politics leaves America with a heightened responsibility to be for the world an example of a genuinely free, democratic, just and humane society."

This Papal visit, believed by reporters to be his last to the USA, is represented by them to be also of great significance for the future. During the Papal presence in the USA an ecumenical "vespers" service was held. The Pope is renowned for his numerous visits to synagogues; he asked forgiveness of the Jewish people in name of his predecessors, expressed endless sadness over the "holocaust" and in general, proved himself to be the Jewish people's best friend. Yet in America he went much further than his former statements. For the first time a rabbi participated in a service presided over by the Roman Pope! Rabbi Robert Jacobs, in his clerical clothing, with a wide ribbon around his neck read in Hebrew a section from the book of the Prophet Isaiah which spoke of the restoration of Zion.

According to "The New York Times" of January 27th, Rabbi Jacobs was very much surprised when he received from the Catholic Archdiocese in USA an invitation to participate in the ecumenical prayer service among 95 non-Catholics and he was delighted to respond affirmatively. Rabbi said that the Pope "has gone to every big city and asked for a special audience with local Jewish leaders. He has done that for 20 years. He has sought out the Jews."

Interesting information, specially concerning requests "for a special audience" with Jews!

## A FEW MORE WORDS ABOUT THE WCC

The newspaper "Orthodox Observer," an official publication of the Greek Archdiocese in the USA (Ecumenical Patriarchate), in its January issue reports that according to a decision of the Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate at a session on December 29th, 1998, it was decided to temporarily discontinue its membership in the WCC until the problems which were raised during spring of the last year in Greece are resolved. The representatives of Orthodox Churches on numerous occasions threatened to leave the WCC to because of its stand on homosexuality, the acceptance of abortions and female clergy.

Archbishop Sergius of Solnechnogorsk, head of the business section of the Moscow Patriarchate, declared that the Patriarchate has terminated its membership until a decision will be published by a common committee of the Russian Church and WCC, which should happen in about three years.

Priest Ilarion Alfeyev, a representative of the Moscow Patriarchate at the jubilee's gathering in Zimbabwe said, "If there aren't changes, other Orthodox Churches will leave the WCC. This is not blackmail, but a painful reality that we cannot put up with. We want to continue on, but we also want a transformation in the WCC to make it a home for everyone."

Meanwhile, at this assembly in Zimbabwe for a 7 year term there were elected into the Presidium, which consists of 7 members: Metropolitan Chrysostom of Ephesus, the senior bishop after the Ecumenical Patriarch, and the Antiochian Patriarch Ignatios. Among other representatives to the WCC of the "Orthodox" was elected Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky, a member of the "Orthodox Church in America" which is not recognized even by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and which received her "autocephality" from the MP. He said, "The real issues remain, but I think we have in place a process to handle them and to address them and I think that effort will be genuine. We have stayed together in order to affirm our commitment to dealing with the issues. There is a sense that we are at the point where we can engage in conversation on those things that have involved difficulties."

A representative of the Antiochian Patriarchate, V. Rev. Olaf Scott declared before the closing of the Assembly that by now he feels much better than at the beginning of it. "A lot of us came here with doubts about the future of the WCC. I sensed a real commitment to listen to each other and find the right changes so our dialogue can continue and make real progress toward real church unity. I hope we are closing out the century on an upbeat."

In this Central Committee, which has 150 members and manages the affairs of the WCC between the Assemblies during the 7 year period were included 8 participants from the USA, who are not all Orthodox (Armenians and Syrians) and in those 8 delegates there are 3 women.

## THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND THE CATHOLICS

The newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" ("Russian Herald") in issue 48-50 published a short note entitled "The President of the Church's Foreign Relations Department Helps Catholics in their Proselytizing Activities."

It seems the first to publish this information was a newspaper "Kaliningradskaya Pravda" ("Kaliningrad Truth") which reported that in that city, where there is not a single Orthodox religious ecclesiastical school, for five years now a branch of a Catholic college in Moscow, Thomas Aquinas, openly functions and which enrolls students regardless of their confessions.

As reported by the newspaper, the course of study is designed so as not to show any confessional differences between the doctrinal teachings of the Orthodox Church and Roman Catholicism. Only the church history of Orthodoxy and Catholicism is studied separately. One can expect that this "history" is totally based upon the Roman Catholic teaching that the Orthodox "schismatics" left Christ's "vicar" on earth -- the Roman Pope.

Last October the students received *diplomas signed by the Roman Catholic Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrasiewicz and next to it, by the Bishop of the Baltic, Panteleimon*, who is vicar bishop to the all-powerful head of the Department of Church Foreign Relations, Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk (with KGB code name "Michailov")!

The most outrageous thing about this story is that "Kaliningradskaya Pravda" published a critique by the very same Cyril of Catholic activities among the Orthodox -- an example of unsurpassed hypocrisy and duplicity! The newspaper also reported that before Metropolitan Cyril there were no Catholics in Kaliningrad. In other words, Catholic propaganda is flourishing in this city with his unofficial protection.

With a falseness typical of the Moscow Patriarchate, it constantly assures her trusting flock that she left the WCC and at the same time, news leaks out that it does not plan to part with its beloved World Council: at present, the game is

still in progress, since the rank of its representatives in the very same Council has changed: instead of bishops there are priests!

In a recent very interesting new publication of the Moscow Patriarchate "Tserkov i Vremya" ("Church and Time") in # 2 (5), 1998, an article by Metropolitan Cyril was published, entitled "The Credit of Our Confidence in the WCC is Exhausted."

In this very cleverly written article Metropolitan Cyril even criticizes slightly this very same Council, yet, toward the end of his words, he actually rejects the necessity of leaving it. "It is obvious," he writes, "that in the contemporary world, which is based upon a principle of interdependence, the Orthodox have no possibility of unilaterally resigning from this dialogue by stating 'we do not want to deal with anybody. We will live by ourselves'. *Today this cannot be done without damage to our witness to Orthodoxy. Therefore, not rejecting the idea of cooperation and joint action with other Christian churches, we have to contemplate the creation of new principles and a new methodology, to re-examine participation in the WCC and in ecumenical programs!*" (Emph. by "Ch. N.")

## "A CULTURE NIGHT"

A magazine, "Touchstone" in # 11/6 reported that an "art exhibit" which was set up by homosexuals in the cathedral in Uppsala, Sweden created a storm of protest. As a result, the Roman Pope canceled his meeting with the Swedish Archbishop Karl Gustav Hammar and he, in turn, canceled his visit to Rome. The strong support for the homosexual exhibit by Hammar brought demands for his resignation.

As reported by the magazine, "Culture Nights" have been held for a number of years in Uppsala which always consisted of performances by actors, artists, lecturers and art exhibits. But this time it included a group which calls itself "The Ecumenical Group for Homosexuals in Uppsala". However, this time the group held their exhibit in the main cathedral of Uppsala. A woman pastor, Dr. Tuullikki Bylund, in spite of numerous protests from residents, permitted a repetition of this exhibit in the cathedral. Previously, the very same exhibit was held in Stockholm and also resulted in many protests.

The exhibit consisted of 12 huge blown up photographs taken by a lesbian photographer one of which obscured the Cross. Photographs of some paintings depicted Our Saviour embracing St. John the Baptist standing in a river; another was a deviant version of the famous "pieta" but in it the Saviour, dying of aids, is lying in the arms of a nurse and the 12 Apostles were depicted as transvestites.

Archbishop Hammar called this "freedom of expression."

In October of last year one of the Swedish newspapers demanded the resignation of Hammar and called his actions "apocalyptic blasphemy." Hammar was installed as archbishop of Uppsala in 1997. While still being bishop of Lunda, Hammar declared that the conservative teaching of Roman Catholicism on sex issues was "barbaric and primitive." The "Touchstone" recommended Hammar send this shameless exhibit to the Archbishop of Canterbury or to the Newark diocese's Bishop John Spong. It seems, that in spite of the uproar about this exhibit, homosexual Hammar was not removed from his position and remains the primate archbishop of Sweden.

At present all Western religions to this or that degree do not openly challenge unbridled homosexuality not only among their lay people, but even among bishops. Yet, there still are a few contemporary confessions which consider homosexuality a grave sin. So far, this sin has been condemned at the Lambeth Conference and the Archbishop got the support of 88% of the bishops, and also United Methodist Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, The Assemblies of God, The Church of God in Christ and Evangelical Free Church. Until now the so-called "Orthodox" have not formally raised this question.

## "A CULTURED RUSSIAN AMONG BISHOPS"

by Archpriest Michael Ardov

The renown activist for "religious renaissance," George P. Fedotov, at one time offered the following formulation: "the Russian intelligentsia is a group, movement and tradition united by the ideological nature of their problems and groundlessness of their ideas."

I recalled these words a short while ago when I saw a new book, "Memories," by Archbishop Vasily (Nizhni Novgorod, 1998). In secular life the author's name was Vsevolod A. Krivoshein. He was a contemporary of his age, studied in Petrograd University, sympathized with the February Revolution, then participated in the White Army, finally settling abroad as an emigre. Later he became a monk in Mt. Athos, and after the war joined the Moscow Patriarchate, managed to get a episcopal consecration and had a title of Brussels and Belgium."

The "Memories" of Bishop Vasily is easy to read; the author has a doubtless literary gift; he is intelligent and observant. The book is in two parts: the first describes the years 1917 and 1919, and a second part relates to more recent times. Here the reader is offered three chapters: "Metropolitan Nicholas (Yarushevich)"; "Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov)"; "The Local Council of the ROC in Troitsa-Sergiev Lavra and the election of Patriarch Pimen."



As a true member of the Russian intelligentsia, Bishop Vasily poses for himself an ideological problem. He wants to prove that the Moscow Patriarchate, created by Stalin and Beria in 1943, is the genuine and only heir to the Russian Orthodox Church. Obsessed with this unsound idea he manages not to notice several quite obvious things.

As an example there is the following episode: On August 21, 1951, the author sent a letter to Moscow addressed to the Metropolitan of Krutitsa and Kolomna, Nicholas (Yarushevich). In it he describes the situation of Russian monasticism on Mt. Athos and in conclusion wrote: "Much more can be said, but in a letter it is not easy and it would better to do it during a personal meeting" (p. 205).

This sentence produced unexpected results for the author. In London one of the Soviet spies met with him who introduced himself in the following manner:

"I am a secretary in the Embassy... I have a message to you from Metropolitan Nicholas... Metropolitan Nicholas is very much interested in the situation of the Russian monks on Mt. Athos and he asks you to write about it in detail. You can do this through me." (p. 208)

The author indeed declined this offer, but the conclusion he drew for himself is astonishing in its naivete:

"...I was startled by what kind of connections Metropolitan Nicholas had in the Soviet administration and how willingly the members of the Soviet embassy would fulfill his requests." (p. 210)

Meanwhile, every sensible person, not possessed by the idea of defending at every turn the Moscow Patriarchate in its subordination to the KGB, would know that Metropolitan Nicholas is their agent and every word to him is addressed to the Lubyanka -- the KGB HQ and infamous prison. In our days it is proven by documentation in the 1996 newspaper "Moskovskaya Pravda" ("Moscow Truth") in the issue of March 12th which published a secret letter of Beria to Stalin which proposed "under the cover of the NKVD agent, Yarushevich, B.D., Archbishop of the Diocese of Leningrad, to create an illegal resident NKVD agent of the SSSR to organize agents' for work among church members."

Archbishop Vasily was a rather sincere man and in his own way a honest one. When he writes about Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov), he does not hide his objections against this scandalous hierarch.

"...one can enumerate a number of serious matters as a result of which we had difficulties with him. First of all, his pro-Soviet statements. All those praises for the "Great February Revolution" profoundly pained us and as such harmed the good name of the ROC and created an obstacle to union between her and those who split off. The same can be said also about the so-called peace efforts of the Moscow Patriarchate, which followed in detail all the twists and turns of Soviet foreign policy." (p. 328)

A little prior to this VI. Vasily writes also about Metropolitan Nikodim's "Soviet habit of lying without any need to, without even noticing or remembering it (I do not speak here of public declarations) which did not correspond to reality: they can be, if not justified, at least humanly understood and excused."

"To understand and to excuse" indeed in full concord with this goal: Archbishop Vasily leaves without any comment the following retort by Metropolitan Nikodim:

"I know that I might be known to history as besmirched and I am far from being indifferent to it! But I am ready to be such for the sake of the well-being of the Church. There is no other way."

This last statement is more than controversial, because the Church offers to her archpastors an entirely different path. Before serving at the Divine Liturgy, when a bishop is already vested, standing in the middle of the church, there are intoned the words of Jesus Christ (Mt. 5:16) by a deacon: "May thy light so shine before men that they may see thy good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

While forcing himself to "understand and excuse" members of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archbishop Vasily speaks very disparagingly of the Church Abroad and all her members are referred to in his book only as "the Karlovchany" or as "schismatic."

At a time when Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) was having a great career in Communist Moscow, the First Hierarch of the Church Abroad was the venerable Metropolitan Anastassy (Gribanovsky). Coming from the ecclesiastical world, he was in no way connected with the intelligentsia circles and, therefore, had no "revolutionary illusions." He departed to the Lord on May 22, 1965, at which time his will and testament was published which includes the following appeal:

"To my dear brothers and concelebrants in Christ, I advise you to stand unmoved upon the rock of holy and salvific Orthodoxy, piously to treasure the Apostolic tradition, to preserve brotherly unity, peace and love among yourselves..."

And the last paragraph of this "Testament" he says: "And regarding the Moscow Patriarchate and her hierarchs, since they are in a close, active and friendly relationship with the Soviet government, which openly professes its godlessness and seeks to implant atheism within the Russian People, and with them in the Church Abroad, which must preserve her purity, and should not have any canonical, liturgical or even everyday association with them; meanwhile, leaving every one of them to the final judgement of a council of the future Free Russian Church."

## THE MOSCOW PATRIARCH ON THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE AND HIS CLERGY

The newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" ("Russian Mind") in the issue of January 7-13 reported that "At the diocesan meeting of the Moscow Diocese gathered in Danilov Monastery on December 23, 1998, His Holiness Patriarch Alexis not only presided, as befits a bishop, but was the single speaker. The Patriarch's speech lasted for more than four hours."

After complaining in his report about economic difficulties "which like an heavy burden fall upon the Church" (did the interest rate of Patriarchal bank investments decline or the profits from sales of oil, tobacco, alcohol and diamonds?), Ridiger turned to an evaluation of the present moral level of the Russian people and then to a critique of his clergy and religious publications. In these areas his evaluations are well thought through and quite correct.

Speaking about contemporary society, the Patriarch said: "The power of ethically negative principle in the society willingly or unwillingly influences and some times captures a substantial number of the faithful, especially those, who are "on their way towards the church," insufficiently grounded in the faith, unsure and undecided..." Developing his thought about the "the action of the mystery of unlawfulness," [conventionally and inaccurately translated as "the mystery of iniquity"] Alexis II says: "Today there is not a sporadic display of sins, not single episodes of evil, corrupt, destructive acts, but an accelerated construction of world's system of evil. The population is guided toward organized satanic principles of lying, forgery, the worship of crude power. Greed, selfishness, perversions of drug addiction, love of entertainment, regardless of price are being introduced as typical of "a normal life." The most dangerous are even not the overt signs of deviations from morality, justice and truth, but more refined forms of substitutes, which according to the Apostle 'look like piety, but deny its power,' such as false religions, false science, false culture."

Then the Patriarch turned to the state of the clergy and said that it has to "learn how to look wider," beyond the borders of one's own parish and to work not only on building church buildings, but to create in parishes educational and charitable establishments for children, such as orphanages, homes for the needy and soup kitchens.

The Patriarch also noted that some of the clergy are hastening to imitate the so-called "new Russians." "This is nothing but a sinful demonstration of selfishness, self-satisfaction, sybaritism, vainglory, permissiveness, hauteur due to one's own riches, which often are obtained by unlawful and criminal ways. This is an absence of modesty, self-control and moderation in all things. Unfortunately, some of our capital's clergy [only they?] is influenced by this "pretty" life style. From this comes the need to compete in stylish clothing, contend in the richness and abundance of holiday meals. And this is at a time when more than half of population lives below the poverty line. From this also comes pride about different makes of cars, cellular phones and other things."

Alexis II also quite correctly attacked a grievous new phenomenon in the present ROC of the MP which he wittily referred to as "young elders." While he did not neglect condemning these "young elders" for their infallible critique concerning the hierarchs of the MP, their "hierarchical foundation," he at the same time quite justly points out that these "young elders" (who are indeed very youthful monks) "do not possess the spiritual discernment to impose on the beginners in Church life unbearable burdens (Lk. 11:46) and apply in their pastoral activities standards that are harmful to spiritual life by applying to lay people, who in most cases are not spiritually strong enough, religious counsels which are appropriate only to monks. The unhealthy dependence of neophytes on the personalities of these young elders results in distorted forms of parish life."

In speaking of the impossibility of creating left wing or right wing groups, Ridiger again returns to a question painful for the MP: "to the criticism of the hierarchy which is disastrous to Church unity," in spite of the fact that, in theory, in ecclesiastical matters political views should not have anything to do with the hierarchical administration.

Ridiger did not omit mention of the relationship of the "structure of the Moscow Patriarchate" and the activities of its "department for mutual relations with the armed forces and law enforcement" (a euphemism for the KGB?). The patriarch categorically rejects the idea of forming regiments along confessional lines in the military. he quite reasonably points out that Orthodox youth is drafted into the army to serve the military and not for "around the clock prayers and the restoration of churches, as many seem to believe."

In dealing with the problem of religious publishing, the Patriarch noted in his speech that "not all publications answer contemporary needs of the faithful, but sow the seeds of various superstitions and evil faiths. We have already spoken to the effect that the priest/rectors and presidents of parish councils should control what kind of material is sold at candle sales' desks."

Following this unique performance at the Moscow diocesan meeting, a session of the Synod was held in this same Danilov Monastery. Its resolutions visibly reflected several parts of his speech. Thus, with probably the "young elders" in mind, the Synod resolved: "Having in view the numerous complaints of lay persons about the canonically unfounded actions of some pastors, we advise priests who are fulfilling confessional duties that it will not be tolerated to force or influence some of the flock against their will to do the following: to become monks, to carry out some obedience in Church, to impose any donations, to force them to enter into marriage or divorce, or forbid them to live as husband and wife, except in cases where marriage is not possible for canonical reasons, to forbid participation in elections or other civil duties, to forbid reception of medical help, to forbid schooling, getting employment, or a change of place of employment, or a change of living quarters..."

This resolution allows lay persons to complain to their bishop if they feel that their spiritual directors have exceeded their authority.

This speech of the Patriarch makes numerous correct evaluations of the spiritual and moral condition of contemporary Russians and their clergy (who are their product), but if one considers the entire range of actions, internal as well as external, of the upper echelons of the MP who are above criticism, then one must say: "Doctor, heal thyself!" So far Ridiger himself, notorious for his expensive cars, has not put any of them up for sale, nor ever given an example of charity.

#### "NICODEMITES IN ACTION"

Under this headline in the newspaper "Rus Pravlavnyaya" ("Orthodox Russia") in # 11 (17) a letter to the editor was published written by the clergy of the Novgorod Diocese which reports that on October 22, 1998, a regular diocesan meeting was held, at which Archbishop Leo (Tserpitsky) of Novgorod and Old Russia presided, during which this hierarch made several statements which scandalized some of the clergy in his diocese.

In view of the seriousness of this complaint on the part of the above Novgorod clergy we include their appeal in full, since we feel that many (at least, abroad) will hardly believe that such an order could possibly be issued by any Orthodox bishop.

It is obvious from this complaint that "In his speech the governing bishop proposed that Novgorod clergy who serve several parishes (and they are numerous) do the following: to celebrate the Liturgy in one parish and then put the left-over Holy Gifts in some kind of container. Then, with these same Gift, to go to another parish, serve again another Liturgy -- not with the former Gifts -- again commune and add the remaining Gifts to the container to those left from the first liturgy. Then go to a third parish and so on, as often as he has time for. He is commune at each Liturgy and only after all the Liturgies is he to consume the left-over Gifts. In this way, contrary to the clear teaching of the Orthodox Church, *Archbishop Leo has blessed priests to serve daily at several Liturgies and to take communion more than once a day* [emphasis in the original]. The initial reaction to this outrageous proposal was tepid. Everyone was silent. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the meeting had already lasted 5 hours and everyone was exhausted and apparently many priests simply were not listening to what the Bishop was saying. And perhaps the habit of not taking his words seriously also played a role -- the renovationist and pro-*Ecumenical* sympathies of Archbishop Leo are well known. Some of us simply did not believe what we heard and thought we had misunderstood or missed something.

"However, the question was also raised about the possibility of giving Communion to Roman Catholics. *Vladyka Leo quite clearly stated that it was possible to commune Roman Catholics.* He referred then to some resolution of the Synod which had been issued prior to the Revolution which allowed Papists to take Communion in cases of necessity.

"Then the question was raised of permitting Communion be given to Armenian Monophysites. Bishop Leo blessed that also. Finally, he *even permitted Baptists be given Communion!* The only requirement for such Communion was that the communicant must prepare for the Mystery according to the Orthodox prayer book!

"We categorically state our disagreement with this blatant trampling upon the Holy Canons. Since such a practice proves that *in cases such as this it is useless to turn to our higher Church authorities, we consider it necessary to bring this event to the attention of wider circles of our Orthodox public through your newspaper.*"

"A group of Novgorod clergy [the signatures follow]"

#### BIBLE BURNINGS AND PERSECUTIONS OF CHRISTIANS IN INDIA

The Serbian Orthodox Church newspaper "Pravoslavije" in the issue of January 15 reported that the Bible Society in Kenya, Africa, noted that various separate groups of people have started to order Bibles in large quantities "for missionary purposes" and then would burn them. As the paper reports, at present about half of Kenya's population belongs to some variety of Christianity.

A similar phenomenon was noticed in India as well.

The same newspaper reports incidents of public Bible burnings. In Zaire alone some 10 thousand Bibles were burned.

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of January 20 reports that fanatical Hindus have become so hostile to Christians that the National Council of Churches of India, headquartered in Najpur had to turn to the government with a request for protection. In the province of Gujarat and in northwestern parts of India, cases of Christian church arson and attacks on clergy were reported.

The NCC of India complains in its appeal that "the failure of the Gujarat government to ensure law and order and also its failure to ensure the safety and security of the life and properties of citizens, particularly those of minority communities." In India, with a population of 960 million, only 2.3% are Christian.

Some members of Hindu sects, especially the president of the World Hindu Council, react to complaints by Christians by insisting that Christian missionaries convert poverty stricken Hindus to their religion and they even depict the famous nun, Mother Teresa, as a conspirator against Hinduism.

The Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee distanced himself from these injustices towards Christians in his region and said that "all citizens, irrespective of religion, caste or region, are to be provided with full security." Nevertheless, the National Council of Churches of India feels that the government did not take sufficient measures in order to protect them.

#### SPIRITUAL SPLIT AMONG JEWS IN ISRAEL

"The New York Times" reports that in Israel serious conflicts are boiling up between Orthodox Jews and groups of Reformed and Conservative Jews. The latter (by the way, "Conservative" synagogues have women rabbis) hoped to gain some seats in the Israeli Knesset, but it recently passed a law according to which non-Orthodox groups may not participate on the committees dominated by the powerful Orthodox party.

Only a few months ago, the Orthodox demanded that Jews from Russia be expelled from Israel since they do not want to follow the strict rules of Judaism. At present about 30% of Jews are from Russia.

The leaders of Conservative and Reformed groups expressed the concern that the new law inevitably provoke the displeasure of some 2/3rds of the Jews in Israel itself, but even more in the Jewish-American diaspora of which nearly half does not keep the strict rules and at the same time is very powerful in predisposing the American public towards sympathy with Israel.

Rabbi Bandel, president of the Conservatives, declared that "the parliament has said that there is only one legitimate Judaism in Israel: Orthodox Judaism."

Another rabbi of Orthodox views said, "we know that the one way street sanctioning assimilation is the Reform system, the Reform conversion, the Reform synagogue."

Until recently, the government was very even handed in giving out subsidies to Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews to support synagogues, ritual baths, and regulating kosher foods. Now, with the new law in effect, the non-Orthodox Jews are afraid that the Orthodox will deny them these subsidies.

This new governmental regulation favoring the fanatic Orthodox might become a major problem in the future, not only for non-Orthodox Jews, but also for all Christians in the Holy Land.

The law was passed by 50 to 49 with one abstention.

#### *Dear Readers*

*1999 Marks our 11th year of publishing "Church News" in the Russian language and our 2nd year of publishing in the English language. It is only through the generosity of our readers that we have been able to achieve this milestone. We would like to express our deep gratitude to our readers for all of their support. We would also like to thank all those that from time to time have provided us with interesting articles and information. However we must also remind you that we can only use these materials when exact dates and publications are provided.*

*We know that our readers are aware of the ever-increasing cost of publishing, mailing and maintaining subscriptions. With this in mind we ask for your continued generous support, please find enclosed a return envelope for your annual donations. We would also ask all those who are no longer interested in receiving "Church News" to inform us, so that we may remove you from our mailing list.*

*We again thank our readers for their generous and unselfish support!*