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With this fifth issue (No. 61) of Volume 9 (which is the seventh issue in English) we repeat that we would not like to send anyone unwanted literature which might clutter up their mailbox. So we request that if you wish to continue receiving "Church News" in English please write to us in that regard, and please remember that both the Russian and English versions exist only on the basis of the voluntary support of our readers. We will gratefully accept any donations to cover the costs of publishing, mailing and maintaining subscriptions to our various sources.

We apologize for the tardiness of this English version issue, but due to that latest of headaches, computer failure, we could not proceed with editing it immediately.

CHURCH NEWS
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CONTINUATION OF THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN METROPOLITAN VITALY AND ARCHBISHOP MARK

The editors of "Church News" have received from a third party further correspondence between Metropolitan Vitaly, Primate of the ROCA, and Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany. In previous years such a correspondence was read aloud by the Metropolitan during sessions of the Synod or Council of Bishops; this was then followed by a discussion of the matter. To avoid any possible information leaks, copies of the material read was not given to any of the bishops. Now the times have greatly changed. The two letters of Archbishop Mark to Metropolitan Vitaly we have received, probably to underline their personal character, were written not under his official letterheads, while the letter of the Metropolitan is written under the English letterhead of the President of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA. The most amazing aspect of this is that the Metropolitan's letter (already widely circulating in strange hands), was sent from the Synod's fax machine! What then is the source of this information leak: someone in the office of Synod of Bishops or in the diocesan office of Archbishop Mark himself?

We publish below the correspondence we have received, since it has already one way or another become common knowledge to all those interested in obtaining it.

Munich, Dec. 14, 1996

To His Eminence, the Most Rev. Vitaly
Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York
The Primate of the ROCA

Your Eminence, Most Reverend Vladyko!

I am extremely sorry that I have caused you pain and distress. In no way did I desire that. I bow deeply before you, repent and ask for forgiveness.

I was stunned by your declaration that I have lost the gift of the Holy Spirit and yet, at the same time I am consoled by your promise to pray for me a sinner before our Odigitria. Holy Vladyko, I assure you that I do not look through rose-colored glasses. You know to some extent how I have suffered and still suffer from the Soviet government, from St. Vladimir's Brotherhood here in Germany and so forth. I am a son of the Church Abroad and want to remain true to her traditions to the end of my days. I never departed from the foundations of the Church Abroad and do not want to depart from them in the future. In everything I do I am always guided by what I consider to be beneficial for the Church.

What deception can be spoken of, when in the course of recent years I won by litigation churches from [Moscow] Patriarchate, with on-going court cases in recent months and even now should receive one more church?

I do not believe that I am deceived by anything. In that respect I try to watch over myself, but also the brothers of our monastery notice all changes and sometimes are not hesitant to speak frankly to me. It was with this aim in mind that before my consecration I insisted upon taking up residence only in the monastery. I see clearly the shortcomings of church life in Russia, both in the Moscow Patriarchate as well as in the parishes which we inherited from her.

Where was our sobriety when we started to receive the priests and parishes in Russia, not knowing their way of life and particulars, when we accepted Valentine and similar meritorious collaborators with the KGB, before which even the bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate trembled? At that time I did not want to heap upon our shoulders the burden which was pouring at us from the Moscow Patriarchate, but our Council decided differently. I accepted this decision as our own and began to live according to the Council's conscience. I do see the defects, but I also cannot close my eyes to the changes for the better. We demand repentance. The Patriarch several times in his official speeches has repented, but we pretend nothing has shifted from its place. Do not the Holy Gospel, our historical lineage, our belonging to the Russian Church, oblige us to seek ways to overcome the breach? Otherwise, we risk the terrible danger of losing in general our bond with the Russian people. My spiritual fathers and teachers taught me to love this people and their Church, and without any thought of personal gain I devoted my life to serve this ideal. In this spirit at the last Council of Bishops the possibility was discussed of sending observers to the Councils of the Moscow Patriarchate and I was guided by this spirit only.

Your Eminence is aware that I am building the first cathedral dedicated to the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. I know I deserve no credit for this. We consider the Martyrs as not belonging to us alone. No matter what happens in Moscow, when they also start to glorify the New Martyrs, I rejoice and feel that also our other bishops, clergymen and flock, while in no way altering our convictions, are [also] rejoicing in it.

Holy Vladyko, we have not once devoted any time, either at our Councils of Bishops or our Synod meetings, to the study of the question of our canonical status, of our relationship toward other parts of the Russian Church, nor of the possible courses of our future development. Our faithful are desperate, seeing no action on our part.

I recognize that I should have consulted with you before meeting the Patriarch. I do believe that my conversation with the Patriarch did not exceed the level which was some time ago reached in a conversation between him and Bishop Mitrophan, but how can he be, as well as I, of the same mind as the Council of Bishops. But maybe this situation will serve to spur us to a dispassionate discussion at the next Council of Bishops about our relationship with the Russian people, with the MP and the different branches of the catacomb structure, with the Russian Church, with the desire of becoming a single Body? It seems to me that these questions urgently demand detailed analysis, serious reports as used to be the case. Our "Statute" obliges us to do this. During the last Council only a few minutes were devoted to this theme, while we listened for days to the quarrels among Russian Bishops. How much benefit would all of us gain from open-minded and well-founded discussions of immediate church and canonical problems!

Your Eminence's unworthy servant

Signed: Archbishop Mark

Mark, Archbishop of Berlin and Germany

It is interesting that Archbishop Mark asks Metropolitan Vitaly: "Where was our sobriety when we started to receive priests and parishes in Russia, not knowing their way of life and particulars, while accepting Valentine and similar meritorious collaborators of the KGB, before whom even the Bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate trembled"?

Is this not just another slap in the face of the Free Russian Church by Archbishop Mark, the Church which abandoned the Moscow Patriarchate after condemning her evil deeds and heresies and for whose return to the very same criminal Patriarchate he is working so hard? Attempting to unite the ROCA with the leaders of Moscow Patriarchate and its actual KGB agents in the person of Patr. Alexis Ridiger (alias "Drozdo") and the others with code names: the "Adamants", "Abbats", "Antonovs", "Pavlovs", "Ostrovskis", "Topazs", "Michailovs", "Restorers" (all of them Metropolitans of the Patriarchate), Archbishop Mark absolutely without cause again throws into the face of the Free Russian Church a new, undeserved slander. From this company (of agents of the KGB in the midst of the Moscow Patriarchate, only some of whom are known) only one agent, "Restorer" -- Chrysostom of Vilnius, very feebly apologized for belonging to this organization!

01/20/97

20:00 FAX 212 534 1798

Synod of Bishops

PRESIDENT
OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

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January 6/19th. 1997

Your Grace, Reverend Vladyko,

Your letter greatly surprised me. You ask for my forgiveness because you have caused me sorrow and distress. But is this about me? I was grieved for you and was distressed for our whole Church.

You were shaken because supposedly I consider you to have lost the grace of the Holy Spirit. I too am shaken because of the lack of understanding on your part, for I know well that you have wonderfully mastered the Russian language. I have never and nowhere written that you have lost the gift of the Holy Spirit, because such a statement by me would be the same as if I were to tell you that you are no longer an Orthodox Bishop. I accused you and do not take back my accusation, when I wrote you that you have lost a gift of the Holy Spirit, in particular the gift of "discerning spirits" (now I want to be precise -- I Cor. XII: 10). And I repeated this phrase in my letter twice.

And that you are deceived, you have proved in your letter to me stating that Ecumenism all of a sudden has disappeared from the Moscow Patriarchate. And all of this is just two months after you sincerely told me following a conversation with some Moscow Bishop: "In order to verify that it is quite hopeless to lead discussions with the Moscow Patriarchate, one has just to talk to them." These are almost your exact words. Such sudden changes in your thoughts are the best proof that I was right when I said that you have been deceived, entranced.

In addition to this I have to remind you that in his report to the Council for Religious Affairs to the Central Committee of the Communist party of USSR, V. Furov divided the whole episcopate into three groups and called them by name. In the first one were included: [the then] Metropolitan of Tallin Alexis II, the present Patriarch and 15 others. All of whom Furov considers to be completely theirs and not only loyal, but also faithful in their words and deeds. Of those sins, neither Patriarch Alexis II, nor his bishops have ever repented. Patriarch Alexis simply repented once before the start of Great Lent, as is the custom, but the Moscow Patriarchate suddenly

ascribes to this "repentance" a comprehensive meaning. Yet you did not pass by an opportunity to accuse us for having accepted Valentine, of sorry memory. But can one compare Patriarch Alexis and the scale of his destructive power within whole Church with insignificant small fry like Valentine?

In concluding my letter I can also say that the Lord allows His Church to be tempted by this or that heresy, untruthfulness, for her purification. In the present age we are tempted neither by Catholics, nor Protestants or some other sect, but only by the Moscow Patriarchate and a correct or incorrect relationship toward her is a test, given us by the Lord to see how we stand before the Truth, Christ Himself. We are tempted by the Moscow Patriarchate and by nothing and no one else.

My three predecessor Metropolitans of blessed memory, precisely and clearly indicated to us the right path. I only try to follow their directions and to continue on their uncompromising, right path.

May the Lord help us in this temptation.

Your sincere well-wisher,

Signed: Metropolitan Vitaly

How nice that Metropolitan Vitaly finally remembered his predecessors "of blessed memory". If he had done so from the very beginning and would do so more often, probably the Church Abroad would not find herself to be in the maze she is in at this time!

Mark, Archbishop of Berlin and Germany

Munich, Jan. 9/22, 1997
St. Philip of Mosc.

To His Eminence, the Most Rev. Vitaly, Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York, Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad

Your Eminence, Most Reverend Vladyko!

Thank you for your fax of yesterday.

You, Vladyko, assume in me a change of my views. But I do assure you this is not so.

During the period of more than twenty years since we first met here in Munich, in the apartment of deceased Vladyko Paul, I became accustomed to relating to you, Vladyko, as to a loving father. And I became so accustomed to this that I can frankly share with you my emotions and impressions, which have not yet turned into a strong form of conviction or even a milder form of judgement. In this spirit I wrote you my letter, deliberately marking the envelope as "confidential and personal".

With the content of my letter I in no way wanted to cross out what I said before and I say the same today. I have not declared my impressions to be the sole truth and I do not pretend to any exclusiveness. I underlined that those were my personal impressions after visiting only two cities.

This letter was deliberately different from an official document. I gave an emotional coloration to my feelings and experiences, taking for granted that you will, as in the past, also in this case relate to me with trust, in particular as a loving father, who according to his spiritual experience will correctly understand my description. Taking into consideration that in writing down my experiences I have no need for careful diplomatic formulations, I did not make a special effort in to compile a sober and formal report, which would have an official character, and which would be definitely necessary for a person who is a stranger to me. I considered that neither you, nor myself need to describe one more time all the defects of church life in Russia. We know enough about it and feel saddened. It appeared to me that it is worthwhile to describe in particular that which I experienced as bright, as something new and comforting coming into being, which in some sense resulted from our tireless critique. But those personal observations do not replace my former declarations made during Synod meetings and Councils of Bishops. I do not renounce them in any way. I am, as before, far from any illusions and in no way do I retreat from my negative attitude toward anything I consider to be incorrect and sinful.

Asking for your holy prayers, I remain yours always loyal and unfit servant,

Signed: Archbishop Mark

Mark, Archbishop of Berlin and Germany

In the letters of Archbishop Mark (especially in his last one) it is noticeable that, while accenting the sincerity of his motives and convictions regarding the Moscow Patriarchate, he very cleverly avoids an answer to the principal position so excellently expressed by Metropolitan Vitaly. Hoping to convince him that his evaluation of the MP is fair and sincere, Archbishop Mark even mentions on several occasions some "shortcomings" of the MP, but certainly without specifying even one of them. And the most obvious one, namely the crime of the MP against the Orthodox Faith -- her adherence to the heresy of Ecumenism -- he describes as one now nearly non-existent, and which is being held onto only "by a handful of its desperate defenders." Of course, he does not mention that these consist of the leading

hierarchs of the Patriarchate and that it refused to reject this heresy even at its last Council despite the fact that there was expressed at this last Council the desire to exit from the WCC and remain in proximity to it in the role of observer only. And as far as the "emotionally colored descriptions... and feelings" of His Eminence Archbishop Mark are concerned, it is common knowledge that these characteristics are not found too often among his countrymen. And those who were privileged to know him personally, didn't happen to notice them either.

Regrettably, in spite of "personal" or "confidential" warnings by both hierarchs, their correspondence which leaves such a sorry impression, is spread all over the world -- with commentaries by a number of quite different personalities.

In this regard, our editorial office received a full page of the newspaper "Soviet Russia" of March 20th, 1997, with an article having several sub-titles, but with the general title "What Prevents the Re-unification of the One Russian Church," by Constantine Doushanov. His reaction to the correspondence of the hierarchs of the ROCA is specially interesting, because this gentleman was a secretary to Metropolitan John and for number of years wrote (and not seldom) very good articles, which were published under the name of "Metropolitan John of St. Petersburg". It cannot be doubted that Mr. Doushenov is very knowledgeable in church affairs, yet he is known to be too "flexible" in his views. The Catholic newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" of May 8th also didn't overlook the correspondence between Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Mark, devoting two long articles for a whole page to it.

When commenting on the letter of Archbishop Mark, (in part referring to a "handful" of ecumenists in the midst the MP), Doushenov writes: "Come on, Vladyko! Some "handful" which includes practically all the contemporary leadership of the ROC! Was it not Metropolitan Cyrill (Goundiayev) who applied a maximum of effort to make the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate sign the scandalous Balamand Union, which *the church authorities so carefully hid from the Orthodox public that even the bishops could not get the text of this agreement for three and a half years?*" (all italics ours, "Ch.N.")

"Was it not Metropolitan Philaret (Vakhromeyev) who for years was pushing another Union -- with the heretic monophysites? Was it not he who made a speech at the last Bishops' Council (1997) declaring that '*Jehovah's Witnesses', adherents to the Theotokos Center*, Moonies and those similar are heretics', but Catholics and Protestants differ from us no more than do the Russian Old-believers and therefore 'a prayerful communion with them is reprehensible only to the extent to which it is capable... of scandalizing the faithful'?* In another words, pray as much as your heart desires even with Latins and Lutherans, just make sure, those dark fanatical stupid parishioners would not see you, otherwise there will be a lot of trouble..."

[* This is a cult in Kiev which considers some woman as contemporary incarnation of Christ or the Theotokos!]

"Was it not Metropolitan Vladimir (Kotliarov) who gained such scandalous notoriety by his ecumenical-renovationist exorcisms, that the Patriarch himself in effort to avoid unrest within the flock in St. Petersburg had to reprimand him in an special letter, *chiding him not so much for renovationist sympathies, as for not understanding what one may say from the ambo and what not?*

And all these Metropolitanians are lifelong members of the Holy Synod and control the key directions of Church policies. And the present by-laws of the ROC give absolutely no hope of their being replaced with someone 'more Orthodox'."

Concluding his interesting article with a short section titled "Outlines of Things to Come" the author asks: "So, what are the prospects for overcoming the Church schism between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad? When and in which form can their reunion happen? What is necessary in order to hasten this process?"

Here it should be pointed out to Mr. Doushanov that something can "re-unite" only provided it was previously united and then disunited. The ROCA was not for a single day in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, founded by Metropolitan Sergius Stragorodsky (of sad memory) at the request of the ferocious persecutor of the Church, the godless Stalin in 1943. The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad from the very beginning of her existence considered herself to be a part of only that which Stalin and Sergius persecuted, the so-called Tikhon or Catacomb Church.

Noting in his article the display of a "certain deliberate naiveté" on the part of Archbishop Mark, Doushenov cannot find enough words to describe his disgust for the letter of Metropolitan Vitaly, who supposedly "has no idea that in today's upside down Russia the Special Services and the Patriarch have problems more important that just to deceive a passing Orthodox bishop". The author of the article pretends he has no idea that the Patriarch himself and the majority of episcopate are the very agents of those same "Special Services", but this does not prevent him from saying about his own Patriarch that "he is acting in full accord with the main principles of an *experienced party functionary* which reads: never attempt anything that it is not possible to do. His Holiness carefully watches the situation and waits to see where the pendulum will finally swing". A Russian proverb in such cases is less picturesque, when it says, "keep one's nose to the wind," having in mind people with no principles. Doushenov also forgets that by now we know not in theory only, but for certain about the cooperation of Moscow hierarchy with the godless, and even about their agent code names. Therefore, Metropolitan Vitaly is absolutely right when he points this out to Archbishop Mark.

It is not known why the obviously knowledgeable and shrewd Doushenov uses a strange means by saying: "with for the temporizing tactic used by the Moscow's ecclesiastical leadership throughout recent years, there are a lot of explanations, *the detailed analysis of which we have simply no room for here.*" And as an explanation he gives a laughable example. Supposedly, if into the Moscow Patriarchate "there were to come, at a minimum, ten bishops of conservative orientation from Abroad who have a strong habit of common views and a compatibility of church-political activity," then " 'such an infusion' of them into the Russian Episcopate may strongly influence the balance of power"! And if one considers that at present the Moscow Patriarchate has some 150 bishops, who are, as in former times, routinely serving the current government, "not out of fear, but out of conviction," and not the Church of Christ and who are deeply involved in heresies of ecumenism, political peace and similar "theologies" from the period of the godless Stalin.

Reasoning further upon the theme of a possible entrance of the ROCA into the Moscow Patriarchate "under this or that condition" Doushenov unfortunately quite realistically remarks that "it is noticeable already that within the ROCA there are two groups visible enough, one of which is actually ready to negotiate the terms for this entrance, while the second categorically refuses any contacts with the 'red Patriarchate'. And from which of these two will emerge the next First Hierarch after Metropolitan Vitaly will mainly depend on how events develop during the immediate years to come. Yet, no matter how will they develop, the forthcoming schism within the ROCA is inevitable. The results, most probably be the entrance of larger number of 'moderates' of those Abroad into the Moscow Patriarchate and conversion of the remnants of the 'irreconcilables' into a minute dying organization of a sectarian sort." He definitely characterizes as having "fallen through" the attempt to have "parallel parishes" in Russia and quite significantly reduces their numbers, yet justifiably admits that "it would be ridiculous to determine the significance of the ROCA with assistance of arithmetic."

While expressing quite Orthodox views regarding ecumenism, Doushenov thinks that his "ecclesiastical leaders, if they actually, and not in words alone, are interested in speeding reunion, should walk their portion of the path toward 'those Abroad' ". that is: reject heresy just in order to lure the ROCA into the nets of the Moscow Patriarchate. At that, of course, he keeps silent about the outrageous debauchery of the hierarchy of the MP, the flourishing of simony, infamous profiteering and the most intimate of unions with the government powers, amidst constant statements (from both sides) that Church and government are supposedly separate.

ABOUT THE BISHOPS' COUNCIL OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE. (Feb. 18-23, 1997)

We received from Moscow printed material which was issued by the Secretariat of the Bishops' Council of the MP to the press and media interested in the results of their meetings.

The bulletin "Vertograd-Inform" in # 2-3 (23-24) relates that, "The Council was characterized by its extreme closedness, the heightened measures of security, which effectively excluded any possible direct contact of its members with accredited representatives of the press. Only the first plenary session was open to the press. The correspondent of 'Vetrograd Inform' learned that the majority of the participants of the Sobor did not receive in advance a daily agenda of the meetings and due to very severe regulation during the council there were almost no debates or speeches. One of the few bishops who managed to express at the Council his critique of the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate was Bishop Augustine of Lvov and Drogobycz. He called for an immediate exit from the WCC, the glorification of the Royal Martyrs during the Council itself and also that a struggle be started against 'neo-renovationists' who are spreading among the Patriarchate clergy more and more".

Looking through the texts of resolutions and decrees, we took as a basis an excellent report made by Fr. Timothy (whose last name is not mentioned) called "A Summary of the Bishops' Council of the Moscow Patriarchate". Due to the length of his article we are forced to quote it with some omissions and then supplement it with our comments, taken from documents of the same Secretariat, which were not emphasized or little noticed by Fr. Timothy.

"We are seeking not a victory, but the return of brothers,
whose separation tears us apart" -- St. Gregory the Theologian

The Council of the Bishops is concluded. It is doubtful that one could expect from it something new in principle or reassuring. We will list only a short selection of the most characteristic citations from its reports and resolutions.

1. Concerning the relationship between the state and society, the present approach is considered the only one acceptable, "which wisely combines, on the one hand, the disavowal of involvement in political conflict, of support for any kind of political force, of interfering with government affairs and, on the other hand, an active mutual cooperation with the government at various levels in matters profitable for the Church and whole nation"... (Resolution on interrelations with the state #1).

If we translate this from bureaucratic language it reads: as we have been serving whatever clique is in power -- Stalinist, Brezhnevist, Yeltsinist -- so will we continue; we promise not to support any kind of opposition (we are above politics); in state affairs: with the destruction of the economy, defense, territorial integrity, the decadence of morals, the destruction of the family, the pillaging of national holdings and of ordinary citizens, the support of the criminal world and

fringe separatists and so forth -- we promise not to interfere. We will further cooperate with the state because it is beneficial for the Church, since we get richer.

Now, a little bit more specifically about the forms of this cooperation: "Today were signed joint agreements with five Russian ministries and departments which have a military wing: these are the Defense Ministry, Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Federal Border Service, the Federal Agency of Inter-governmental Connections and Information (maybe the former Intelligence Agency? Ed.), Ministry for Extraordinary Situations. In addition, we have signed an agreement with the MVD [the present Ministry of Internal Affairs, successor to the KGB?] about a cooperation" (from the Patriarch's Report). Question: why are we given now this scandalous unmasking of Patriarchal cooperation with the KGB, when the very same is going on at a much larger scale quite legally?

One logical difficulty was bypassed here: how is such a cooperation with the government, in no way non-partisan, with combined with their own statements of apoliticality?

2. Regarding ecumenism, the theological mind makes a startling jump. Not only the whole of pre-revolutionary Russia has become ecumenist, but an extravagant definition of heresy and schism has been found. In the form of an absolutely arbitrary "interpretation" (that could withstand no critique) of the First Rule of St. Basil, Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk states in his report: "heretics are those with whom common prayer is forbidden -- they are those whom we accept into the Church by baptism. In another words, according to the contemporary practice -- they are Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Molokans, [a sect in Russia, established in 1830, so called because they did not fast from milk on fasting days] and adherents of the newest sects, which lately are usually called totalitarian. Here I point out that there are and were no common prayers with them in neither the practice nor in the *OFFICIAL ACTIONS* of our Church".

"The worm in the apple" lies in the last words which we have italicized. The above mentioned heretical sects are not members of the ecumenical movement, and which the Patriarchate designates in the future will be considered to be heretics and accepted by baptism. As far as dogmatic differences are concerned, no where it is shown why, for example, Methodists are closer to Orthodoxy than Adventists. However, the first are members of the WCC, while the latter are not, therefore, we may pray with them, and not with the others. Sectarians! Quickly register yourself on the religion exchange of the WCC and no one ever will dare to call you heretics!

On the other side of the coin: "conducting joint conferences, dialogues with Christians of different denominations, surely cannot but start with prayers."

Under the term schismatics we rank those whom WE (that is the MP) have excommunicated, in particular, "the so-called Synod of Bishops of the ROCA which remains in schism" (the Patriarch's Report).

However, a concession is made to the opponents of ecumenism in the Patriarchate: Metropolitan Philaret promises in his report not to serve joint liturgies with the heterodox, as well as not to invent special rites for ecumenical prayers.

The main thing that is forgotten amidst these very talmudic refinements and verbal fictions is Orthodox proselytism, the need to preach the truth of Orthodoxy to all who have gone astray and the desire to bring them into the Church. However, "forgotten" is not the right word. Ecumenism above all forbids exactly this kind of preaching; it is the principal sin of ecumenists before God and Church.

Ecumenical creeds are in agreement on one thing: they are erecting common house for themselves which will become a palace for antichrist. They rarely quarrel and never over the Truth, but over the divvying up of the flock. It is precisely this that somewhat "tightens the relations of the Patriarchate", in particular, with the Roman Catholics. Everyone is striving to shear his little ewe, doesn't want to give it to another, and, if the opportunity arrives doesn't mind swiping them from his neighbor. But as far as salvation in the true Church is concerned, that is nobody's business. So, what is this WCC, if not already a super-church of the future, with many customs and many rites, where everything that does not belong to her is labeled a heresy and schism, while anything inside her is considered to be neither?

3. Canonization of the Imperial Family.

In a short report on this theme by Metropolitan Yuvenaly a new bucket of dirty dishwater is thrown upon the saintly Family and on monarchy in general. However, it was acknowledged that due to the repentance shown in the last months of his life, one may probably forgive even the Tsar, because the Lord saved adulterers and robbers who repented. The question is postponed until the next Local Council, but now without any suggestion of canonization, in another words: the matter remains fully open. One gets the impression that this is the playing out of a revolting comedy during which any one who wants to gets an opportunity to write as much rubbish as possible on this theme. It is enough just to go through the pages of the last issues of the "Tserkovno-obshchestvenaya Vestnik" in the paper "Russkaya Mysl" and other anti-Orthodox publications.

Grant, O Lord, to Metropolitan Yuvenaly repentance before he dies, as to adulterers and robbers, which he needs much more than the Saints!

4. The Patriarch's Report is devoted to the financial situation as usual, with enviable streamlining. "The Patriarchate... in an effective manner managed her liquid assets, putting them in deposit accounts, obtaining short term government bonds and other valuable government certificates. This gave an opportunity to... repay a considerable deficit and finance full scale the most necessary church programs". Translated, this means that "the Office of the MP" basically

lived by way of usury. And, in spite of it being strictly forbidden by the Church canons, the Patriarchate shamelessly declares: "Efforts made by the Church to get rid of financial problems are undertaken quite openly, and do not contain anything against the law or morality..."

And with all this nothing is said about tobacco and vodka deals made under the cover of humanitarian assistance, about sales abroad of oil and other operations which have been unmasked in detail by the press. Verily, a shamelessness which has no bounds!

But it cannot be said that people do not see it. One statistic on the percentage of donations for the general needs of the Patriarchate is very characteristic. In 1994 donations totaled 43% of all funds received, in 1995 -- 8.4%, in 1996 -- 0.6% (figures given in the Report of the Patriarch). Such a drastic decrease may be explained by the following:

- donors are getting poorer
- seeing the "plush" way of life of the Patriarchate, people do not hurry to open their wallets
- donations no longer are registered and land in private pockets
- the general turnover of income greatly grew due to financial machinations

In brief, these data certify whatever one wants, but certainly not the growing respect for the Patriarchate among people.

5. It seems that the Moscow Patriarchate for the first time in her history pronounced the word "anathema." Gleb Yakunin and Philaret Denisenko are excommunicated. Without expressing any solidarity with those persons, as well as with the clerics defrocked by the same Council, it is noteworthy to remark that they suffered for nothing else but for exposing [the Russian has a nice pun, meaning literally "divesting"] the Patriarchate and her wonderful undertakings. The most ridiculous in the first set of accusations of Philaret is his "lack of compassion and Christian love", for that he was "COMPASSIONATELY" proclaimed "anathema before all the people."

6. One more short but vivid citation from the resolution regarding relations between the government and laity: "The Bishops' Council deems positive the development of cooperation of the ROC with international and intergovernmental organizations." What those intergovernmental organizations are and why this resolution is so short we need not interpret to a contemporary Orthodox person of the 20th century. Such a relationship of the Moscow Patriarchate leadership with the sharks of the world's governments is in every way criminal.

7. One can sum up the above with the evaluation which the Council itself gives in its epistle to the faithful, of course, equating itself with the whole Church: "Today the Church emerges from the ashes, resurrecting before our eyes, again beginning to be a voice of the nation's conscience, the main force of rebirth in our land." The Moscow Patriarchate is the wisdom, honor and conscience of our era! Hurrah for the comrade bishops!

