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EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE (AUTONOMOUS) RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The condition of Metropolitan Valentine's health, First Hierarch of the Autonomous Russian Church, improved so rapidly after his operation that he was able to serve on the feast of Pentecost in the cathedral in Buena Vista, Colorado. Concelebrating were Bishop Gregory and most of the clergy of the AROC diocese.

On this day, in accordance with an ukase of the Synod of Bishops of 7/20 March, 2004 # 47 Bishop Gregory was elevated to the rank of archbishop with the right to wear a diamond cross on his klobuk.

After staying in Colorado, the Metropolitan went to Massachusetts, where on June 9th he served in Ipswich in the church of St. John the Russian, where the rector is Fr. Spyridon Schneider. At the invitation of the rector, the administrator of parishes in USA, Fr. Vladimir Shishkoff, was also present. There, just before the upcoming parish feast in Worcester, he accepted into the AROC Fr. Victor Melehov and his second priest, Fr. Michael. On June 12th and 13th Metropolitan Valentin also served in the church of Fr. Victor Melehov in Worcester. According to information we have received, one of the three catacomb parishes in Russia (Moscow) which were under Fr. Victor during the period he was exarch of the old calendar Greek jurisdiction, have agreed to follow Fr. Victor and also join the AROC. The Metropolitan also received the Orthodox mission in Haiti headed by Archimandrite Michael Graves.

All the accepted clergy are under the immediate supervision of the First Hierarch himself, Metr. Valentine.

THEOLOGICAL COURSES IN THE SUZDAL DIOCESE

The Internet agency Vertograd/news # 462 on May 26 published information about the school year of the Suzdal Diocesan Theological School.

According to this report, "on May 21, the feast of St. John the Theologian, the school year was completed in the Diocesan Theological School of the (Autonomous) Russian Orthodox Church. The graduating class's year ended with a "tea" which the teachers and students participated in. At this gathering the events of the past year as well as plans for the future were discussed.

During the past year the Third Year course students heard lectures on the early history of the Church, Patristic theology, biblical history, as well as special courses on "the history of the Moscow Patriarchate" and "contemporary sects".

The dean of the school, Priest-monk Theophan Areskin greeted the students, teachers and some clergy and expressed his wish that they not lose the knowledge acquired and they devote more time to reading books and participating in the services.

Suzdal's Orthodox Diocesan Ecclesiastical School was officially established in 2002, when the Synod of Bishops recommended the theological courses be reorganized so as to be perpetual. A group of 5 teachers gathered a library and prepared the syllabus for future studies.

In the Third Year Class there are at present 10 students. Also a program of correspondence courses is being prepared.

COMPLETE BETRAYAL FINALIZED

There is so much material available regarding the visit by Metropolitan Laurus and his delegation of Russia that it is not possible to re-publish all of it here, even more so since in various publications there are many repetitions. Therefore we will limit ourselves to quotations from the most important declarations made by the Moscow Patriarch, Metropolitan Laurus, some members of his delegation, as well as Bishop Yvtikhy of Ishima and Siberia, who heads some ROCOR(L) parishes, located inside Russia.

An article by Maria Sveshnikov from the Internet agency "StranaRu" of May 14th began with the words: "Despite the fact that Metropolitan Laurus arrived in Moscow in response to an official invitation from Putin and Patriarch Alexis II, **not only the itinerary of his stay in Russia, but even the flight number of the ROCOR delegation became top secret!**" (All emphasis by "Ch. N."). Based upon failures to mention some of the details of the trip by the Metropolitan and his delegation in the various sources -- one has to come to the conclusion that "The Secret Mission" (the title of Sveshnikov's article) concerned not only matters of the arrival time and the flight number, but sometimes more serious matters.

Metropolitan Laurus arrived in Moscow on May 18th and returned to the USA on May 28th.

The "Reference-Informational Portal for Religion and the Mass Media" on May 19th reported the following statement of Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk: "**The task of the first stage is accomplished, the committees of both parties have received the concrete directives concerning the direction they are to work in... At the end of June there will be a combined meeting of the committees. The beginning for unification is established**".

Archbishop Mark of Berlin (the main instrument in the process of betraying the ROCOR) told the very same agency: **The external obstacles for our unification have now been abolished and there are conditions for joint work in the Lord's field. I believe the process of rapprochement might come very soon. But at present, to set any particular date would be irresponsible**".

The very same agency on May 17th republished an interview which originally appeared in the "GazetaRu" given by Metropolitan Laurus. Interview was given to Paul Korobov.

What is the reason for your coming to Russia?

Metropolitan Laurus: The reason for my visit is to meet with the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church MP and get acquainted with the state of the church life in Russia... Beside the official meetings, it is planned to make a pilgrimage to site of the murder of the Royal Family in Yekaterinburg as well as other shrines in the homeland.

How can you characterize the beginning of the integrational stage of the ROCOR and the ROC? What is the final aim of this process?

The forthcoming visit, I hope, will serve as the start of a pre-conciliar process which **will lead to the solution of all questions and problems which have separated the Russian Church since the time of the 1917 tragedy and to the restoration of prayerful and Eucharistic communion through mutual repentance of all the mistakes which have been committed on the conciliar level during those difficult years for the Church.**

It is known that not all the clergy (on one side, as well as on the other) are supporters of the rapprochement of the Churches. Do you feel any opposition toward this process?

Certainly, not all the clergy and lay people are supporters of the rapprochement because not all of them take into account the reality of the resultant situation, also that in Russia there is no longer the godless government and there is no apparent state policy to intentionally liquidate the Church. It is much easier to think in terms of the former stereotypes than to evaluate the importance of the on-going changes. In any matter there are people who oppose it, but we do not prevent our flock from expressing their opinions.

Do you expect any difficulties with the First Hierarch of the Moscow Patriarchate? How can you characterize Patriarch Alexis II whom you are to meet?

