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TSAR SYMEON BECOMES PRIME MINISTER OF BULGARIA

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## **“CRIMINAL CASE” INITIATED BY THE ADHERENTS OF MP AGAINST FIRST HIERARCH OF THE ROAC, VALENTIN, METR. OF SUZDAL AND VLADIMIR**

For quite some time now the First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, Metropolitan Valentin has been the target of the fanatical hatred of the MP, which he left in 1990, and also of the once hidden and now open supporters of union between the ROCOR and the MP.

After the now clear development of schism within the ROCOR following the October 2000 Bishops' Council, many became interested in the extraordinary personality of Metropolitan Valentin. In order to prevent a stream of parishes departing to be under his jurisdiction an unbelievably slanderous attack was started.

We believe there is no need to repeat the previous explanations made by the Metropolitan himself in the form of Epistle to his parishes as well as in his official declarations to the press. Among the ferocious slanderers the newspaper “Prizyv” stands out which stains its pages with anonymous fantasies from “the office of investigative journalism”. Some Moscow newspapers picked up the very same attack from the Vladimir Region.

It is interesting to note that nowhere and never had the MP and the local authorities or any one of the hierarchs of the ROCOR in Russia ever made any attack.

In the section “What the April Ecclesiastical Court of the ROAC is” on July 19<sup>th</sup> from “investigative journalism” it was reported, that “Metropolitan Valentin is a dangerous criminal, who by his disgusting deeds has disgraced the Church and her members, handing them over to Satan and is defrocked on basis of Canons 7 and 62 of St. Basil.... If A. P. Rousantsov will not repent of his sins and will not make peace with the Church, after his death he may not be granted a dignified burial according to Christian rites and his body should not be buried in an Orthodox cemetery”. It is self-evident that the “spiritual court” held by Osetrov and company has nothing to do with the genuine ecclesiastical Court of the ROAC, which defrocked Osetrov and several clergymen with him.

Indeed, all of this would be laughable, were it not sad.

On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, in the “Journalists’ House” in Moscow, a press-conference was held at which Archbishop Theodore of Borisovo and Sanino, Secretary of the Synod, Archpriest Arcady Makovetsky, Priest-monk Gregory Lurie and legal advisor to the diocese, Serge Mechenov responded to numerous questions. Present were also several boys with their parents.

A question was asked about rumors of blackmail of Metropolitan Valentin with films fabricated by Osetrov. This was verified by the Archbishop Theodore, who said that indeed “there was an anonymous telephone call. We are not sure what and who was there. They called Vladyka and said: ‘Do you want it or don’t you?...’ After demanding \$5,000 they said: ‘If you don’t want us to show it on TV, pay us \$5,000’. And he said: ‘Please show whatever you want. We are not going to pay’ and he hung up.”

One of our sources in Suzdal described the outrageous acts of the Osetrov followers and wrote: “The impudence of the newspaper (“Prizyv”) is quite amazing and it is obvious that they feel total immunity to lie. It is clear that authorities stand behind them who guarantee them protection and defense. When we approached the newspaper “Facts and Arguments” we were told with compassion that this is a scandalous case and should be heard in court and we received a promise that our appeal will be published. But then they very quietly backed out and affirmed that behind all of this there is a political power. ‘You are clever people and you know in what kind of country you live’, the editors told us. For ten years we have been watching flowers bloom, and now there come the berries.

We began to build a chapel on the cemetery, and they wrote unprintable words all over the walls. The Metropolitan ordered them not to be erased. When the outraged believers filed complaints with the newspaper, they received a flat answer: ‘No one is going to publish your letters’. And, they have themselves published the reason for it in the newspaper ‘Prizyv’ on August 15<sup>th</sup>, page 3:

**‘The so-called Metropolitan Valentin commands fifty parishes in the country, three of which are in Suzdal. Knowledgeable people affirm that if he will step aside, his autonomous church very quickly will be swallowed up by the Moscow Patriarchate: after all, there is no leader around him who is on his scale. Therefore, strictly speaking, the critique of this schismatic is not harmful at all, but benefits the Russian Orthodox Church’**, in other words, the Moscow Patriarchate.

According to the same information, “Vladyka Metropolitan bravely suffers these abuses and says: ‘I knew what I was about to suffer. One does not step down from the cross, but is taken down from it.

“We rely on the mercy of God, that He will help us to preserve our Church, although it seems that we will not escape the persecutions and abuses. Let the will of God be done. We have to prepare our faithful to be the flock of Christ, reminding them that the enemy does not rest and in his arsenal are lies and slanders – the main tools in wars against Truth and faith in Christ. This is true even more since the documents were published from archives of the Council for Religious Affairs, containing information on how the plans were created against the Church, clergy and active faithful and then put into practice. The circumstances of the regime have changed, but not the relationship toward the True Church.”

Besides the hopes of the MP to sully the hierarch’s name, who has restored 19 churches in Suzdal and its suburbs, this persecution has also another, more political, aim: the effort to prevent Metropolitan Valentin from winning Suzdal’s city elections, which are scheduled for December of the current year. At present, Metropolitan Valentin is a representative on the city council and an honorable city resident. As is reported, “This interpretation is partly verified by the fact that the hearing of the court case of ROAC and Metropolitan is scheduled for some time in January, 2002. That is – until the

elections are over -- all the accusations against Rousantsev will stand. But it also is not verified because the whole outcome cannot be influenced: Suzdal has only 12,000 residents, every one knows everyone else and no local prosecutor can change this".

The status of city council representative gives a person a certain immunity. When still Archimandrite Valentin, at one of the Synod meetings of the ROCOR the question was raised about his city council status. At that time, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) presented to the ROCOR Synod the following "information on the canons":

"We are facing now a problem: if a candidate for the episcopacy in the Soviet Union is a member of a city council, elected to this position by the residents of his town, may he keep it?

Some believe it is not permissible according to the 6<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon that states: "Let not a bishop, presbyter, or deacon undertake worldly business; otherwise let him be deposed". Bishop Nikodim interprets this in as follows: "No warrior of Christ, which what a clergyman is, should occupy himself with any kind of worldly business which is not appropriate to his spiritual calling and, in general, with his spiritual ministry in the Church".

Certainly, this does not settle the question. In another instance, a commentary on the 81<sup>st</sup> Canon (also Apostolic) regarding a similar case, Bishop Nikodim devotes more than a full page to his interpretation. There, he interprets the rule "We have said that a bishop or presbyter must not devote himself to the management of public affairs, but devote himself to ecclesiastical business." The rule also gives a basis for this: "For no man can serve two masters, according to the Lord's declaration" (Mat. 6:24). Another Apostolic Canon (the 83<sup>rd</sup>) does not permit Orthodox clergy to participate in the Roman military service.

Certainly it has to be kept in mind what kind of civil government was meant by these rules. In interpreting the 81<sup>st</sup> Canon, Bishop Nikodim notes: "This rule had in mind public service in a pagan empire, which existed at time of the adoption of this canon".

In Roman paganism one can find something similar to the communist governments of our times. Yet, now the Soviet government has renounced atheism and we may compare it with the contemporary democracies, foreign to any religion or atheism, while proclaiming its official well wishes for all of them.

Bishop John of Smolensk, when interpreting this canon points out that public civil service in general can have nothing in common with clerical ministry. A priest should not take upon himself a civil office, which some times cannot be combined with the rules of the Church. The 83<sup>rd</sup> Apostolic Canon, while objecting to military service in a pagan state, forbids the combining of "the Roman authority and a priestly office".

The Fourth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils, now held in a Christian state, made the rules only against clergy who compromised their service to the Church by devoting their energy to secular concerns. (Compare the 16<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Council of Carthage).

However, the concluding section of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Council of Chalcedon, in the changed situation of the Byzantium of the fifth century introduces an important addition to the tally of priestly duties.

Certainly, leaving in effect the Carthage statement that no bishop of clergyman would "give himself to the management of public affairs," the canon makes an important reservation: "unless he shall be called by the law to the guardianship of minors, from which there is no escape; or unless the bishop of the city shall commit him to care of ecclesiastical business, or of unprovided for orphans or widows and of persons who stand especially in need of the Church's aid through the fear of God".

Summing up this canon, Bishop Nikodim writes that the participation of a clergyman in public affairs is possible with the bishop's permission if "under-aged children, widows and orphans remained without any defense, to be sort of a lawyer or, if the interests of the Church demand it and if he is directly appointed so by his immediate superior".

When recalling the close cooperation of the secular with the Church in the Justinian period, Bishop Nikodim instructs that because conditions had changed from the Apostolic period, "clergymen and monks could become defenders of the interests of their churches and monasteries before civil governments".

In the Christian Empire, the emphasis is that the clergy not be preoccupied with concerns of state or their personal welfare and therefore neglect their immediate attention to and duties in the ministry of their flock.

In any case, the 6<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon is in no way applicable to the case we are to solve. Our candidate has no public duty. He does not receive any salary from the state or the city. As someone elected by the residents to the city council he does not participate in any way in the state administration. His status in the city is closest to that described in the third canon of the Chalcedonian Council. For the benefit of the Church it is important that he remain on the city council, using his position to defend the interests of the Church and his parishioners.

October 12/25, 1990 Bishop Gregory"

As was the case with literally all the memos and opinions of Bishop Gregory regarding current church affairs, this canonical information was also disregarded by the Synod of Bishops who demanded that Archimandrite Valentin resign from the status of city representation, despite his report that this status to a certain degree guarantees his inviolability. Nevertheless, Archimandrite Valentin fulfilled the demand of the Synod and informed the authorities of his resignation. He was reelected as a representative to the city council after the Synod and the Council of Bishops did everything possible to force him to leave the Church Abroad, while the "canon information" of Bishop Gregory supported the status of Bishop Valentin.

## **FRENZY IN SUZDAL CONTINUES UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

"Vertograd.Razsyika" # 119 reported that on the night of September 30/October 1<sup>st</sup> two fires in church buildings were set in Suzdal. Around midnight some unknown (?) criminals doused the walls of wooden house on 1 Slobodskaya St. and set it on fire. Several monks and old people live in this building, among them a paralyzed parishioner and a blind nun.

Luckily, Fr. Simon, doing his monastic rule, noticed flames through his window in time and the fire was extinguished. At the crime scene an empty 5 liter gasoline can was found. Beautiful hand carved decorations around the windows and main entrance door suffered badly from this fire.

The second fire was set at the almost completed cemetery chapel. All the wooden scaffoldings were burned down.

In both cases the local militia failed to register the intentionally set fires!

On night of September 29<sup>th</sup>/September 30 a number of flyers were posted with calls to "the Russian people" to "deal with" Metropolitan Valentin and organize an "uprising" in order to get him out of Suzdal.

The same "Vertograd," but in #121 reported that on October 1<sup>st</sup> Metropolitan Valentin sent a declaration to the head of the Suzdal local administration, procurator and the head of the Suzdal department of internal affairs. In it he reviewed the unprecedented campaign against the ROAC and her first hierarch and also countless acts of desecration of churches and violence against the clergy of the Russian Church.

In his declaration Metropolitan Valentin also pointed out that a whole number of crimes of recent days was left unattended to by the "internal authorities".

