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FROM THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA

On Tuesday, April 22/May 2, 1998, in New York, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia opened. The Council was attended by the following bishops:

The First Hierarch of the ROCOR, Metropolitan Vitaly, Archbishop Anthony of Western America and San Francisco (who arrived the following day due to being hospitalized), Archbishop Laurus of Syracuse and Troitsa, Alipy, Archbishop of Chicago and Detroit, Mark, Archbishop of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain, Hilarion, Archbishop of Australia and New Zealand, Lazarus, Archbishop of Tambov and Odessa, Benjamin, Bishop of Tchernomorje and Kuban, Evtikhy, Bishop of Ishima and Siberia, Daniel, Bishop of Erie. Barnabas, Bishop of Cannes, Kyrill, Bishop of Seattle, Mitrophan, Bishop of Boston, