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The staff of "Church News" offers heartfelt greetings to all their readers on the radiant days of the great Feast of Feasts, Holy Pascha, and extends wishes to all that these days be spent in spiritual joy and good health.

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PASCHAL EPISTLE OF THE FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA
CHRIST IS RISEN !
TRULY HE IS RISEN !

I greet all the children of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia on this festival of festivals, on that "Day", out of all the days in the year, "which the Lord hath made."

At Pascha time disappears, for time is a great mystery, not a calendar, because Christ is Risen not 1999 years ago, but now, today, on our Orthodox Pascha. This is not something we have imagined, not a dream or an emotional feeling, but a spiritual reality, which no calendar can fit into the constraints of its divisions and calculations.

At the time of the final resurrection, all will rise up from their graves and will enter into the eternal Pascha with Christ, with indescribable rejoicing and beatitude -- all who have passed this short life worthily and in a Christian way.

My wish for all of you is that you will enter into this eternal Pascha with Christ in His Heavenly Kingdom.

Metropolitan Vitaly
Christ's Pascha, year 1999

PASCHAL EPISTLE OF HIS EMINENCE VALENTINE, ARCHBISHOP OF SUZDAL AND VLADIMIR
TO THE GOD LOVING FLOCK OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
CHRIST IS RISEN !

"Today doth every creature rejoice and shout for joy. For Christ is risen, and Hell is led in captivity"

On this all joyful day all the Orthodox world celebrates Christ's Resurrection. He is our purifying Pascha, eternal Pascha, the living sacrifice. Christ the Lamb of God was doomed to be slaughtered from the first days of His life. There was a search to kill Him and what Herod did not succeed in doing, the most evil deicides finished.

Great was the sadness, unspeakable were the sufferings of the Holy Apostles and the Myrrh-bearing Women during the days of crucifixion, suffering and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the clouds of spiritual sadness and agonizing grief, which hung over Golgotha, dispersed before the brilliant rays of Christ's Resurrection.

Together with the stone which was pushed from door of the Sepulchre, the stone of grief and hopeless despair also was lifted from the souls and hearts of the weeping and sobbing loyal followers of Christ and their souls and hearts became illumined by joy and celebration. This is namely the joy for which Holy Church prays: "O, Christ the Lord! Fill our hearts with gladness and joy." To all the ends of the world the disciples of Christ brought and carried the news of the New Christ's Pascha, God's saving Pascha.

A multitude of nations went through face of the world, like a disastrous whirlwind rushed the wars, empires and civilizations were swept aside, taking one another's place, but the resurrection of Christ remains alive for ages longevity. Together with the Angels and the Apostles, together with the Myrrh-bearing Women and the hosts of the saints, we again have a feeling of renewed life and rush toward the Sepulcher of the Life-giver in order to witness with pure hearts that Christ is Risen. And this is the basis of our faith, our life and hope.

Today we are forgiven, redeemed and saved. And all of us exclaim: "Christ is Risen!" And these are the very same words of the Angel who appeared to the Myrrh-bearing Women at the Saviour's Sepulchre. These are the words which he ordered them to repeat to the Apostles: "And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead." (Mt. 28: 7) And when they were going to the Apostles, Christ Himself met them on their way and said: "All hail!" And the holy Myrrh-bearing Women worshipped Christ with joy and exaltation and rushed to the Apostles and "told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest."

And so this joyful news, this Paschal greeting, went from mouth to mouth, went through two millennia and all the nations and by now with the greatest joy is announced also by our mouths! The Holy Evangelist Luke relates to us how the second part of today's greeting also appeared: "Truly He is Risen!" When Luke and Cleopas returned from Emmaus, they greeted the Apostles with the words, "Christ is Risen!" and they answered: "The Lord is risen indeed," in other words, truly risen" (Luke 24: 34).

In this way when hurrying today to the church, which on this holy night represents the very same Sepulchre in which was the Lord's grave and when hearing at the doors of the church as if before the rolled aside stone of the tomb, "Christ is risen!" and answering, "Truly risen!" we are not only the witnesses, but also participants in the greatest of mysteries, Christ's Resurrection, a "feast of feasts and celebration of celebrations." Thus, see how great is today's holiday and how precious and life-giving is our participation in it. And therefore "with joy let us embrace one another." Through us, this salvific and all joyful news will be carried to all the nations through the future ages.

But will those ages and nations come to be? You know that those to whom there is nothing more frightening than the news of the Resurrection of Christ also rush to the Sepulchre! With feverish fright before the first ray of Light which shone from the darkness of the Sepulchre, they are in a hurry to block the entrance with a stone, to seal it, to place a guard on watch...

They rush to block the heavenly brightness of Truth from the human heart with absurd motives of materialistic specters of profitable earthly life and, since no one can seal a heart, will seal the forehead and right hand.

I consider it to be my pastoral duty to remind to you of the warnings of the Apostles: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those, who are good, traitors." Those are the heirs of Herod, a unsuccessful deicide, and the other god-fighters, beginning with Judas, Annas, Caiaphas, Simon the Magician, Arias down to the contemporary apostates from Orthodoxy. They are those, who in the future age will be placed on the left side, of the Terrible Last Judgement of Christ, when the sheep will be separated from the goats. They are those, who in a future age will not inherit salvation, but will inherit ages long condemnation and Gehenna, full of fire.

"And who worships the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name... shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation... and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name" (Rev. 14: 10-11).

"And he (the beast) causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark on their right hand, or on their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.... Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and the number is six hundred threescore and six" (Rev. 13: 16-18). Until "the man of sin, the son of perdition" is revealed, we may not positively state that this is the actual seal. But no doubt, this is a step in that direction. Every Christian has already received a seal on his forehead and hands at baptism -- this is the seal of the Holy Spirit - and there can be no other seal for a Christian.

There is still time to listen to the Lord's words, "Come out of her, my people!" (Rev. 18: 4). Come out of her, Russian people, do not add by yourself the amount of those who worshipped the beast and he will weaken immediately and you will see the Glory of God and with yourself also saved a world, which is on the brink of perishing.

I greet you, God-loving fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ, on this joyous and bright day of Resurrection of Christ. May a joyful day also come for the Russian people when all of us with pure hearts and inspired by spiritual feelings will be imbued with the power of Christ's resurrection, which will lead us from the abyss of sins, but also the entire fallen human race.

May the Lord grant to all of us the Christian virtue of reason, which is the mother of all the virtues.

Verily Christ is Risen!

Archbishop Valentin of Suzdal and Vladimir

Pascha 1999, Suzdal, Russia

REGARDING THE LAST COUNCIL OF THE BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA IN 1998

A newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" ("Russian Herald") from Moscow in issue #3-4 published with some omissions an appeal to the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR by Bishop Daniel of Erie in which he calls for unification of the ROCOR with the Moscow Patriarchate.

"Russkii Vestnik" gave a short introduction to this document with explanation, that it was received "rather late, but we still publish it, because it is considered "to be very important" and at that, there were tactfully omitted everything that "concerned personal moments".

"Church News" received this document before some of the bishops had even left for home at the end of the Episcopal Council, but restrained from publishing it, considering this appeal to be beneath the dignity of the archpastoral rank. However, since then unfortunately it has become widely known about and often commented upon, so "Church News" felt we may also voice our opinion of it. Bishop Daniel demonstrated in his appeal not only considerable theological ignorance, but also in a number of ways expressed views about the Moscow Patriarchate quite contrary to the seventy year old practices and principles of the ROCOR. At the same time, he permitted himself to employ a rude expression which is not used in polite discourse. He also made a number of very rude remarks concerning the First Hierarch of the ROCOR with the offer to Council of Bishops to have him removed from this position on the grounds of incapacity due to age and exceeding his authority. Bishop Daniel also introduced an unheard of in the world of Orthodoxy a proposal of an age-limit for First Hierarchs. It seems he is unaware of the fact that such a proposal was first invented by the Roman Catholics and, at that, a short while ago, namely at Vatican II. But even among Catholics, it is meant for cardinals and bishops, but by no means for the Pope himself.

In his appeal Bishop Daniel touches upon the subjects of Old Believers, Adventists and Anabaptism, although it is quite obvious that this is only a prelude to introducing his main theme: proving the absolute necessity for the unification of the ROCOR with the MP. That, in spite of all his efforts he did not achieve.

In attempting such a goal and with a lot of stretching his arguments with the assistance of Evangelical texts, Bishop Daniel made a very great error when in a part about Adventists he incorrectly uses Lord's words, Who supposedly strictly forbids Christians to "know the times and the seasons..." of the Second Coming of the Lord! This restriction was spoken to the Apostles as an answer to their question: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" and this quotation has absolutely no connection with the Christ's Second Coming.

Rather, just the opposite is the case: the Saviour not only clearly and in detail speaks of the signs of His Second Coming, but also gives the example of a fig tree, explaining that when its branches become tender and put out leaves, "ye know that summer is nigh." In the very same section Bishop Daniel makes another very obvious mistake. While citing the Gospel text "but of that day [at the end of the world, "CH. N.]" and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only," Bishop Daniel finishes this sentence with the words "but also my Father." If this error is be taken seriously, this has a character of pure blasphemy.

Quite incorrectly he also claims that baptism by not immersion, but by sprinkling water over the head, was a norm in the universal Church. In the section on Anabaptists, he declares that in the sacrament of Baptism, there are no exorcism prayers, since they were an independent part of making catechumens. It seems that Bishop Daniel did not take into consideration that for centuries already these two parts have become inseparable in a same way as the sacrament of Marriage, consisting of betrothal and wedding are now one service.

An excellent review of this appeal was given in the bulletin "Vertograd-Inform" in issue # 2 (47) for February.

Yet Bishop Daniel has a valid excuse regarding this controversial appeal: he is very sick person, almost legally blind, suffers from acute diabetes, a bad heart condition and a recent stroke, which has restricted his movements.

"BLANCO"

For number of weeks now, on the Internet there has been a very lively correspondence regarding accusations of paedophilia, which concerned "Christ of the Hills" Monastery in Blanco, Texas.

The history of this monastery is as follows:

During the lifetime of Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory, sometime near the end of the 70's, a group of five or six men arrived at the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR dressed in strange robes and strange headgear. They said they were Old Catholics and applied to be accepted as a monastery. At that time they were told that, in the first place, they have to be baptized, then to integrate into parish life and only after some ten years could one talk about establishing a monastery. After that, until the Metropolitan's repose, they never approached the Synod and no one ever saw them again. However, very shortly after Metropolitan Philaret reposed this group was accepted by Bishop Hilarion with permission to officially open a monastery. Bishop Hilarion supported them in every way he could. The monastery even received Synodal permission to open its own "New Sarov Pastoral School." As abbot of this monastery was installed Priest-monk Benedict (a former Old Catholic archbishop) and as his deputy Priest-monk Jeremiah. At some time (probably 1978) in the state of Arizona, someone posing as "Bishop" Michael (also belonging to some Old Catholic group) established a convent, which was insured by him for \$100,000. When Michael died Benedict (who used the title Archbishop of Levka, Exarch in Mexico and Guatemala, Ruling Bishop of Western America and Alaska) made a four days long raid on the convent in Phoenix, Arizona, quickly gathered all the inventory and the insurance policy and persuaded the Abbess Anna to go with him with and all the removed property to Blanco, Texas. Also, in violation of the law, in a passenger car, he brought with him the body of Michael and buried it in Blanco. Anna managed a bit later to escape to her convent in Arizona. From there she filed suit against Benedict and demanded the return of Michael's body, as the founder of the convent, and also the insurance policy.

The demands of the convent to Benedict were filed in November, 1994, and addressed: "Father Benedict, and members of the Corporate Board of the Hills Monastery, and Ecumenical Monks, a Texas Corporation, Blanco, Texas." One wonders: When Bishop Hilarion was accepting this team, did he notice that they were also "ecumenical monks"?

Very soon it became known that the inhabitants of this monastery happened to be lovers of miracles. They had a 'miraculous' icon of the Theotokos and the brotherhood sent out widely requests for donations to enlarge the church and build new housing for the monks. Enclosed were return envelopes with commemoration slips on which was written not "for life and salvation" as usually, but the Roman Catholic "for your intentions"! The donors were promised a bottle with Theotokos tears of myrrh from the same icon. When Bishop Constantine, who lived in this monastery after his retirement died, his admirers immediately through the Internet stated that from his body there came so much myrrh, that the cuffs and epitrahilion were soaking wet.

At the same time Benedict and Co. established a big business selling mounted reproductions of icons and small church items. They also asked for donations to build separate quarters for novices, who, for lack of living quarters, were

lodged in a tent. As is visible on a photograph printed on one of these appeals, the "novices" were about a dozen teenagers and, among them, two little boys.

About half a year ago ugly rumors started about this monastery. Finally, in reply to a local police request, the Synod of Bishops did send a senior priest from the Eastern-American Diocese to Blanco. After his report, Benedict and his deputy were immediately suspended. For unknown reasons Abbot Basil was not suspended.

The American authorities are very sensitive to possible accusations of any sort of blasphemy and disrespect for clergy and sacred objects during arrests. Benedict and his deputy were arrested in the presence of the Synod delegate and led away in the handcuffs on accusation of paedophilia. According to Internet information, they were freed on bail and await trial. Synod also sent to this place the Priest-monk Joakim from NYC and Archimandrite Theodosius, a former Chief of the Mission in Jerusalem. This story is far from over.

The investigation also noticed a small monastery cemetery on which there were some children's graves.

One should hope that under such circumstances the remains of Bishop Constantine will be immediately transferred to some Orthodox cemetery.

The presence for number of years in this "monastery" of an elderly and sickly bishop, gave to this den a plausible status. It is very sad that while accepting this group into the ROCOR Bishop Hilarion did not bother to inquire in detail into their scandalous past.

ECUMENICAL "ORTHODOX YOUTH SOCIETY OF GERMANY"

As we reported in Vol. 10 # 9 (76) issue of "Church News" for 1998, there has been founded in Germany an Orthodox Youth Society, in which the youth of the German diocese of the ROCOR also participate.

The newspaper "Orthodox Observer" of the Greek Exarchate in America (Ecumenical Patriarchate) on February 5th reported that this Society widely distributed its first public letter, signed by a student of some university, Elisabeth Danou, which stresses that this group is not an ethnic organization, but includes all young people in Germany.

The main motif of this letter is: "Eventually we, the youth, will have a voice in the Church... Now we are able to create a place, where we can realize and develop ourselves. It will be a place of our own in this God-created world." As a prominent focus for the future the letter mentions in first place the environment: "We all know that we have negative influence on the ecological system. So it is our duty as Christians to strengthen the right balance in this world: if we honor the world, we honor the creation of God!"

In what way does this "Orthodox" youth differ from other non-orthodox young people of the same age, who are occupied not with matters of the Orthodox faith, but with so fashionable now ecology? It is very sad that the youth of ROCOR's German Diocese also participate in such an "Orthodox Youth Society."

FROM THE LIFE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN RUSSIA

The Rt. Rev. Bishop Victor of Daugavpils and Latvia reports that the matter of registering the Russian Free Orthodox Church in Latvia has made a little progress lately. Some deputies of the Parliament have begun to raise the issue of the legal standing of this diocese more actively. Thus the republican daily "Diena" on March 5th in # 54 (2364) published an official statement of mistrust about a religious Orthodox organization under the Moscow Patriarchate made by the Secretary of National Defense, Edgar Rinkevich. He speaks about ideological and political influences upon the military youth in Latvia. This statement says: "It is obvious from the statutes of the above mentioned organization (The Brotherhood of St. George, the Great Martyr) that it accents matters of an ideological and political character and this structure is easily made dependent on foreign organizations. The Latvian Orthodox Church is under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarch. And therefore, states the State Secretary, these statutes are subject to investigation by the state defense."

It is interesting that the editor in chief of this newspaper "Diena," Anna Stroi, in different statements on March 8th declared that "the Russian edition of 'Diena' is not a megaphone of 'a state party' nor 'otherwise a fifth column' in the camp of Latvian Russians; she does not obey any orders... We are directed by our own understanding and our own convictions." Nevertheless, despite such a categorical statement, the newspaper quite obviously sympathizes with the Moscow Patriarchate and is strongly influenced by her.

Let's hope that finally the Latvian government will realize that by supporting all the way the Moscow Patriarchate, it supports her former masters of the 40's who have re-colored themselves in democratic stripes.

TOWARD BUILDING A NEW CHURCH IN SUZDAL

In connection with the approaching second millennium from the Nativity of Christ the Lord, His Eminence Archbishop Valentine of Suzdal proposes to build a new little church in a new development on suburbs of this city

dedicated to the New Martyrs and Confessor of Russia. For residents in this area, specially elderly ones, it is nearly impossible to get to the center of the city, where indeed there are plenty of pre-Revolutionary churches, because very few people in that area have any cars.

The plans for this little church (approx. 8 x 8 yards square and 20 yards tall) in the old Russian style is also to have a small attached bell tower. The local authorities provided a plot for building this church.

