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FINALLY ROCOR UNDER METROPOLITAN LAURUS LAYS CARDS ON THE TABLE

The game heretofore played behind the scenes, which started in 2000 at the ROCOR's Council of Bishops with Metropolitan Laurus presiding, at which the Moscow Patriarchate was recognized to be the legal Russian hierarchy – has finally come out into the open.

For almost 3 years the "holy administration" (an MP term) convinced her flock that there were no negotiations about uniting with the MP: only common meetings with representatives of the Patriarchy to establish what separates them from and what is in common with the MP. Such conferences (with no objections on part of the Synod) were already started in the early 90's by Archbishop Mark of Berlin.

Meanwhile, the name of Metropolitan Laurus (expressing obvious sympathy) began to appear even on the front pages of such newspapers as have proven their loyalty to the MP, for example "Russian Herald" # 20 (622).

The most recent move in the new policies of Metropolitan Laurus was his meeting with the President Putin, on a visit to the USA, meeting with him and several members of the Synod of Bishops on September 24, 2003, in the consulate of the "Russian Federation". The Russian press widely responded to this fateful meeting, and the Chancery of the Synod of Bishops felt it is necessary to place on the Internet its own "communiqué" about it. Because of its importance, we also feel the necessity to publish this communiqué's text. According to the English version (which slightly differs from Russian) it reads:

"A meeting took place in the Consulate of the Russian Federation in New York on 24th September between the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus, members of the Synod of Bishops and the President V. V. Putin of the Russian Federation.

"Participating in the meeting were Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain, Bishop Kyrill of San Francisco and Western America, the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Bishop Gabriel of Manhattan, Protopriests Nikolai Artemov and Peter Holodny, as well as the Prior of the stavropigial Monastery of the Meeting of our Lord in Moscow, Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov).

"The paths of the Russian Church in the tragic 20th century were discussed, the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the government in present-day Russia, and the perspectives for a constructive dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. A letter from Patriarch Alexy II to Metropolitan Laurus was presented, which contained an invitation to visit Moscow. *The letter was accepted with gratitude.*

"The meeting was **the result of a long process of relationship between members of the Russian Church in Russia and abroad.** The invitation to this meeting was offered also during President Putin's visit to USA in 2001. With the blessing of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia during presidential visits to the USA and Germany, brief meetings were held between bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the President of the Russian Federation.

"The matters discussed during this meeting will be presented for consideration at the forthcoming All-Diaspora Clergy Conference and the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia to be held in December".

Two hierarchs of the ROCOR, who have participated in this meeting with President Putin, have given interviews to representatives of the press.

The first was given to the representative of the Moscow Komsomolets, Mr. S. Bychkov by the Secretary to the Synod of Bishops, Bishop Gabriel. The second interview was given by Bishop Kyrill of San Francisco to the parish publication "Blagovestnik". Since quite a bit in this second interview is a repetition of the first one, we will make just a few quotations from it.

The interview is entitled "Putin Is Not Against the Law of God".

"The President declared this at a meeting with the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad during his visit to the USA. Vladimir Putin met with the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. Her episcopate for the last 70 years has decisively refused any communications with the Russian Orthodox Church, believing that she has stained herself by collaboration with the theomachist government. Today, one of the participants of this meeting -- Bishop Gabriel of Manhattan talked with the representative of the 'MP'.

--- How was the meeting with the President?

--- We met in the Russian Consulate in New York. On the Russian side, besides the President, were Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov) the Deputy Prior of the Monastery of the Meeting of our Lord in Moscow and the Ambassador to the USA George Ushakov. On our side were the First Hierarch Metropolitan Laurus, Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany, Kyrill, Bishop Of San Francisco and Western America and myself. The President greeted everybody, then officially greeted Metropolitan Laurus and handed him an epistle from His Beatitude Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexis II. The Metropolitan greeted the President in name of our Church. At that time, we all stood up and have presented him with the icon of Elisabeth Theodorovna...

--- The Grand Duchess who was shot by the Bolsheviks in 1918?

--- Evidently the President knew of her life, the murder of her husband and he venerates her. In the icon there was a particle from her relics, which are in our convent on the Mt. Olives in the Holy Land. President Putin presented the Metropolitan with the icon of Holy Trinity, since he resides in the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, and a book about

the Kremlin. The President spoke about the changes in Russia and has assured us that Russia will never again return to a totalitarian regime.

--- Was the matter of church property touched upon in conversation? Since after the Revolution some of the churches and monasteries joined your church...

--- We discussed this matter. Today about 4 million Russians live in the USA – this is the fourth and the most significant wave of émigrés from Russia. In New York alone there are about a million of Russians. Our church has 250 parishes all around the world. Unfortunately, the old émigrés are dying out, their children have assimilated themselves on account of mixed marriages. We thought that some parishes were dying out. But a new wave from the beginning of 90's has substantially re-filled our churches.

[Actually, His Grace the Secretary of the Synod has not given a straight answer to the reporter's question: although it has been known for some time that the MP is in pursuit of ROCOR property and has to an extent realized its dreams by grabbing the Monastery in Hebron, with the Mambre Oak, the cathedral in Berlin and other places!]

--- Certainly there were previous negotiations with the President regarding a meeting with him?

--- I met with Putin in September of 2001. That was just after the terrorist act in New York. There was an official reception in the Embassy and I was among those invited. Our conversation with the President lasted just a minute. In September, the Deputy Prior of the Meeting Monastery, Fr. Tikhon came to the meeting of the Synod. He delivered to the bishops a letter of President Putin which announced his wish to meet with us. It was planned that the meeting would last 40 minutes, but actually it lasted more than 2 hours. This despite 2 important meetings with Chirac and Schroeder, he had just before. [President of France and Chancellor of Germany.]

[*Note from the editor's desk:* Probably, the hierarchs of the ROCOR spent more than 2 hours discussing "the weather" with the Russian President!]

--- The Christians in Russia are mostly concerned with the problem of unification of the two churches...

--- The President shared with us his wish to see the Russian Church united, although he admitted that there are certain problems which separate us. Naturally, they are to be solved primarily by the church herself. Metropolitan Laurus has assured the President that we will be discussing the unification problem at the forthcoming Council of Bishops in December.

During supper we spoke of the necessity of religious education of the Russian people. We believe it is a must that religious education is introduced in the schools. The President reacted positively to this, but said that the variety of nations in his country stands in the way. I suggested to Vladimir Vladimirovich that the state, together with the Church, should consider how to celebrate one day in the year when Russia would commemorate the millions of victims of Communism and the bloody regime. Let it be not a day off from work, which mostly ends with heavy drinking, but a day of mourning. Here in the West we know more about the victims of Communism than in the Soviet Union. According to very modest calculations, 60 million Russians were annihilated. President said he would talk it over with the Patriarch.

--- Official reports say that Bishop Mercury, who presides over the Patriarchal parishes in the USA, was present at the meeting? Is this so?

--- This is false. Except for Archimandrite Tikhon there were no other representatives from Moscow.

--- What stands on the way of unification of the two churches?

--- First of all the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius of 1927 and the collaboration with the theomachists. We believe that there must be a comprehension of having taken the wrong path. No one of the hierarchy of the MP has offered repentance for this historical sin. The second problem is Ecumenism to which the Moscow Patriarchate is loyal even today.

--- What were the President Putin and Metropolitan Laurus talking about?

