



# CHURCH NEWS

An Independent Publication of Orthodox Opinion

JUNE, 2005

Vol. 16, No. 6 (# 141)

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## PERSECUTIONS OF AUTONOMOUS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH CONTINUE

The persecutions of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church continue with their former persistence.

We have received from the Chancery of the Synod of Bishops in Suzdal the following report from the rector of St. Olga's Church in Zheleznovodsk (in the Caucasus), in which it is stated: "I have received today the answer of the person authorized to represent human rights... On Tuesday or Friday I will go to Stavropol, to the registration office. I will find out on what grounds they will return my documents. The resolution about my appeal so far was not received, but it is necessary for me to travel.

We received the court decision regarding "the claim of the mayor; next preliminary meeting is scheduled for June 29<sup>th</sup>. The declaration of Zheleznovodsk's parishioners before the civil court was also returned regarding the very same decision under the pretext that they have no right to appeal the court's decisions. We have again filed a complaint in their name with the higher court in Piatigorsk. The main judge of Zheleznovodsk has accepted the declaration for consideration. The date of the hearing at present is unknown".

The Moscow Patriarchate, in violation of all the civil rights of the parishioners, is trying under various pretexts to grab the spacious and beautiful St. Olga Church.

The story of Zheleznovodsk's church is a vivid and fresh example. The MP has not contributed a penny to its construction, and now, the local bishop Theophan summons the clergy and forces them to lie that they contributed to the building of this church. There are no receipts, no documentation what so ever to substantiate this – only oral statements. The clergymen simply come into court and say: 'I helped; I gave 5 or 10 thousand.' Yet no proof can be given by the rector of our church, or our parish; nor could there be, because no one ever gave any money for it. But, nevertheless, the city and regional courts insist that the parishioners must leave the church and it be handed over to the Moscow Patriarchate! And actually this is a struggle not for souls, but for stones."

According to the Vertograd agency # 524 of June 7<sup>th</sup> the mayor of Zheleznovodsk, Zubtsov, who was especially hostile to the parish unexpectedly has lost his position. A special committee came from Moscow to investigate allegations of outrageous corruption by the former Mayor and there are two criminal cases pending against him.

As was customary in the "former" USSR, when initiating the case against Zubtsov the investigators look for any possible violations of the law. Alas, now the parish has learned that the office of the prosecutors general of the Russian Federation has received a complaint about "the inactivity of regional and local prosecutors regarding the parish's complaint of violations of the constitutional rights of the community". Russians say: 'there would be no luck, if misfortune had not helped'.

There are reports of another case: that of the St. John the Baptist Church in the village of Pavlovsk, of the Suzdal region. "For several years its registration has been refused, because the former rector has joined the MP and it is considered that the church building will also go to the MP. But if the MP clergyman joins us, the OMON (sort of militia) will come and our priest will get chased out of the church and we are told that it is a priest's right to join whom ever he wants, but as far as the church is concerned it has to go to the MP". And one should keep in mind that the churches received by the diocese were in ruins and have been restored by the petitioners and sometimes by the diocese.

"Such is the fate of St. First Martyr Stephan in the village of Kideksha, in the Suzdal region. Osetrov has joined the MP and despite the fact that we have the legal registration and there is a preservation agreement, the MP pretends to have ownership and all the authorities kowtow before the MP. We are being refused registration under the pretext that the diocese is not registered. And one cannot register the Diocese, because such are not registered! Such is the arbitrariness and there is no law to protect us – we are outcasts, people of the lowest rank".

## INTERVIEW WITH IRINARKH, BISHOP OF TULA AND BRIANSK

The Internet site Vertograd # 525 on June 10<sup>th</sup> published an interview with Bishop of Tula and Briansk, Irinarkh by Mr. Roman Lunkin for the website Portal CReDO.RU.

**Question:** Are there special attitudes of the clergy of the MP towards the AROC communities in the region and how bitter is the fight, in your view, of the MP administration with alternative Orthodox groups?

**Bishop Irinarkh:** I assume all representatives of Moscow Patriarchate have an identical relation to our communities. It only slightly varies depending on the personality of one bishop or another.

The existing groups of AROC believers meet with resistance practically everywhere. Clergy of the MP with the aid of local power structures strive by every means possible to oppress the AROC communities, preventing their registration, and also attempting to divert people from them. Our Church is most visible, first of all, for its defense of the purity of Orthodoxy, and we are the bearers of the idea of retaining the pure Orthodox faith. And how people see this is up to them. We, in turn, we will only attempt to preserve the purity of the flock.

To fight to seize churches is not our policy. On the contrary, the motives of the actions of the MP are evident: that in fact they have launched a war against us. In essence, the Patriarchate is using whatever means possible to preserve its predominate position, and above all, its influence on the authorities.

**Q:** Why, as you see it, do believers and priests, for example, in the Briansk Province and other regions come to AROC and leave the controlling and most politically influential church in our country?

B.I.: If people from the Moscow Patriarchate come to us, this means that their eyes were opened. Such believing Orthodox saw all the sins, the pervasive 'hereticalness' of State Orthodoxy with their own eyes. The AROC is also aware of those principles on which the Patriarchate was built, which was created by Stalin, on his orders in 1943. To this moment there is no Moscow Patriarchate whatsoever. Glory to God, people begin to understand the nature of that structure considered to be the Russian Orthodox Church.

To the believer's spiritual vision the fact is increasingly clear that to enter the MP and follow its leaders ruins their souls. Any believer must leave such a church, being in heresy, since the responsibility for the misdeeds of Ecumenical contacts, dishonest business dealings, and political activities falls upon the entire church.

Many speak of frequently having nowhere to go and nowhere to turn. And it goes without saying we cannot possibly spiritually nourish everyone who desires it in Russia. But in Soviet times, catacomb communities existed that never entered the Moscow Patriarchate. They for many years prayed and preserved the purity of Orthodoxy.

Q: For majority of the Russian population the Moscow Patriarchate is a symbol of the cultural wealth and stability of the religious traditions of the people. Where is the place of AROC in the contemporary spiritual history of the country?

B.I.: First of all we do not consider the Moscow Patriarchate to be the keeper of the intellectual values of Russian people. Statements from the MP, which does not have canonical succession with the pre-Revolutionary Russian Greek-Catholic Orthodox Church, about their exceptional cultural and spiritual role in the country are simply a usurpation of this position, but by no means deserved.

Besides, it is certainly pitiful that a substantial part of the people relate superficially to the native Orthodox Faith. The majority do not examine that, what and where is a jurisdiction, what priests are serving. Those who look more deeply see, where is there is clean, and where there is muddy water. The Lord opens to man the way to salvation, to the true Church. Indeed, the Church, the body of Christ, can be only one.

### **BISHOP ABTHONY (CT. GRABBE) UNDERGOES URGENT OPERATION**

On Saturday June 24<sup>th</sup>, late at night Bishop Anthony (Ct. Grabbe) was brought to one of the New York City hospitals. The examination revealed a hernia. During the operation another was found. Bishop Anthony underwent both operations on the same night.

Doctors believe the operation was a successful one and on Tuesday June 28<sup>th</sup> Bishop Anthony was released from the hospital.

During last month Bishop Anthony has visibly weakened and the operation, certainly has weakened him even more. But he is on the way to recovery.

### **FROM THE LIFE OF THE ROCOR(L)**

The official Internet site of the Chancery of Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR(L) on May 25<sup>th</sup> published the results of the Synod's meeting, which was held from May 23- to 25<sup>th</sup> in Munich, Metropolitan Laurus presiding.

The Secretary of the Committee for Rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate, Archpriest Alexander Lebedev read a report after which "The Synod of Bishops approved and affirmed the documents which were added during the last meeting of both church committees, held March 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, in the Paris suburbs". The Synod of Bishops has blessed the publication and commissioned His Eminence Archbishop of Berlin and Germany Mark, as president of the Committee, to coordinate with the President of the corresponding committee of the Moscow Patriarchate the exact date and hour for publication on the official sites of both parts of the Russian Church".

The Secretary of the Committee from the Moscow Patriarchate, Archpriest Nicholas Balashov, informed one of the newspapers in Russia that "the publication might happen as early as the beginning of next week".

"Archpriest Peter Perekrestov, a Secretary of Committee Preliminary to the Committee, which is to prepare the All Diaspora Council and Priest Seraphim Gan, member of the same Committee have presented the documents prepared at their meetings... The Synod of Bishops has resolved to open the IVth All Diaspora Council, which will be held from May 6<sup>th</sup> to May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2006 in San Francisco". (?!)

"In the near future there will be published **some** materials of the Preliminary Committee regarding the procedure of election and **approval** of delegates for the future Council.

Since some members of clergy and the flock of the Russian Church Abroad have expressed the view that it does not have sufficient information and is in need of explanations of some matters and are perplexed by some events in the life of our Church, the Synod of Bishops has decided to appoint one member of Committee for Rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate, and one member of the preliminary Council, bringing the Kursk-at the Root icon to **all the elective Diocesan meetings**".

The press is expecting that at this Council there will be resolved the matter of unification of Metropolitan Laurus' Church with the Moscow Patriarchate.

Does not the appointment of the two representatives one from the Rapprochement with the MP and the other from the Preliminary Committees, who are to interpret to the flock "something it does not understand," mean they have the task of **controlling the voting at the Diocesan meetings?**

## “POSITIVE CHANGES”

The Internet edition of the newspaper IZVESTIYA.RU of May 31<sup>st</sup>, while discussing the process of unification of the Church Abroad with the Moscow Patriarchate, among other things has reported that the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR at last May's meeting came to the conclusion that over the past 15 years tremendous changes have occurred in Russia.

“In the light of positive changes in the Church's life in Russia, before us there stands a direct matter about the relationship between the part of the Russian Church Abroad and the Church in Russia. This matter was always a lively one for the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, but today, the situation matured for its final comprehension and solution”.

The publication of Portal CReDO.RU of May 3<sup>rd</sup> gives details about the past “Feast of all Feasts” – holy Pascha in Moscow.

According to this information, based upon the reports of “competent services” by GUV D (and only the militia members were as many as 20 thousand) the capital's cemeteries were visited by 680 thousand persons. Out of this number on Pascha Sunday 500 thousand, and on a day before (Great Saturday) some 180 thousand more. This is less than a year later than when at the cemeteries there were just 640 thousand.

The visiting of cemeteries during the days (when in the Church it is forbidden to serve the memorial services) and they are to be served a week after, unfortunately has become a paganized custom. On the majority of Moscow's graves there are placed little tables and benches and over the grave the ‘commemoration’ of deceased is by consuming vodka and sandwiches!

Then it is reported that (according to the same GUV D report) the church services were visited by some 359 thousand. These were the ones who stay only for the initial procession, while there were only 120 thousand for prayer during the night services in the churches of Moscow, while in 1992-1994 there were 180 thousand in the churches.

Considering that at present the population of Moscow is 10 million – this is a minimal percentage!

According to MVD (Ministry for Internal Affairs) this makes from 0.5 to 2.1 %!

Even the “Patriarch” Alexis “Drozdov” himself admitted at one of the diocesan conferences that ‘the churches are becoming empty. And they get empty not only because of the increased number of new churches. This is a natural process and it will continue’.

At the same time, in the Moscow Patriarchate there is an uncontrolled drive for the “glorification” of persons of dubious character, even such as Ivan the Terrible (who was 7 times married, killed his own son and sent Maluta Skuratov to strangle St. Philip of Moscow, when he exposed the cruelty of Tsar), Rasputin, (who's “icons” are “myrrh-gushing”). But the ultimate are “icons” of Stalin, published by the Internet “LIVEJOURNAL” on May 5<sup>th</sup>! On it, this outcast of humanity is blasphemously depicted in bishop's vestments, with the Gospel and the sword in his hands!

However, the veneration of Stalin began long ago: at Stalin's funeral Patriarch Alexis I before starting a pannikhida for this terrible persecutor of the Russian Church and her people, was not ashamed to praise him, falsely testifying that he can not overlook “his always benevolent, compassionate feelings toward the Church's needs. Not a single request, with which we would address him, was ever denied. He fulfilled all our requests... now, when he is gone, we pray for his immortal soul”.

To finish his outrageous sermon Patriarch Alexis exclaimed in front of the coffin of this militant atheist: “To our beloved and unforgettable Joseph Vissarionovich, we prayerfully, with deep love, do say **eternal memory**” (“Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate” # 4, 1953).

Is not it amazing that the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR, under the presidency of Metropolitan Laurus has discovered “positive changes” in the contemporary Moscow Patriarchate and is persistently seeking union with it?

## PUBLICATION OF SOME DOCUMENTS OF THE UNIFICATION COMMITTEES

The ROCOR flock has waited for quite some time for the publication of some of the documents of the joint committees of the Church Abroad and the MP regarding the unification of “the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church”. Finally, on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005 the Committees fulfilled their promises. About the resolutions on these committees one can say only: “Pour the very same soon, but in another way.”

In 2000 the question of speeding up the unification of Church Abroad with the Moscow Patriarchate arose. Realizing that at some time the patience of the flock Abroad might end, her hierarchy had to give in to such demands and publish at least something.

In these resolutions we see nothing new: as before, they inflate the very same issues, such as Sergianism, relationships with the heterodox, relationships between the Church and state and the status of the Church Abroad in this treasonous union and the rest. But this time we see not deliberately murky formulations, but an actual officially agreed program. It really in principle does not differ from former discussions. Instead of the condemnation of Sergianism, we hear again about the notorious “Social Conception” (based on Roman Catholic theory) according to which the Moscow Patriarchate has supposedly renounced Sergianism. However, in the final document of 5 pages of apologetics for Sergianism we read a new way to justify it. It states in particular: “In this way the ‘Declaration’ was seen as a coerced document which did not express the free will of the Church.

“At the same time, a critical view of the above document **does not equate to a condemnation of His Holiness Patriarch Sergius, and does not express an effort to besmirch his person and mitigate His First-Hierarchical**

**podvig of service in the difficult years of the Church's life in the Soviet Union** (emphasis by "Ch. N." and the word "podvig" is left out the official English translation.)

In paragraph 4 it is related that: "The policies of Metropolitan Sergius enabled the reestablishment of Church life during and after Second World War".

The composers of this document praising Metropolitan Sergius have conveniently "forgotten" that his "Church saving policies" by the time Sergius was appointed "patriarch" had led to the fact that throughout the territory of the **entire** USSR, when Stalin summoned him, there were not more than a HUNDRED churches open and only three bishops not under arrest, including Sergius himself. The vast majority of reopened churches were only in regions under German occupation!

That the Moscow Patriarchate, being a successor of this Metropolitan Sergius, defends his policies is quite logical, but the recognition by the Church Abroad of his having a positive role now proves that the Church Abroad has reversed her 80 year path.

When Stalin appointed Metropolitan Sergius Stragorodsky to be the All-Russian Patriarch in 1943, the meeting of the Synod of Bishops held in Vienna on October 3/16, 1943, in the presence of 7 bishops resolved:

"The election of Metropolitan Sergius to the See of Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, is only an uncanonical act, but also unchurchly, a political one, in the interest of the Soviet Communist Party and its leader, the dictator Stalin, who are undergoing a difficult crisis during the war and seeking for help from the Orthodox Church that they hate and recently persecuted".

The appointment of Sergius Stragorodsky to the post of Patriarch by Stalin also violated the 30<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon by which: "If any bishop comes into possession of a church by employing secular rules, let him be deposed from office, and let him be excommunicated. And also all those who communicate with him".

It is very doubtful that any one would be able to deny the historical fact that Sergius Stragorodsky was appointed "patriarch" at the initiative of the militant atheist Stalin. In another words, by seeking union with the uncanonical Moscow Patriarchate the Church Abroad has now fallen under the anathema of this Apostolic Canon!

Further there is the document on the "canonical relationship" of the Church Abroad with the Moscow Patriarchate. According to it: "The drafted 'Act on Canonical Communion' determines the canonical status of the historically formed assemblage of the dioceses, parishes, monasteries, brotherhoods and institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia as an inalienable, self-governing part of the Russian Orthodox Church on grounds similar to those foreseen by the Statutes (Ustav) of the Russian Orthodox Church as they apply to Self-Governing Churches on the territory of the Moscow Patriarchate. Upon the enactment of this proposed Act, the fullness of canonical communion within a single Pomestny (Local) Russian Orthodox Church headed by His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia shall be restored".

On the second page of the newly released joint document it is stated: "The Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia also examined the question how to view the many official declarations, decisions, epistles and other such documents issued by the First Hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, and also by the organs of ecclesiastical authority in the fatherland and abroad over the course of decades during which canonical communion between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was absent. Some of these documents contained canonical suspensions or other of canonical rejections of the hierarchs and the presence of grace in the Church life on the other side of the division. In connection with this it is proposed that when the above Act is put into effect, all previous acts which could hinder the fullness of canonical communion are declared invalid".

On page 3 it states that in the future in order to manage inter-communion of MP and the Church Abroad it is proposed that it is necessary "in aim of further establishing the life of the single Russian Church to apply proper economica and pastoral discretion gradually developing pastoral cooperation in the countries of the Russian Diaspora, with the special oversight of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia".

Of course, in the published documents there is no mention whatever of the former condition for rapprochement with the MP – that it would leave the WCC.

Also, it is worth noting that the ROCOR, since its arrival in the USA (55 years ago) – being absolutely independent – consecrated for itself its holy Chrism. Now it is expected that ROCOR will get the Chrism from.... the heretical Moscow Patriarchate!

An article by Roman Lunkin, written for Portal Credo.RU and published on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, quite correctly states that "the project of swallowing the ROCOR under the pretext of unification was developed already by the Soviet KGB, since the ROCOR was a bastion of anti-communist ideology... It seems the KGB work has not been in vain and has successfully implanted into the ROCOR's hierarchy enough of their agents: direct ones, as well as the so-called "agents of influence" which have brought the Church Abroad to this pitiful moral state.

The main success of the secret destroyers of the ROCOR is that the followers of Metropolitan Laurus have justified the correctness of the outrageous compromises to which the Moscow Patriarchate has agreed during Soviet times and which were to be disastrous to the Church, which is the Body of Christ".

Then this article notes that one "clergyman of the St. Petersburg Diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate has said: "We had hoped that the Church Abroad would help us to change the situation for the better, but two our main problems – Ecumenism and the servility to secular powers have been ignored... It seemed that the hierarchs of the Church Abroad could help us. Now it is obvious that this will not happen: ROCOR will accept all the conditions".

Roman Lunkin is not to be denied a high level of insight!

Portal CReDO.RU of June 22<sup>nd</sup> has also published an interesting anonymous interview given by the same MP priest, but written by Vladimir Ginsburg. It is more extensive than the one by Lunkin.

Responding to a question about his opinion regarding the published documents, the MP priest said: "I am very saddened and disturbed..."

Speaking about the servility and Ecumenism this priest complained: "And namely in these matters the ROCOR was renowned for her strictness. We have had no strength to correct these problems from within and it seemed that the hierarchs of the Church Abroad could help us. Now it is obvious that this will not happen..."

Asked how the Church Abroad could change the MP's attitude toward Ecumenism the anonymous priest said: "By forcing our hierarchs to stop common prayers with the heterodox. Any prayers, including those crafty excuses: 'he didn't pray, he just pretended.' To demand other Local Churches also stop it, first of all, the Ecumenical Patriarchate. If we would stop cringing before the Catholics, the Catholics would respect us more and not less."

"We should flatly declare what our relations toward the heterodox are and sever the relations with those who believe differently. Many faithful, including bishops, would like to do this. But it is difficult from the diplomatic point of view. And the Church Abroad, if she were more steadfast, would have given us a good reason".

When answering a question about the relationship of the Church Abroad toward secular powers, "Fr. N" said: "Simply hold another position, the proper position is also contagious and it would be accepted by many of ours. It is necessary to gradually squeeze out the hierarchs who have besmirched themselves. The retirement of some of them would be possible if it were made a condition for unification. Personally, I do not want to mention any names".

To the question of the journalist why he does not want his name to be known the priest honestly answered: "Do you want me to lose my position and the next time to speak as a representative of 'alternative Orthodoxy'? Even cooperation with your publication is not welcome. Although, I personally believe that you are very helpful... To read you is interesting and shameful like reading 'Komsomol Truth'".

The Political News Agency (APN) of June 21<sup>st</sup> made a complete evaluation of the accepted documents. According to this agency (definitely a supporter of the MP) – "In the first document the relationship to the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius is reviewed. The essence of this document is to separate the name of Metropolitan Sergius from the declaration". (Underlined by "Ch. N.")

"The second document is about relations with the heterodox... it affirms the intolerableness of common prayers with the heterodox, but it believes dialogue with them is possible in order to achieve missionary goals..."

"In this manner," it says further, "all the issues which have created the schism of the two parts of the Russian Church – are taken off the table. There is nothing to stop the Russian Church Abroad from becoming a self-administrative part of the Moscow Patriarchate as is Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the MP. The signing and achievement of those common declarations is an outstanding event in our Church and national life. It means the end of the Civil War, unification of the separated Russian people, a powerful strengthening of the Russian Orthodox inside the country and on the world stage. The unification of the Russian Church is also inflicts a blow on those forces in Ukraine who are looking for separation from the Moscow Patriarchate."

"However, one should not rest. The meaning of this unification is also clear to the opponents of Orthodoxy and they will struggle with all their might against the acceptance of this Act of the canonical unification of the two parts of Russian Church, which is to be approved by the Synod of the ROC MP and the All-Diaspora Synod of the ROCOR. The first bell has already rung – it is a new political report against Metropolitan Cyril with the laughable accusations of illegal imports of crabs to the USA. The next stage of this campaign of the anti-Church forces is an effort to shake up the situation in the Church Abroad and to mobilize a small liberal lobby within the MP against unification."

"The laughable accusations" are not recent, but have been known for a number of years. Metropolitan Cyril, who had the nick-name of 'the tobacco Metropolitan' successfully trades in duty-free tobacco, alcohol, diamonds and oil. It is not idly that the press calls him one of the richest men in Russia!

Alas, it is absolutely indisputable that with changing their 8 decades of principles the traitor-representatives of the Church Abroad not only have done Her irreparable damage, but also assist in strangling some forces of life still existing in the present MP. The present hierarchs of the Church Abroad have forgotten the Gospel's words: "He who shall offend [in Russian: scandalize] one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea' (Mt. 18:6).

## DANGER OF LOSING MIRACLE-WORKING KURSK ICON

The newspaper "Russian Life" of June 25<sup>th</sup> on basis of Internet publication by NEWSru.com has reported that the Moscow Patriarch Alexis II has expressed a hope that the renowned icon of Holy Virgin of the Sign, also called Kursk Root Icon, will be some day brought to the fatherland.