I have never personally met with the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church of the MP, but judging by what is going on, **both parts of the Russian Church are ready for a constructive and honest dialogue in the spirit of repentance.** Nevertheless, the work of both church committees in my opinion will not be easy and the healing process of all the wounds afflicted to the body of Russian Church, might be a rather long one.

Are there any positions of principle which you will not forgo in the process of negotiations? What do they consist of? Which points, in your opinion, might the ROC hold as equal matters of principal?

Negotiations do not always prejudice the compromises. If they will follow in the Church's spirit of repentance, then, in the words of the Prophet and King David, "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other".

What administrative form might the unification of the ROC and ROCOR take, and how soon might this happen?

The question is not one of administrative unity, but about overcoming obstacles and restoring Eucharistic communion. First there should be a mutual recognition of each other. Then, by the means of conciliar repentance there should be regulated all the matters which separate us".

In this interview it is interesting that in the course of only one page, Metropolitan Laurus three times mentions the necessity of mutual repentance order to regulate the union with the Moscow Patriarchate.

In the past when the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad spoke about this it was on condition of the repentance of the MP of the sins of Sergianism and Ecumenism.

However, Metropolitan Laurus during his stay in Russia, on the 60th anniversary of death of Metropolitan Sergius Stragorodsky, silently listened to a sermon of Patriarch Alexis that praised the betrayal of the very same Metropolitan Sergius! By the way, several journalists have expressed the suspicion that the dates of the trip and this anniversary were not coincidental, but that they were planned ahead of time. At the same time, the Patriarch and a number of his hierarchs have stated that they will not leave the Ecumenist movement because supposedly it is needed in order to "witness Orthodoxy to the world"!

Therefore, it seems that all this "repentance" (certainly on part of the Church Abroad only) will correspond to the ancient Ukrainian humorous song: "Forgive me, my dear, for your beating of me because I greeted you without taking off my hat"!

The agency NEWSru.com of May 17th quoted these words of Metropolitan Laurus: "The mutual wish of our Churches is to find ways for the necessary rapprochement so that we, who live abroad, might participate in the church life of Russia... We are scattered all over the world and must adopt to local conditions and laws... The one source from we come is the Russian Church".

At the same time the Moscow Patriarchate on several occasions has stated via a member of the Foreign Relations Department, Archpriest Nicholas Balashov, that "the visit is proceeding in a pleasant atmosphere and with a sincere aim to restore union".

In his words, "the pleasant atmosphere during the first meeting of Metropolitan Laurus with the Patriarch on the day of the arrival in Moscow, during the mutual prayer on the shooting range in Boutovo and the participation in laying of the cornerstone of the church which is to be built on this spot soaked with blood, as well as the pilgrimages to the Moscow shrines and Holy Trinity Monastery will affect the discussion under Patriarch Alexis".

On several occasions, Metropolitan Laurus in interviews given to various publications stressed that "the participation of our delegation in the ceremony to lay the corner stone for the church in honor of the New Martyrs and Confessors in Boutovo was especially moving". Here the First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad had to "forget" that at this very same Boutovo not only true Martyrs and Confessors were killed, but also Sergianists who had been instrumental in their killing, as well, as of Western heretics. During these years the fanatic atheist Stalin persecuted all religion in general!

The same agency on May 18th quoted from the common declaration of both parties which stated: "During these conferences there was expressed the mutual wish on part of the Moscow Patriarchate and of the Church Abroad (underlined in the original) to overcome the tragic separation of our people created as the result of the Revolution and the Civil War". It was also decided to "achieve the restoration of Eucharistic communion and **canonical unity of the one Local Russian Orthodox Church, of which the Church Abroad always considered herself to be inseparable part**".

In the extended report about the stay of Metropolitan Laurus in Russia (sedmitsa.ru/) there is published a short interview by Priest Alexis Oumansky with the supposed spiritual father of Putin: Tikhon Shevkounov.

To the question of Fr. Oumansky: "What are the further prospects of relations between the Churches?" Archimandrite Tikhon replied: "At present there are two committees at work: the one abroad and the one in Russia. The committees are to present to the Bishops' Councils their conclusions and suggestions. I believe that in the near future the Councils of Bishops will decide on the liturgical communion and the creation of a united Local Russian Orthodox Church".

Interesting is also the interview given to the newspaper "Gazeta" on May 14th by Bishop Yevtikhy. The situation of Bishop Yevtikhy is an especially "delicate" one, since he is the head of the ROCOR(L) diocese located in Russia. Bishop Yevtikhy at the Council of Bishops in 2000 proved to be a supporter of unification with the MP and it was on his initiative that the Council of Bishops of the Church Abroad has misinterpreted "The Basis of Social Ideas" of the MP as supposedly a renunciation of Sergianism. Also, he was a creature of Archbishop Mark, and it is known that the latter was already

feeling out Patriarch Alexis, trying to find out the future status of Bishop Yevtikhy in the event of unity of the ROCOR with the MP. One feels in his interview a natural uncertainty.

Question: *Your Grace, do you notice any realistic changes in the relationship between the two parts of the Russian Church?*

Bishop Yevtikhy replied: They have changed toward normalization. However, inside the Church Abroad, as well as in the Moscow Patriarchate, at present there is no unified opinion. Regarding this or that position, sometimes there is a polarization of opinion.

What is to be expected from the visit of Metropolitan Laurus to Moscow?

The meeting of the First Hierarch of the Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarch has the character of politeness [?!]. There are plenty of preconditions for unity of the Churches, but the matter itself will be decided on the conciliar level

Will the Patriarch and Metropolitan Laurus concelebrate?

Today, Eucharistic communion is impossible, since the break happened at the highest possible level. In the Orthodox Church that level is that of Church councils. Therefore, the restoration of Eucharistic communion can be resolved only at a Council.

Why, despite the wish of many clergy and parishioners of both Churches, is the process of unification proceeding rather slowly?

I do not believe that the unification process is going slowly, but I am afraid of thoughtless and premature actions. The parties have to reach thorough solutions to the contradictions. Otherwise, there will remain grounds for countless revisions and separations. As the break in the positive movement remains the habit of solving the problems on level of publicity and mutual accusations.

The majority of ROCOR dioceses are located outside of Russia. Your diocese is, actually, within the territory of the ROC. What fate do you personally and your diocese expect in the possible unification?

The main question is: on what level will the unification take place. Will the matters of Sergianism and servility (pleasing the government – “Gazeta”) be positively resolved? If there should be a sudden, unprincipled unification, then our diocese will have to remain in total solitude and will need to review again the difficulties of legalization in the new situation. But if the unification happens, as we hope, through a common confession of faith and a clear evaluation of the basic painful points of Church life and the new church history, than the fate of a little diocese against the backdrop of overcoming the epochal tragedy of the Soviet period is not so important.”

In the Internet report of the Vertograd agency news #463 of May 25th, it is briefly stated that, “The delegation prayed during the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Yekaterinburg, visited St. John the Baptist Cathedral and got acquainted with the information-publishing center of the Yekaterinburg Diocese of the MP. The guard of Metropolitan Laurus was all the way preventing him to meet with the group of ROCOR(L) clergy from Siberia, headed by Bishop Yevtikhy (Kourochkin). (Underlined by “Ch. N.”).

Since in the countless information it was no meeting of Metropolitan Laurus with Bishop Yevtikhy and his clergy was reported, it is natural to believe that such meeting did not take place. Although it is quite obvious that it would be “tactless” on the part of Metropolitan Laurus to meet with them while he is negotiating unification with the MP. Metropolitan Laurus, during his stay in Russia did not visit a single parish of his diocese in Russia. By the way, he never did during his previous visits either! However, he briefly visited the parish in the suburbs of Moscow in Podolsk but not during a service, where in a hurry the parishioners were called by telephone and where only tea was served.

There are reliable rumors that when the unification takes place, the MP will not recognize the consecration of Bishop Yevtikhy, but will agree to receive him back as their former clergyman.

It is interesting enough that according to “PortalCREDO.ru” of May 31st, Bishop Yevtikhy had a meeting in Moscow on January 18th ...with the most odious personality in the MP -- Metropolitan Kirill (Gundiayev) of Smolensk and **“the meeting was a working one and confidential”**.

While the agreement of unification between the Church Abroad and the MP actually took place – the actions of Bishop Agathangel, who keeps accepting clergy and parishes from the MP (which is to be understood) but also the parishes of the “Kiev Patriarchate” – are puzzling

We stated that the information about the stay of Metropolitan Laurus and his delegation in Russia was veiled in a lot of secrecy. Thus, Archbishop Mark of Berlin has acknowledged on the press conference that **“our meetings over these days have resulted in the acceptance of a mutual document, which we are holding in our hand”**, but he gave no hint about the content of this document.

Also the matter of the visit by Metropolitan Laurus to Kursk looks mysterious to us. There were only a few short reports, in particular of May 27th by RIA News and that consisted only of mentioning the churches he visited that are sort of memorials to St. Seraphim of Sarov. Only later did 2 or 3 journalists mention in passing that this is the town in which the miraculous Kursk icon was discovered. It is impossible to believe that the clergy which met with Metropolitan Laurus would not know that the icon is property of the Church Abroad, and none of them suggested that the icon in time would visit or even be returned to Kursk. The utter silence regarding this matter makes all of us, who grew up under its protection, feel special concern about the future of this icon.

According to Internet agency “Vertograd news #472 of June 14th”, “Journalists were forbidden to ask the quest any question regarding the return of the miraculous icon to the homeland, at the personal request of Metropolitan Juvenaly of Kursk and Rylsk. Although the question of the return of this sacred object concerns the residents of Kursk very much, and

they were expecting to receive a concrete answer during this visit, the local clergy has decided it would be better to find a more suitable moment for the discussion of this problem, then to irritate the guest with such questions, and on whom solely depend the eventual solution of this problem.

At the conclusion of the visit, Metropolitan Laurus and his delegation vied with one another to share their positive impressions about the veneration of Russian shrines and the successful negotiations.

The publication "Gazeta" – The Orthodox informative agency Russian Line – published an article under the title: "The End of the Schism – a summary of the meeting of the hierarchs of the ROC and the ROCOR with Putin." The five page long article starts with the sentence: "On Tuesday there happened an event, the significance of which is hardly to be overestimated for Orthodox people in Russian as well as abroad. The schism, lasting for 80 years between two parts of the Orthodox Churches – Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR) was overcome. This event was personally admitted to by President Putin, who met with the head of the Russian Church Abroad, Metropolitan Laurus and Patriarch Alexis II of all Russia. Being impressed by his trip to Russia, Laurus has confirmed that his Church is ready to return to the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. It is expected that the Church Abroad will receive the status of autocephaly within the ROC, in other words, will recognize the Patriarchal administration while retaining administrative autonomy. The bishops from abroad will become members of the Synod and will have a voice in the Council." (Emphasis by "Ch. N.").

PortalCREDO.ru on May 25th published the opinion of an MP priest Dionissy Zolotoukhin regarding the negotiations between the Church Abroad and the ROC. He declared: "Generally speaking, I have not followed in detail the visit of Metropolitan Laurus. But what I have found out, what I have read on the Internet, all of this does not make me very optimistic.