--- The president described in detail his trip to Valaam in August of 2001. Metropolitan Laurus related that he too *has incognito visited Valaam this year and in the same month of August.* [What a surprising coincidence! "Ch. N."] The monastery is reviving and we are ready to help with the revival of Orthodoxy in Russia".

Bishop Kyrill, in his interview has partly supplemented the data given by the Secretary of the Synod Bishop Gabriel about the meeting with Putin.

In particular, he has related that, "at present, the main focus of our attention is on the forth-coming All-Diaspora Clergy Conference and the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. The Conference will be held in Nyack (Near New York) from December 8th to 12th. And it will not be a standard pastoral conference, but an All-Diaspora, with representatives from all the dioceses of our Church. The main topic will be: "The path of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in the past and future". Speakers of clergy rank from Russia will be invited. They will talk about the New Martyrs, church life in Russia and Ecumenism...

It is also planned, that before the All-Diaspora Conference and the forthcoming Council of Bishops, a hierarchical delegation of our Church will make a trip to Russia, in order to personally meet with the Patriarch Alexy. The main purpose of this meeting is to meet face to face, without a go-between, to clarify our opinion about various problems and to hear the opinion of the Patriarch. The results of this meeting will be reported to the All-Diaspora conference and the Council of Bishops"

According to the Internet publication of Vertograd (news # 383 of September 25) Metropolitan Laurus was more than happy with the results of this meeting.

A letter of Archbishop Lazarus of Odessa and Tambov of 4/17th of July 2002 addressed to Metropolitan Laurus states that Archbishop Mark (Arndt) in his interview with the "Nezavisimaya Gazeta/religii" ("Independent Newspaper on Religions) declared: "**There are no obstacles to setting up eucharistic relations with the MP. The talk is only about the conditions of autonomy of the ROCOR.**" (see the collection of documents "The Church Truth" published by Uspensky Listok, Moscow 2003, p. 35).

The most probable reason for this trip is to receive the final instructions from the future "sacred administration", how to proceed with the matter of "reunification" of the ROCOR with the MP (since there never was a union, how can the be a reunification?) so that there would be minimal disturbance among the flock abroad.

An Internet publication "Polit.ru" of September 25th has reported that, "The manager of the office of the Foreign Relations of the MP, Fr. Nicholas has hailed the meeting of Putin with the hierarchs of ROCOR. He was also on the radio "Echo of Moscow". He believed that this meeting may serve the cause of re-unification of the ROCOR with the Church in the Homeland. According to him, 'over the past 12 years the sacred administration of the MP has repeatedly addressed the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia with an appeal to establish a brotherly dialogue with no previous conditions. We are convinced that the reasons which gave birth to this separation long ago became non-existent'

According to the same report "an Archpriest of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, Michael Ardov, disagrees with this. In his opinion, the reasons for schism have not all "vanished into non-existence: The Moscow Patriarchate does not want to repent of all the terrible crimes with which she has stained her entire history – she was a church of Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and she has never condemned her servitude to the Bolsheviks." He considers the contacts of the RF President with the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad to be negative.

The clergy of the German Diocese, as well as of Denmark and Great Britain, took a first step toward union with the MP at a meeting on October 2nd and 3rd. The following document was published by the Chancery of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR (L): (translated from the Russian)

"The clergy, who have gathered from all parts of Germany, Great Britain and Denmark, greet the possibilities, which were opened by the members of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia with the President of the Russian Federation V. V. Putin and *the future steps towards rapprochement of the two parts of the Russian Church – the Moscow Patriarchate and the Church Abroad: the trip of a delegation to Moscow Patriarch Alexis II in November, the extended pastoral conference of the clergy of all dioceses of the Russian Church Abroad in December, which will make decisions concerning the further possible steps to be taken, as well as **the forthcoming visit of Metropolitan Laurus to Moscow.*** We are convinced, that during the visit of our First Hierarch to Moscow, the voice of our Church will be heard and accepted in a friendly atmosphere.

In the meeting of our First Hierarch with the RF President and his forthcoming visit to Russia, we see the realization of the decisions of the Councils of Bishops of the Church Abroad of the past decade and the limited continuation of the measures that were carried out during these years.

In the discussions the problems have been considered, which so far have prevented ecclesiastical Communion: matters of canon law, parallel structures in Russia and Abroad, historical and **real estate** matters. These problems are to be settled by common conciliar decisions. It is obvious that this process will be a complicated one. It is also obvious that within the entire Russian Church there are sufficient healthy powers, that reveal her genuine internal unity [?!].

We appeal in a brotherly spirit to all pastors of the Russian Church to actively participate in the podvig of healing the wounds, which have been brought upon the body of the Russian Church and her people. The input of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad into the treasure-house of the experience of the Russian Church, naturally, is possible only with the perseverance of her growing unity, independence and freedom".

The resolution by the pastoral Conference of the Chicago Diocese, of October 10, also published on the Internet by the Chancery of the ROCOR (L) basically little differs from the German one, although, it seems to be more definite.

After expressing total support for the Diocesan Bishop Alipy and the joy over his gradually returning health after a fall from a tree, the Conference issued the following resolution:

After being informed about the meeting of His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus and the members of the Synod of Bishops with the Russia's President V. V. Putin we thank the Lord God for these new fruitful contacts and we hope that similar contacts in the end will lead to the reconciliation of the Russian Church [emphasis by "Ch. N."].

When the Soviet power crashed down, we rejoiced. Our joy continued when we saw the spiritual revival in the Russian Land. Now we hope for the reconciliation within the Russian Church. We hope that this process will go on in stages, openly, and that the flock will be informed about what is going on, so that it will understand what and why is it happening and that there will be no fear. We trust that our hierarchs will take the necessary measures to overcome all obstacles that stand on the way of reconciliation. We express our support for His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus and the Synod of Bishops in their friendly agreement to accept the invitation of Patriarch Alexis II to visit Russia and to discuss the matter of reconciliation in the Russian Church. We believe that with the God's help our archpastors will make wise decisions and will lead us and all our flock toward our heavenly homeland. We believe that all the measures taken for the reconciliation of two parts of the Russian Church will unite all of us in the spirit of truth, faith and love" !

To sum up the results of the preparations for the meeting of Metropolitan Laurus with President Putin and the meeting itself, as well as the forthcoming meeting of the ROCOR hierarchy with the Moscow Patriarch, it is worthwhile to be reminded of a warning made by Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) to Metropolitan Vitaly on March 24/April 6, 1994, when he saw

the inevitable end of the history of the Church Abroad. After criticizing in 7 printed pages the entire direction of the Church under Metropolitan Vitaly after the repose of Metropolitan Philaret, Bishop Gregory wrote:

"It is absolutely necessary for you sharply and decisively turn the rudder of our administration in the direction of keeping the canons, before it is too late.

Do not allow, Vladyko, your name in the history of the Russian Church to be linked, not with the continuation of peaceful construction of Church life, **but with its abrupt and disgraceful destruction, both in Russia and Abroad**". Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), "Letters", Moscow 1998, p. 119).

No matter how sad it is for us to acknowledge it, the prophetic letter of Bishop Gregory to Metropolitan Vitaly has already been fulfilled before our eyes, just some 10 years after his repose!

ABOUT ROCOR (L) CONSECRATION OF BISHOP PETER (LUKIANOV)

The published details about the episcopal ordination of Bishop Peter Lukianov on July 16th in Chicago were so controversial, and partly anonymous, that our publication until now has delayed reporting about it, until it was possible to confer with particular witnesses of this event.

The official report of this consecration was made on the Internet website of the ROCOR Synod of Bishops in an article signed by Priest Seraphim Gan in which the author did not mention a single word about the scandal which occurred during this event. Knowing about it, one could make out a slight hint in the speech of Metropolitan Laurus when he presented the crosier to the newly ordained Bishop, in which he has briefly noted that, "the beginning of his episcopal service was darkened by sorrows inflicted by false brothers".

Another source of Internet information ("Otkliki") has reported that at the most important moment of the consecration, the ordained Sub-deacon Valentin Shcheglovski in a loud voice announced "anaxios", which means unworthy. Shcheglovsky was in a cassock. Two sub-deacons rushed toward him (as it happened they were the brothers of Archimandrite Peter) and dragged him out of the cathedral. In the process, Shcheglovsky suffered a dislocation of his arm and was taken to the hospital, which called the police in case the victim would like to sue the 2 sub deacons who also took his tape-recorder. After being released from the hospital, the very same Shcheglovsky in two days was back again in the hospital where it was discovered that he had two damaged neck vertebrae.

Even before the consecration, the whole episcopate was sent an accusation of the sin of sodomy, but one must think that Metropolitan Laurus has justly rejected it as an anonymous claim, because it was signed only by "the faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia".

Unfortunately, when (at that time Pavlik Lukianov) used to live in the Synod HQ as the cell attendant of Archbishop Laurus, similar rumors circulated among some employees of the Synod of Bishops, who at the same time accused him of the unlimited use of alcohol.

In August, 2003, evidence was published by Sub-deacon Valentin Shcheglovsky under the title "Anaxios and Fr. Peter (Lukianov)". We publish it with slight abbreviations. It states:

"The aim of my presence at the consecration of Archimandrite Peter was to utilize the means which the Church gives to her members to secure and prove the fitness of the selected candidates for the episcopacy. I believed, as I believe also now, that I was acting sufficiently carefully, since prior to the consecration I used all possible means to bring attention to the matter of the fitness of Fr. Peter. For some time before the ordination, believers addressed the Synod with expressions of concerns and fear about the fitness of Fr. Peter as a candidate, taking into account some matters regarding his amorality and his behavior and personality. On several occasions I talked with these people, including clergy, who had personal information or experience regarding the moral short-comings of Fr. Peter, which they evaluated as sufficient proof to disqualify the candidate for consecration. Some members of the Church, hoping that there would be an investigation that would lead to the selection of a suitable candidate, have expressed to the Synod their apprehensions in order to assist in securing a high level of quality in the hierarchy. Nevertheless, there were absolutely no measures taken for a formal – not to speak of an open – investigation to verify the truthfulness of the accusations against the person of Fr. Peter. As far as I know, witnesses were not called, testimony was not taken and there was no report or information of administrative proceedings regarding the matter which were considered to be rumor or gossip. I, like many others, hoped that a formal investigation would follow in order to defend the dignity of the Church (from those, who are unworthy to lead her flock) or of Fr. Peter himself, (in case the accusations against him proved false). However, during all these developments, believers were not presented with any sort of announcement or declaration that would dispel their concerns regarding the qualifications of Fr. Peter. But, after the consecration, on several occasions we were given to understand that all the sins of Fr. Peter were forgiven at the sacrament of Confession before his ordination...

When it became obvious that his consecration would be performed regardless, there appeared also another consideration. The most important was the lack of unanimity among the bishops regarding the selection of Fr. Peter as a candidate for episcopal rank. It seems that the suggestion of the candidacy of Fr. Peter did not result in a unanimous agreement of all the bishops. Several hierarchs found him to be an unfit candidate. It is possible that this is normal; it is possible that there are often disagreements about a candidate to episcopal rank. However, taking into consideration the apprehensions which have been expressed by some bishops, this should be a reason enough to postpone or temporarily revoke this selection, until there would be enough proof that he is a worthy candidate.

As a reaction to the resulting situation, I was present at the consecration and utilized my right to publicly express my conviction that this candidate is not worthy to become a bishop.

Minneapolis, Minnesota".

On August 19th /September 2003, Sub-deacon Valentin Shcheglovsky once again wrote to Metropolitan Laurus and copies of his letter again were sent to the entire episcopate. In it there was a report about the assault of Fr. Peter in 1993 of the Seminary Student D. V. Sheebayev and as a proof there was included an audio cassette and a cd to illustrate the attack of the then Hieromonk Peter against this student.

One must think that this was not an isolated case, if it was a possible to make a recording of such a case!

Sub-deacon Shcheglovsky wrote his appeals to the hierarchy in a quite polite and respectful manner. He was at times an altar servant of Archbishop Gregory of Chicago and later a very close colleague of Archbishop Seraphim (Ivanov) and his right hand man in organizing the diocesan youth and the summer camp for them.

Despite all of this, the Synod of Bishops, at its session from September 2 to 4, 2003, considered it necessary to publish in the Internet the following resolution:

"Due to some Internet statements regarding the ordination of His Grace Peter, the Bishop of Cleveland, the Synod of Bishops declares: Before the nomination and before the ordination of His Grace Peter, The Synod of Bishops has thoroughly and with all responsibility inspected the life-long path and the ecclesiastical development of the candidate. Upon hearing of some reproaches, the Synod of Bishops became acquainted with all the circumstances and has not found any obstacles to the consecration. (Emphasis by "Ch. N")

"The Synod of Bishops declares that it is unimaginable for us to make any compromises regarding the moral purity and the spiritual stand about positions of the Orthodox purity of the candidates for sacred orders, even more so, about a member of the Council of Bishops. We held to this principle in the past and will hold to it in the future".

From a letter of Archpriest Victor Potapov, published on the Internet on July 5th and addressed to "Fathers and Brethren" is obvious that, "Before the consecration, bishops, clergy and lay people were calling and writing to Metropolitan Laurus, pleading with him to revoke the consecration. Their pleas were ignored. In a letter which I sent him by fax, several days before the consecration, I tried persuading His Eminence to convene the opponents of Fr. Peter and together hear them. I said, that if it becomes clear that they are lying, the Synod of Bishops might and should punish them according to church regulations. I did not receive an answer".

Fr. Potapov quite properly testifies that, "since the sacrament of Consecration continued despite the exclamation of 'anaxios', this seriously generates doubts as to its canonical value".

Independent of all this, when the question was raised of the possible consecration of Fr. Peter (Lukianov) during the tenure of Metropolitan Vitaly, at that time not only he himself, but also several bishops were against it. And according to the letter of Fr. Potapov, at present there are 5 bishops against the consecration and 1 abstention. This is actually half of the ROCOR episcopate!

Not considering the moral "qualities" of this new bishop of the Church Abroad, it is very characteristic who were guests present at this ordinations. It is not in vain that the Russian popular wisdom has rephrased St. John Damascene and says: "Tell me who are your friends and I will tell, who you are".

As friends of Bishop Peter present in the cathedral were: Bishop Job, a hierarch of the OCA (which received its autocephaly from the MP), a rector of a holding in Moscow of the same Church, Zakhey (Wood), representatives of the Serbian Church, representatives of the MP and "representatives of other Local Churches".

It seems that important representatives of the new "global Orthodoxy" came for this event!