The Patriarch believes that the hope for it is in the continuation of the dialogue between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Church Abroad.

"Anticipating this event" "Patriarch" Alexis believes the "restoration of the monastery of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin, the monastery of the Root Hermitage" is an act of honor.

This declaration was made due to the publication in Moscow of a book dedicated to 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of St. Seraphim of Sarov.

According to him, the Russian people are hoping today for "better fate for our state. It is not without reason that the miraculous icon has left Russia and has warmed the hearts of many compatriots in the Diaspora, who became emigrants".

Worried about the fate of the miraculous Kursk icon during the Revolution, Bishop Theophan of Kursk and Oboyan initially brought the icon to Southern Russia, but then the icon left Russia with the army of General Wrangel.

Bishop Theophan brought the icon covered with the cheapest blue enameled "risa", but also taken out were a number of others, among them the most valuable: gold and covered with diamonds and other gems. It has been kept all these years in the Synod's safe. Archbishop Theophan died in the summer of 1943.

As we closely watch the speed and the already published documents of unification of the Church Abroad and the MP — there is no doubt that to start with the Miraculous Icon will only visit the Homeland, but will eventually remain there. After all, it is very naïve to believe that the Moscow Patriarchate would restore the Korennaya Hermitage just for a brief visit of this icon!

## CONFLICT IN JERUSALEM PATRIARCH FAR FROM RESOLVED

As we reported in our last issue for May, at the Athens extraordinary meeting in which the representatives of almost all the autocephalous Churches participated under the presidency of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos the Jerusalem Patriarch was declared deposed and immediately the Jerusalem Synod appointed as Locum Tenens Metropolitan Cornelius. The deposing of Patriarch Irineos was signed by 14 of 18 his hierarchs.

However, despite the fact that nearly whole Synod demanded that the Patriarch retire he is not giving up and insists that he does not plan to retire.

Patriarch Irineos has declared: "I am living not just symbolically but actually the Passion of the Lord. Why should I resign? What crime or error have I personally committed so as to choose the easy solution of escape?"

The Patriarch also insists that he does not understand what are the accusations against him.

According to the newspaper "Athens News" of May 25<sup>th</sup>, Patriarch Irineos suspected that the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos is under strong pressure "by unknown powers" in the Greek government. The former has also said that his presence in Athens at the Council would have legalized the decision, but his absence from the Council might cause it to be declared illegal. The Patriarch has also declared that the bishops who disagree with him are schismatic and Christian anarchists. But, actually, the Patriarch was not allowed to be present on this Council!

Among a number of accusations against the Patriarch are complaints that he was acting on his own without considering the wishes of the Synod.

According to the Internet version of the "Moscovskii Komsomolets" of May 25<sup>th</sup> the scandals around the Jerusalem Patriarch Irineos started almost immediately with his election. It seems that the manager of Jerusalem Church affairs was Metropolitan Timotheos, a close friend of Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk (Gundiayev) since their school years whom Metropolitan Timotheos helped purchase real estate in Jerusalem.

Patriarch Irineos was shown a photograph of Metropolitan Timotheos in the company of homosexuals and he had to get rid of him.

Since the Russian Church in Jerusalem has a lot of property, it is believed that it will have some influence (probably behind the scenes) in dealing with the Jerusalem scandal. At the same time, the reputation of the Moscow Patriarchate's representative, Metropolitan Cyril (Head of the Foreign Relations Department), is very negative in the financial field, and in the moral even more so, therefore his interference in Jerusalem problems might also lead to a scandal.

According to Vertograd Inform # 524 of June 7<sup>th</sup> the Patriarch will try to defend his rights in the UN European Court for Human Rights in Strasburg.

Meanwhile, Patriarch Irineos was visited by a consular clerk who gave him a new diplomatic passport and took away the old one. New passport does not indicate that he is Jerusalem Patriarch!

The newspaper "Athens News" of June 3 reported that the Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal See, Metropolitan Cornelius has sent out information about his new assignment as Locum Tenens. He had previously held this position immediately after the death of Patriarch Diodoros. As soon as the three required governments approve Metropolitan Cornelius in the position of Locum Tenens, it will be possible to start the procedure to elect a new Patriarch. Archbishop Theophilos of Tabor is mentioned as the leading candidate. It is interesting that the US Secretary of State Condoleza Rice, while recently visiting Israel, on her own invited Metropolitan Theophilos for a conversation.

Israeli government has taken "wait and see" position: Israel has not yet recognized the deposition of Patriarch Irineos, and at the same time is not in a hurry to make an official decision about his Locum Tenens. The matter is quite simple: after all, whole scandal exposed was about the Patriarch selling very important property to Israeli merchants.

According to the agency Portal CReDO.RU of June 10<sup>th</sup>, Archimandrite Attalla Hana just recently visited the Mt. of Olives Convent. This archimandrite is believed to be the theoretician of "Arabization" of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. According to the above mentioned agency: "For some 20 days Attalla Hana didn't appear anywhere in public. Although he claims that the newspapers were writing lies about his role in the process of deposing Patriarch", it is believed that for this purpose he received a substantial amount of money.

Portal CReDO.RU believes that the visit of Attalla Hana to the Mt. of Olive Convent means that the metropolitans who have deposed the Patriarch intend to win the influential ROCOR(L) communities to their side.

It is also expected that the Patriarchal See might be transferred to Ramallah!

One fact is not in doubt: that the case of Patriarch Ireneos will last for a long time and is threatening not only his own Church, but also "global Orthodoxy".

## **SERBIAN PATRIARCHATE AND MACEDONIA**

The agency Portal CReDO.RU of May 31<sup>st</sup> reported that in Belgrade from May 15<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> a Council of Bishops of the Serbian Church was held.