I am used to viewing the Church Abroad as being free. My negative feelings are not liable to account, because I myself serve in the Moscow Patriarchate. All that is going on is not sympathetic for me. I have the feeling that the ROCOR is giving up her positions. The Synod Abroad, Metropolitan Laurus and Archbishop Mark say the words, which at first glance seem to be very proper. That is to say, they consider themselves to be the part of the Mother Church and things of that sort. It seems to be quite correct, but there remains a sad feeling.

Personally for me, the Church Abroad has ceased to exist in the manner she used to be before, at the moment when the split started, when there started the unpleasant story regarding Metropolitan Vitaly. All that is happening with the Church Abroad, her capitulation – is a natural process".

It is a self-evident that the forthcoming unification of the Church Abroad with the Moscow Patriarchate inevitably will bring her into participation in the heretical "global Orthodoxy". In other words, all the obstacles for concelebrations and prayerful communion with all sorts of Ecumenists and Modernists will be removed because the Moscow Patriarchate is in intimate communion with them. Besides ecclesiastical, canonical and ideological issues, this step will inevitably lead to concelebrations with the "Orthodox Church in America", (which received its "autocephaly" from the Moscow Patriarchate in 1970), and similarly in Western Europe with the Evlogianists and other various renegades from the Church Abroad of recent years. However, this measure at the same time would give an opportunity for all those who want to take communion from the chalice of "global Orthodoxy" regardless of jurisdiction, if one is to consider the ancient principles of the Creed, that the Orthodox Church is the united, single Body of Christ and the Local Orthodox Churches are but administrative parts of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Properly speaking, the participation of the Church Abroad in common prayer with the members of "global Orthodoxy" has already come about.

The official publication of the Greek Archdiocese in USA, "The Orthodox Observer" of May-June 2004, reported that in Chicago a Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center was opened in commemoration of the victims of the Dachau Concentration camp. On the eve of opening the museum, a memorial service was held at which an icon of an Archangel opening the gates of the concentration camp was blessed. Metropolitan Iakovos of Chicago (GA), Archbishop Vsevolod of the Ukrainian Church in the USA, the Serbian Bishop Longin, Bishop Peter (Lukianov) of ROCOR and the concelebrating clergy of the respective bishops participated in this prayer service. Among them was also a priest of the "Orthodox Church in America (OCA) Fr. John Adamico.

The only tragedy of our century is that at present **there is not a single Local Orthodox Church left, which has not fallen away from the direct ecclesiastical teaching about the unity and uniqueness of the Church** except for the former Church Abroad, Catacomb communities in Russia and some Old Calendar Greek groups!

Strictly speaking, as was frankly admitted by President Putin, his "non-intervention" in the unification of the Church Abroad and the MP is a very profitable move for the Russian Federation politically. Putin expects that the Russian emigration, scattered all over the world, will use her influence over their local governments in favor of Russia.

Some hierarchs of the Church Abroad (in particular Metropolitan Laurus and Archbishop Mark) have publicly admitted that they are in agreement with the new course toward unity with the MP, and supposedly no one prevents the opponents from expressing their opinions. However, when Mr. M. V. Nazarov (in Moscow) composed an excellent letter addressed to the hierarchy and wanted to collect the signatures of those in opposition, Bishop Michael "has not blessed such an undertaking". Then Mr. Nazarov made his letter public under the title: "In a two week visit to Russia Metropolitan Laurus didn't participate in a single service in the Church's Abroad jurisdiction." He forwarded his letter to "Bishop Michael, with the request to transmit this appeal to the Synod of Bishops and the Ecclesiastical Court to receive a reasoned reply."

And to those who disagree with this betrayal Mr. Nazarov appeals with: "While it is not too late, reverend Fathers, brothers and sisters in the Homeland and abroad, let us make a last effort not to allow the prepared for shameful end of the mission of the Russian Church Abroad and the mission of the Russian emigration".

No matter how amazing it is, a vast number of Russians abroad continue to play the ostrich and insist that "after all, the union is not yet completed" and therefore there is no need to be concerned, and this at a time when even an MP priest (who is definitely sympathetic toward the Church Abroad) has so truthfully characterized this as a complete betrayal!

Q and A OF ROCOR DELEGATION AT MOSCOW ECCLESIASTICAL ACADEMY (with minor abbreviations)

A meeting of Metr. Laurus and members of his delegation with professors and students of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy opened with a short speech by Metr. Laurus in which he expressed his gratitude to the Rector of the Academy, Archbishop Eugene, "for emphasizing in his greeting the mutual wish of both our Churches to find ways for rapprochement, so that we, who are abroad, would participate in the church life in Russia. In connection with this, we have met with His Holiness Patriarch Alexis and have discussed important questions about our relations".

After a brief greeting to the students of the Ecclesiastical Academy, questions from the students followed.

A student of the 4th year Vladimir Burega asked: *Vladyka, what is the present situation of the ROCOR? How many parishes does it have, how many bishops, monasteries and in which countries are they located?*

Metropolitan gave a very vague answer to a concrete question: "The current situation of the ROCOR is various, since we are scattered over the world and in different countries. The dioceses in America or in Australia differ very much from the European parishes. We are not that numerous, but the traditions of some parishes put a stamp upon all of us. We are forced to adjust to local conditions and laws and because of this, there arise some problems. But in general, we are united by the same faith. The one spring from which we originate is the Russian Church. Due to some individual problems of each parish there arise some difficulties, but nevertheless, we are one family. There are monasteries with 10 monks, there is a printing-house, where we are working hard, there are several monasteries in the Holy Land".