NEW CRIMES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGAINST ROAC

In the latest issue of Suzdal's "Diocesan Herald" (# 15) the crimes committed against the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, that have not been investigated even once by the local administration were listed, as well as the documentation of the authorities' shameful "judgment" against the First Hierarch, Metropolitan Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir. In it there were also published xeroxes of repentance letters written by those who have slandered Metropolitan Valentin.

During the year 2001 (from May to December) there were 26 cases of vandalism, arson, desecration of churches. During May only there were 7 of them! And this -- in Suzdal only...

In 2002 -- there were 39 such cases, while beginning with January 7th (Christmas day) to the end of May, there were 8, not counting two new arsons in Suzdal set in September!

From the Suzdal administration we have received a "list of ROAC communities, which the local authorities, at the instigation of the ROC (MP) have systematically refused to register, grant permits to build a church, buy a church building and, in general, are a part of various obstacles".

There are 20 such cases and the number of them is growing fast.

On August 3rd, at 4:30 AM in Suzdal in the immediate proximity to the Synod House a metal hangar was set on fire (which contained 12 tons of heating fluid and wooden boards) as well as the garage of the Placing of the Garment Convent on Vasilievskaya Street. This is already the second fire in this convent. In the building next to the hangar, which serves as a hostel for visiting clergy and pilgrims, at the time of fire there were Bishop Ambrose, several monastics and among this group two children: 7 and 9 years old!

Risking their lives (until the firemen arrived) Protodeakon Vladimir Nonchin and Archpriest Nicholas Novoselov tried to extinguish the fire. They managed to pull one of the cars out of the burning hangar, while pouring water on the other.

On the feast of Exaltation of the Cross, (for the 10th time), there were painted with obnoxious inscriptions about the First Hierarch, from top to bottom of the church of the New Martyrs and a little church/chapel of the Znamenskoye Cemetery. And on the next night, in the convent of Placing of the Garment on Vasiliyevskaya street, there were broken windows of the hall in which there are held the lectures of the ecclesiastical courses. Called militia has **refused** to come and act upon this case.

However, according to Internet Vertograd information of October 9th, "On October 6th 2003 there was a meeting of Mayor of Suzdal, Mt. A. Y. Ryzhov with the representative of the Suzdal diocese of the ROAC, Archbishop of Borisovo and Sanino. The Mayor expressed his concern about the continuing situation of the churches and buildings belonging to the ROAC. During the conversation, the Mayor stressed that in democratic Russia the freedom of religion is guaranteed, that the ROAC is officially registered and has the right to be defended by the law. (However, until now, the same Mr. Ryzhov was never concerned about defending the legal rights of the ROAC!)

The Suzdal Mayor has declared that the blasphemous inscriptions upon the churches are made by the powers which are hostile toward the town and are destabilizing the peaceful life of the residents. He also noted that he has nothing to do with the criminal organization "Our Cause", to which there are ascribed not only sacrilegious acts and excesses toward the ROAC, but *also spreading leaflets with material undermining the authority of Suzdal's Mayor.* (!)

The Mayor has promised that he will take measures to expel this organization from the town's vicinity. The blasphemous inscriptions on the walls of New Martyr's Church and St. Vladimir's chapel will be painted over at the municipal cost!

It seems, "no evil comes without also some good" (a Russian proverb) and it is quite possible that the Mayor is mainly concerned by the attacks against himself and now hopes to get some sympathetic support on part of the rather visible in Suzdal ROAC flock!

This does not prevent the Mayor of the town from unexpectedly demanding that the ROAC pays taxes and fines (amounting to several tens of thousands of dollars for the land upon which stand numerous churches, which were restored from ruins by the diocese.

Under immediate threat is presently a very beautiful and big church dedicated the St. Equal to Apostles, Grand Duchess Olga in Zheleznovodsk, which was built in 1989 by the efforts of the Novakovsky family, three brothers of which are priests in this parish, which at that time belonged to the MP. The former local bishop of the Patriarchate, Gideon, was in advanced age, knew the Novakovsky family long ago and didn't create any kind of trouble for them, even when the family in 1992 left the MP and joined ROAC under Metropolitan Valentin. However, shortly after the aged Moscow hierarch died a few months ago Bishop Theophan (Ashoorkov) was appointed.

According to Vertograd information of September 29th (#384) "Bishop Theophan (a former deputy for commercial matters of Metropolitan Kyrill Goondiayev) was appointed to this diocese just a few months ago and has already threatened the parishioners of St. Olga's church with "litigation". At the same time, the Mayor of Zheleznovodsk Anatole Zoubov, according to Vertograd's information of October 10th in his decree #891, dated October 3, has revoked the land upon which the church of St. Olga parish of ROAC stands. "The plot was assigned to the parish in 1993. It seems that the Mayor plans to participate in the seizure of the church and handing it over to the MP through Bishop Theophan... The rector of the church, Archpriest Anatole Novakovsky will defend the right for this land in the court. Meanwhile the parish is ready for a long siege. In no way is the parish going to give up its rights. It is to be expected that in the near future through the efforts of the Zhelesnovodsk Mayor and the bishop of the MP there will be a "fight for the church" in this previously peaceful town.

During his archpastoral visit to the Northern Caucasus in the beginning of September and, of course, also Zheleznovodsk, the First Hierarch of the ROAC Metropolitan Valentin was met by a group of parishioners and a mighty male choir of the church which sang "It is meet and right..." in Georgian.

The Metropolitan in his short speech to the parishioners present said that the reason for his visit is to offer the parish his support in the fight for her very existence and that if matters become sufficiently dangerous, asks them to inform him of this and he would come to share with the parish her dangers and difficulties.

On several occasions Bishop Theophan tried to enter the church in order "to speak to the people", but was refused. However, he managed to get inside once, and after that the church was blessed again according to rite of "re-consecration".

There were several attempts made to get in touch with the Novakovsky family by the representative of Bishop Theophan, the deputy abbot of the New Athos Monastery, Fr. Siluan. He plainly said: "Vladyka has such connections that he may come to you with the OMON and OMON will throw you off the ambo". (OMON is para-military militia)

One can say: it is rather open threat on part of the Moscow Patriarchate! Yet all fathers Novakovskys are extremely brave people, they are generations long residents of the Caucasus and the parish is strongly supports them. This parish is big enough to have two choirs: male and female and therefore, the fight against the MP for this church will be a very intensive and long one.

ARSON IN THE ST. VLADIMIR CHURCH IN DAUGAVPILS (LATVIA)

On the feast of Dormition of Holy Virgin (August 28th) at 5 AM the St. Vladimir cathedral in Daugavpils (Dvinsk) was set on fire -- a major city in "democratic" Latvia. According to Archbishop Victor, he was awakened by screams of a woman neighbor, who let him know that the building was on fire. Vladyka was on the second floor. To get out of the building was extremely difficult, since the roof and the stairway leading to the second floor were already on fire. Archbishop Victor was saved by the firemen who arrived at the building and on their stairway, with assistance of neighbors he was able to get to the ground. But by the time help arrived the hands of the Archbishop were burned and he had to go to the hospital.

As a result of this arson (two containers were found, one empty and one still filled with gasoline) --the Archbishop's quarters, dining room and all the diocesan office were totally burned. The church suffered least.

The criminals managed to throw the gasoline directly into the window of the second floor.

A while before the arson, Vladyka Victor informed the authorities that "over the past two months he received several threats in connection with the activity of his Church. These people called themselves Christians. In both cases the police were informed", but there was no action on their part.

According to information given by Archbishop Victor, "Just a day before some (people) came who threatened: 'Get out of here while you are still alive; we will get rid of you in any way'".

To this arson against the center of the ROAC in Latvia a number of Russian newspapers responded. All of them call the Archbishop "Father", some have written that he was "defrocked by the Latvian Orthodox Church (read MP), excommunicated or "has excluded himself from the Church".

One of the newspapers (seemingly not too sympathetic toward the MP) has reported that "Metropolitan Alexander Kudriashev is ready to annihilate all, who wish to be Orthodox, but beyond his authority. He is afraid not of the word 'Orthodoxy' itself, but of the possibility of losing rental money from real estate. Therefore, he and his friends invent all sorts of terrors for those who do have a conscience and are of different convictions".

A Daugavpils weekly newspaper "Glas Naroda" ("Voice of the People") of September 11, 2003 in # 37 (250) has published Archbishop Victor's letter to the editors. In it he writes:

"The animals were afraid of God, but the killers and their employers in the crime of arson on August 28th against the St. Vladimir's church are even more monstrous.

"There is no normal soul of a sane person that would not tremble at such vandalism. During these difficult moments, some often ask me: who could draw the sword of inhumanity against the holy of the holiest -- the Church? The answer is plain: certainly the terrible beast, Satan in the form of a human being. However, the criminals made a mistake: God is never profaned. Luckily, the Holy Virgin has sent the servant of God, Nataly Bogdanov and his pious family, as kinds of guardian angels, to save the Archbishop from the fiery snake. Orthodoxy often provides examples of nobility and self-denial. The firemen were working under extremely difficult conditions and prevented part of the church property from total destruction. The church services will continue, despite the war-like conditions. Our misfortune has united the believers even more: they are not going to step aside before killers -- they are not scared.

"A deep bow to the neighbors of the local houses, who in such an early hour manifested special Christian brotherly love and care -- bravely carrying out icons, church garments and equipment from the Orthodox Church engulfed in fire.

"With the tears in my eyes I saw people of different ages and different faiths and nationalities carefully saving the Orthodox objects of worship. The truthful information about the extraordinary event -- the punishment of the church building and attempted murder of the head of the Church, which was made at that troublesome time -- was also of great importance. A deep bow to the weekly newspaper "Seichas" Anatole Vavinsky, George Dunaisky and journalist Ivars of the "Latgales Laiks" who have objectively and justly informed their readers about the arson of an Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, one unimportant newspaper has used human misery and troubles to throw a bucket of rotten slops.

"The parishioners and clergy of the St. Vladimir church have faith the Lord will grant them strength to restore the house of prayer with help of decent Christian people for the Glory of God.

"With a deep bow to the Daugavpils resident Victor, Archbishop of Daugavpils and Latvia".

Archbishop Victor has appealed to the State Duma asking for assistance in restoring the Diocesan building. Unfortunately, he received the following answer, signed by the President of Duma, R. Strode:

"In connection with the difficult situation with the budget of the town of Daugavpils, we are unable to give you a material support to restore the building after the fire.

We express a deep regret about this event and suggest that you appeal to the business men of the town or other organizations to help you".

His Eminence Archbishop Victor has enclosed a leaflet in which the information is given how to forward donations through a member of the Diocesan Council:

Ina Grigorieva

Baltic Transit Bank, Daugavpils branch. Account # 01030668345 LATVIA

LV- 5403 Daugavpils. Rainia St. 24: Tel. (+371) 542 11 11; Fax (+371) 540 75 95 S.W.I.F.T.: BATR LV 2 X

DECLARATION OF METROPOLITAN VITALY ROCOR (V)

The Internet publication Vertograd/news # 376 has published the following declaration of Metropolitan Vitaly:

"The following news has reached me: that there continue to be published references on the Internet that the organization headed by Archbishop Lazarus is under my omophorion and this continues to deceive our flock.

This forces me to remind all about numerous resolutions of the ROCOR in which it is clearly stated that by their schismatic acts the Right Reverend Lazarus and Benjamin and those with them have placed themselves outside the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

Due to persistent ignoring of this position of the ROCOR by Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin to this day, I officially declare that they do not have the right to cover themselves with my name and to state on the website "under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly".

Signature + Metropolitan Vitaly

St. Vladimir, Equal to the Apostles, July 15/28, 2003

FRICTION BETWEEN ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE AND THE CHURCH OF ARCHBISHOP CHRISTODULOS

The Greek newspaper "National Herald" (English edition) of September 20-21 published information that there is major friction between the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios and the head of Greek Thessalonica, Archbishop Christodulos. The newspaper published two articles regarding this matter, one by Theodore Kalmoukos, "Patriarch Threatens to Quit over Squabble," and another by Prof. Kousoulos, "When Push Comes to Shove..."

The conflict started over the appointment of a new bishop for the so-called New Lands, due to the repose of Metropolitan Panteleimon.

These are territories which were liberated from Turkey during the Balkan Wars and until 1928 were under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Due to a complicated political situation, Patriarch Vasilios IV asked the Autocephalous Greek Church to "temporarily" minister this territory. But now Patriarch Bartholomew who strongly holds on to every single parish under his jurisdiction suddenly, after a period of 75 years, decided to stop the "temporary" condition and demanded that Christodulos begin to commemorate him and requested that he send him a list of candidates in order to replace the reposed hierarch. It seems that to mock him, the secretary of Archbishop Christodulos has sent Bartholomew a list of 350 archimandrites and 12 vicar bishops, but not for the appointment of candidates, but "for information". With the list was enclosed a letter explaining the state of the autocephalous Church.

Instead of directly answering the letter of Archbishop Christodulos, Bartholomew wrote a letter to the Greek prime-minister, asking him to intervene in this problem. The letter was handed to the Metropolitan of Pergamum Ioannis with the request to deliver it to Premier Costas Simis, but it became known to the newspaper "The Investor's World," before it reached the Prime-minister! The fact that a confidential letter was published by the press has created a panic within the Patriarchy.

The letter said: "As Your Excellency already knows, the relationship between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Greece is in crisis. The consequences of this crisis may prove to be extremely serious for the Greek people and Hellenism as whole". Concluding this letter, the Patriarch wrote: "This crisis existed in silence for a long time, since Archbishop Christodulos attempted in different ways to attach the Eparchies of the so-called New Lands, which through Patriarchal Decision of 1928 were temporarily given to the Church of Greece under specific terms".

The prime suspect of leaking the Patriarchal letter to the prime-minister is Metropolitan Ioannis, who was the main rival of Christodulos in the elections for head of the Greek Church.

The "New Lands" consist of a number of tiny islands and make up 36 dioceses of the Greek Church in the northern part of Greece.

At a meeting of his Synod, Bartholomew declared that: "if the Synod believes that we should back down, then it should elect another Patriarch who will go down in history as the one who gave up the rights and the privileges of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. I do not wish to take a pass on such a matter during my patriarchy".

The Synod has unanimously supported the Patriarch.

AN EXAMPLE OF AMBITION

The newspaper "Russian Courier" of August 22nd, 2003 (#76) published on its first page a curious story and a photograph of Patriarch Alexis Ridiger with the caption: "Only do not dress me in a uniform". On this photograph Ridiger is taking off his patriarchal cowl. And the story is as follows:

Two artists, Kalinin and Bogdanov, decided to imitate the idea of the famous painter Repin, who created a huge painting "The Festive Meeting of the State Council", with the only difference that the contemporary Russian politicians will be in it and in the place in the original where the Emperor was depicted -- will be Putin instead!

The artists applied much effort to advertise their project and even a competition was declared on TV with the offer to the public to vote for their favorites. The painting is to have 89 persons and will be 4x9 meters in size. Besides Putin, there are already 24 names of persons who have agreed to pose for the artists and it is said that "the Russians want to see in this painting Prime-minister Kassianov and two government speakers of the Federal Conference, Seleznev and Mironov, also Yavlinsky and Zhirinovskiy and even the President's adviser Ilarionov". However, the persons who will appear in the painting, without any exceptions, have to come personally to the studio. From the number of politicians who were invited to be depicted on the future painting, only Gorbachev has refused. The painting is supposed to be ready in November or December of the current year.

Of course, the artists also wanted to have the Patriarch – Ridiger “Drozdov” in their painting, while in Repin’s original there are no hierarchs! Nevertheless, the Patriarch was informed of such a plan and, to the great surprise of the artists, quite unexpectedly, they received his invitation to come to the patriarchal residence of Chisty Pereulok.

Patriarch came out to them in a black rassa and the white patriarchal cowl, and according to the newspaper, “he sat down in the armchair and obediently posed for photographers”. The Patriarch thanked the artists and said: “Thank you for coming here by yourselves – I could not get out to your studio” and with a smile he warned them: “Just do not take it into your heads to dress me in a uniform!” Then the Patriarch asked to interrupt the photo session for a while, took off his cowl, pulled out a small comb, combed his hair and the photographing continued.

The artists were very excited and just kept saying: “saint, saint!”

Now the artists have to decide in what spot to paint the “saintly Patriarch”.

**SERMON ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF GLORIFICATION OF ST. SERAPHIM
BY FR. MICHAEL ARDOV
(delivered on July 21/August 3, 2003)**

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In 1984 I, already being a priest, undertook with my friends a trip to Visha, the very same monastery in which lived the ascetic Venerable Theophan the Recluse. When we have arrived there, we were startled by what is called in the Holy Scripture: “the abomination and desolation in the holy place” (Math. 24: 15): in the quarters of the former place of piety there was a psychiatric ward. In the court there were walking unfortunate people in dirty clothes... It was autumn and the terrible stink of rotten cabbage was all around... Besides, one of the buildings was used for the so-called “violent department”. It had bars on the windows and from there one heard vulgar songs and dirty profanities...

During this so memorable trip, I formulated for myself a law regarding the spiritual life. If the Lord, for any reason abandons some place that was famous for its sanctity, then Satan inevitably gets into it and makes a former sanctuary become the subject of especially violent profanation. And, the more holy such a place was, then the more terrible and repulsive is the “abomination and desolation”.

Why did I recall this today? Because several days earlier, we could see on TV what happened in the once beautiful Sarov Monastery in which at one time lived the ascetic St. Seraphim. And exactly 100 years ago, the most pious Tsar Nicholas II, the heavenly protector of our Church, participated in this great feast – the discovery of the relics of this servant of God...

Let us recall the fate of this monastery during the XXth century. Like all other monasteries, it was ruined by the theomachists, and the relics of the Saint stolen and hidden. Then something even more terrible happened. After the World War, Stalin, who aimed to subject the whole world under himself, needed nuclear weapons. His nearest collaborator, one of his main executioners – Beria – received the order to organize the production of atomic and nuclear bombs. And unfortunately, the Sarov Monastery, in particular, was selected as a central place, where these terrible weapons were to be produced. What used to be a holy place – became a secret one, the scientists were brought, the secret police, soldiers and prisoners were herded in... The monastery buildings were partly destroyed, partly remodeled; laboratories and reactors were built... And the name itself “Sarov” was forbidden, forgotten – there appeared a new code name – “Arzamas 16”.

As we know, finally the atom and the nuclear bombs were created... The miserable patriots for whom Stalin’s tyranny remains an acceptable form of government say even today: “Our country could not have existed without such a weapon; it was a nuclear shield”. There is a certain truth to this: due to the fact that such an arsenal of nuclear bombs existed in the USSR and the USA – a Third World War was avoided. This horrible weapon, glory be to God, was not used by the Communists against the Americans or Europeans... But instead, on the orders of a monstrously cruel man – Marshal Zhoukov, the very same, whom the patriots so overrate – ordered the nuclear bomb be tried on Soviet soldiers... Some of these miserable creatures are still alive and even now, they receive no compensation for the terrible crime committed against them. This is with what is connected the history of the Sarov Monastery.

Now, regarding the most recent official celebrations of the centennial of the opening of the relics of St. Seraphim. From the Christian point of view, what happened when the physics scientists and the secret police guarding them were busy with their secret work. Those, at least, didn’t hide that they were atheists and did not pretend to be believers.

During the past week, the Patriarch with his bishops, the President with his clerks, guests from abroad, and crowds of the curious, and Muslims, and God knows who else, came to “Arzamas 16” (my tongue is not able to pronounce the word “Sarov”)... Meanwhile, a person who calls himself a patriarch, honestly speaking, should not come there. At the worst, he could bless a clergyman to open a church – but would be impossible to hold pompous celebrations in the place, that was so terribly desecrated by the theomachists. Even more so, because the true Christians, the simple pilgrims were not able to get there. It was necessary to get a special permits from the very same secret police...

Unfortunately, the Patriarch does not burden his head with such considerations. He also used to visit “Arzamas 16” previously and didn’t find anything better to do but to be photographed next to the model of the first Soviet atomic bomb. I saw this photograph that was published in one of the newspapers.

From what was shown during the past week on the TV – was this scene: the President rewards decorations to two clergymen. The senior of them is Metropolitan Philaret (Vakhromeyev) of Minsk and Slutsk and he said that he is “serving

the Russian people, the nation, as well as the state of Russia-Belorussia". He did not even mention that he serves God. The President did it for him. So this hierarch has publicly violated God's command which forbids one to make idols and warns: "Do not venerate them and do not serve them".

We, with you, glory be to God, have nothing to do with the Moscow Patriarchate. And the feast which they have so sacrilegiously celebrated, strictly speaking, does not belong to them – it is our feast. Not least because we with you stand in a church dedicated to the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas, according to whose wish the glorification of St. Seraphim was done and who, in his time was present at the feast in Sarov.

And let the flattering Patriarchate bishops publicly kiss the thieves of state property in "Arzamas 16", or what is even worse in the Moscow Kremlin, let them sound the trumpets all over the world about the supposed "spiritual revival" in our unfortunate Homeland... On their absurd feast even the mullahs are present. (It was reported: after the moleben, Putin stepped aside to talk to the "Muslim clergy"). Let us imagine how St. Seraphim would react to such an assemblage...

I might be approached: the relics of St. Seraphim are laid out in the Patriarchal monastery in Diveyevo. But this should not be overestimated. We know that to the Catholics, whom we consider to be heretics, also belong many relics of God's Saints this does not add to the papists either grace nor truth. The history teaches us that often sacred objects are in captivity in the hands even of the theomachists

Alas, let us stay away as much as possible from the Moscow Patriarchate, and even more so, from their crafty thieving (I do not shun these words) hierarchs. Let us imitate the Psalmist who in Old Testament times announced: "I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked" (Ps. 26: 5)

PRIEST OF MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE "MARRIES" TWO HOMOSEXUALS

A priest of the Moscow Patriarchate from Nizhny Novgorod, Vladimir Enert has married two males: Denis Glagolev and Michael Morozov for a price of 15,000 rubles (about \$500). This event has created a such sensation that the respond came even from the Swiss newspaper "International Herald Tribune" in an article of September 10th. It is self understood, that there were numerous reactions in the Russian Press as well as on the Internet to this scandalous event.

The "wedding" was performed on September 1st in one of the Nizhny Novgorod's chapels. According to the newspaper "The Moscow Komsomolets" of September 9th, this priest is known to be a money-grubber and also belongs to the group of "birds of passage". Bishop George of Nizhny Novgorod and Arzamas immediately suspended Fr. Enert.

In a reflection to this event, published in the Internet publication of "Mir Religii/Sobytiya" (The World of Religions/Events) – the Deputy President of the Foreign Relations of the MP Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin said in the radio translation "Echo of Moscow" that the period for which the priest Enert is suspended – is not known and that such decisions are made by the Sacred Synod, all depends on the situation. "It happens that a punishment can be applied for a certain period of time, it happens it can be without a time [?!]. It happens often that after repentance, when a certain time has passed, this punishment is lifted and the priest is permitted to serve again. In this particular case it is not known how much time will be served as a punishment".

It seems, that Fr. Chaplin has no idea that the suspension of a priest is not at all "punishment" for a committed crime, but a temporary measure forbidding an unworthy priest to serve until there is an investigation of the accusation. The canons of the Ecumenical Councils and the ecclesiastical administration rules do not know of any kind of "without a time" suspension from serving at the altar!

We happened to see a video made of the TV "duel" between one of these perverts and Fr. Michael Makeyev – the assistant rector of the Golovinskoye Cemetery St. Tsar Nicholas II Church in Moscow.

From this duel it is obvious, that both men, besides being perverts, also wanted the publicity to get votes for the post of deputies in the Duma.

Fr. Michael has definitely won this verbal "duel"!

MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND CATHOLICS

The matter of a visit to Russia by the Pope is being raised relatively often. The Pope does not hide that this visit is the dream of his life. At the same time, President Putin has on several occasions publicly declared that he would welcome the visit of the Catholic leader to Russia, but would not do it over the head of the Moscow Patriarchate. However, it is quite clear that behind the scenes, there are going on the negotiations between the Catholics and the Patriarchate.

The Internet edition of the newspaper Nezavisinaya Gazeti/Religii (Independent Newspapers/Religions) published on October 1st an article by Oleg Nedumov in which it is reported that "Patriarch Alexis II during the past week has appealed to the Roman Pope John Paul II to condemn Catholic proselytism on Russian territory. 'We do not speak of a censure of the Unia, although the Unia has practically destroyed our dioceses in the Western-Ukrainian regions. Nevertheless, at least the proselytism is to be censured'... Without realistic results, the meeting with the Pope has no sense. I do not want the meeting to happen before the TV cameras, which would bring no results at all. In is necessary to speak of some specific matters, and in the first place of proselytism".

The author of this article comes to the conclusion that at present the Moscow Patriarch actually has renounced the possibility to take back the property of the Russian Church which was grabbed by the Catholics and insists only upon the

matter of Catholic propaganda. Alas, this is one of the main characteristics of the Roman Catholicism, which they will never renounce.

The Author also stresses that, "Until now, the Russian Church has steadfastly insisted upon the fulfillment of both conditions (the return of property and the discontinuation of proselytism). However at present, judging from the words of the Patriarch, the Vatican is just expected to condemn proselytism on Russian canonical territory. In this way, the position of the Moscow Patriarchate becomes much more realistic... So, that by declining of one of the previous conditions, the Moscow Patriarchate made a gesture of the good will toward the Vatican, while not losing on her own part".

Judging by the Catholic press, the health of the present Pope is so threatened that there is already open talk about who might be his successor, so it is very doubtful that the Papal dream of visiting Russia will come true.

ABOUT THE "SPIRITUAL REVIVAL" IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA

The Moscow Patriarchate does miss a chance to sound its trumpet about the "spiritual revival" in Russia, which very much reminds one of the early 40's, when to lure the naïve, the Patriarchate, especially Metropolitan Nicholas Yarushevich tried to persuade the world that the Church was now free and "the Homeland has forgiven them and is waiting" for their return.

One can decisively state that during the last decade of official freedom for the Church, the Moscow Patriarchate has used it only for the enrichment of her hierarchy and the capital's clergy, and what concern for the preaching of Orthodoxy in the spiritual field devastated by the Communists' -- no missionary work is visible. Even more, on several occasions there was published information in the Russian newspapers that many Russian clergy refuse to teach the Law of God to children in the parish schools, because they were not paid for it!

It is quite natural that due to negligent pastors the "weeds" have grown out of proportion.

The Internet publication "Mir Religii/Sobytia" ("The World of Religion/Events") has reported that the number of "Jehovah Witnesses in Russia is growing".

According to a report made by this harmful sect, located in Brooklyn, USA, the total number of these sectarians in 2002 has grown by 2.8% and the general total of this sect throughout the world is now at 6 and a half million members! Unfortunately, this sect has gained 6% in Russia. At present, there are in Russia no less than 131 thousand of these sectarians, not counting Ukraine and Belorussia.

The very same publication of August 12 has reported that the Japanese sect "Acum Shinriki" has more members in Russia, than in Japan itself. After the attack made by the members of this sect in Japan on March, 1995, when more than 5,400 people were hurt, this sect was forbidden in Russia, but, nevertheless, nothing stops its harmful activity

RUSSIA BECOMES THE CENTER OF THE JEWISH WORLD

Such was the title of an article in "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" ("Independent Newspaper") of October 9 # 191, published on the 2nd page, when informing its readers that the Chief Rabbi of Israel Yona Metzger came to visit Russia. As the newspaper reports, "Previously, Metzger, accompanied by the president of the Federation of Jewish communities in the SNG, Levy Levayev and the main rabbi of Russia Berl Lazar, visited Kiev. He was attending there a festive reception because of installation of the first main rabbi in the history of Ukraine-- the very important Brussels Rabbi Ariel Haykin.

After arriving in Russia, the main rabbi of Israel met with the Berl Lazar and the Mayor of Moscow Luzhkov, as well as the speaker of the State Duma (Parliament) Seleznev. He has also visited several Jewish schools in Moscow.

During the day, there was a business meeting of rabbis who have arrived in Russia from abroad in order to work in the Russian Federation, and in the evening at the Jewish community center in the "Maryina Roshcha" (grove) there was a festive banquet in honor of Metzger. Also present was the Israeli Ambassador.

According to the newspaper the "main purpose of Metzger's visit was to strengthen relations among the Jewish communities in Russia and Israel, as well as widening primarily the spiritual and humanitarian relationships between the two countries. It is the very first instance of a visit to Moscow of the maim Ashkenazi rabbi of Israel and his first trip after the inauguration".

One cannot but note that history over the past decade has moved to a previously unthinkable side...

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS

(Letter to Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco, October 19/November 1, 1974)

Your Eminence, Dear Vladyko!