As reported by "Vertograd," many in Suzdal believe that these actions are a result of the anger of the "Osetrov followers" because of the Vladimir court decision of September 27<sup>th</sup> that forbade the newspaper "Prizyv" to publish any accusations against the Metropolitan. Previously this paper had published articles with some 10 "criminal" accusations of Metropolitan Valentin.

## **A MP PARISH IN VOLGOGRAD JOINS THE ROCOR**

According to the Internet report by "Vertograd.Razsyika" #113, on September 3, 2001, the St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Volgograd (at first Tsaritsyn and then Stalingrad) left the MP. On September 5<sup>th</sup>, the rector of this parish, Priest Victor Ulianov received a certificate of registration of his parish within the ROAC. This rector demonstrated an unusual foresight.

On July 20 he visited Suzdal and there was officially accepted into the ROAC. He did not immediately inform his bishop, Metropolitan Herman, that on July 12 he petitioned the Diocese to be accepted. This gave him sufficient time to go through the procedure and the MP found out about it after considerable delay. According to our information, the MP had a serious confrontation with V. Gorelov, the builder and churchwarden of this church and started in the press a smear campaign against him.

MP hoped to win back Fr. Victor Ulianov by offering him a miter and also threatening him with "problems with the militia and administration". At the same time, the MP appointed to this parish another priest, Michael Yermakov, without informing him that this parish is no longer in its jurisdiction. But already by the end of August the patriarchal priest warned Fr. Victor that "he has started an action against him".

As it is related by our sources, "the Justice Department of Volgograd found out of existence of a "alternative" Orthodox Church. The members of the Justice Department were very sympathetic toward the ROAC parish and its rector, who is a medical doctor. The Chairman of the regional Justice Department and a representative of the regional administration visited the parish, talked with Fr. Victor and some parishioners and were interested in the reasons for their leaving the MP. The official guests who were used to relationship with MP clergy were very much surprised by a simple fact that all the documentation, necessary for the parish registration were received by Fr. Victor from the Suzdal diocese administration free of charge".

Let us hope that the local Volgograd authorities will continue their friendly relations with this parish and will not support the slanderous actions of the MP, as it is the case in Suzdal.

At the same time, Archimandrite Gregory of Denver, Colorado also announced that he, his Dormition Skete and also Priest Dionyssy (recently ordained in Suzdal) have joined the ROAC.

## **ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE ROCOR COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**

In anticipation of the future ROCOR Council of Bishop to be held on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2001 – many of her parishes, especially in Russia, are in a temporizing state.

The October Council of 2000 resulted in cruel disappointment with the ROCOR for its favorable evaluation of the MP, the establishment of a special committee for reunion with it and a letter to the ecumenist Serbian Patriarch Paul, again with the request to assist that union.

At that time only very few have noticed that the Council of Bishops quite illegally deprived the Metropolitan of any administrative power, while nominally leaving to him his title of First Hierarch. The Council created a never heard of before a post of "Plenipotentiary Deputy" (while the First Hierarch is alive) without whose signature no document is valid. At the same time, the Eastern American and Canadian dioceses, which were governed by the Metropolitan, were entrusted to

his vicar bishops Gabriel and Michael. In connection with the decisions of this Council, all its members have received numerous protests on part of various groups and individuals, many of which were published. To all the protests the Synod responded with a declaration that fully confirmed all the Council's decisions. Unfortunately, the Metropolitan also signed this. However, rather soon the Metropolitan published an open Epistle, which completely contradicted all the Council's decisions. This resulted in hopeful reaction in defenders of the principles and ideals of the ROCOR and on the other hand – the fury of the conspirators against Metropolitan. Some developed an idea that the sinking ROCOR vessel can be saved only by declaring Metropolitan Vitaly and Bishop Barnabas as sort of banners for the ROCOR and a creation of an independent new hierarchy. The Metropolitan's Epistle resulted in the second illegal removal of Metropolitan's even nominal rule over the Church Abroad. Unfortunately, the Metropolitan signed the act of his resignation and the Synod's resolution about it, despite the canonical absurdity involved. The farsighted retention of the Metropolitan's title of First Hierarch (in order to avoid panic in midst of the flock?) – still did not deprive some optimists of hope for the proper solution of this extremely confusing situation. Now, a whole number of parishes in Russia as well as Abroad – have taken a temporizing position regarding the decisions of the future Council of Bishops. There are already circulating appeals and declarations by the clergy, addressed to the ROCOR's episcopate. Among them we have received a "declaration" signed by several clergymen from Kursk and Belgorod, which has 7 extensive paragraphs, an appeal to the Council of a meeting of ROCOR parishes in Russia, signed by Archbishop Lazarus and Bishops Benjamin and Agathangel, also 21 clergymen and 15 laypeople as well as a very well composed "position of the Far-East Deanery" and others. All these appeals examine in detail the uncanonical removal of the Metropolitan from the post of First Hierarch, rejoice about his Epistle and express the hope that the future Council will straighten out the past errors in accord with this Epistle.

From one very dependable source we have found out some details of the meeting of the ROCOR parishes in Russia (Voronezh). It states that almost no parishes in Russia are commemorating Archbishop Laurus, and some even not on proskomidia. It is well known that even in the Church Abroad, there are priests who commemorate him, but unwillingly.

## UNPRECEDENTED DOCUMENT

We have received a Xerox copy of the document with the letterhead of the Synod of Bishops, written in English and entitled "Protocol # 750".