All those willing to help and support this worthy project may send their donations to the "Church News" address, indicating they are for the new church.

CANCELLATION OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE IN 2000

The newspaper "Rus Pravoslavnaya" ("Orthodox Russia") in issue # 12 (18) published information about the supposed cancellation of the Local Council of the Moscow Patriarchate scheduled for the year 2000.

A short foreword states: "From circles close to Patriarch Alexis, the editors of RP were informed about the sensational decision recently made by the Moscow Church authorities. After long deliberations behind the closed doors it was decided not to go on with the 2000 Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church which was scheduled for year 2000."

Originally, one Council was planned for 1999 and then a second in 2000. Yet these decisions were canceled indefinitely after deliberations behind the closed doors.

"Our own correspondent" of this newspaper, not without a good reason speculates that the Patriarchate simply became frightened that at present time it will not be able to control the passions of so many delegates which undoubtedly would become a critique of "the infallible authorities" of the MP. It is no longer a secret that by now the "lower classes" of Orthodox minded clergy and the masses of the Patriarchate flock very strongly and decisively have come forward and demanded the withdrawal of the MP from the WCC as well as against the amorality of a number of hierarchs.

One of the most recent appeals to "church authorities" known to us to exit from the WCC was made by 17 clergy of the Alma-Atina and Semipalatsk Diocese. In a very emotional letter addressed to Alexis Ridiger they quite correctly point out that the participation in the WCC is a betrayal of the Creed of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church. Their ruling bishop Alexis (Kutepov) very sternly treated these clergy: some of them were suspended, others were sent to remote parishes of the diocese. The information about this case along with the translation of the letter (giving 17 names in full and their rank) was sent on the Internet by a gentleman who was converted to Orthodoxy by two of the priests who signed this letter. Addressee Vladimir Smagley stated that the suspended clergy were literally left without homes and means of living and he appealed to good hearted people to help them out.

Forced by these "lower class" Orthodox people Moscow Patriarchate had to pretend that it exited from the WCC, yet no where is there any mention that under another colors she participates in this organization: instead of the formerly openly participating bishops, the MP now covertly operates under the umbrella of an heretical Priest-monk Hilarion Alfeyev, who is acting on her behalf.

Just recently another priest of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archpriest Valentin Asmus published a brilliant critique of Alfeyev's book "Mystery of Faith: an Introduction to Dogmatic Theology" in which he said, "It is not without a reason that one hears alarming questions about this book." This representative of the MP in the WCC teaches that regardless of anything, all will be saved (a teaching of the heretic Origen); he expresses a criticism of the decisions of the 5th Ecumenical Council which condemned Origen and also denounces the Holy Tradition, upholding the primacy of the Roman Pope. The article of Archpriest Asmus was published in the magazine "Pravoslavnaya Rus" # 2 of 15/28th of January.

It seems that Origenism has become fashionable again. In a Franciscan magazine "Holy Land" in the spring issue for 1999 an article was published by Denis Deriev entitled "Origen: Early Christian Writer." Rightfully giving credit to Origen for his outstanding mind and scholarship, the author of this article states that "Origen was undeservedly maligned for centuries. His allegorized exegesis, experimental theology, and expression of Christianity in terms of Greek philosophy could not be understood by many later Church Fathers who refuted him as heretic... This is why he was never able to take his rightful position among the ranks of the Church Fathers."

The author also notices contemporary interest in Origen in the East as well as in the West. His unhealthy interest in Origen does not come as a surprise in our Ecumenist age, when Christ's Truth is replaced by the "love" toward all kind of delusions and beliefs that in spite of all the deludes and not belonging to the Orthodox Church - nevertheless all people will be saved.

The official newspaper "Orthodox Observer" of the Greek Archdiocese in America (under the Ecumenical Patriarchate) in the issue of February 5 published information entitled: "WCC: Russian Orthodox Church has not quit." It reports that although the ROC supposedly terminated her membership in the WCC, "The Russian Church has not suspended or withdrawn membership in the World Council of Churches." The very same information was confirmed by a

representative of the Russian Church in Geneva. In another words, the Moscow Patriarchate impudently is lying to her clergy and flock.

"Rus Pravoslavnaya" after reporting the cancellation of the Local Council, makes note of another "advantage" to the Moscow Patriarchate, coming from this decision. In this way it can also put of indefinitely the glorification of the Royal Martyrs and all the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, for whose glorification the people are calling more and more insistently.

In this newspaper one finds another interesting fact: the last Council of Bishops of the MP decreed that during the planned Local Council of the ROC a "New Statute of administration for the ROC" was to be approved. In accordance with the earlier decision, all hierarchs, monasteries, schools and parishes were to submit to a special Synodal committee their proposals and requests. But in fact by now "the Church Authorities quickly had their own Statute approved by the Ministry of Justice, which was privately drafted, one may say, almost secretly"!

Does this mean that now, with the Local Council of the ROC canceled, there is no need to convene the Local Council of the ROCOR which was planned by Archbishop Mark and clergy of the German Diocese which supports his idea?

KOSOVO TODAY

At present, Serbian Kosovo is on everybody's lips, but there are few who know the very tragic history of Kosovo and Serbian people.

For the Serbs Kosovo has the same significance that Kulikovo Field and later Borodino have for Russians. On June 28th, 1389 the Serbs fought with the numerically superior army of the Ottoman Empire and where, at the head of his almost annihilated army, Tsar Lazar heroically fell, and his incorrupt relics have a rare characteristic: none of the limbs suffer rigor mortis, but easily bend.

At that historic battle the Serbs lost their independence and for 500 years were under the most cruel yoke of the Turkish Muslims. Throughout that period the Serbian Church enriched herself with a multitude of martyrs for the faith. But also Turkey, which supposedly won the war, after that battle never recovered and efforts to expand to Vienna and into Europe in general were never unsuccessful. In this sense Serbian and Russian history are parallel. After a courageous battle on Kulikovo Pole, Russia also fell under the Tatar yoke, but at the same time so drastically reduced Tatar power that their efforts to conquer Europe also fell apart.

During these 5 centuries of Turkish yoke over Serbia, Kosovo was never quiet and at every opportunity staged uprisings against the oppressors. Only in 1912 was Kosovo liberated.

After becoming part of the kingdom of Yugoslavia Kosovo region finally started for a short period to enjoy her freedom. But there thundered a II World War, Yugoslavia fell into hands of Communists and was ruined by them in the same manner as was Russia. To show his appreciation Albanian support, Tito displaced from Kosovo more than 200,000 Serbs (denying permission to ever return to their homes), who had lived there for no less than 900 years and in their place moved in Albanians. Before the war the Albanians were a minority in Kosovo. They are a very poor and absolutely uneducated people.

In spite of this tragic history, this region still has a lot of churches and monasteries with outstanding frescoes and mosaics. Some monasteries date to the tenth and eleventh centuries.

It is known that in the 16th century these places were visited by Leonardo Da Vinci who was studying frescoes and the technique for painting them.

The Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church as well as some individual bishops have made and still make countless efforts to explain the situation to the Western world, but they meet with a dead end: no one not only does not want to hear their explanations, but they even refuse to meet with them. So, American diplomat Richard Holbrooke, who went to Kosovo to settle the arguments in this area, met only with Albanians and did not feel it necessary to also visit the ruling bishop in this area, Bishop Artemie. While complaining about unwillingness of Westerners to understand what is going on, Bishop Artemie at the same time is critical of Milosevic, pointing out that he is a product of a Communist regime and behaves in the same manner: if the Orthodox Church still can not get back her property which was confiscated by the Communists years ago, then what is one to expect from foreigners?

The media in Europe provides its public with much more information then its American colleagues. Thus it was reported by European media that the monastery of Grachanica (12-13th century) was bombed. However, a cynical remark made by some politician in the USA is also reported, that they will bomb all the historical monuments in Kosovo so that the Serbs would have nothing left to defend. Those, who happened to live in Germany during World War II remember that as soon as the war moved onto German territory, Germans stopped putting out Red Cross flags over the hospitals, because this would guarantee that they would be bombed. The agreement which is being forced upon the Serbs by NATO consists of a plan to gradually (within 3 years) to hand Kosovo over to the Albanians, called in Serbian Arnauts.

In general, the media informs us only about the unfortunate Albanians, who are slaughtered by the cruel Serbs. Yet, no one ever mentions that Albanians destroyed in Kosovo more than 300 churches out of some 1800 which were there, and that certainly, the Albanians do not sit motionless with their hands folded and just wait to be murdered by Serbs.

It is very sad that the Westerners, led by USA, do not want to understand that a civil war always has a multitude of victims on both sides and intrusion into matters by a third party only makes things much worse.

During its one thousand year history Serbia never fought a war beyond the fatherland's borders.

The First Hierarch of the ROCOR Metropolitan Vitaly issued an ukaze, ordering that additional petitions in the ectenias for suffering Orthodox Serbs be included and that a moleben for them be served in every parish.

TWO MYRRH-GUSHING ICONS IN MOSCOW

Last year it became widely known in Moscow that two copies of lithographic icons, originally painted in America, an icon of the Tsar Martyr and another of all the Royal Martyrs, started to gush myrrh.

News of the first icon of the Tsar Martyr (with St. Nicholas and St. Hiob the much-suffering on the sides) which became famous because of gushing myrrh was reported in the newspaper "Russkiy Vestnik" ("Russian Herald") in # 48-50. For some time this icon was displayed in the Moscow's Ascension Church on Gorohovoye Pole. The icon belonged to an surgeon, Oleg Ivanovich Belchenko, to whom it was given when he visited city of Ryazan. When from this icon started to gush a very aromatic myrrh, it was handed over by the owner to the rector of the church, Archpriest V. Golovanov. In front of this icon almost without interruption were served memorial services, well attended by people. This did not please the Moscow Patriarchate and the rector received an order to no longer keep the icon on an analogion in the church, but on the altar and to carry it out only during memorial services. Later it became known that the icon was taken away from Ascension Church and given to Archpriest Alexander Shargunov, who a few years ago urged people in the press and sermons to vote for the Communist Zuganov. As it occasionally was with the myrrh gushing Iveron Icon of the Theotokos, the myrrh some times appears on the surface of the glass of the Tsar Martyr icon.

Archpriest Golovanov sent a detailed report to Patriarch Alexis about the myrrh gushing icon of the Tsar Martyr, including with it numerous statements about miracles from his parishioners, but there was no response to this report. Incidentally, just a year ago, Metropolitan Yuvenaly (in the KGB, Agent "Adamant") insisted that the committee for glorification of saints, which he chairs, never received reports of any miracles, submitted under oath and approved by the ruling bishop which were attributed to the Royal Family.

From material we received comes the following: to a church attached to a shelter for the poor dedicated to St. Nicholas the Miracle Worker in the city of Ryazan, on March 15th, 1998 2 guests (George Balovlenkov and O. B. Belchenko) came from Moscow to participate in the feast of miraculous icon of Theotokos "Derzhavnaya" (Sovereign). Both guests were at that time blessed by the rector of St. Nicholas church with the icons: Balovlenkov by the icon of Royal Family (enlarged color Xerox copy to size 26 cm x 40cm) and the surgeon Belchenko by an icon of the Tsar Martyr. The copy received by Balovlenkov was a very poor one, pale and in some places even basic colors and lines were not clear. Nevertheless, both icons were put in frames with glass and in this condition left for Moscow where very soon became famous for gushing myrrh and a number of miracles.

The icon of the Royal Martyrs already has been given the name of "bleeding," because the aromatic myrrh coming out has the color of blood and, according to witnesses, constantly "pulsates" streaming from the faces and hands and looking like real bruises. At the same time, also the colors of the garments of the Royal Martyrs become bright and gradually became brighter from their former dullness.

Many very moving reports of witnesses have been gathered of those who have been cured from illnesses by this icon. They were published in a booklet of 50 pages issued by the community named in honor of the Theotokos "Vzyskaniye Pogibshikh" (Seeker of the Perishing) in 1999.

Before this icon almost constantly molebens and akathists are served, it seems, at the owner's home.

In October 1998 the miraculous icon of the Royal Martyrs went for 50 days to Greece. At its arrival in Thessalonika, the icon was met by a church procession and with the singing of hymns was brought to the church of St. Great Martyr Dimitry. Then it visited the islands of Andros, Leros, Tinos, Patmos and, finally, Mt. Athos where it visited 20 monasteries and individual sketes. Everywhere the miraculous icon was met with reverence and in some places with the ringing of church bells.

At the end of the booklet are published opinions about this icon by abbots of various monasteries. Unfortunately, due to the large number of them and the lack of space in our bulletin we are not able to publish them.

The appearance of two myrrh-gushing icons of the Tsar Martyr and "bleeding" of the Royal Family happened to be a very bad shock to the "church authorities" of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" dated February 17 reports that the Moscow Patriarchate decided to play a waiting game. Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk declared that "This case will be carefully studied and reviewed by

the Synod Commission on the Canonization of Saints for an indication of God's grace, rather than the result of a diseased imagination; and then studied by the Local Council as part of the preparation for the Church's glorification of the Imperial Family." Definitely, this will happen by a decree of the Council which is already known to be canceled indefinitely.

A BLASPHEMOUS DEBAUCH IN GOMEL

The bulletin "Vertograd Inform" in issue # 2 (47) 1999 reports that on the Feast of the Epiphany in the city of Gomel (Byelorussia) with the blessing of the Moscow Patriarchate bishop Aristarkh of Gomel and Zhlobinsk an outrageous citizen's walking tour was organized, presided over by the nephew of this ruling bishop, the rector of the cathedral, Archpriest Andrew Belianko!

The walk started immediately after the end of the Divine Liturgy from the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul. Following right after the church banners and a small group of parishioners was a column of "walruses" (winter bathers), members of the clubs "Optimalist" and "Soratnik" (propaganda organizations of Porphyry Ivanov, who advertises a return to paganism), then actors in different robes, and clowns with stuffed animals on poles, similar to the Muppets. The procession went accompanied by the merry music of an orchestra.

According to some very upset witnesses, some of those stuffed animals, which were carried behind the church banners, had devils' faces and many of the songs sung with frivolous verses.

As is reported further, after the blessing of water in the Sozh River, the "walruses" dived into river and then the actor's performances started. The directors of the "park" took care to set the tables with food and vodka. The local newspaper, "Gomelskaya Pravda" ("Gomel Truth") on January 21 reported the first such people's walking party, which was organized by the Gomel diocese, was a "great success" and it seems that the blasphemies of a similar sort will be repeated in the future.

ROMANIAN CHURCH INVITES ROMAN POPE

The official newspaper "Orthodox Observer" of the Greek Archdiocese in America (under the Ecumenical Patriarchate) dated February 20th reported that the Romanian Orthodox Church invited Pope John Paul II. It was even more surprising, because only a few weeks earlier the Romanian Church announced that she would not invite the Pope until the Uniates drop more than a hundred property suits against the Patriarchate, which demand the return of churches confiscated by the Communists and turned over to the Orthodox. The invitation was made by the Romanian President Konstantinescu, but he at the same said that the invitation on the part of the Romanian Church must also follow.

Towards the end of January a joint commission of 15 bishops, chaired by an Orthodox and a Uniate Metropolitan met in the center of Romania and the matter of invitation of Pope was resolved positively.

Pope wants to visit Romania in May, but an exact date so far has not been set.

According to report of the bulletin "Ecumenical News International," dated February 17, out of the 23 million living in Romania, no less than 87% are Orthodox and there are about one and a half million Uniates.

According to a projected agreement between the Orthodox and Uniates in controversial cases regarding church buildings the use of them will be settled as follows: in places where there is only one church (formerly Uniate), both parties will take turns using it. In cases where there are two or three churches, the Uniates will get theirs back.

The representative of the Romanian Church Stoiku said: "Our precondition has always been a dialogue with Greek Catholics; since this is now under way, we believe firm steps will follow. But if the Orthodox Church is sharing the invitation, it should also be represented on the commission which prepares the visit." Stoiku also stressed that "disputes should be solved through dialogue, without state interference" and according to the principles for agreements of Balamand (Lebanon) agreed to in 1993. "It is hard to understand why the Greek Catholics previously avoided this dialogue and tried to settle their claims through legal and parliamentary action," added Stoiku.

If "dialogues by Orthodox" with the Uniates are to be held according to the principles of the Balamand Union, one can expect nothing good from them. It is not without a reason that the Tsar Martyr once said that Romanians are not a nation, but a profession.

THE WCC ON A COMMON DATE FOR PASCHA AGAIN

"Ecumenical News International" of March 17 reported that the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, Dr. Ishmael Noko, again raised a question about establishing a common date for all Christians to celebrate Pascha. At present, the WCC includes 300 Christian "churches."

During the Ecumenical gathering in Aleppo in March of 1997 it was proposed to use "the most accurate astronomical scientific knowledge" in order to set up a common date for Pascha. Some time ago in our April Issue # 4 (60) of "Church News" for 1997 we highlighted this matter in a rather detailed way.

As is evident despite all the efforts by the Ecumenists, there were no significant results.

Yet, the Ecumenists keep fussing with this matter and their bulletin states, at the end of this year in Bratislava (Slovakia) another conference is scheduled of the Lutheran World Federation which is planning more deliberations about the Paschalia. Dr. Noko was forced to admit that his "church" alone favorably reacted to the Aleppo resolutions, but he still insists that "the body of Christ is divided due to mathematical calculations" and that "the issue of a common date for Easter is the issue of the unity of the church around an event which defines the church as the Body of Christ."

Dr. Dagmar Heller, the WCC's Executive Secretary for Faith and Order contradicts Dr. Noko by telling journalists that there has been a good response to the Aleppo proposals and that the Armenian Catholicos Aram I made a report about it during the Assembly in Zimbabwe.

Heller explained that some "Oriental Orthodox Churches" and the Syrian Orthodox Church demonstrated a lively interest in a common date for Pascha, but other churches, including the world's largest Orthodox Church, the Russian, "with all its problems inside the church (may) not feel able to do something." Then she made an interesting remark saying "We have to keep the discussion going, and be careful about what happens on the Orthodox side." She warned against pressuring the Orthodox on this matter too much, because this might provoke a reaction by the "conservative forces" in these churches.

When asked if one can expect to have an established common date for celebrating Pascha by the year 2001, Heller said that she tries to be realistic, but that she was "positively surprised" at the amount of interest shown in the issue.

So far not a single Ecumenist has realized that it would be more simple just to accept the seventeen centuries old Orthodox tradition.

CRITIQUE OF THE WCC

The official publication of the Serbian Orthodox Church "Pravoslavlje" ("Orthodoxy") on February 1 reported that about fifty important public figures of the non-Orthodox denominations (among them two Anglican bishops) at the beginning of January sent to the General Secretary of the WCC, Konrad Raiser, a very sharp protest in connection with the Assembly in Zimbabwe.

This protesting letter sadly states that in the texts of the final resolutions in Harare, the name of Jesus Christ was not mentioned at all. At the same time the critics complain that during the meetings there were no discussion about the role of the family and at that there were totally absent any discussions regarding "Biblically oriented sex ethics." Also, there was no mention of not tolerating same sex cohabitations.

The signers of this protest threatened that they will cancel their participation in the WCC if in a short while no drastic changes become apparent. They also pointed out that any changes made in the structure of the organization without changing some personnel will bring no results.

AMAZING GENEROSITY OF YELTSIN

A British newspaper "The Daily Telegraph" of March 13 in the section "Arts and Books" published an interesting history of a very generous gift received by the Moscow Patriarchate from Yeltsin.

A reporter, Jeraldine Norman, spent six months on background research on a gift of 11.8 million US dollars given to the Moscow Patriarchate for purchasing a collection of ancient icons, which at some earlier time were sold by the Bolsheviks and more recently were simply stolen and illegally taken out of Russia.

This journalist got interested in such generosity by Yeltsin in 1996, since she knew that millions of people receive no pensions and salaries for the work performed over several years now. She discovered that the Moscow Patriarchate badly wanted to have some old icons displayed in the basement museum of Christ the Saviour Cathedral, but it did not have enough funds. Nevertheless, Alexis Ridiger ("Agent Drozdov") himself and the Chief of the Church Foreign Relations Department Metropolitan Cyrill of Smolensk ("Mihailov" to the KGB) traveled abroad and visited famous antique dealers selling icons and inquired about prices. They were accompanied by several of the most renown specialists in ancient iconography and restoration as consultants.

After checking upon all the possibilities and prices, the Patriarchate asked Yeltsin to purchase for it the collection of icons being sold by house of van Rijn and suggested that this money could be raised by Russia's selling 650 tons of crude oil and that would bring in 10 to 12 million dollars. At that time the Patriarchate scandal about the duty free import of cigarettes, alcohol, oil and diamonds was widely publicized and deprived the government of some 5 billion British pounds worth of possible taxes.

Ridiger's proposal to get \$12 million from the state through the sale of oil happened to be unacceptable to the Finance Ministry of the Russian Federation. Then Yeltsin, who was campaigning for re-election in 1996 and seeking votes, decided to help out the Moscow Patriarchate. On February 6, money was received by him from the foreign exchange reserves. In July, assisted by the MP, Yeltsin won re-election.

For this astronomical sum of money, the Patriarchate purchased only 120 icons, which immediately were taken by her officials and were not shown to anybody. It is expected that they will be displayed no sooner than a year's time. This journalist also reported that seeing Patriarchate's desire to purchase these icons regardless of cost, the owners did not hesitate to inflate the prices. So, one icon of the Holy Trinity (15th century) was offered to the Patriarchate for \$550,000, while the seller had bought it for only \$150,000!

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES GRADUALLY LOSE THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

"The New York Times" of February 5 published a long article by Karen Anderson about the Roman Catholic universities and colleges who have experienced a sharp decline, losing their former traditions.

In mentioning the famous Jesuit Fordham University in New York, she notes that except for the statue of the Virgin Mary in the front of a building with stained glass there is nothing to indicate that this is a Catholic University.

The students, no longer are obliged to be present at daily masses as before, there are no longer crucifixes in the class rooms. Of the teaching personnel of 500 persons, only 37 belong to Jesuit order. The dean of this university is still a Jesuit, but the president of the Board of Trustees and a woman who chairs the theological department are no longer Catholics.

Such a situation can be observed throughout all the Catholic educational institutions, who function quite independently from the Catholic hierarchy. Catholic bishops (members of the National Conference), concerned by this situation, decided to introduce new regulations for all their educational institutions in the USA. The editor of a Jesuit magazine "America" noted that "None of these Catholic colleges wants to throw away its Catholic identity. But if these guidelines were adopted, the colleges would be put between a rock and a hard place."