Concluding his excellent report, Fr. Timothy speaks of the horrible situation when a "criminal mafia 'Church' " is part of a "criminal mafia government", and calls it a "terrible, horrible phenomenon, which was unknown even three or four years ago." The author enthusiastically appeals to all Orthodox people to join the ROCA.

In supplementing Fr. Timothy's article, it is noteworthy to remark that in the relatively brief data of ecumenical connections of the Patriarchate, he points out an encouraging occurrence of strong protests of truly Orthodox Christians who are demanding that the Patriarchate exit from the WCC. As we know, this question was raised during the Council's meetings, but in the materials issued by the Secretariat to the press nothing is mentioned about it. However, there is one slight hint. The resolution "On the Report of the Synod's Theological Committee" says:

"Taking into consideration the confusion which is produced in the Orthodox world due to the practice of so-called ecumenical services and rise of new tendencies in the theology and practices of Western Protestantism (expressed in the acceptance of a female priesthood, in the use of the so-called "non-exclusive language", leading to a distortion of authentic Biblical texts, and to the revision of moral norms which regulate the relations between the sexes, we consider it necessary to *raise in inter-Orthodox discussions all the complexities of questions connected with participation of representatives of Orthodox Churches in contacts with a heterodox world*, in particular, in bilateral theological dialogues, in the actions of the World Council of Churches and other international Christian organizations. We note the importance a consensus among the local Orthodox Churches in reaching the decisions in the area of mutual relations with the heterodox.

As a result of the all-Orthodox decision [!?!], an Episcopal Council must deliberate about participation or non participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the bilateral and multilateral interconfessional theological dialogues, and also in the work of the WCC and other international Christian organizations. At present, *we will continue the participation of the ROC in the work of international Christian organizations, while noting the special importance at the present moment of an Orthodox witness in a world divided by sins*" (everywhere italicized by "Ch. N.").

Due to its relative weight, participation of the Moscow Patriarchate in the WCC is very significant. Because of number of faithful, it has accordingly a proportional number of representatives in the administrative center of this organization. Therefore, the exit of the ROC from the WCC (which is about to celebrate its 50th year of existence) would be a big blow. When the news of the insistence by many Russian Orthodox on the departure from the WCC reached the heterodox ecumenists, it created a big unrest in their camp.

As is reported by the official publication of the Greek Ecumenical Patriarchate's Exarchate in America, "The Orthodox Observer" for May 5th, 1997, the Germans became especially alarmed, to the point where the president of the Evangelical Church in Germany, Bishop Klaus Engelhardt, quickly organized a delegation and as head of it flew to Russia in order to negotiate with the Moscow Patriarchate to stop such a step. Bishop Christoph Demke, who spoke at the press conference, begged the Russian Church to "maintain the momentum" because "ecumenical thinking cannot be inherited from previous generations, it requires constant nursing." As the newspaper noted, "The Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Russian Orthodox Church are two of the world's most important churches in terms of numbers and influence. Both belong to key ecumenical organizations, the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC)."

When explaining to Germans at the press conference the situation with ecumenism, a representative of the Department for External Church Relations of Moscow Patriarchate, Priest Victor Petlyuchenko declared that an anti-ecumenist movement is being "formed by [under] the influence of destructive religious and para-religious groups".

At its Council the Patriarchate found an excellent way out of the situation. It leaves the final decision on the question of staying actively in the ecumenical movement or of changing its status to that of an observer to no one else but its "sister Churches" which are as ecumenical as it is itself.

As reported by the "Ecumenical News International" on March 12th, Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk, President of the Theological Committee, told reporters that "the word ecumenism has become today a sort of a swear word in our Christian community" and "*nevertheless, (he) presented a lengthy defense of the church's ecumenical contacts in his report to the Bishop's Council.*" Speaking about deliberations regarding an exit from this organization, he said that "We cannot take such revolutionary decisions which differ from the position of other Orthodox Churches with whom we are in communion and bound by obligations."

The bulletin also notes that the decision to continue further membership in the WCC should be considered as a major victory of Patriarch Alexis II over all those who were insisting upon leaving the heretical WCC.

Of interest also is the decision of the Moscow Patriarchate regarding ROCA. At the beginning of page 5 of the Secretarial Reports it says: "The relationship with the so-called 'Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad' still in schism remains strained. Its possible favourable development is prevented because of cases of acceptance in the jurisdiction by this Church of clerics suspended by the Moscow Patriarchate for various violations of canonical discipline. This unacceptable practice, directed toward undermining the authority of our leadership (?) very much complicates bilateral connections. *However, it is worthwhile noting that within the episcopate of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad a tendency has become apparent to find for both sides an acceptable form of dialogue with the Moscow Patriarchate. Although this tendency does not correspond with the official course of the Synod of Bishops, it seems to imbue a hope for a positive change of our relations.*" (Italicized by "Ch. N.")

PERSECUTION OF THE LATVIAN FREE ORTHODOX CHURCH BY THE LATVIAN GOVERNMENT

Our editorial office received xerox copies of some Latvian newspapers and appeals to the "democratic" government of the Republic of Latvia from the diocesan office of the Latvian Free Orthodox Church which already for several years now cannot get official legal registration in spite of innumerable petitions to all possible departments of the government. To make matters worse:

As reported by the paper "Panoram of Latvia" of February 4, 1997, on January 21 just before start of services, in the administrative center of Diocese which is attached to the church of St. Vladimir, seven policemen forced their way into the church and started a commotion at the counter where candles are sold. Hearing this, His Grace Bishop Victor came out and asked the policemen what was the matter and received in answer: "We have the right to do anything!" The police started to make an inventory of the contents of the counter and then started to interrogate several parishioners present, demanding what they were doing there and how much they had received in contributions. Upon leaving the police took with them a ledger book, and "religious objects", namely, candles and icons.

The newspaper "Gigas Balls" of Jan. 27th relates that the reason for this police attack was that "the Free Orthodox Church in Daugavpils not only was not registered with the Ministry of Justice, but also was illegally selling the religious objects, and for this the Bishop was fined in the amount of 200 lats, which is the equivalent of approximately \$500!

The Latvian authorities claim that there is a law according to which every denomination is registered as one entity only. So, after the Moscow Patriarchate was registered as "the" Russian Church, (Latvian Orthodox Free Church is under the jurisdiction of the ROFC) the local authorities insist that all the other representatives of the same Church are "noncanonical" and under this pretext refuse to register the Free Latvian Orthodox Church, although Bishop Victor with logic and documentation proved to the authorities that the Church in Latvia, which he heads, is a direct heir to the by now glorified St. Bishop John (Pommern), who never was a member of Moscow Patriarchate.

It seems that the persecuted Latvian Free Orthodox Church has no way out but to complain about the "democratic" government of the Republic of Latvia to the international organizations which deal with religious and civil rights.

Those who would like to help Bishop Victor financially or with legal advice, may contact him at the address: Biskaps Viktors (Kontuzorovs): 18, Novembra iela 20; Daugavpils, LV - 5400, Latvia.

TROUBLESOME EVENTS IN THE HOLY LAND

The situation in the Holy Land becomes more and more strained.

According to news received from local sources, *Abraham's Oak has withered up* in Hebron. In former years it was very closely watched by the Chief of the Ecclesiastical Mission, Archim. Anthony (Grabbe) who on several occasions consulted Jewish specialists in botanical science, in order to help prolong the Oak's life.

The former Chief of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, Archim. Theodosy, suddenly decided to put a roof over the Oak and place around it stone tiles. In the process of preparing for these projects, the roots of the Oak were torn up and this hastened death of the Oak. At the same time, the Arabs discovered that no one is interested any longer in maintaining this property and have started to build houses on it.

The situation in the Holy City itself is not much better. There Muslim Palestinians made their presence known, encouraged by the indifference of local authorities in matters of concern to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the main shrine of Christianity, and not to their institutions.

However, after a prolonged silence, the Israeli newspapers started to react to Muslim disorders. The first information about a break-in at the Jerusalem Patriarchate was published in "The Jerusalem Post," April 13th. The very same paper on May 1st gave additional information about Muslim-Arabs and finally, a paper published in America, "The Jewish Press" of May 23, published a rather long article by Prof. Howard Adelson entitled "Jerusalem's Christian Shrines Assaulted By Muslim Waqf."

This article indeed is partly devoted to Arab law breaking committed against Christians but, using this as a pretext, the Israelis demand that the losses caused by Arabs be "restored" to them. However, the article has a number details of interest to Orthodox Christians.

A delegation of Christian representatives in Jerusalem approached Israel's Prime Minister for protection "in his capacity as the secular protector of the religious shrines of all faiths in the Holy City and as defender of the religious status quo among the various religions and sects." The delegates stressed that they are unanimously seeking protection from authorities and will support them.

Two years ago Muslims seized an underground room belonging to the Greek Patriarchate, located next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which had not been used for some 120 years. Then the Arabs decided to extend their mosque, which is located between the building belonging to the Coptic Patriarchate and northern wall of the Church of Holy Sepulchre. Arafat's organization seized as well an apartment house and also annexed it to the Mosque of Al-Khanqa. Some alterations were made to the house and public toilets installed, considered by many to be a blasphemous act.

On April 9th it became known that Arabs broke through a wall of an apartment belonging to a temporarily absent priest of the Patriarchate, carried off his effects into an adjoining room which they walled off, while storing their tools in the first. To complaints from the Patriarchate, the Arabs declared that this apartment belongs to them. And on Wednesday of Holy Week it was noticed that they had dug a tunnel under the Holy Sepulchre Church leading to the mosque. This was discovered when the floor in the church collapsed at one point.

Since all of these "renovations" were done by Arabs without even seeking a building permit from the appropriate authorities, Israel's government is demanding an immediate restoration of the disturbed rooms and their return.

As the newspaper "The Orthodox Observer" of May 5th relates, (a publication of the Exarchate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in America), Archbishop Spyridon sent written protests to Prime Minister B. Netanyahu and Jerusalem's Mayor Ehud Olmert, asking them to take measures to do everything possible to resolve these conflicts. A few days ago the Arabs left the illegally taken two rooms.

"The Jerusalem Post" of April 13 states that "Uri Mor, director of the Christian Communities Department of the Religious Affairs Ministry, said that the Waqf action constituted a serious infraction of the status quo in the holy places."

A PROBABLE MEETING OF THREE "BROTHERS"

From time to time in the press (especially the Ecumenical), persistent rumors have been circulating of a possible visit by the Pope to Russia, or of his meeting with the Moscow Patriarch in Europe. However, in spite of naming a place and sometimes even giving an approximate date for this meeting, these rumors later quieted down.

Now however, several Roman Catholic newspapers announced a possible meeting in Vienna between the Pope, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Alexis II, theoretically on June 21st.

A Polish paper "Nowy Dziennik" (New Daily) reported that while on his visit to Poland, the Pope will participate at the closing of the International Eucharistic Congress in Wroclaw, where the millennium of death of the Roman Catholic saint Wojciech will be celebrated. This newspaper, quoting the Italian newspaper "Corriere della Sera", relates the possibility of a meeting of the Pope with Patriarchs Alexis and Bartholomew. It states that "this information is not official, yet definite. An official announcement is expected on June 10th, when the Pope will return to Vatican". A Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said that he was not in position to confirm or deny that the meeting was expected to happen.