Serge Zvonarev, also a student of the 4th year asked: *The matter of the recent negotiations – is not a one day discussion; this is a process which will take some time. How does the Church Abroad see this process? In your estimation, how much time will be needed to solve the present problems and on which matters is there agreement already?*

Archpriest Peter Perekrestov from San Francisco responded: "The Lord has placed us in such historical conditions that there is a realistic possibility of healing the wound of the Russian Church, the wound of separation. There are various opinions among our parishioners and clergy: some are more emotional, and some have even a fanatical attitude. This is understandable: for 80 years there was a particular church life and, now, all of this seems to be changing, they are afraid of betraying the inheritance given to them: so I believe we should take this into consideration but, still, not for too long. It is common knowledge that any unity is not only signatures and seals on the minutes, an organic unity is necessary. It is quite wrong to set a time, lest we introduce human will into God's work, our particular program for mutual friendship and prayer. The Lord will show us the ways, and the Body of Christ will gradually be healed. This might happen sooner than we expect, or maybe not".

Reader Vyacheslav of the 3rd year asked: *What is the actual problem that stands before the Russian Church Abroad, that calls for a theological solution? Who are the members of the co-workers in this matter?*

The same Archpriest Peter Perekrestov answered: "Our Russian Church has tried to preserve what was given to us. And when there emerged sufficiently liberal theological opinions in the West, we have not accepted this and therefore there are no special problems. I may refer to a problem in our city. It is common knowledge that in San Francisco same-sex marriages are permitted. This means that our parishioners and descendants will be living in a world which didn't exist before. Therefore, we are gathering numerous symposiums and are trying to somehow solve such matters" [?!].

The Rector of the Academy, Archbishop Eugene asked: *Does the practice exist in your seminaries of directing students to heterodox schools?*

Archpriest P. Perekrestov answered: "To my knowledge, some students in the seminaries who wish to get a higher theological degree, enter heterodox schools in other countries".

Archbishop Mark made an addendum, by the way, not on the subject of the question: "The current situation of our pastors is such that they need to be busy mostly with pastoral work. Our parishes are different from those in Russia. Our clergymen visit people scattered over hundreds of kilometers; sometimes one is dismayed the distances a priest has to cover in order to visit the sick, the incarcerated and others in need of communicating with him. And this leaves very little time for another activities".

Boris Redkin, a student of the 3rd year asked: *Your Eminence, my question concerns the existing controversies between our Churches. At the meeting of the Council of Bishops of the ROC in 2000 there were accepted several documents regarding the church-state relations. What do you think: to what extent have these controversies been liminated and what has not yet been expressed in the documents of the ROC in order to remove these controversies?*

Archbishop Mark replied: "Regarding the matter of the relationship between the state and the Church, the document mentioned, indicates a position which can be accepted fully. The question might lie in specifying particular details, so that in the future such matters would not be repeated. And regarding Ecumenism, on paper there are a lot of correct [statements, "Ch. N.], but unfortunately the practice is different. When an Orthodox bishop together with a Protestant

woman bishop blesses the people, I consider this to be unnecessary theater, which does no good. Therefore it would be useful to make certain clarifications about how we should carry out our ministry in the heterodox world. For us this is an real issue, since we live in immediate proximity to the heterodox world. Therefore we need precision in these matters”.

LATEST ECUMENICAL SERVICE OF SERBIAN PATRIARCH PAVLE

According to Internet information by a Serb Thomas Deretic of May 29th, the Serbian Patriarch Pavle, Metropolitan Amfilohije and judging by a photograph (one of 17) some other bishops have participated in prayer with Roman Catholics. From this report it is obvious that this happened at the invitation of Catholics in Belgrade, when the bishops came to the Catholic Church. On the photograph we see a group of 5-6 Catholic bishops in full vestments standing at the altar, and at a short distance stands the group of Serbian bishops, headed by Patriarch Pavle, but not vested. Common prayer of the Serbian Church with Western heretics is not at all surprising. Serbian Patriarch Herman was even an honorary president of the World Council of Churches!

The participation in this prayer of Metropolitan Amfilohije is especially surprising, because he used to be a disciple of Fr. Justin (Popovic) already canonized by the Serbian Church, who strongly opposed Ecumenism and common prayer of the Serbian Church with heretics. This is even more outrageous, because shortly before his repose Fr. Justin wrote an appeal to the Serbian Bishops warning them that if they want to remain Orthodox they should renounce common prayer with heretics, as being contrary to the teaching of the Church. At the end of the life of Metropolitan Anastassy the Church Abroad severed communion with the Serbian Church, but unofficially it continued to be practiced by the rather liberal Archbishop Anthony of Geneva and especially by Archbishop Mark of Berlin.

Another ecumenical prayer for peace of all the Christians was for the first time held in Lebanon, on the initiative of the Serbian Church in their local church. The liturgy was served by Bishop Chrysostom while a Catholic choir participated in singing several hymns and a psalm. After the Liturgy, there was a service with a kneeling prayer. Catholics thanked Priest Jelko Djurica and expressed the hope that such prayers will be held in the future. The “Feast” (but not of Orthodoxy) was concluded with a Serbian choir singing “Theotokos Virgin...” and the Te Deum in Slavonic.

TREASURES OF THE SERBIAN CHURCH SOLD ON THE “BLACK MARKET”

The newspaper of the Serbian Orthodox Church “The Path of Orthodoxy” #5-6 has reported that the number of destroyed and robbed Serbian churches in Kosovo has reached 150. Of them 20% are churches dating from the 13th and 14th centuries and considered to be the world art treasures. All this while UN troops “protect” Kosovo.

The criminals are not simply destroying and robbing churches, but it is known by now that more than 10,000 icons and church valuables are being sold on the “black market”.

In the town of Podujevo Albanians, before destroying the church, removed the bells from the bell tower, and at least three times approached the central military administration of the military “protectors” demanding the return of the bells to them, as supposedly belonging to the town of Podujevo. The bells were donated by King Alexander I Karadjordjevic in 1932 to the Monastery of Grachanica. The superior of the Czech unit refused to give them the bells.

Patriarch Pavle on many occasions has protested to the military authorities of the United Nations in Kosovo, but with absolutely no result.

In April of this year the forces of the U N made a violent attack upon the house of Priest Jeremiah Starovlah, hoping to find the “military criminal” Radovan Karadjic there, but he was not. But in the process, Priest Jeremiah and his 28 year old son were badly wounded when 40 American and English soldiers threw explosives at the door in order to storm in after midnight, then, with both the priest and his son tied up, they began to beat them with rifle butts and boots. Both “have received life threatening wounds and are still in critical condition in the hospital”

The Patriarch and some bishops have visited the victims in the hospital. The son of Priest Alexander is still unconscious. The Patriarch wrote a strong protest to the “protectors” of Kosovo, but it is very doubtful that this time there will be any results.

Despite countless complaints from the Serbs over the 5 years of preserving “peace and order” by the United Nations, not a single criminal has yet to be arrested!

MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND THE JEWS

The Internet publication unicorp@cableonada.net has printed a report about “the festive reception dedicated to the 40th birthday of the chief rabbi of Russia”. We reprint below the full text of this report.

“On May 31st 2004, in the Moscow community center there was held a festive reception dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the chief rabbi of Russia, Berl Lazar. Present were the Deputy of the Head of the Foreign Relations Department of the MP, Bishop Mark of Yegorievsk, who delivered to the rabbi congratulatory wishes from His Holiness Alexis II Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the President of the Foreign Relations Department of the MP, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad. (Underlined by “Ch. N.”).

Also present at this reception was a member of the For. Rel. Dept. and acting Secretary of the Inter-religious Council of Russia, R. A. Silantiev, who also congratulated the chief rabbi in the name of the ICR.

His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexis II sent a congratulatory message to Rabbi Berl Lazar on his 40th birthday.

The text of the patriarchal greeting was read and then handed to the celebrating rabbi by the Vice President of the FRD of the MP Bishop Mark of Yegorievsk.

"To the Chief Rabbi of Russia, member of the Inter-religious Council of Russia and Inter-religious Fellowship of the Independent States, Berl Lazar

Venerable Brother! From the bottom of my heart I congratulate you on the occasion of your 40th birthday. It is a joy to see that you are in the bloom of physical health as one of the chief religious leaders in Russia and the entire fellowship of the Independent States. With deep satisfaction may one note the existence of a tradition of cooperation between us and to express hope in its continuation.

I wish you physical strength and spiritual peace, joy and success in your labors for your flock.

Alexis, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia".

How can one not recall the scandalous speech of Patriarch Alexis to the rabbis of New York on November 13, 1991, which also started with the words: "Dear brothers: Shalom to you in the name of the God of love and peace... We are united with the Jews, not against Christianity, but in the name of Christianity..." At that time this outrageous speech resulted in the publication of a 300 page book of commentaries on the speech!

Definitely the Moscow Patriarch forgot Christ's words: "He that is not with Me is against Me: and them that gather not with Me scatter abroad". (Matt. 12:30). The blasphemous hate of the Jews for Christ the Savior ("even to this day") is indisputable and to call them "brothers" is a betrayal of the basics of Christianity. Only by sincerely being baptized and accepting Orthodoxy may the Jews be called brothers in faith, but Alexis Ridiger had in mind not such Jews, but fanatic haters of Christ!

Portal CREDO.RU OF June 11th reported that in return two rabbis (both of them "chiefs"): Berl Lazar and Alof Shayeveich congratulated Alexis Ridiger on his birthday. Berl Lazar in his greeting said: "In first place please accept my sincere greetings on this special jubilee –your 75th birthday and the 14th year of your enthronization, as well as my sincere gratitude for inviting me to participate in festivities dedicated to this date" (Underlined by "Ch.N.")

Further on he praises the "Patriarch" for his work in returning the gift of spirituality to the people after the Communist yoke, "while at the same time not permitting religious intolerance and sectarian fanaticism" and "defending the peoples' souls from attack of the multiplying totalitarian sects" – the rabbi believes that this is totally due to Ridiger.

"Your service of so many years as First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as your personal participation in supporting social peace and the growth of spirituality and morals, are really priceless and have gained well deserved recognition and love among many people". The greeting ends with sentence: "I hope for the continuation and strengthening of our relations".

The congratulations of the second "chief rabbi of Russia" Adolf Shayeveich is longer than the first and is full of similar praises. From it we find out that the "Inter-religious Council of Russia" was created "due to the immense support of the Patriarch and with his blessing. We have always felt and feel the Patriarch's support in all our works, and that is helping us a lot in our work".

Rabbi Shayeveich had established a long standing relationship with the Patriarch. According to his statement: "we were meeting together when there was the Soviet parliament".

In his memorandum to the Synod of Bishops of December 1992, in connection with the speech of Patriarch Ridiger to the New York rabbis, Bishop Gregory suggested a special resolution be issued because "This matter calls for urgent and thorough consideration. We can not ignore any longer the connections of the Moscow Patriarchate with the Jews, without loosing our spiritual authority". (Underlined by "Ch. N.")

This suggestion was not in any way acknowledged by the Synod of Bishops!

President Putin has also congratulated Rabbi Lazar on his birthday by sending him a telegram which stated: "It is important that your activity serves to strengthen inter-confessional dialogues, civil peace and concord in the country".

The Internet agency "Interfax" has published an interview with this rabbi in which reporters wondered about the state of Judaism in Russia. Berl Lazar (a Lubavicher hasid) gave interesting details. Thus, asked what is the estimated number of Jews living in Russia, the rabbi has numbered them to be "many more than a million, maybe even two million".

Also there was a question: Is it true that Moscow is the "most Jewish city" in Europe?