Traditionally a "Protocol" ("minutes" in Russian) is a document, which records all the deliberations and final resolutions of the meeting. Actually, we are in possession of extracts. Probably for the very first time in the decades of existence of the ROCOR we hear of a Synod meeting held by the telephone. Here is the text we received:

"We, the members of the Synod of Bishops – Archbishop Laurus, Archbishop Alypi, Archbishop Mark, Bishop Kirill, Bishop Gabriel and Bishop Michael – at our meeting conducted by telephone (conference call) **deliberated concerning** the question of our First Hierarch, Metropolitan Vitaly, regarding the fact that those surrounding him are not assisting Metropolitan Vitaly to live in a peaceful environment, but are inciting him to oppose the decisions of the Synod, and are thus using him for their own ends, so that in this way an abnormal environment is being formed within the Church, which is leading to all our disorders. Having discussed this question from every viewpoint, the Synod of Bishops **decides**:

1. To confirm and to announce for the information of our flock that, in accordance with the Decree of the Diocese of Canada, dated 12/25 January, 1999 and signed by the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, His Eminence, Metropolitan Vitaly, Archbishop of Montreal and Canada; and also in accordance with the Decree of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, dated 14/27 October 2000 (#13/51/90), and with the Act of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, dated 27 June/10 July 2001, whereby Metropolitan Vitaly's declaration of his retirement was attested, the administration of the Diocese of Canada was entrusted to His Grace Bishop Michael, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant upon this appointment. For this reason, all matters concerning church finances and property on the territory of the Diocese must fall under the jurisdiction of His Grace, Bishop Michael, as administrator of the Diocese of Canada.
2. Furthermore, in accordance with the Decree of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, dated 2/15 December 1999 (concerning property questions in connection with our monasteries, sketes, monastic communities and parishes) all financial, property, legal, administrative, and other matters connected with the Brotherhood of St. Job of Pochaev, within the boundaries of Canada are under the jurisdiction, administration and care of His Grace, Bishop Michael. Based on the aforementioned Decree of the Synod of Bishops, the Diocesan Administration is ordered to examine all property documents to see how the property of the monasteries, sketes, monastic communities and parishes located on the territory of the Diocese of Canada are registered. It must be clearly indicated in those documents that all these monasteries, monastic communities and parishes are an inseparable part of the Diocese, which is an integral part of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and their property is under the Jurisdiction of the Diocesan Administration.
3. To conduct such an examination, His Grace Bishop Michael is to request all the above-mentioned documents from all persons by whom they, for various reasons, are now being kept. He must also take all measures deemed necessary to assure the good order of property matters in the Diocese entrusted to his administration.

**Resolved:** To inform Bishop Michael by means of a Decree of the decision of the Synod of Bishops set forth above, and to bring it to the attention of our flock.

**(Resolved also:)** To issue a decree concerning this to His Grace, Bishop Michael, for appropriate implementation

Signed: Laurus, Archbishop of Syracuse & Trinity, Deputy of the First Hierarchy of the Synod of Bishops  
 Gabriel, Bishop of Manhattan, Deputy Secretary of the Synod of Bishops  
 September 11/24<sup>th</sup>, 2001”

## **INSTALLATION OF JERUSALEM PATRIARCH IRENEOS**

On Saturday, September 15<sup>th</sup> in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher the installation of Patriarch Ireneos was celebrated. The ceremony started at 11:30 AM and was completed at 2:30 PM.

Entrance into the church was allowed only to the holders of special numbered invitations. In the evening at 8:30 PM there was held an official reception in the King David Hotel.

Next day, on Sunday, the Patriarch served the Divine Liturgy at the Lord's Tomb. After the Liturgy, all present were invited to the Greek Patriarchate for a special reception in the newly built hall. The guests were treated with cognac, candy and typical eastern sweets. The choir sang during the reception.

On the ceremony of installation were present the representatives of the Orthodox Palestine Society. The ROCOR was represented by Archbishop Mark and the Chief of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, Archimandrite Peter (Lukianov), Priest-monk Andronik and the abbesses of the convents: Moiseya and Elisabeth. But only Archbishop Mark and Archimandrite Peter attended the reception.

## **THE NEXT TO SLANDER THE ROCOR**

An Internet version of the newspaper "NG Religions" on August 22<sup>nd</sup> published an extensive article by Elias Goriachev with the biting title: "During the War the ROCOR Assisted Croats in Persecuting Serbs".

The author totally misrepresents all the facts.

It is true that the Croats managed to persuade Archbishop Hermogen (Maximov) to establish a "Croatian church". Hermogen made an attempt to lure also Archbishop Theophan of Kursk and Oboyan. He sent him a telegram to the effect that: Come, there will be money, servants and a car! Archbishop Theophan flatly refused to participate in this adventure.

E. Goriachev knows so little about church matters that he informs his readers that supposedly "Hermogen was ordained by the Rumanian Patriarch Nikodim". Undoubtedly he mixed up the installation and the ordination.

Under the German occupation the relations between Serbia and Croatia, as well as with all other European countries was almost non-existent and the Serbian Post Office hardly was able to function. The relationship between the Serbian Patriarchate and the Synod of Bishops was conducted only by means of messengers, among whom occasionally were also the editor of "Church News."

"Some one by the name of Mitkevich" (Gregory Gregorovich) was a resident of Belgrade and the owner of a pawnbroker store, specializing in Russian antiques. In connection with this his reputation was very low, because he was exploiting the needs of Belgrade's refugees who brought him their last jewels in order to sell them on commission. He had very limited relations with the church, because he visited it very rarely. Also the author's information about his political involvement is also very questionable. He was a typical businessman, very little interested in matters foreign to his store.

As soon as Metropolitan Anastassy found out about the adventure of Archbishop Hermogen, he informed the Patriarchal Deputy, Metropolitan Joseph (Patriarch Gabriel was at that time in a German concentration camp), about it as well as of suspension of Archbishop Hermogen. Therefore, a complaint by the Serbian Church was not needed at all, because the position of the ROCOR in that case was quite clear. Metropolitan Anastassy wanted to widely publish the Synod's resolution of an extraordinary meeting, but for some reason, unknown to us, the German military government did not permit this official declaration to be published and it was announced in the Russian Holy Trinity cathedral in Belgrade and unofficially distributed among the faithful of other churches.

The Croats killed Hermogen in the year 1944.

The author of this article mentions "someone by the name of Mitkevich" (not even knowing his name), Archbishop Hermogen and briefly – Metropolitan Anastassy. Having such "data" on hand – to speak about support for Croats of the ROCOR in persecuting Serbs — is more than highly dishonest; it is even stupid. In this entire article the true facts are only the names of Metropolitan Anastassy, Archbishop Hermogen and information of the murder by Roman-Catholic Croats of some 800 thousand Orthodox Serbs. But, what does this have to do with any "assistance" of the ROCOR in the persecution of Serbs?

## **AN INTERESTING "OPEN LETTER" BY ABBOT JOACHIM ABOUT HIS GOING OVER TO THE MP**

The information bulletin "Vertograd.Razsylka" # 115 of September 1 published a very extensive explanatory "Open letter" from Abbott Joachim entitled "My journey from the Church Abroad into the Moscow Patriarchate". Unfortunately, we do not have the original English and had to make our own translation.

To begin with, it should be mentioned that this is not the first canonical "journey" of Abbott Joachim (Parr) -- originally to a number of various Greek jurisdictions and then to the ROCOR. His letter is almost 5 pages long and we will give only the most essential quotations from it. In general, he accuses the Church Abroad of supposedly leaving her original path when breaking off from all the "Orthodox Churches".

In 1956 the Church Abroad left the membership in the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in USA because it accepted the MP as a member. Shortly after that the participation of all "Orthodox Churches" in the Ecumenical Movement since concelebrations with heretics of all colors was absolutely unacceptable to the Church Abroad.

Abbot Joachim in detail describes the schism in the ROCOR, which resulted due to treacherous decisions of the Council of Bishops in 2000, whose Epistle, he claims "has given hope to many".

"I was appointed Director of the Foreign Relations Department by the Council of October, 2000," [despite his not knowing a single Russian word, "Ch N"]. "When I approached the hierarchs of the Ch A to describe to me the horizon of my duties to be included in my new position, the answer was: 'there are none. You have to invent them yourself' and this was what I followed in the future [all emphasis by "Ch N"]. In Jordanville Archbishop Laurus gave me the following advice — do not hurry, where possible personally visit the ROCOR parishes, or approach them with your letter informing you of the creation of this department. For my part, I have shared with Vladyka my own approach to the situation, telling him that in my view, the main scope of immediate interest to the Department are the internal affairs of the Church and not the external relations. And again I got no direct definitions of my position. To my proposal to invite the representatives of various Orthodox jurisdictions to New York, Archbishop Laurus replied that their presence in the Synod might result in the displeasure of clergy residing there and also of believers in general and therefore it would be better not to invite them. I have followed this suggestion and didn't send out any official invitations to other jurisdictions.

Upon my return to New York from Jordanville. I have shared the information of my conversation with Archbishop Laurus with one of the bishops in the Synod and received the comment: "Your position was made by the Council of Bishops and therefore, you are responsible to the Council for fulfillment of your job. Therefore, do what you feel is necessary. None of the Hierarchs had ever mentioned that I should not enter into any contacts with the MP. Since I had the permission of hierarchs to create the immediate duties by myself. I tried to follow it, and that included my trips to Moscow and talks with the Patriarch.

At first I met Metropolitan Kyrill, the President of the Foreign Relations Department of the MP in November 2000. The Metropolitan came to NY on an official visit and was very friendly. We had an outstanding, open and direct conversation, in which we discussed various problems that today are faced by the Russian Church and the Church Abroad. At the conclusion of our evening conversation, Metropolitan Kyrill invited me to come to Russia and to personally see how the Church is living now. I answered that I would try to arrange this trip and will inform him of the details after Christmas. I approached my bishop before the October Council with the travel request and his answer was: many are traveling; why would not you too. Then he inquired when I was planning to go. At that moment I had no idea regarding the time of the trip, for which I also had to gather funds, and I informed the Bishop of that.

Abbot Joachim fails to mention the name of "one of the bishops in the Synod", but it is almost certainly Bishop Gabriel, the Deputy Secretary of the Synod of Bishops.

After arriving in Moscow shortly before the feast of the Ascension and after receiving the invitation to be present at the rite of the elevation of Archimandrite Seraphim to the episcopate, after the service. Abbot Joachim "was invited to have a private conversation with the Patriarch. This remarkable conversation, held with an interpreter's assistance, lasted for 45 minutes. In this conversation I mentioned my personal wish, as well as wish of the whole Russian Church, to heal the wounds afflicted by the separation and to restore unity to the Russian Church. The Patriarch spoke in detail about these wounds of which the most recent is the ordination by the Church Abroad bishops for Russia and also the schism of Bishop Valentin, who left the Church Abroad and brought harm by his actions even to the ROCOR. And the Patriarch again stressed his wish for reunion..."

"...Upon my return to the USA, I wrote a letter in which I raised the question of Eucharistic unity and the status of the ROCOR regarding all other Orthodox Churches. I gave this letter to the clergy for consideration. I have shown this very same letter to two bishops of the Church Abroad who, as have other clergy, shared with me in writing their opinions and expressed their support..."

## **"ABOUT HOPES OF REUNION OF MP WITH ROCOR"**

The newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" ("Russian Herald") in its issue # 36-37, 2001, published with this title the following:

"The newspaper 'Russian News' making comments during an interview with ITAR-TASS given by Patriarch Alexis II regarding the recent retirement of Metropolitan Vitaly, who was opposed to any contacts with the MP writes that he expressed a hope that with departure of the old generation of ROCOR bishops, there will totally change the relationship of the 'zarubeshniki' (those from abroad) toward the MP.

'Unfortunately,' noted the First Hierarch of the MP, 'the old generation of the episcopate lived by former categories. They could not imagine that changes came in Russia and even recently, no matter how paradoxical, they prayed in their churches 'for the suffering Russian Church'. The Patriarch recalled that the founder of the Synod Abroad, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitzky), established his Synod as temporary — until the moment when the Church in Russia would become free. 'We believe, there are no more any reasons for separation. The representatives of the Church Abroad are the flesh from the flesh of our people and we have to unite' said Alexis II.

He warned, "If the resistance takes on a permanent character, it will turn into the analogy of the old-believers schism, which up until now is a unhealed wound of the body of the Russian Church".



Ridiger craftily fails to mention that the MP never repented of her 70-year long intimate ties with the godless government and is justifying this sin with the words of Holy Scripture that all authority is from God. And also the entrance of the MP into the heretical ecumenist movement in 1961 from which it has no intention of exiting. Contemporary "freedom of the Church" is also a very questionable matter. In vain, Ridiger is pleading with his KGB colleague Putin to return to the Church at least some of her property. What has been "returned" was actually given "to be used free of charge" only. And so far he has not succeeded even in getting back a most sacred relic of the Russian Church — the Vladimir Icon of Mother of God. For years it was exhibited in the Tretyakov art gallery, for one (very short) period the icon was placed in one of the Moscow churches and now no one knows where the icon is, whether it has been destroyed or sold by her "protectors"!

The "NG.Religii" in September 12<sup>th</sup> published an article entitled: "Unjustified pressure upon the 'Suzdal Church' with the subtitle "Her hierarchs consider the accusations of their First Hierarch a provocation".

After giving a short history of the creation of ROCOR parishes in Russia and then the ROAC, the newspaper writes: "At present, the ROCOR church authority which always was a bit 'ashamed' of a challenge to the 'Mother church' in the form of the 'parallel' dioceses in Russia, decided gradually to roll up her activity in our country and finally to unite with the MP.

"This fact was officially registered in the documents of the ROCOR's Council of Bishops in 2000, turned the ancient Suzdal into the center of the most important 'alternative' Orthodoxy in the Russian Land, which is the residence of the Head of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, the Metropolitan Valentin (Rousantsov). Historically, the ROAC has a lineage from the ROCOR from whom it received her hierarchy. But her contemporary cast of mind is in many ways formed under the influence of the dozens of 'Catacomb' communities, who joined her after long searches for a 'true Orthodox hierarchy'. It is not without the influence of these communities that Metropolitan Valentin already in 1995 condemned the course of the ROCOR to get closer to the MP and asserted the inability of the New York Synod to follow any consistent 'Russian policy.' "

#### **"FRATERNAL LETTER" OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCH TO MEMBERS OF THE ROCOR COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**

With the speed of the lightening the "Fraternal Letter" of the Moscow Patriarch and his Synod to the "Members of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad" dated September 23/October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001, was published on the Internet.

The Epistle starts by addressing "Venerable archpastors and pastors – members of the Council 'grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, Lord Jesus Christ' (Eph. 1:2)!

After the ill-conceived Council, in the eyes of the MP we are no longer schismatics, Karlovtsi sectarians. The Church Abroad is informed that the MP fervently prays for annihilation of the "sad schism." It characterized the past "tragic twentieth century" and is stated that "...the face of Russian land was washed with the blood of hundreds of thousands of martyrs and confessors". Obviously, nowhere it is mentioned that the major part of this blood was shed for no other reason but because these martyrs would not accept the Sergianist compromise with the godless government. Now, supposedly everything has changed, the Church is free and time has come for union with the MP.

Then we are informed that "...only will be our joy complete, when the wound from the pernicious schism will heal. Our hearts are filled with sadness that we, being brothers with you and confessing the very same faith cannot commune from the same Chalice and continue to stay in the historically obsolete separation. Many sensitive souls, especially of those Russian people who live abroad, in the Homeland are weary of this situation and are looking to find ways to overcome it. And in depths of the Church Abroad there is a strengthening aspiration for removal of this partition. The decisions of the former Council of Bishops to establish a committee regarding matters of union brought forth joy to the members of the Church of Russia. We do affirm our readiness to also establish such a committee on our part in order to solve in the brotherly dialogue all the obstacles which stand on the way of unity" (Underlined by "Ch. N").

The Ridiger's Epistle quite correctly states that the saintly New Martyrs "suffered innumerable sufferings for the Russian Church" wishing to see her free, but again, he craftily omits to mention that the matter was not at all about unity, and in fact, they severed their former unity with Metropolitan Sergius, because they could not agree with a treacherous policy of selling the internal liberty of the Church. During that period they organized the Catacomb Church (Never acknowledged by the MP until now) and which was in constant spiritual unity with the Church Abroad. From some members of the Catacomb Church in the 1940's it became known to us that on the third day after the repose of Metropolitan Anthony, the New Martyrs served a panikhida for him at Solovki Prison Camp (formerly a monastery). Until 1937 the Synod of Bishops received regular information about the events in the Catacomb Church. Metropolitan Anastassy new of the martyric ends of a number of hierarchs and of some secret ordinations. It seems that at the end of that year the informer was caught and probably perished. Even in 1944 Prof. John Andreyevsky handed to Metropolitan Anastassy a little bottle with the Holy Gifts from the Catacomb Church. Following Metropolitan Anastassy, the Catacomb Church knew of Metropolitan Philaret and these Metropolitans were commemorated by it.