The American Catholic episcopate three times tried to keep Catholic colleges which they sponsor within some sort of limits. A first draft of the statutes was labeled as too controlling, a second effort was made in 1995 which passed with 224 votes against 2. This statute stipulated the necessity for respecting the hierarchy, but at the same time sought independence and the right of "academic freedom." And finally, the draft will be revised for the third time upon a demand from the Vatican

The deans at Catholic universities claim that the acceptance of Vatican demands would bring many hardships for them. In particular, the insistence that students have to be "faithful Catholics," because then Catholics would not feel they were second class citizens.

The dean of Boston University William Leahy declared: "I don't want Protestants, Jews, agnostics, Buddhists and others to think they have no place here. I don't want the message sent that we only tolerate them, that they'll be second in priority."

The reporter explains there is a problem as result of a lack of those in Catholic monastic orders which make it necessary to hire not only lay people, but even non-Catholics. On the other hand, subsidies from the government to strictly religious schools are given very unwillingly. Besides, a drastic secularization of Catholics as a result of the Vatican II Council in the 60's has also played an important role.

According to "The New York Times" of March 20, some students of Catholic schools started have demanded the return of crucifixes to class rooms, as earlier. The administrations of such schools have found an easy way out: there will be crucifixes in the class rooms, but not of traditional Catholic design, but made by contemporary artists in a decadent style. Among the prospective "artists" is a Hassidic Jew Asher Lev.

Such are the problems of some 230 Catholic religious schools in the USA.

THE POPE AND MUSLIMS

For centuries the "Christian" Western world supported Muslims against the Orthodox nations who were struggling against them. While the powerful Russian Empire existed, the Muslims did not dare to lift their heads too high. There were many of them also in the Russia, where they peacefully lived and had all the rights of citizenship.

With the fall of the Russian Empire and, especially after the Second World War, there was a noticeable expansion of Muslims to European countries and even to America. Germany is packed with Muslims; there are many in France, and also Catholic Italy. Just a few years ago a mosque was built in Rome, the largest in Europe.

The Pope could not resist expressing his sympathy for Muslims, a very aggressive people who have no knowledge of feelings of mercy. As reported by the "Ecumenical News International" of March 3rd, a meeting is

scheduled with the Pope during his visit to Poland in June. He will meet there with representatives of Muslims from various European countries.

A Catholic bishop, Miziolek, said that it is expected that the Pope will meet also with Muslims from Lithuania, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Russia and some of the republics of dismembered Russia.

It is estimated that in Poland there are some 20,000 Muslims who until 1939 even had a separate military unit within the Polish army.

In 1997 a General Muslim Council was formed from representatives of various countries. Catholic bishops stressed that until now, the Pope has never met with Muslims in European countries, but he has met with them while visiting non-European states.

Bishop Miziolek explained that at the meeting "the Pope will recall our common roots in the ancient tradition of Abraham, as well as in Jesus, who is seen by Muslims as a prophet, though not as the Son of God. At a time when powerful circles are showing conflicting attitudes and dispositions, an event like this could succeed in altering the climate of opinion."

In May of last year there was established a top-level Roman Catholic-Islamic commission chaired by Cardinal Francis Arinze and Sheikh Fawzi Fadel Zifzaf which will pursue inter-religious dialogue.

During his visit to Poland the Pope plans to meet Metropolitan Sava, head of the Polish Orthodox Church which has about 700,000 believers. He will also pray in Warsaw for the victims of the Jewish holocaust.

Such warm feelings of the Pope for the centuries-long cruel persecutors of Orthodox Christians in Greece and the Balkans, are also felt in contemporary America and not only in the White House. As it is reported by the Orthodox newspaper "Christian Activist," a few years ago the County Council of Lowdown, Virginia, decided to give Muslims 100 acres land to build a number of Muslim schools (from kindergarten to university) with a boarding for 800 students. Also, there will be built a huge mosque with an 85 foot high minaret. But all this is still not enough: all these establishments will be under the direct control of the government of Saudi Arabia!

A "MARDI GRAS" IN AUSTRALIA

"Ecumenical News International" of March 17 reported that in Sydney (Australia) on February 27th for a whole month a "Mardi Gras" was celebrated by homosexuals and lesbians with the participation of 15 clergy, who represented several major Australian denominations and which created a "Uniting Church." Among its members are Quakers, Anglicans and the "Metropolitan Community Church" which ministers to "Christian" homosexuals.

These groups were enthusiastically greeted by several hundred thousand citizens who for some 20 years have been delighted with these perverts. The parade originally started in 1978 when at that time a small group of them was dispersed by local police. Now it is considered to be the largest parade of participants of this perversion in the world.

The representatives of a "church" were carrying a banner with the words "embrace diversity." Some of the clergy were dressed in business suits. Some of those "spiritual leaders" were followed by about 120 parishioners.

The organizer of this parade of "Uniting Church" Rod Pattenden said that "we were very warmly received at the parade. We protest against the church's involvement in acts of homophobia and hatred... For too long the Christian Church has forced people to deny or hide their sexual identities. This has got to end because it is a denial of the church's teaching on God's love and acceptance."

However, this outrageous parade met with criticism from a number of conservative opponents. A member of the Christian Democratic party and a member of parliament Pastor Fred Nile said that "the parade itself contains a great deal of obscenity, blasphemy, nudity and other offensive activity. A number of men dressed up as Catholic sisters which is a blasphemous act... It is not a place where an Orthodox Christian should participate, but rather pray as we did that night: 'God forgive them, for they know not what they do.' "

GRABBE ARCHIVE

We wish to inform those interested that the correspondence of the late Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) with the First Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, its clergy and some activists has been forwarded for safe keeping to Stanford University in California.

The address of the university is: Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, CA 94305.

These Archives are in the Special Collections and are called "Grabbe Archives." Access is open to the public.