Yesterday I received your letter and rush to thank you for it.

I was indeed very much aggrieved that it was namely from your side that I have met with misunderstanding. I believed that since you have known me for so many years, you would also know that I do not have any personal ambitions. I always try to think and act in the interest of the Church and I do everything possible to be objective. Since I do not hide my opinions, at times I do disagree also with the Metropolitans and some particular bishops, and with Fr. Anthony. Regarding the last, I know more closely the difficulties with which he has to deal and, in general, the whole situation in Jerusalem. Not knowing it, and without considering the East and the character of the Jews, his methods sometimes are misunderstood. The more dangerous are conclusions and acts made with trust in a slanderer who in his anger doesn't

think of the consequences to the Church, no matter how much Archimandrites Dimitry and Modest with the abbesses tried to persuade him. However, I have never had an unfriendly feeling toward those who criticized him and I was sincerely sorry for poor departed Denke. The Lord preserves me from such feelings also toward my direct enemies. Maybe I am helped in this matter because I never did any harm to any one of them and therefore, their enmity I consider to be not a personal one, so much as a form of struggle against our Church.

Pardon me, but I have had the impression that in your actions against me there was a desire to win over enemies of the Synod by throwing them some sort of a bone. However, I could not see any good purpose in that. But no undermining of me would satisfy any of our enemies, because they look to totally annihilate me, so that after myself they could select another target, as happens in all revolutionary movements.

Such enmity against myself I accept as a natural phenomenon in the struggle against our Church. One of the methods is to generate an impression of odiousness of the more visible leaders, using any kind of excuse. But in fact, if we speak of my "unpopularity," often I have gained enemies because of odium against me for fulfilling some of the orders of the Metropolitan.

The trust in me by the First Hierarchs, well known among all, makes some believe that any decision unpleasant for them is a result of my evil influence. Thus the authority of the leadership's directives are undermined. At the same time, considering the presence of intrigues by secret agents of the KGB, it is very important for us, all of us, who are part of the administration to be united, sometimes even to cover for the external sins or errors of each other. This is the way I try to act. Only to the First Hierarch himself do I express unreservedly what I think when I believe that he is making an error, and, thank God, he takes it equably.

Alas, I will openly admit that I was very saddened when I was misunderstood by you. The more do I appreciate and am touched by your letter which clears up everything. I heartily thank you for this and ask your pardon if there is any fault on my part. I am very happy that the conflict among us has been resolved.

Asking for your holy prayers, I remain the devoted servant of your Eminence,
Protopresbyter George Grabbe

A Memorandum of Bishop Gregory to Metropolitan Vitaly, 8/21 February, 1995

To the President of the Synod of Bishops
Of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia
His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly

MEMORANDUM of Bishop Gregory

I consider it my duty to present again my complaint to the Synod of Bishops regarding the violation of rules concerning my position as a bishop of the Church Abroad.

According to the paragraph 8 of the Statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, "All hierarchs belonging to the Russian Church Abroad are members of the Council of Bishops".

It seems it would be just natural to inform them of regulations of Synods and Councils, as well as informing them about proposed ordinations, so that they could participate in them if physically possible, but at any case to give them an opportunity to express their opinion about the candidates. Meanwhile, I was not informed at all about the candidacy and even the consecration of Bishop Yevtikhy. Nor did I hear that there is in view another ordination, but also about that one I have no received neither a question about my agreement, or any information at all.

The episcopate of every Church constitutes a sort of brotherhood, from which any one of us might be excluded only on account of some canonical crime. I didn't commit such, but have served the Church Abroad for nearly 55 years.

I ask the Synod of Bishops to correct this canonical situation and to inform me in the future about any candidates for the episcopacy with the enclosure of their biography.

Synod of Bishop's humble servant,
+Bishop Gregory

This complaint, as became customary for the Synod of Bishops, remained unanswered.

Letter of Bishop Gregory to Bishop Mark of October 27/November 9, 1990

Your Grace, Death Vladyko!

Thank you for your letter of October 17/30. Maybe I would agree with you were it not for the pitiful situation in which our brethren in Russia are and which is described in the letter by Vladyka Metropolitan (no date). I do have, besides correspondence with Moscow, now also telephone connections. I do see that the action against us, supported by the Patriarchate and (secretly) by the KGB, has noticeably increased. Our people there simply will be unable to withstand the attack, without a leader in place. At present, the Patriarchate, in addition to the actions of KGB has added quite a major resolution of a polemical nature against our Church. A provocation has been directed at the very same, which by mistake was published with no reservations in the pages of "Pravoslavnaya Rus" (# 20, October 15/28).

Now, here there was received a long publication against us from the Moscow Patriarchate. If not today, then tomorrow I will receive this document. In the face of action supported by the government instigated by the Moscow Patriarchate our people over there have no leader.

If Vladyka Metropolitan writes about the impossibility of reaching Vladyka Lazarus, I well understand it. After all, he has no right to live in Moscow. I would not be surprised if, for the sake of security, he is hiding somewhere in Kuban.

But can we, at such a time, leave our clergy with no leader at all? My personal impression of Fr. Valentin are much better than yours. But even if I would at some points agree with you with your evaluation, we have no right to let our people stay without a commander. Fr. Valentin at least has demonstrated the bravery, without which it is not possible to fight. Without a brave leader we cannot expect any bravery and activity on part of our clergy. I am afraid, that they themselves will thus begin to feel a lack of faith in our rightness and [our] desire to help in difficult times.

And in regard to the resolution of the Patriarchate, I am afraid it is not only I who must get busy with that, but also someone younger than I. And in regard to the consecration of candidates in Russia and understanding the difficulties of this for diocesan bishops involved in the pre-festal concerns, in spite of my weakness I am willing to go to Russia in order to participate in ordinations. At present it is too much a time of conflict and every day might be precious.

I ask for your holy prayers and remain truly your brother in Christ,

+ Bishop Gregory

P. S. The members of the government have attended the service of Patriarch in the Dormition Cathedral and participated in the procession.

Letter of Bishop Gregory to Archbishop Mark July 6/19, 1993

Your Eminence, Dear Vladyko!

It is not always that we agree in our opinions, but at present, I want to tell you that I fully agree with you that we are unable to govern the affairs of the Church in Russia from here, especially after the illness of several of our senior bishops, which has considerably weakened our hierarchy. Practically speaking, we even do not have a Deputy President of the Synod. We are also so short of candidates that already for several years we could not ordain anyone for Russia. At this point, Vladyka Metropolitan has chosen a candidate who is in no way acceptable to our bishops in Russia. It would be very unlucky to appoint precisely someone who is not welcome. We saw him during the last day of the Council. I have found nothing repulsive in him, but to promote him at this time would be very impractical. [Bishop Evtikhy, "Ch. N."]

The delay of the Synod meeting, contrary to my report that it is urgent to deal with the Russian problems before the new laws go into effect, becomes all the more complicated. We must ordain at least two more bishops, whom you have seen and who were liked by all, and have proven themselves with active and constructive work.

I am sorry that you have such a prejudice against Vladyka Valentin. The recent diocesan conference was interesting in the large number of participating clergy. They know nothing about the crimes which have aroused you against him and are very devoted to him. The photographs of these numerous clergy have impressed me.

I do not know if you will be here for the meeting?

I ask you for your holy prayers and remain loving you your brother in Christ,

+ Bishop Gregory