At the end we read that: "while bringing forth the common repentance, we are called to meet each other". The reason requiring the repentance of the MP is quite clear to any church going people, but it seems, that the Church Abroad has to repent for her exposure of the Sergianist treachery and in addition of her critique for joining the anathematized ecumenical movement, which the MP does not want to leave. The latter might be easier, since on the recent meeting of ROCOR's clergy in Voronezh, Archbishop Lazarus explained that the Church Abroad has never anathematized the ecumenical



heresy, but that supposedly, after the conclusion of the Bishops' Council, Bishop Gregory added to the minutes the English version of the anathema text. This "forgery" nevertheless was twice quoted and reaffirmed by the Councils of Bishops and is completely quoted in Bishop Gabriel's letter to Abbot Joachim.

Since Ridiger writes that the MP is "reaffirming" a readiness to establish a committee for union with Church Abroad, one has to believe that, behind the backs of the faithful, the traitors in the ROCOR have already made some provisional agreement with the MP, otherwise, it is very doubtful that we would be reading a Ridiger epistle to the Bishops Council!

## **A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST. JOB OF POCHAYEV IN CANADA**

In 1954 Bishop Vitaly (Oustinoff) was appointed as vicar bishop to Edmonton, and shortly after that, because there was an urgent need to remove Archbishop Panteleimon (Roodyk) from the Canadian diocese, he became the Archbishop of Montreal and Canada.

Possessing great constructive energy, Archbishop Vitaly immediately organized the Brotherhood of St. Job, which started a printing business.

After the scandalous Council in 2000, the administration of the Canadian diocese was officially transferred to Metropolitan's vicar, Bishop Michael of Toronto. However, as we found out, when transferring the diocese, the Metropolitan retained the control over the Brotherhood and its property which occupied a three story building in Montreal. It had a small chapel, monastic cells, storage rooms and work areas.

After disagreeing with the decisions of Bishops' Council, Archimandrite Sergius, with the blessing of the Metropolitan, stopped serving in St. Nicholas Cathedral and established regular services in the Brotherhood's chapel. This resulted in great displeasure from Bishop Michael. On August 19/September 1, 2001, Bishop Michael wrote him:

"To venerable Archimandrite Sergius (Kindiakov)

Your Reverence;

This is to inform you, that you may not, despite your present actions, serve the vigil services and Divine Liturgies in the building of the Diocesan Administration, as you have been doing for more than a month, because you do not have my blessing for it. You serve on days when there are performed the services in our St. Nicholas Cathedral.

By doing this you are consciously introducing the spirit of confusion and schism within our flock and this, by itself is a canonical crime.

From documents displayed on the walls of the Diocesan Administration, I have found out that you try to justify your scandalous behavior with reference to letters of Vladyka Metropolitan, dated respectively May 5/18 and July 15/28<sup>th</sup> 2001.

You know that the Metropolitan, as of June 27/July 10, 2001, has retired.

In any case, these letters in no way justify your unauthorized behavior, because nothing like this has ever happened in Montreal. You must cease such actions immediately, as they are harmful for the Church.

Michael, Bishop of Toronto, the Administrator of the Canadian Diocese".

Bishop Michael is absolutely right, when he states, "nothing like this has ever happened in Montreal". His actions and behavior led to this point, that the Montreal cathedral is considerably empty and one suspects that many parishioners preferred to attend services in the chapel and not in the cathedral. How the conduct of services of a legal clergyman in another church of the city introduces schism and confusion among the flock and is a "harmful crime to the Church" – is a secret known to the inventor, and there is no canon that prohibits such a service. At the same time we learn that Bishop Michael had the locks to the Brotherhood's building changed so that the Metropolitan, if he were to come to his quarters – would have to stand outside, ring the bell and be let in.

There are also problems with the mail addressed to Metropolitan in Canada, as well as in New York. At present, it is given to the Administrators of his former dioceses.

On September 21/October 4<sup>th</sup> the Metropolitan returned from Canada to New York. At this time his Secretary, who drove him home, could not enter her quarters, because... during the absence of the Metropolitan the lock was changed! At a late hour the locksmith was called and he opened the door. Besides, a cabinet with important documentation was also opened. The police were called to file this case.

Metropolitan Vitaly, who called the Ch. N. editor to inform us of this outrageous fact, was very much upset.

All this behavior of a former vicar of the Metropolitan, as well as of other his "co-brothers" very clearly remind one of two fables of Krylov about the old lion and the fox and the ass!

## **THE "DECLARATION" OF METROPOLITAN VITALY**

During the month of July we received from Europe a copy of a hand-written letter (but not by the Metropolitan himself) dated July 8/21, 2001, which opened with the words "The news has reached me..." We would ignore this piece of paper if not the case that it was sent over the Internet not only by the author of this note, but also by such a serious agency as Vertograd. This makes many believe it to be authentic.

The history of this "document" is the following:

Priest-monk Paissy (Malykhin) after receiving the order to commemorate Archbishop Laurus, refused to obey the order and Bishop Gabriel threatened him with suspension. Immediately after that Fr. Paissy went to Metropolitan Vitaly with the

prepared handwritten sheet, explained to him that he needs it just for his personal use, obtained the Metropolitan's signature. Despite the assurances that the signed paper is to be used for his personal needs, it was widely distributed on the Internet. This didn't help Fr. Paissy in any way and he was immediately suspended and removed from his parish, but it also did put the aged Metropolitan into a peculiar situation.

It would be interesting to know what was a reason for this provocation?

## THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND THE MONOPHYSITES

A Russian newspaper "The Daily Merchant" on September 24<sup>th</sup> published a short article by Catherine Fomenko about the way Alexis II celebrated the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the baptism of Armenia.

According to this information, Ridiger spent two days in Armenia, met with President Robert Kocharian and **"in the evening participated in the ceremony of cooking the myrrh, which in the Armenian Apostolic (Gregorian) church happens once in a century"**.