At the Council were present Metropolitan John of Velsk and Povardar, the exarch of the autonomous Ochrid Church.

Despite the efforts by the Serbian Patriarchate to establish normal relations with her former diocese, due to pressure on part of Macedonian government, which was recently declared to be an independent state, a group of former Serbian bishops has split and established their own "Macedonian" church which is not recognized not only by the Serbian Church, but also other members of "Global Orthodoxy".

The Serbian Council of Bishops has decreed that it is severing any kind of communion with the schismatic episcopate, and the clergy and laity following them.

The Council has promoted the Ochrid exarch to Metropolitan of Skopye and gave him a special "Tomos". At the ceremony proclaiming this Tomos were present all the hierarchs of the Ochrid exarchate, who came especially for this purpose to Belgrade.

The Council has also decreed that the parishes of the Serbian Patriarchate located in Macedonia are to join the legal Ohrid church.

The resolution of the Serbian Council of Bishops has disturbed the Macedonian civil authorities. At the end of May, the President of Macedonia Vlado Buchkovski addressed the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with a request to step in and be a mediator in this conflict.

The Macedonians flatly refuse to recognize any other church on their territory and, according to their new president, "the Serbian Council refuses to acknowledge the existence of the Macedonian nation, Macedonian culture and cultural identity".

Meanwhile the head of the new archbishopric, Metropolitan John complains about persecution in the press. Besides. According to his statement, the government has refused to register the Ochrid Archdiocese and has provoked several attacks upon her churches.

## **MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND CATHOLICS**

The flirting of the Moscow Patriarchate with the Roman Catholics has a long history of many years.

In April 2005 on the Internet an article by Attila Guitarist was printed about Vatican and MP agreement on the theme of Fatima, according to which the three children have had a vision of Mother of God, who supposedly told them that it is necessary to consecrate Russia to her!

From this article it is obvious that by the beginning of the 40's the Vatican was in touch with the Moscow Patriarchate. When the preparations for the Vatican II Council were made, this connection was strengthened. In 1962-64 there was a partly secret agreement made by which the MP was invited to be an observer at this Council, but under the condition that it will in no way criticize Communism. The agreement on the part of the MP was signed by Metropolitan Nikodim and on the part of the Vatican by Cardinal Tisserant.

This agreement was very convenient for both parties: Nikita Khrushchev felt that the Russian people were getting weary of the oppression of Communism and he had to "smile" in the Western direction, while the Catholics wanted to spread their propaganda in the USSR.

The details of this agreement were published in France only in 1989.

Catholicism has long criticized Communism, and by the start of the Vatican Council 213 cardinals and bishops have proposed a declaration about the need to condemn Communism. A bit later 435 members of this Council delivered a similar declaration. However, the first proposal was not accepted, while the second has "vanished" without a trace!

As we know, Catholics never lost the hope of converting Russia to Catholicism and therefore all the Popes dreamt about visiting Russia. This dream of the late Pope John Paul II didn't materialize due to the stubbornness of Patriarch Alexis, who protested the Pope's coming, certainly not for theological reasons, but exclusively material ones: in the Western part of Russia, (especially in Ukraine) Uniates (Catholics of the Eastern Rite) have seized a multitude of the former Orthodox churches.

With the election of the new Pope, Benedict XVI, Catholic policy toward the Moscow Patriarchate has slightly changed. New Pope is very conservative, but at the same time is trying to establish a close relationship with the Moscow Patriarchate.

According to the Internet agency "Obshchestvo-Religiya" ("Society-Religion") of May 29<sup>th</sup>, the Pope believes that the time has come when all the followers of Christ should unite and suggests that ordinary Catholics make steps toward

rapprochement with the Orthodox. "I beseech you to firmly decide to step on the path of spiritual Ecumenism and to open the doors for the Holy Ghost, Who alone can create unity".

According to "The New York Times" of May 30<sup>th</sup>, while in Bari, Italy, Pope Benedict said in his sermon: "I would like to confirm my willingness to assume a fundamental commitment to work to reconstitute the full and visible unity of all the followers of Christ".

Cardinal Walter Kasper (the head of the Council on Christian Unity) has openly suggested the convening of a Catholic-Orthodox council, with the aim of possible reconciliation. Kasper recalled that in Bari there are relics of St. Nicholas and that precisely in Bari there was a council of Greek and Latin hierarchs.

Of course, the speech of Cardinal Kasper also mentioned the primacy of the Pope in Christian world.

## ABOUT THE NEW POPE

The newspaper "National Catholic Reporter" of June 17<sup>th</sup> published an article characterizing the first 50 days of the papacy of Benedict XVI.

The new Pope was for almost 24 years a president of the Curia's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, which was on watch for any appearance of heresy within Roman Catholicism. He is also considered to be a convinced and defender of papal infallibility and primacy within the Christian hierarchy.

Observers of the new Pope have noticed even such a minor fact as that during his papacy has "published 43, 500 words, that is about 1 thousand words daily".

Although within Catholicism there has already began a movement to canonize the reposed Pope John Paul II – observers have noticed that the late pope had been a stage actor, and loved to be the center of attention and, even when serving the Mass, he thought not of the service, but rather about his own role in it.

The media ascribes to the new Pope a great deal of modesty. Even when meeting people he does not offer his ring to be kissed, but prefers a handshake.

In the middle of May he addressed his clergy saying that the teaching that non-Christians should be left in peace and not bothered should be discarded, but just the opposite, the task of a Christian is the preaching of Christianity.

It was believed that Pope Benedict is very skeptical about Ecumenism because it weakens the concept of Roman-Catholicism. However, unexpectedly to observers, the Pope has declared that he will "irrevocably and ideologically" get busy with the matter of Ecumenism and, first of all, will try to establish a close relationship with the "Orthodox" Churches.