An American Catholic newspaper in New York, "Tablet," informs us that although the Vatican insists that this meeting is not officially announced, yet two Austrian papers announced that the Pope will arrive in Vienna on June 21st to participate in this historic meeting." Similar information is given by another Catholic paper, "Catholic New York" of May 29th.

Since "where is smoke there is a fire" and somewhere and somehow (one cannot exclude that it will be done secretly) the long expected meeting between the two traitors to Orthodoxy and an Roman Catholic heretic by all means will take place. Too much has been written and said about it lately.

See our next issue for the next installment of this story.

ABOUT THE GRAVE OF A NEW MARTYR "GLORIFIED" BY THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

The newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" of May 1-7 # 4172 published a small article signed by Anna Poliansky from St. Petersburg, called "Lenin is with Us". It concerns an ugly statue of Lenin which was erected above the sanctuary of a church destroyed in the 30's in the city of Pushkin. This statue was made out of church bells. Two years ago the local authorities decided that this statue has to go, but it stands there still.

According to Poliansky, after the Moscow Patriarchate glorified a priest in 1994 St. John Kutcherov (the first one to be killed by the atheists during first days of the Revolution), only in 1995 did the faithful finally got permission to put over his grave a cross with a short description of his martyric podvig. However, now the administration of Pushkin decided that the cross stands in the way, that the cross appears to have the statue as a background and this is "an insult to the historical revolutionary feelings of the citizens" and demanded that the cross be dismantled. In addition, a rector of the St. Sophia cathedral church, Fr. Gennady, was fined 388,000 rubles with the demand to take off the cross. It seems, that the faithful admirers of St. New Martyr John are ready to fight to keep the cross on the grave of the saint "glorified" by the Patriarchate, a priest who was martyred by the followers of Lenin.

The Patriarchate, which "glorified" him, did not bring his relics into the church and even did not for more than a year bother to have a cross placed upon his grave: this was done by the local faithful. It would be interesting to find out: how this martyr was "glorified"? One would expect that this was done probably only by Alexis II and his Synod members signing an decree!

A NEW MANNER OF DEMONIC POSSESSION

A newspaper "Christian News" of April 21 related that a sect which appeared in England in 1993 and is called the "Laughing Revival" lately has begun to spread very quickly. From London it traveled to the USA and some other countries. In 1994 in a church in the Toronto Airport daily "services" began of the sect of the Laughing Revival, which they blasphemously term the breath of the Holy Spirit. In this airport church people from all ways of walks meet and from different nations and professions. The temple received a nickname of "The Toronto Blessing." The founder of this sect is Howard-Browne, an evangelist from South Africa.

During those "services" the sectarians are overwhelmed by uncontrollable laughter which lasts for days and some times even up to 6 weeks. Describing one of these services, one of the leaders of this satanic laugh relates:

"I simply laid my hand on top of his head!... The expression on his face changed instantly! His eyes opened wider than anyone's I have ever seen, and in less than two seconds he exploded with the greatest outburst of holy laughter I have ever heard!... He tried to stand up, but he was instantly so drunk with the power of the Holy Spirit (may the Lord forgive us for repeating this blasphemy in order to demonstrate the practices of this sect) that he could not stand! I lightly laid my hand on his head again, and down on the floor he went, bam! He laughed and laughed, and rolled and rolled and tried to get up, but he was stuck with the same irresistible Holy Ghost glue which had caught me so many years ago."

We are definitely witnessing the triumph of "hades, the laughable" which has emerged from the nethermost depths!

DOES SATAN EXIST?

"The New York Times" of May 10th in a section, Religion Journal, published an article "Is Satan Real? Most People Think Not."

According to a nationwide surveys made in the USA, it is considered that 95% of Americans are religious. However, a recent telephone survey of 1007 people by the Barna Research Group of Oxnard, California, gave interesting results. On the question whether they agree that Satan is "not a living being, but is a symbol of evil" -- 62% agreed with this statement, 30% disagreed and 8% had no special opinion. Yet, almost all believed in the existence of paradise and living angels!

Some two years ago the very same group made another survey seeking to find out what people think of existence of hades, as a place of physical tortures. In spite of absolutely clear indications of it in the Gospels, it was obvious that less than one American in three believe in the existence of the devil and hades, as a place of torture.

The article stresses that because of the ideas of "love" preached by ecumenists, religious leaders speak less and less about the devil and hades.

The Holy Fathers say that the greatest achievement of the devil is inculcating the thought that he is non-existent.

A CONTEMPORARY IMPRESSION OF CHRIST

The Serbian church newspaper "The Path of Orthodoxy" for May is concerned that the impression of Jesus Christ on today's young Americans is mainly made under the influence of Hollywood movies, such as "Jesus of Nazareth", "The Gospel according to St. Matthew", "Jesus Superstar" or "The Last Temptation of Christ".

Professor Stephenson Humphries-Brooks, who teaches religion at a college in Clinton, N.Y. said that "Students come to my class with present interpretations of Jesus... much of which does not appear to be from the church but from the media, especially film."

"Jesus of Nazareth" (a blasphemous film which came out in 1977) by the Italian Franco Zeffirelli "is a current cultural definer who Jesus is." This professor thinks that this film seems outstanding to many because it bears a similarity to the Gospel narratives while corresponding to contemporary ideas about piety and therefore, becomes a sort of "canonical film."

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of April 30th related that according to records gathered from different libraries, there are more than 65,571 books written about Christ the Saviour. Of these, 53,094 have His name in the book's title and the majority of these (25,077) were printed after 1979. Mr. David Barrett, editor of the World Christian Encyclopedia said that in the year 1996 alone some 1,500 books about our Saviour were published.