As is known, the Armenians are Monophysite heretics who teach His Divinity consumed the human nature of Christ. What is, then, their liturgy if not a deception of their faithful? The Fourth Ecumenical Council condemned this heresy in 451. However, in our "ecumenical times" the Armenian-Gregorian heresy was proclaimed by the ecumenists to be a "sister church" and Antiochian Patriarch accepted their sacraments of baptism and marriage as equal to the Orthodox!

In an interview given in the same paper, but on September 26<sup>th</sup>, the Moscow Patriarch, while answering a question of the journalist about the relationship between the "Armenian Apostolic Church" and the Russian Church, declared that "this relationship may be characterized as close and fraternal".

"Vertograd Inform" also reacted to these celebrations by reporting that in answer to Geregyn's II welcoming speech to Ridiger, the latter presented him with a pectoral cross and panagia and declared that "there are established between us genuine fraternal relations. The fraternity among our Churches... will help us to continue our ministry... and will unite us in Christ's love"!

In addition to the Moscow Patriarch, the Alexandrian Patriarch Peter VII, the Romanian Patriarch Theoktist, as well as representatives of the churches of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, Georgia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Serbia, Greece and other members of "global Orthodoxy", attended this ecumenical celebration.

In the life to come, undoubtedly all these "Orthodox" bishop will not find a language in common with the Fathers of the Fourth and Fifth Ecumenical Councils. One has to wonder: will the Moscow Patriarch follow the example of the Alexandria Patriarchate and permit concelebrations with these heretics?

## BUILDING THE THIRD TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

Lately we read more and more about plans to restore the third temple on the "Temple Mount". As is known, the huge Mosque of Omar and two other smaller mosques, cover a very considerable part of this mount. This is a main reason for confrontations between the Israelis and Arabs.

In order to hasten the building of the temple, Israel's fanatics have established the organization "The Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement". As per 46 pages of the Internet's "Voice of the Temple Mount Faithful", this organization brought in July 1999 a symbolic "corner stone" to the sites on the mount, the location of the future temple. But the police forces did not permit them to lower their stone from the truck, but rode with it around the mount.

At present, the situation has become more favorable to the "Faithful" ones: the state permitted them to bring the "corner stone" and to place it close to the former temple. This celebration is scheduled for October 4<sup>th</sup> of this year and will be performed at 9:30 AM by the Western Wall of the Temple Mount.

During the past year the members of this organization performed a ritualistic Passover rite, with the slaughter of a specially prepared Pascal lamb (not by rabbis, but priests), but this year, the police didn't give permission for this rite for fear of Palestinian reactions.

It seems that the antichrist period is approaching us with implacable speed!

## PERSECUTIONS OF ESPHIGMENOU MONASTERY ON MT. ATHOS

The Internet news agency "Vertograd.Razsylka" # 99 reported on August 14<sup>th</sup> that the Old Calendar Archbishop Chrysostom spread the news about persecution of the True Orthodox Monastery Esphigmenou on Mt. Athos. This is the only monastery on the Holy Mountain that remained true to Orthodoxy and does not acknowledge Patriarch Bartholomew and his "global Orthodoxy".

The Greek government has started to refuse entrance visas to the members of the Old Calendar Church even in cases when they have a direct "invitation" from Esphigmenou Monastery. All those who want to visit this monastery, are directed to the travel bureau in Thessaloniki.

A few years ago the Mt. Athos monasteries tried to oppose the New Calendar Patriarchate, Bartholomew, but this resistance was brutally subdued. All the protesting abbots were retired and the most active ones were simply removed from the Athos. At present, of the 20 monasteries only Esphigmenou remains true to the Orthodoxy, but it is evident that

everything is being done to totally isolate it. It seems that this monastery still flies the banner with inscription: "Orthodoxy or death!"

### **CHURCHES FORBID INCENSE**

"Ecumenical News International" on August 29<sup>th</sup> published information that some Anglican parishioners in Canada, who come to the church wearing perfume, have no idea that they present a "threat" to some people. Therefore there is a strong movement to create a "scent-free" zone in the churches. This primarily includes incense.

Readers are informed that some schoolteacher of St. Mark's Parish aged 30 became ill with asthma and had to quit her job and became confined to a wheel chair.

The reporter of the publication of "Anglican Church in Canada" declared that the "Liturgy is supposed to be life giving, not life threatening. St. Mark's strives to be a scent-free church so that services and events may be enjoyed comfortably by everyone."

As a result of this widely spreading propaganda to get rid of incense, already many Anglican parishes became "scent-free". According to the rector of the Roman-Catholic cathedral in Vancouver, on Sundays 6 masses are served and incense is being used only during one of them.

It is also related that according to the Canadian's Lung Association – every fifth citizen has lung problems in this or that manner.

### **TSAR SYMEON BECOMES PRIME MINISTER OF BULGARIA**

The agency Orthodox Christian News Service, Inc. reported that the Bulgarian Tsar Symeon II, who recently became re-involved in the political life of this country, was elected to the post of the Prime-Minister and before the Parliament swore on the Cross and the Gospel in the presence of Patriarch Maxim to defend the constitution of the republic. The New Premier asks to be called "Mr. Sachs-Coburg-Gotha".

This agency points out that Tsar Symeon is the very first monarch in the world to take such a step. In his election campaign the "Premier" promised to pass laws that would assist the Church.

The very same agency also reported that in May of 2002. the Pope plans to visit Bulgaria and offer to meet with the Catholic, Orthodox and... Muslim "clergy".

A representative of the Bulgarian Synod in New York (Metropolitan Gelassy) said that if the Pope would like to meet with Patriarch Maxim – he would be a welcome guest.