The rabbi replied: "If one speaks about the number in Moscow, it is without doubt the most Jewish of all the European capitals.... However, in time, Moscow might become, if not in number, then in quality, a very Jewish city... If we speak of their number, then the number of Jews in Moscow is more than 500 thousand, and maybe reaches a million. It is sufficient to look at the last names. When there was the explosion in a house on Kashira highway, we separated out the Jewish families living there in order to help them organize the funerals in accord with Jewish tradition. And we found 13 families, yet that house was not large. Maybe these people do not advertise their ethnic origins, but they themselves know that they are Jews". This is all too familiar to many of us!

To the question: how is this community's life developing and how much success has there been in this direction? "It happened that just a few years ago there were about 5 active synagogues in major cities, and by now this has grown to be 40!"

In general, one can say about the relationship of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Jews, in the words of the Krylov fable: "The cuckoo praises the cock, because he is praising the cuckoo"!

UNEASY REPORTS FROM THE HOLY LAND

The official magazine of the Serbian Patriarchate "Pravoslavlje" ("Orthodoxy") of May 1st reported that: "During the last few weeks the situation of renewing visas for clergy and monks coming to the Holy Land has become greatly aggravated.

At the airport in Tel Aviv, at the border, clergy with no explanations and reasons are turned away and not permitted to enter Israel. Those who live there for more than a month and up to a year live with the fear of needing to extend their visas. Some, fearing refusal, in general do not apply and live as illegals.

The Israeli media has reported that shortly before Pascha the police stopped 23 nuns, lined them against a wall and demanded to see their documents. And then two of the priests were even jailed. These problems touch in equal measure the Orthodox, Catholics, Anglicans and, in general, all Christians. The Vatican lodged a protest, stating that 120 of its nuns have no place to live. The minister of Internal Affairs has promised to take some action, but so far nothing has been done. Now there is talk of the need to establish a special committee of representatives of various ministries, which is interpreted as an excuse to drag out the matter for an unlimited time.

Why do not the "brothers" – the Patriarch of Moscow and Rabbi Berl Lazar – get involved in solving the obvious persecution of Christians in Israel?

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS: (Letter to Archbp. Anthony of San Francisco of December 23/January 5, 1994)

Your Eminence, dear Vladyko,

I greet you on the feasts of the Nativity and the Theophany and send you my best wishes for the upcoming new year.

I was very saddened by your last letter and for the first time I sense signs of some discord in our opinions. We had in Russia an old physician who specialized in provocations and on how to present the dark manifestation of the KGB in new colors, and to present new, bright matters in a false light, explaining this as being a supposedly precaution. Therefore, the outstanding work of Bishop Valentin remained without support and there was even the thought of having him defrocked. Thank God, although a bit too late, they rejected this suggestion coming from enemies. I suggested this to the Metropolitan more than two years ago.

However, my efforts to build the restoration of the Church in Russia and to build it on the prophetic authority of Patriarch Tikhon was supported by no one and they exchanged in this matter his authority for the much lesser authority of our times. The name of Patriarch Tikhon is no longer mentioned in the Epistles of the Councils, although not so long ago there were references to it.

Will Bishop Valentin be able to preserve his 97 parishes – that is a big question. Take a look at my previous reports and compare them with that which replaced their basic concepts, and especially compare the attitude of the Council toward our Russian hierarchs. I would not be surprised if you agreed with me. In realistic policies the undermining of significance of the saintly authorities is a very bad mistake.

Pardon me, dear Vladyko, that during such major holidays I occupy your attention with such problems. Over the many years of my service to the Church I got used to putting the problems connected with the welfare of the Church foremost.

Once again I greet you with the Bright Holy Day and ask for your holy prayers,

With sincere love, + Bishop Gregory

URGENT REPORT BY BP. GREGORY TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, METR. VITALY AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH ABROAD -- May 16/29, 1993.

As the senior bishop serving the Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, I was greatly concerned with the latest Council of Bishops and consider it my duty to bring to the attention of Your Eminence and fellow hierarchs my observations. Please pardon me for being deeply disturbed by the situation we have created; I must permit myself to write this appeal. Please believe me, I do this with no sense of judging or ill will toward anybody, but only because I care for the good of the Church, since I notice much due to my experience in serving the Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration since 1931.

The high degree of authority enjoyed by the Church Abroad in Russia until now was based upon her careful perseverance in Orthodoxy and the exact observance of the canons. Meanwhile, lately, under certain influences we have stepped away from these principles, which at present is especially dangerous and is already destructively effecting church life in Russia. The principal of the strict canonicity of the last Council was replaced with a hurried disregard of violations of the canons. Through such an approach, the canons have been forgotten which secure justice and preserve the freedom of the arch-pastoral work of some hierarchs. Uncanonical decisions, without a careful investigation of the facts, in the name of urgency, might result not only in criticism from, but also the direct opposition of hierarchs who have suffered and been hurt by injustices, not to mention the scandal in their and our flocks abroad. Because of this Archbishop Lazarus has

already left us, and the patience of Bishop Valentine is being also tested. If he also is not able to endure this test, what are we going to be left with? Will be his flock willing to separate from him under such conditions? Will it not also revolt?

To clarify this I have to start by analyzing some actions during the extended Meeting of the Synod in Munich.

Despite the appearance of peace, a certain tension was felt. Behind the scenes a suspicious attitude started toward Bishop Valentin. Only after the close of the Synod meeting, did I find out that a number of Synod members were shown some document, accusing Bishop Valentin of violations of the rules of morality. Throughout all the meetings the President of the Synod, did not receive it and got it only after the closing sessions. I have also received a copy from Archbishop Mark who, in turn, received it from Bishop Barnabas, who obviously had no idea how to treat such matters in accordance with the ecclesiastical canons.

The unexpected appearance of such a document among the members of Synod, I have necessarily accredited to secret Communist agents and to the inexperience of Bishop Barnabas.