It is expected that the new Pope will make drastic changes in the administration of the Vatican and will take measures to free it from the bureaucrats whom he cannot stand. He has also suggested his bishops get rid of the bureaucrats and to hire instead specialists in this or that field.

It is interesting that only in the Russian press (based upon the newspaper "Argumenty i F акты") is there detailed information about the biography of the new Pope, who was a German citizen during the Hitler era. Not only was he a very active member of the Nazi organization "Hitler Jugend" ("Hitler Youth") but also completed training as an anti-air craft gunner and in 1941 was drafted into the army.

One journalist was energetic enough to travel to Traunstein in Bavaria, where the future Pope spent his childhood, and tried to get information about his school years.

According to Portal CReDO.RU, the journalist was shown the file with the future Pope's records, however, the principal could show him just a minimum from the file and told him: "I would like to show you more, but it is forbidden – the majority of these documents are under seal to protect a person's civil rights".

According to the same source of information, English newspapers published data about the Nazi past of Ratzinger and at that time it made a local scandal in the press. In the State Archives in Munich it also was impossible to see even the photograph of the future Pope in the military uniform of a German soldier, although this in no way can be proof of his being a member of the Nazi party.

A newspaper "The Jewish Press" of June 24<sup>th</sup> has also reacted to these events. In information on this theme it reports that on June 9<sup>th</sup> a delegation of 25 Jews came to the Vatican, members of the "International Jewish Committee for Inter-religious Consultations" in order to meet with the Pope. The delegation was headed by a Rabbi Singer.

Another rabbi, David Rosen (President of the Society for Inter-religious Affairs of the Jewish Committee) has declared that after the death of Pope John Paul II he was very much concerned whether his successor would be as sympathetically inclined toward Jews, "However, in one of his first public statements Pope Benedict declared his commitment to maintain the bonds and described the Jewish people as 'dearly beloved elder brothers and sisters'.

"Benedict expressed his desire to strengthen the bond. And now we are responding to this".

It is interesting to note that before the delegation was presented to the Pope, he received Rabbi Singer, President of the Jewish World Congress Edgar Brofmann and Cardinal Kasper in a separate room. The conference was to discuss the matter of mutual participation of the Catholics and Jews... in the fight against hunger and poverty in the 'Third World' (?!).

After this secret meeting, the Pope received the 25 delegates and shook hands with every one of them.

## PRESIDENT PUTIN IN ISRAEL

The newspaper "Jewish Press" of May 6<sup>th</sup> had an extensive article describing the very first visit to Jerusalem by the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin.

The President arrived surrounded by a large retinue, composed of well known politicians and the Chief Rabbi in Russia Berel Lazar.

As soon as Putin arrived in Jerusalem he requested to be taken to the 'Wailing Wall' (a remnant of the ancient temple). Being afraid for his safety, the secret police objected to his wish to go to the hill with multitude of Jews. As a result of an agreement with the police, Putin was led to a "safe" spot. The President of the RF was not ashamed to put on a Jewish yarmulke (skull cap).

According to information from the office of Israeli President Moshe Katsav both presidents have agreed that, "The two sides reiterate their refusal to accept the solving of international conflicts by means of violence and will continue to push for a just solution to the Middle East conflict". About that Putin said: "The Holocaust marks the worst human suffering in history and cannot be forgotten. In our century, we must strive to make sure there is no longer hatred between nations, only brotherhood".

It seems the interests of the Jews are so close to the heart of President of the Russian Federation that by worrying about "terrible human sufferings" of a very uncertain number of Jews during World War II, (Now even the Jews themselves speak not of 6 million victims, but less than half of that.) the Russian President has 'forgotten' (?) about the tens of millions of Russians who also perished during the World War II! This is not to count the tens of millions of Russians who perished at the hands of Communist Party executors on orders from Lenin, Stalin and the heirs of these outcasts of the human race.

During the trip of President Putin to Israel, President M. Katsav expressed serious concern about anti-Semitic acts in Europe and Russia. And he emphasized that it is forbidden to forget the Holocaust. Putin promised Katsav that 'he would make no compromises in combating anti-Semitism in Russia and would not be satisfied with mere words condemning anti-Semitic acts, but would fight it very vigorously with actions'.

Rabbi Berel Lazar did not hide his delight over the results of the agreement between the Russian Federation and Israel.

According to the agency Portal CReDO.RU of May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Priest Dimitry Kaplun on the Internet strongly criticized the actions of Putin who on Holy Thursday followed the Jewish custom and put on a yarmulke and then went to the Holy Sepulcher Church in Jerusalem.

It seems, that the last name of Fr. Dimitry is of Jewish origin and that he is a Christian Orthodox Jew, therefore his critique has especially important meaning.

## RENOVATIONISM IN THE GREEK ARCHDIOCESE IN THE USA

According to the Internet agency Portal CReDO.RU of June 1<sup>st</sup>, in the Greek Church in USA (under the Ecumenical Patriarchate) Metropolitan Alexis of Atlanta ordained three women and an 11 year old girl to be readers. This unusual ordination happened on Great Thursday, on April 28<sup>th</sup> in the Holy Transfiguration Church in the city of Marietta, state of Georgia.

As was reported: "In his sermon after the ordination, Metropolitan Alexis stressed that the rank of reader is the first step toward the ordination to the priesthood". It is unknown if the "ordained" ladies are to wear sticharions, but to cover their heads during the services – is not obligatory – in their church this custom is not popular.

Information about the ordination by the New Calendar Greeks of women to the rank of reader is not new, nor for the Orthodox Church in America, although it rarely happens.

## FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS:

### Letter of Bp. Gregory to Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco of Oct. 13/26<sup>th</sup>, 1990

Your Eminence, Dear Vladyko!

Knowing your kind heart, I want to share with you the sadness I have experienced when parting with Archimandrite Valentin.

His staying in the Synod was a test without a break. Certainly, he felt very quickly that it was doubtful that his hope for consecration would come to pass. The natural wish was not just out of vainglory, but according to the Apostle, wish for the sake of a "good cause" (I Tim. 3:1). It was necessary for him in order to develop his services to the Church. This is why he was upset. From the very first day of his arrival he felt the malevolence. No one would talk to him about his service in Russia, until I came to see him on the third day of his arrival. He was made to feel that he was only tolerated and not a welcome guest, whose service was valued. Only the Metropolitan paid some attention to him. And after all he was the very first important clergyman who came to the side of our Church. While in the Patriarchate – he was headed towards a good career, but could not stand their lies, Our indifference and suspicions certainly hurt him, but he endured it with patience and without making judgments, as I can affirm after we became close.

He felt that the condemnation of his membership in the City Council and the wish for him to resign from it is an error, which would undermine his work. Therefore, I busied myself with investigating this matter from a canonical point of view

and I have found that his position in the City Council does not contradict the canons at all. About this I have composed a canonical analysis, a copy of which I will send you when it has been copied. Mainly the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canon of the Council of Chalcedon speaks to his benefit.

What bothers me most is that in accepting Suzdal we have begun an open struggle against the Patriarchate, but we are conducting the war without a commander. Meanwhile, the new law about the rights of religious groups might have been useful, but only if there is a bishop. Otherwise, they might seize the Suzdal Church. I am afraid that we underestimate how quickly the time passes and the enemies work. And they are very much concerned by the candidacy of Fr. Valentin, because he is a strong man and beloved by the population.

Vladyka Lazarus is a wonderful man, but much too used to the catacombs, and in Moscow he even does not have rights of residence. He is unable to head an open action. I hope that you, as a member of the Synod will help poor Valentin.

Asking for your holy prayers I remain your loving brother in Christ + Bishop Gregory

### Letter of Bishop Gregory to N. P. Churilov of Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>/November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1991

Dear Nikolai Pavlovich;

Thank you for your letters. I try to be occupied with something, otherwise I feel uncomfortable, but I have no duties. Thus I have time for correspondence. It would be more, were it not for being older and I am slowing down. Every little thing takes time. And regarding the reference books, unfortunately I have very few of them, because I live in a tiny room and there is no way of keeping them. Therefore, unfortunately I am not able to check the reference you need about the elder's words.

The latest events made me happy because now I have no problem in writing the place of my birth, what I have always written in the old way, as is stated in my preserved birth certificate. Besides it is pleasant to know that in Russia it is freer now and not so dangerous, although our parishes in some places are persecuted.

At the Council, all three of our hierarchs have met and agreed on the issue of collaboration. The catacomb parishes also remain active.

Regarding the precedents of [Metr.] Anthony's period, -- much has changed in the living conditions since the 20's. Personally I, fight for preservation of the catacomb parishes, because I am not sure of the steadfastness of anything under the present government. I would not be surprised if under some pretext the former persecutions were reinstated. I am afraid that it is possible to describe the situation with the words: "Pour the very same soup, but in another way."

I have met Soloukhin only once. He is pleasant and maybe tried to present himself as such, but I have doubts if he is "ours" ?

And I still wait for the final publication of my third volume. For a long time they console me with promises of a "breakfast". Now they say that everything is done, but I have seen only a part of the proof sheets. I am afraid that the book might appear when it will be impossible to distribute it.

Now what is the matter with your visa? When one may hope for your coming?

Regarding Patriarch Alexis – blood is the last thing that would bother me. After all I myself have a mixture of bloods, but still my soul is Russian and the faith is Orthodox and this is the most important thing.

May the Lord keep you safe. With love in Christ + Bishop Gregory

### Letter of Bishops Gregory to N. P. Churilov of July 1/14, 1993

Dear Nikolai Pavlivich;

Thank you for expressing your thoughts to me regarding Sergianism and our reaction to Metropolitan Sergius Declaration of 1927.

Certainly, while abroad we could not know the various details of the pressure and threats which were exerted against Metropolitan Sergius. One has to think about them, because the methods were new, while in history the dilemma: give in or you will be annihilated, happened to the faithful during various persecutions. Such a clever man as was Metropolitan Sergius could not think otherwise when he was transported to Moscow in order to sign the Appeal. But in such a similar case there is a moment of final decision. When Metropolitan Sergius decided to give in he was thus helpless in the face of what was coming. There thus remained no way to seek a new way.

Metropolitan Anthony loved Metr. Sergius very much. I was a witness how much he has suffered for him. The Orthodox decision could be only one: to live in everything according to God's will and hope that the Lord will help in ways known to Him.

Also in your letter I do not see any advice that would help. In the book of Metropolitan John of Petersburg "The schisms in the Russian Church" also there is no indication what could secure for Metropolitan Sergius a sinless compromise.

At present there is another situation in Russia and I am saddened that the man who has created a diocese under difficult conditions of lawlessness [Bishop Valentin, "Ch. N."] and persecutions has not been supported, but instead more deemed an intriguer.

Regarding the persecutions, they quite obviously exist. I see no facts about true progress. I believe it is necessary to use by all means the opportunities for open sermons, but unfortunately, I do not expect anything steadfast. I see that the world rather fast is being rearranged and is preparing for the forthcoming Antichrist and would not be surprised if we both live to see antichrist's persecutions. I wonder if you have already received my book "The Church in the Face of the Hegemony of Evil". If not, let me know and I will hurriedly send it to you.

I have the impression that the present preparation of Antichrist is going full blast. It is not by accident that there is already established (temporarily, rather a weak one) a world government consisting of 7 people.

Do you suffer much from the heat? I save myself with the air conditioner.

May the Lord preserve you. Your well-wisher + Bishop Gregory