



CHURCH NEWS

An Independent Publication of Orthodox Opinion

MAY, 2003

Vol. 14, No. 5 (# 118)

Supported by the voluntary contributions of its readers.
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PASCHAL FESTIVITIES IN SUZDAL

According to information received from Suzdal the Paschal services in the Tsar Constantine Cathedral were conducted by four hierarchs: the First Hierarch of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church, Valentin, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir; Theodore, Archbishop of Borisovo and Sanino; Seraphim of Soukhoom and Abkhazia, and Irinarch of Tula and Briansk.

The cathedral was packed to capacity, and particularly noticeable this year was the presence of many young people. It is interesting to note that in the Kazan church, located not far away from the Tsar Constantine Cathedral, and which is a cathedral church of MP Archbishop Eulogy of Vladimir and Suzdal, there was a minimum in attendance: about 20 persons!

THREE CHURCHES OF THE ROAC IN SUZDAL BURGLARIZED

According the information of the Internet Bulletin Vertograd # 363 of May 19, three churches in Suzdal were robbed, belonging to the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church.

Some icons and church vessels were stolen from the church of Russian Holy New Martyrs and Confessors, which was built in 2000 at the initiative of the First Hierarch of the Russian Church, Metropolitan Valentin, in a new housing development in Suzdal.

All but the two large bells were stolen from the bell tower of St. Antipios church, located near the Synod of Bishops residence.

According to reports direct from Suzdal, on May 23 the St. Tsar Constantine Cathedral was robbed. The thieves who committed the sacrilege, cut the metal fence on the left side, walked through the Royal Gates and stole several icons.

As in other cases of desecration of temples of the Russian Church, it seems the local authorities do not plan any kind of investigation.

The Suzdal residents believe that these acts of sacrilege were inspired by the television talk of the deposed priest Andrew Osetrov. According to this information, Osetrov declared that Metropolitan Valentin is hiding "immense wealth" which should be taken and given to "the people"!

OUTRAGEOUS GESTURE OF BISHOP AGATHANGEL

According to the Internet bulletin Vertograd, # 349 of April 11, the secretary of ROCOR(V) Archpriest Benjamin Joukoff on April 1 officially published information about persecution of clergy in the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Vitaly in Moldova. There is a deanery there, headed by Archimandrite Anthony (Rouday) which includes three other priests. On November 20, 2001, this deanery left the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Laurus (in this particular case the flock of Bishop Agathangel) and joined Bishop Barnabas.

Bishop Agathangel on March 1 of this year sent the following letter to the government of Moldova:

"To the state agency on cult problems in the government of Republic of Moldova. To: Director S. Yatsko.

Hieromonk Anthony (Roudey), Priest Constantin Bezhenar, layman Arcady Kovalev and others who have appealed for registration in the name of the Synod of Bishops of the TROC [True Russian Orthodox Church] of the ROCOR, have left our Church. At present, they represent none of the acknowledged religious headquarters and may not claim to belong to the Orthodox Church.

Signed Bishop Agathangel".

The layman A. Kovalev mentioned in Bishop Agathangel's letter believes the government of Moldova is communist and the bishop's letter to be, quite correctly, shameful!

LETTER OF METROPOLITAN LAURUS TO ARCHBISHOP AMBROSE OF GENEVA

The official Internet site of the ROCOR (L) published a letter addressed to Archbishop Ambrose of Geneva as a sort of response to the appeal of MP Alexis Ridiger regarding the latter's offer to create an Autonomous Metropolitan District in Western Europe. One should notice that this letter, though an official document, was published only in English. In our Russian edition we published a translation from English into Russian made by "PortalCredo.ru."

"Christ is Risen!

Your Grace;

Having reviewed your report on the letter of Patriarch Alexis II, dated April 1st 2003 # 1378, the Synod of Bishops shares your opinion that this document is capable of causing doubts and further turmoil.

When this document first appeared it was unclear whether it was the personal initiative of the head of the Moscow Patriarchate, and whether this letter expresses an official position which coincides completely with the opinion of the Synod and the Council of Bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The letter was received by fax, and hitherto neither you nor our Synod of Bishops have had access to the original letter. At the same time, the letter of the Patriarch was widely publicized in the mass media, being directed to "all the Orthodox parishes of the Russian tradition in Western Europe".

Your diocese is one of the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. In your capacity as its diocesan bishop you are a member of the long-functioning Council of Bishops. In the light of conciliar, ecclesiastical order, questions of the organization of dioceses, and, all the more, ecclesiastical regions, fall under jurisdiction of the supreme ecclesiastical authorities. As you have correctly noted, the fact that they are addressing to Your Grace such a question, by-passing the head of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, places you in an unacceptable position from the ecclesio-canonical point of view.

No less lamentable is that the document is submitted without regard to your rights and powers of a ruling bishop vis-à-vis the flock. It must be left to you, as hierarch who has received such a written appeal, to publish it with your own considerations. Actions circumventing your hierarchal position divide you from the flock entrusted to your episcopal care, and likewise introduce division in the midst of the flock. The woeful events in the British diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate itself further convince us that caution is required in dealing with these questions.

The variant readings you have pointed out are, in a sense, cause for further caution: while the Russian original of this letter speaks of "the tradition of Russian Orthodoxy in the lands of West", the French translation speaks directly of "Orthodox parishes of Russian origin and tradition in Western Europe.

It is obvious that your apprehension that the letter of the Patriarch may be used to influence parishes and their internal life, and not in an edifying way, are not groundless.

The Synod of Bishops is in agreement with you that the consideration of questions of the unity and wholeness of the Church of Russia cannot be fruitfully resolved by way of precipitous administrative transformations. All the more, it ought not to introduce division among bishops who constitute a single Council, the succession of which may be traced back to the Pan-Russian Council of 1917-1918.

You rightly note that the allegation that the independence of the Russian bishops Abroad from the Moscow ecclesiastical administration is supposedly based "more on political than any other reasons" is incorrect. We cannot term "political" the struggle of the confessor-bishops and people in the Church of Russia. And the Russian Church Abroad has felt itself obligated to them, has striven to be of one mind with them. It has never broken with its Mother, the Church of Russia, preserving the legacy of the confessor-bishops of Solovki, that "Her (the Church's) power does not lie entirely in an external organization, but in unity of faith and love of Her children, who are devoted to Her".

The unity of the various parts of the Church of Russia already exists among the Russian Orthodox people in the homeland and Diaspora. **The grace of the Mysteries in the churches of Russia is not questioned by the Russian Church Abroad**, just as the Moscow Patriarchate accepts the Mysteries performed by clergymen of the Russian Church Abroad. Any further rapprochement must originate from our common growth in the Truth of Christ and, in particular, through a spiritual comprehension of the historical paths of our Church of Russia. [All emphasis by "Ch. N"].

The Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad **has blessed various initiatives whose purpose is the elucidate the paths toward the "restoration of the historical succession," mentioned in the letter of Patriarch Alexis. We wish to continue efforts in this direction.**

The concept of the desirability of an orderly ecclesiastical state for the Russian Diaspora spoken of by Patriarch Alexis in his letter, **is in and of itself good**; But this question must develop while taking in account ecclesiastical community of pastors and flock. **At the foundation of this process must lie the Truth of Christ, mutual respect and mutual understanding.**

Internal questions of the unity of the Church of Russia – an integral part of which we and our fathers have considered and still consider ourselves to be – are not viewed by us as "external". Consequently, the Department of External Church Ties (DECT) must not meddle in them. Questions of the internal life of the Church of Russia fall exclusively within the competence of the Council of Bishops, and not the DECT, which is not envisioned by the canons.

Our ecclesiastical way of life is defined by the decisions of the major conciliar entities of the Russian Orthodox Church (1917-1920). **We are bound to strive toward the restoration of this conciliarity, and look forward to a Pan-Russia Church Council which will prove to be the culmination of various undertakings which serve for "the healing of the onerous division", not only in the Russian Diaspora in Western Europe, but of the Church of Russia as a whole.**

In this spirit, you are blessed and entrusted with the task of actively participating in all possible conversations on the topic of the further fate of the Russian Diaspora. As regards measures of an ecclesio-administrative character, you should adopt the position benevolent observer.

With fraternal love in the Lord,

+ Metropolitan Laurus
+ Bishop Gabriel

Munich, 1/14 May 2003

Holy Prophet Jeremiah

This letter – signed by the President of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR and the Secretary of the Synod, Bishop Gabriel – is thus a very significant official document, which has designed a program for the future history of the Church Abroad. It is also distinguished by outstanding craftiness and distortion of the facts.

When it says that **“our ecclesiastical way of life is defined by the decisions of the major conciliar entities of the Russian Orthodox Church (1917-1920)”** then the fact is craftily by-passed that Patriarch Tikhon himself **anathematized** the Bolsheviks and all those who collaborate with them. This Patriarchal anathema **was never lifted by anyone!**

The reference to the preservation by the Church Abroad of “the legacy of the confessor-bishops of Solovki” **is here again a failure to mention two decisions of the Catacomb Church which anathematized the Moscow Patriarchate! Again – no one ever has lifted these anathemas!**

And regarding the matter that **“the grace of Mysteries in the Church of Russia is not questioned by the Church Abroad”** we should remember that during the tenure of Metropolitan Anthony, communion with the Sergianists was discontinued; Metropolitan Anastassy has left us his will and testament: **not to have any communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, even in the social aspect of life.** Also, Metropolitan Philaret in his letter to V. Rev. V. Potapov on June 26/July 9, 1980, wrote that, “when receiving the Soviet clergy, we apply the principle of economia. And we receive the clergy from Moscow not as those who have grace, but as those who receive it when being received [into the Church, “Ch. N.”]. But certainly, we cannot recognize a church of cunning to be a bearer of grace. Because, outside of the Church there is NO grace and the Soviet church has deprived herself of grace”.

Therefore, when **blessing and entrusting Archbishop Ambrose with “the task of actively participating in all possible conversations”** about the union of the Church Abroad with the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Laurus and his Synod have openly violated all the basic positions of the Church Abroad. But this is not all: by seeking union with the Moscow Patriarchate, they have fallen under their own anathema, ignoring the anathema by the Council of Bishops in 1983 of the heresy of ecumenism. The Moscow Patriarchate is an active member of the World Council of Churches and has no plans to leave it.

For 80 years the Church Abroad had no connections with the Moscow Patriarchate. But, starting in the year 2002 her administration assured the concerned faithful that there are no talks about union. Now we do see that this undoubtedly will happen because the majority of episcopate and clergy will fall for the bait of “autonomy”!

During all the years of the existence of the Church Abroad outside our Homeland she was very concerned that the agents of the KGB might infiltrate her. Now, she herself is seeking the union with the Synod of Moscow Patriarchate, in the majority of whose members **consist of “former” KGB agents, starting with the Patriarch Alexis Ridiger – “Drozdov” himself!**

The fact that this letter was published by the Synod’s office in English only suggests that Synod wants as few Russians as possible to find out about this Judas maneuver!

FROM THE LIFE OF LATVIAN AUTONOMOUS ORTHODOX CHURCH

An agency, which has replaced the bulletin of Keston News and is now called Forum 18 News Service, with its center in Oslo (Norway) has reported on the difficulties with which the Orthodox Latvian Church has been subjected and which for a number of years still cannot obtain governmental registration, since it is permitted by local law to register only one denomination from each religion in the country, that is in this case of the Orthodox jurisdictions in Latvia only the MP can be registered. . The ruling Archbishop Viktor (Kontuzorovs) in his conversation with a representative of this agency said that for quite some time, “We have asked for this discriminatory article [in the constitution] to be abolished. No European state apart from Latvia has such a discriminatory article. It is absurd that an Orthodox Church still has to live in catacombs”.

Archbishop Viktor, a member of the episcopate of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church, said that without registration it is very difficult to preserve its real estate rights; the Church has no tax exemptions; it cannot have any schools and, actually, is deprived of any rights the registered dominations have. At the same time, a Protestant denomination was registered as a “new religious movement”, although it also does not have full rights and has to annually renew this registration.

Archbishop Viktor has also informed us that he has sent Ms. Ina Druviete (chairman of the parliamentary human rights committee) documentation of 360 pages, but she has declared that she has never received it! However, in her words, “the human rights committee will tackle this issue seriously. We already know about it. Maybe some serious changes will follow”. She has even advised that they keep in touch with her.

PILGRIMAGE OF BISHOP AGAPIT (GERMAN DIOCESE) TO UKRAINE

The Herald of the German Diocese in its # 2 issue for the current year published a 9 page long description of the pilgrimage of Bishop Agapit of this diocese to Ukraine, with the note “to be continued”. Two clergy went with him: Priest-monk Evfimy (Logvinov) from the monastery of St. Job of Pochaev and Priest Peter Sturm, the rector of the church in Zurich.

The pilgrims started the trip in mid-November of last year and visited Kiev, Pochaev Lavra, Chernigov, Chernovitsy, Mukachevo and Ladimirovo.

On the Hungarian border Bishop Agapit and his travel companions were met by the secretary of the diocese of Chernovitsy and the spiritual director of the convent in Mukachevo.

Then they went to Lvov. The diocese there is ruled by Bishop Augustine, but at that time he was not at home, but Bishop Agapit managed to meet with him in Kiev. Despite the absence of the ruling bishop, the diocesan office there offered the guests "a nice lunch".

From the Lavra, the pilgrims went to Chernigov. According to the magazine, "the curators of this church-museum (Boris & Gleb Cathedral) were very polite and even friendly seeing that we are clergymen, and would not accept from us the entrance fee for seeing the church. One has to say that friendship toward us, as clergy, was extended also when communicating with representatives of the secular administrations, including the traffic police".

It should be noted that all the monasteries and churches, in which the guests from abroad were met and seen off in such friendly manner, all belonged to the Moscow Patriarchate and without the orders of their "superiors" would not happen.

The warming up of relations toward the representatives of the Church Abroad (which until the ill-starred year 2000 never recognized the Moscow Patriarchate as a legal Russian Church) was demonstrated in fact that the very pro-patriarchal newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" ("Russian Herald") in issue # 8 on the second page printed the Paschal Epistle of Patriarch Alexis and, immediately below the Epistle of Metropolitan Laurus!

It is interesting that the English version of Metropolitan Laurus' Epistle was published by the Internet bulletin of the Three Saints Parish in Garfield, also of the Moscow jurisdiction!

A renown commentator, M. V. Nazarov, has quite correctly expressed his surprise in the magazine "Pravoslavnaya Rus" ("Orthodox Russia") # 9, 2003 "in connection with information published in 'Pravoslavnaya Rus' and 'Pravoslavnaya Zhizn' ["Orthodox Life"] and other publications which describe pilgrimages to Russia of lay people and even whole groups led by the clergy of the Church Abroad, that sometimes the organizations from abroad hold their conferences and meetings there. But, for some reason (*on extremely rare occasions*) they do not feel obliged to visit our Church Abroad parishes even in Moscow and Podolsk. [Emph. by "Ch. N."] This would give the visitors not only the chance of personally describing the life in the Church Abroad, but also of finding out about our relations toward what is going on in Russia – including the spiritual image of the present authorities of the Russian Federation.

"Then, I am sure, many clergymen would have less of a desire to have relations with the leaders of this government and less illusions about how it is able to achieve a healthier present situation. This is leading to subjection to 'the world center of evil', 'the systemic evil which coordinates the civil destruction of Orthodox Christianity and nationally staunch people' which was warned against in the epistle of our Council of Bishops of May, 1993..."

MORE ABOUT THE JERUSALEM PATRIARCHATE

In our April issue we reported that the Palestinian police arrested certain Al Mufdi and that during the investigation he admitted that he received from Metropolitan Timotheos a down payment of half a million dollars to assassinate the Jerusalem Patriarch Ireneos.

Initially the Jerusalem Patriarchate tried to down play this newspaper report and Metropolitan Timotheos himself declared in Greece that he has no ill will toward the Patriarch.

However, now it becomes clear that the agreement between the Metropolitan Timotheos and a Palestinian Arab had indeed taken place and that he indeed tried to kill the Patriarch.

According to the Internet bulletin of the Three Saints Parish in Garfield, NJ of May 6th, the Patriarch formally initiated in Athens a suit against Metropolitan Timotheos, in which he accuses him of hiring a murderer to kill him.

The Greek lawyer of the Patriarch, Alexander Kuiuais, has verified to the Athens's newspaper "Etnas" the fact of a transfer of money, but at the same time said that he will make no more comments on the request of the Patriarch. The newspaper reported that the plot failed twice, when the Israeli police arrested two more participants in the plot.

It is most surprising that Metropolitan Timotheos, a former secretary of Patriarchate for many years – was not arrested so far! One should guess that if he was able to offer half a million dollars as a down payment for killing the Patriarch this sum was not saved up from his episcopal salary....

The very same publication of May 8th reports that following the suggestion of a Greek lawyer, Giorgios Alfantakis, in Tel Aviv, Metropolitan Timotheos plans to sue the Patriarch because "This constitutes yet another plot against Bp. Timotheos". The lawyer Alfantakis also related that his client plans to file a complaint about his former superior to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos to the effect that he "investigate Bp. Ireneos and his behavior during the election."

Meanwhile, the Athens's prosecutor Dimitris Asporoyerakas brought misdemeanor charges against Timotheos for "forming a gang and inciting a criminal act".

It seems it would be difficult to find a more scandalous story in the Church than this one!

PASCHA IN JERUSALEM

According to information published by the Internet bulletin by the Three Saints Parish in Garfield, NJ, the service of Great Saturday in Jerusalem was not without disturbance. The Monophysite heretics tried to prevent the Greek clergy from receiving the Holy Light. They entered the Resurrection Church together with the Orthodox and moved toward Christ's Tomb. The believers of both sides interfered. The clergy agreed to prevent a fight after the Israeli police declared, that under these conditions, it would permit only a few hundred people to enter the church. Finally, the police permitted

about 6,000 inside, but came inside the church, without removing their clubs and guns, and separated the rival parties with metal barricades, which crowded in to photograph or touch the patriarchs as they processed three times around the Tomb.

Following tradition, the Jerusalem Patriarch (or a senior bishop) is the first to enter the chapel of Christ's Tomb, while the Monophysite remains outside by stone of the Angel. After receiving the Holy Fire the Patriarch gives it to the Armenian Monophysite.

Immediately after the appearance of the Patriarch with the Holy Fire the church was filled with cries of joy, when the church became lighted with thousands of candles with foot high flames. The police, "afraid of possible fire" was sprinkling the crowd with water that it brought in special containers. This miracle happened for almost 2000 thousand years and never was there a fire!

During the few last years the Armenians have demanded equal rights with the Orthodox. Since both parties were on the verge of violence, the police demanded documentation about the protocol in this case and, as was expected, the Jerusalem Patriarch was the first one to enter into the Tomb. In settling this scandal even Nathan Shcharansky, a cabinet minister in charge of Jerusalem affairs and renowned Russian Jew, was involved who declared that, "As the local authority, we have the right to impose an agreement, but I don't think it is proper for the Jewish state to do so".

It seems that the Armenian Monophysites became impudent, in view of the fact that the Israeli government does not recognize the Jerusalem Patriarch.

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of April 30 reported that this year for the Western Easter, due to the very unsafe situation in Jerusalem, there were almost no pilgrims from abroad. At the same time, over the last two years, due to the military situation, some 2,000 Christian Arabs have left Jerusalem. A Catholic priest Jerome O'Connor said that, "If the local Christians leave, then of course, the holy places would be of interest to scholars, to pilgrims. But they would, in fact, be museums, and people like me, foreigners, would be curators".

This year, instead of thousands of Western pilgrims, there were present just a few hundred people, because the Western Easter coincided with the Jewish Passover and Israeli authorities, fearing disorder, closed all the roads to Jerusalem.

VANDALISM ON THE RUSSIAN CEMETERY IN JACKSON, NJ

According to information by the Three Saints Parish in Garfield, NJ, on May 22 the Orthodox St. Vladimir's cemetery was vandalized on May 12 after the gates were already locked.

When the administrator of the cemetery Michael Molod came into the cemetery the next morning, he discovered that the monuments of 73 graves have been either moved or overturned. 13 monuments in falling down were irreparably damaged.

The president of the cemetery corporation Martin Hrynck estimated the damage to be \$125,000.

The vandals also got inside the small cemetery chapel, where they broke the window in the door, stole one door handle and left the doors wide open. They also broke some icons in the chapel and threw them outside. This fact testifies that this 'vandalism' was not a case of youthful pranksters, but is connected with hate for religion.

The police does not exclude that this might have been committed by a group of "bigots".

The cemetery was opened in 1939 and some 11 years ago was vandalized, but not to such an extent.

The Shevchenko Co. which makes monuments has volunteered to put all the monuments back in place that have not been damaged or destroyed at no cost. The cemetery administration is very much concerned about the loss of monuments over the graves of deceased that do not have any relatives to care for the graves. A special foundation was opened in order to restore such monuments.

The police are asking the public for any information in connection with this case.

CRUCIFIXIONS IN PHILIPPINES

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of April 30th reported that the Catholic episcopate in the Philippines is trying to end the local tradition of imitating the crucifixion of Christ the Savior. This year in a settlement some 70 km from the capital 11 persons, (among them 3 women) crucified themselves.

The Catholic Bishop Hernando Coronel has said that instead of crucifying themselves these people "should confess, go to mass, meditate on the Passion of Jesus Christ but they should take care of their bodies". Another Catholic bishop, Ramon Arguelles, called it a pagan practice.

One resident of San Pedro, a 42 year old carpenter, has crucified himself for 17 consecutive years playing the role of Christ.

Such crucified people, in imitation of Christ's suffering, crucify themselves to a wooden cross for 10 to 15 minutes with alcohol soaked 10 cm. nails.

Another Catholic priest said that instead of those crucifixions, "We can donate blood, or even some of our organs, to those in need. Or we can share our time and talents with our less fortunate brothers and sisters. Or we can defend the truth so that others can be freed".

STRUGGLE FOR THE PATRIARCHAL THRONE CONTINUES

It is a common knowledge that when a high ranking person starts to be seriously ill or is just simply aging, their immediate circle tries in every way to cover up the actual situation. This we see in the case of illness of the Moscow Patriarch Alexis II.

Just a few months ago the press reported that Ridiger planned to travel to Estonia, but that due to poor health and at the insistence of his doctors, he temporarily cancelled this plan. The serious condition of his health became known in autumn of last year and it was then that speculations started about candidates for his position.

Now the press has reported that Ridiger feels so badly that after a cold, complicated by pneumonia, he had to cancel the Paschal service.

The Internet issue of "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" ("Independent Newspaper") of April 28 "from then on the Patriarch didn't appear in public until Holy Week. The unstable condition of the Patriarch's health was proven by the contradictory reports from the Moscow Patriarchate. In the beginning it was announced that Alexis II would abstain from the Holy Week services, but will, by all means, preside at the festive Paschal service. But actually it happened the other way around. The Patriarch served the Holy Thursday Liturgy and on Great Friday" but omitted the Paschal service.

Instead of the Patriarch, the Paschal service in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was presided over by Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk. The newspaper considers him to be a "neutral personality", having no chance for the patriarchal position, because he is 3 years older than Ridiger, is no longer a people's representative and was removed from the position of head of the Publications Council of the MP in 1994.

On Easter day Metropolitan Youvenaly of Krutitsa and Kolomna greeted the Patriarch and in his speech called him "the foundation [?!] of universal Orthodoxy on whose shoulders rests the restoration of the spiritual ruins of the Russian Orthodox Church after the horrible decades".

As we previously reported, based upon information of the Russian press, the main candidates for the Patriarchal see are: Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk (Goundiayev, and in the KGB "Mikhailov"), Metropolitan Methodius of Voronezh (Nemtsov, and in the KGB "Paul") and Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk (Vakhromeyev, and in the KGB "Ostrovsky"), who was for a number of years the head of the Foreign Relations Department of the MP. However, according to the Internet information of the Political News Agency, recently also Archimandrite Theognost, the Abbot of the Holy Trinity Lavra, was added to the number of candidates.

The agency reports that "Theognost is the youngest of all the claimants to the see; he is not yet 50 years old. He is not too well known in church circles, but he is influential with two persons closest to Patriarch Alexis: 62 year-old Eugene Parkhayev, director of the arts production of 'Sofrino' company [there are persistent rumors that he is a Jew, "Ch. N."] and Guelnaz Sotnikova [no such Orthodox name exists, "Ch. N"], president of the Russian Fund for Harmony and Reconciliation. According to this report, Parkhayev, who has headed "Sofrino" since 1987, and Sotnikova over the last two years have almost totally controlled the Patriarch. The sources of PNA are inclined to believe that in the present complex situation "the household" personages have a very strong influence upon the mechanism of the acceptance of resolutions and on the atmosphere of the circle around the head of the Russian Church, more than the clergy".

If one is seriously to believe the "sources" of this publication, then it seems that the future of the MP, in the spiritual sense, is even worse than even the present deeply sad present situation!

However, according to the New York's Russian language newspaper "Novoye Russkoye Slovo" ("New Russian Word") of May 11, one of the former candidates for the patriarchal see, Metropolitan Methodios, who was a president of the History and Legal committee and the manager of the Makary Foundation, quite unexpectedly, following the decision of the Synod of May 7, was removed from Moscow. He was appointed Metropolitan of the newly organized Metropolitan region with the title of Astan-Almaatin in... Kazakhstan!

His Voronezh-Lipetsy diocese was split into two: Voronezh-Borisogleb and Lipets-Yelets. To the first was appointed Metropolitan Sergius (Fomin) of Solnechnogorsk. He is also considered to be a serious candidate for patriarch. After receiving the new appointment he retains his position as manager of Moscow Patriarchate affairs, which testifies that in the present revolution in the center Sergius Fomin has lost nothing.

The newspaper reports that according to existing data it was precisely Metropolitan Sergius (Fomin) of Solnechnogorsk who started intrigues against all the possible candidates to the patriarchal see and among them, one of his main rivals – Metropolitan Cyril, by spreading information about his connection with the KGB and his commercial machinations. No doubt, the removal of Metropolitan Methodios to Kazakhstan – is a victory for Metropolitan Sergius and demonstrates that in view of the probably immanent repose of Alexis Ridiger the spiders already have started to consume one another!

It is also interesting that the newspaper reports: "When Methodios will to start his new job so far is not clear: first the ROC has to prepare the statute about the Metropolitan region and to present it for deliberation to the Council of Bishops" but... who knows when that will happen?

As a result of this revolution, in Kazakhstan which had three dioceses, "in order to coordinate the religious education press, and noticeable social activities on territory of the republic" there was established a new administrative apparatus, so under Methodios there will be at least several bishops!

It is quite natural, that such a re-shuffling in the center of the MP could not but create a significant reaction in the press and even among people just interested in the church matters.

The very well informed Internet publication of Three Saints Parish in Garfield, NJ on May 3 published the refutation of rumors that all the re-shuffling in the MP is not the result of a struggle for the patriarchal throne, but almost a promotion of Metropolitan Methodius, who was appointed to create the first Metropolitan region in the history of the Russian Church!

The Internet publication of the MP about the recent Synod meeting testifies to the unexpected activity at this meeting. It is evident that several bishops have presented their resignations for retirement, several archimandrites were elevated to the rank of bishop and several priests got important assignments.

The MP spokesman Fr. Michael Dudko declared: "We have no internal church struggle, and so it is simply inappropriate to comment on the Synod's decisions in military terms. The appointment of Metropolitan Mefody to the first metropolitan district in the history of the Russian Church is a very responsible task, one than far from just anyone can cope with. So what it signifies is not so much sending Metropolitan Mefody away as recognizing his administrative merits, and to say that it's a loss for His Eminence Mefody is as inappropriate as to say it's a gain for Metropolitan Kiril. It's everyone's gain, for that matter".

Dudko also denied rumors that a struggle is under way for the post of patriarch. "With the Patriarch still holding, thank God, all power, to say that someone is involved in a secret struggle for his post is simply an insult to His Holiness, but also to the entire Russian Church".

The newspaper "Novoye Russkoye Slovo" of May 19 published another article about the intrigues in the struggle for the patriarchal see in Moscow, under the title 'Struggles around the Patriarchal See'. Basically repeating the previous information, the newspaper finishes the article, signed by Artem Pukhov, (despite the refutations of priest Dudko, who has rejected any struggle around the future Moscow Patriarch) who writes: "The present behind the scenes struggle of hierarchs obviously is leaving behind the long-term opposition of Cyril and Methodius. Rather this is the beginning of a war between the rivals for the patriarchal see, the signal for which was a sharp decline in the health of Alexis II. In this war all the rather significant influential powers participate. However, if this was "all against all" it is probable that Metropolitan Sergius himself will become the victim of the cadre's intrigues".

The very same newspaper, of May 21 reported that according to the latest news "at present the Patriarch has a high fever what is connected with the results of his illness. Efforts to get information about the status of his health in the Moscow Patriarchate produced no results. The Deputy President of the Foreign Relations Department of Moscow Patriarchate, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin could not affirm or deny the hospitalization of Alexis II".

THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

The Moscow Patriarchate deceives its flock again and again about its non-acceptance of the Catholic faith, although, one sees in the press not one dogmatic explanation regarding the heretical teachings of Roman Catholicism. Actually, in the press we see only disagreements concerned with solely material matters: Uniates, especially in Ukraine have taken a multitude of churches belonging to the Orthodox. However, during the Second World War, the Moscow Patriarchate simply declared all the Uniates in the territory occupied by the Soviet army to be "Orthodox". In the very same way, the Baltic parishes which were under the Ecumenical Patriarchate (according to the rule of "might makes right") came under the Moscow Patriarchate.

Nevertheless, it is quite obvious that Putin's government, for political reasons, wants the Pope to visit Russia and works for it, yet tries to do this without creating a strong reaction at home. The Pope, also, does not hide his dream of visiting Russia and he looks for any possible excuse to realize it. As such he has invented the "return" to Russia of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God.

In connection with this plan the Moscow Patriarchate's Foreign Relations Department has published the following declaration:

"Recently the Holy See Press Office Director, Joaquin Navarro-Valls, has made a statement on a possibility for Pope John Paul II to visit Russia to return to her a copy of the icon of our Lady of Kazan in its keeping. In this connection, the Communication Service of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Relations has been authorized to make the following clarification:

On this basis of the analysis undertaken on April 1, 2003, in Rome by a group of authoritative scientists delegated by the Russian Federation Ministry of Culture and the Vatican, it became clear that the icon of Our Lady of Kazan kept in the apartments of the Pope of Rome is an 18th century copy made by a provincial icon-painter of the style characteristic of the 17th-18th century.

In its size and character, this icon cannot be identified with either the historical miracle-working icon that appeared in 1579 in Kazan or other known and venerated icons. The statement that this icon is 'authentic' is justified only in the sense that it is not a modern forgery and fully corresponds to the time to which it has been dated by specialists.

The return of this icon as one of many which were in liturgical usage and were illegally taken out of the country in the years of upheaval cannot be considered a reason for Paul II's visit to Russia. Previously such icons were returned to our country from abroad on many occasions that normally involved customs and other law-enforcement bodies in various countries, as well as benefactors who had bought up purloined icons.

The attempts to link the return of this icon with the question of a visit of the Pope of Rome to Russia is astonishing, the more so since the Vatican has not negotiated such a visit with the Russian Orthodox Church. The possibility for a meeting between His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia and the Pope depends entirely on the readiness of Vatican to take steps for healing the problems standing between the two Churches, such as the Catholic proselytism among people who belong to Orthodoxy by baptism and cultural tradition and the strained circumstances in which the faithful of the canonical Orthodox Church live in western Ukraine. However, the recent establishment of new Catholic dioceses in Kazakhstan shows that the Vatican's policy is aimed at aggravating the existing problems".

All this has in no way prevented Patriarch Ridiger from sending the Pope a greeting at Easter!

EVANGELICAL "CHRISTIANS" AND THE JEWS

A newspaper "The Jewish Press" of May 9th published an article by Tobi Axelrod under title "Proselytizing for Israel among German Christians" about a missionary trip of Rabbi Eckstein to Berlin.

Rabbi Eckstein in 1983 established an international fellowship of Christians and Jews and visited to collect funds from Protestant fundamentalists who believe that it is necessary to help the State of Israel because the sooner the end of the world comes, the sooner they will be taken in "the rapture" to heaven.

This rabbi was born in Canada, raised in the USA, lives in Israel, but often visits America and has a reputation among the Jews as a controversial personality.

He gave a sermon in a Berlin church of evangelical fundamentalists with some 600 members present. To his surprise, he saw that there was hung an Israeli flag and in back of it on the wall attached to an altar was standing a huge Cross.

Eckstein has admitted that he felt a tremor, however, he said in his sermon that, "For many Jews the Cross is a reminder of anti-Semitism. But Jews can work with Christians who respect their faith. Instead of trying to convert Jews, you can demonstrate your love by giving money to Israel".

When resting in a hotel, Eckstein admitted that, "What was different, unusual, was the cross" and that this was for the first time he had to speak with that symbol looming over his shoulder. "It was uncomfortable, but I had to make a choice. I wasn't about to walk out". Instead, Eckstein had "used the situation to make a point: How does the Cross make Jews feel?".

The money collections by Eckstein bring him a lot of fruit. In America alone, during the last year he has collected \$21 million for Israel.

The newspaper points out that the Germans sung Jewish songs and even the national anthem in Hebrew!

The German fundamentalists, just like their American counterparts, believe that the "state of Israel is the fulfillment of the New Testament" and therefore many of them wear instead of a Cross, "the star of David".

All this is happening in Germany and at a time when the press sharply condemns the aggression of the Israeli government against the Palestinians and 73% criticize the behavior of this government against the Palestinians.

Despite this, the fundamentalists have organized a demonstration for Israel's defense and on that occasion collected several thousand euros.

Inevitably the question arises: who unofficially converted whom to whose faith?

JUDEO-CHRISTIAN CENTER IN CAMBRIDGE INCLUDES MUSLIMS -- INFLATABLE CHURCH

The bulletin "Ecumenical News international" of May 14th reports that the Center for Jewish-Christian Relations (CJCR) in Cambridge has also included Muslims in its activities. It is believed to be very first such English interfaith fellowship.

The Center has declared that it wants to "apply its expertise to wider interfaith encounters, particularly with Islam."

This center was established in 1998 and is unofficially connected to the famous Cambridge University. The executive director of this institution Ed Kessler hopes that visiting scientists from various denominations would visit his center, which will be officially opened in 2004 and will be active for at least three months.

"We are not interested in a high-powered academics who'll produce a paper of interest to two or three people," said Kessler. The aim of this inter-faith organization's dialogue is not so much to discover what is common among the various religious groups, but to develop the methods of activities among such religions

This organization was established in March by the philanthropist Sir Sigmund Steinberg. Present at the opening were Queen Elisabeth II, her husband Prince Philip as well as Jewish and Muslim representatives.

For quite a long time England has forgotten Christian principles and her established Anglican Church has turned out to be rather a social club than a church. The Anglicans, as with many Western religions in Europe, have had to sell their empty church buildings. But this does not prevent the Westerners from a certain inventiveness.

An Internet publication "Yahoo News" of May 17th reported that the very first "inflatable church" was created in England. This blow-up creation is 47 feet high, 47 feet long and 25 feet wide and was exhibited in Sandown Park in the city of Esher, west of London.

This "church" was created some 6 years ago to serve as a nightclub. It resembles a balloon castle and has windows made of "stained glass" and ever burning "candles". It can hold 60 people, but this entertainment idea collapsed and that what sparked the idea of converting it into an inflatable church.

Its price is \$34,700 and to rent it for a day – would cost \$3,200. This “church” is transported on the special kind of truck.

When the “church” was inflated in the presence of many witnesses, the Pastor Michael Elfred invited all present to see the ceremony of “consecration”.

The owners hope that this “church” might become a fashionable place for weddings and baptisms, engagement parties and so on.

The builder of this curiosity piece has announced that he has already received inquiries about the possibility of renting the church from twenty countries abroad. It seems, that this time, the exploitation of this “church” instead of a night club – will be profitable and not end with the owner going broke!

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS (letter to Archbishop Alexander Troubnikoff of 5/18 July 1978)

Dear Fr. Alexander!

Thank you for your letter of July 5th and the translation into French of Yakunin’s letter. Next time I will send you two copies, [of Notifications from the Synod’s Foreign Relations Department, “Ch. N”]

I have received a letter from Ivanoff-Trinadzaty and his book about Tolstoy. The latter I could only look through, but I imagine it is interesting and well-researched.

I have also received, once you started the ball rolling, a book by Fr. Virgil. It is very interesting as regards the ideological opinions, but the plot into which they are inserted seem to me a bit far fetched.

I am glad that you were able to visit the Holy Land. Not only are the conditions you noticed incredible, that no one goes to help Father Anthony, but also, that our people in superior positions do not realize what a tremendous task he has accomplished there and how difficult it is for him to keep going. Their mind is more directed to find his minuses, than to help him. However, all around we see a lack of active people. And the minute someone starts to budge and work, they start to attack him; that is something I have experienced myself. However, lately they have left me alone for a while. Actually I can work only since I took on my daughter’s help, but for this I have had to tear her from a good job and transfer her to a much lesser salary for service in the Synod. Some probably will say that this is a “favoritism” and that I have “fixed up a job for my daughter”, but this is unimportant, the main thing is that it benefits the Synod to have a good worker, who, in addition, does not count her time spent working.

“Ohm Nuvo” has not yet reached me. In what language should I write to Fr. Virgil? It is very difficult for me to write in French – I lack the grammar...

It is groundless to be shocked by a banquet in a hotel. There were so many who wished to attend that we needed a big hall, and this is not easy to find and, also one which would not be so costly. The rented hall is actually not a restaurant, but mainly a hall for commercial exhibits. The price per person is lower than many more modest places, but which are not sufficiently large enough.

Such gatherings have an important unifying import.

With sadness we buried Archbishop Andrew on Saturday. There were a lot of people, about 50 priests from various places. It was a spiritually inspiring, but tiring, because the burial service was conducted without any omissions. The reposed has left behind a great influence. I dropped by to find out how he was a week before he died. He was hardly alive, but fully conscious. I didn’t think to walk in to him, in order not to disturb him, but after hearing that I am here, he asked that I be called and spoke to me.

You must have received a copy of the ukase about the award to your Archbishop, but nevertheless, I will send you one.

May the Lord help your operation to be successful. Of course it is disappointing to be unable to work, but one has to humble oneself.

Asking for your holy prayers, I remain truly yours in Christ + Protoperbyter George Grabbe

Letter to the Secretary of the ROCOR Synod, Archbishop Laurus of September 9/22, 1993

Your Eminence, dear Vladyko!

Lately we have observed that there is a total disregard of the rules regarding the management of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and which started at the last Bishops’ Council. In violation of all of these rules and canons of the Ecumenical Councils, our Council heard and, nearly accepted, the proposal to defrock one of the bishops, without any sort of procedure, a bishop who is in an extremely responsible and important diocese, which later was replaced through his retirement due to poor health.

At the same time it became clear that in a number of cases the decisions made by the Synod were replaced through administrative acts, by immediate orders of the President of the Synod, who has personally made the decisions, in violation of the canons and Statutes of our own Synod of Bishops, even when there was already a decision reached by the Diocesan Hierarchy. In two cases it resulted in someone leaving his post and in the case of Archbishop Lazarus – his leaving our hierarchy.

But what is even worse is that in the case of Bishop Barnabas our Administration is being accused of protecting lawlessness.

The fact alone that our Chancellery has heard reports from Bishop Barnabas in which he spoke of his own violation of the rules prohibiting the interference of a hierarch in the affairs of another diocese and none of us raised a question about his responsibility for such acts (although during the deliberations Vladyka Metropolitan reminded him of this) actually served as an example of our tolerance toward obviously uncanonical acts.

It was a bit later that I realized suddenly that I also bear a responsibility for this omission. I have presented a report about it to the President of the Synod, pointing out to him that it is necessary as soon as possible to correct the matter at a new Council, which would take into consideration the situation of Bishop Valentin's parishes. I also have pointed out the necessity to bring to an end the uncanonical activities of Bishop Barnabas, which are harmful to the Church, and who up to now remains unpunished, although the complaints about his interferences in another dioceses were expressed in the reports of Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentin. Unfortunately, I do not know if, due to his poor vision, the President of the Synod read my report. In any case, I have not received any response to it at all. But, one way or another, instead of speeding the summoning of the Council and the resolutions about the manner of administration and ordinations in Russia (even the Synod meetings) were postponed until late autumn.

Meanwhile, in this way the unlawful acts of Bishop Barnabas remain covered up and have undermined the very understanding that our Church leads her life guided by the canons. The duty to observe this lies upon those who direct this administration (Statute of the ROCOR, p.19).

The rule says that in case of violations or crimes on part of a ruling or vicar bishop, the Synod of Bishops is o b l i g e d (emph. by me) to take necessary measures to restore order according to par. 15 and at that "In cases of necessity, the Synod may apply suspension while informing the episcopate about it. According to this 15th rule, the Synod may resolve the matters by the way of a opinion poll in writing from the bishops.

In this case, as I pointed it out in my report to the First Hierarch, there was just such urgency, but the main thing is that to leave obvious violations of canonical rules without reacting to them is an admission that our Church does not feel that guidance by the church canon rules is obligatory upon her. Not one of us, the members of the Council, under any conditions may step upon this path. The responsibility for this, in the first place lies upon the President of the Synod, the Secretary of the Synod, his Assistant and every one of us, the bishops.

Your Eminence's devoted brother in Christ, + Bishop Gregory