The practice of being scrupulously careful regarding such accusations during troubled periods of persecution was prescribed by the 74th Apostolic Canon, the 11th of the First Ecumenical Council and especially by the 6th Canon of the Second Ecumenical Council. At that time the heretics multiplied their intrigues against the Orthodox hierarchs. The above mentioned canons direct us not to accept the accusations presented by less than two or three persons, and even then only by the faithful children of the Church and those deserving of trust. The 6th Canon of the Second Ecumenical Council begins with the words: "Because many in the spirit of enmity and for the purpose of slander, being desirous of confounding and subverting ecclesiastical discipline, connive to fabricate certain charges against Orthodox bishops managing the churches in an attempt, desiring nothing else but, **to sully the reputation of priests and to raise disturbances among people who are at peace** (emphasis in the original, "Ch. N."); on this account it has pleased the Council of the Bishops... to decree that informers are not to be admitted without examination, nor are any men to be allowed to bring accusations against those managing the churches, nor yet are all to be excluded".

This canon demands of us special care. For the very same reason, the canon directs that the one who presents his accusations to a Council against a bishop, "are not to lodge the accusation until they themselves have in writing agreed to undergo the same penalty, if in the course of the trial it be proved they have been slandering the accused bishop" (Underlined in the original, "Ch. N.")

Was the judgment of Bishop Valentine made with the same care for prudence and justice, when we were ready to defrock him without any investigation and to convict him for accepting Archimandrite Adrian? And were the accusations against the latter checked?

Starting with accepting, contrary to the canons, the accusation against Bishop Valentin on the testimony of only one informer, not known to any of us, the Council was ready to defrock him without due process, until there was put forward the argument of illness. But here also, no one thought about the fact that this would require his own appeal and verification of how serious is his illness. The intent was very simple: only to get rid of a bishop who was too active. No one gave a thought to the fate of his parishes, which exist on the basis of legal registrations. Without him, they will lose them.

While, in the absence of the accused and in violation of the canons and without his knowledge we were deciding the fate of the Suzdal Diocese, Vladyka Valentin received three more parishes. He now has 63 of them. Including the parish of Archimandrite Adrian, they number almost 10 thousand people, thus we are talking about approximately **20 thousand souls**.

Question: in whose interest it was to destroy something called by the local media the center of the Church Abroad in Russia?

Dear Hierarchs! Tell me, who of us would be willing to be judged in such a manner unusual for the Church?

After all, we **didn't have as single complaint** from the bishop's parishioners and the ailing one himself was silent, having previously stated his innocence.

The success of Bishop Valentin's mission was drawing thousands of saved into our Church, and now his flock is condemned to be widowed and to the scandal of leaderlessness only because he happened to be disliked by some of our bishops.

Hierarchs! Can one build the Church upon prejudice, antipathy and especially upon unfairness?

Our responsibility before God demands from us the annulment of this Conciliar decision and, if there are [no] accusers who have documented material, which so far we have not seen, then Bishop Valentin should be returned to his cathedra and his case closed or, newly reviewed by the Council, but this time in concordance with the existing church canons. To this end, a Council of Bishops should be convened, and to start with, an extraordinary session of the Synod is needed.

Please note the following important circumstances: In a number of cases Bishop Valentin is in litigation against the civil authorities and he has to expend a lot of energy to defend the rights of his parishes. Their registration is often contended by the Moscow Patriarchate which constantly puts great obstacles in the way of the registration of our dioceses and parishes. In fact, the legal registration of diocese and its parishes so far exists only in the case of Bishop Valentin. He has a lot of experience in the struggle against the civil authorities. Now, the registration **of all his parishes** is in danger: this means these parishes will also lose their newly restored churches.

What is more, in not one of his parishes is anything known about accusations against him. Not a single one against him has been instituted in concordance with the 6th canon of the Second Ecumenical Council and actually, should not be taken in consideration, since he is already deprived of his diocese! Our enemies could only dream of creating such a problem!

There is another problem connected with the Noginsk parish. We have, without any investigation, believed the accusations against her rector, initiated also by a person unknown to us. The matter became so complicated, that our Bishop Barnabas became a collaborator with the Moscow Patriarchate in the struggle for this parish. According to about a hundred parishioners who signed a petition, giving their names and addresses, and to the local press, the rector seems to be respected and influential.

Patriarch Alexis, in his ukase of January 10th appointed him to another diocese in order to build a cathedral there and does not mention any sort of accusations. Bishop Valentin received him and his parish on January 18th and only on February 11th did Metropolitan Yuvenaly, governing the Moscow diocese, report to the Noginsk administration that Fr. Adrian has joined the jurisdiction of the Church Abroad and is suspended as a **schismatic** and demand that the authorities collaborate with him in taking back the Theophany Cathedral. Again, there are no accusations of morality – they exist only in some newspapers.

It is understandable why the Patriarchate is slandering him, and Bishop Barnabas dislikes him because he wanted to be under Bishop Valentin and not Barnabas. The newspapers stated that in this case Bishop Barnabas partly supports the Patriarchate, and not his own Church. Everything is very murky there, because apparently Communist agents are mixed up in this, although it is fashionable to claim that they supposedly no longer exist.

In the example of Bishop Barnabas we see how difficult it is for us to get involved from abroad in situations in Russia. He trusted "Pamiat" ("Memory") and it brought him trouble and after using him, has abandoned him. Also the case of Fr. Averianov is confusing, whom Vladyka Barnabas unreservedly trusted.

Without a new impartial and canonically established review of this case it might become disastrous for our whole Church.

Thus we are presented with a practical problem: how can we give Russia the hierarchy that could conduct church life by itself, having the experience of surviving under the present conditions and knowing the psychology of the contemporary Russian, who has undergone specific temptations that are completely foreign to us and not understood by us.

The humble servant of the Synod of Bishops + Bishop Gregory

Of course, this report of Bishop Gregory was not considered and he was not even informed if it was heard at any meeting of the Synod although he was present!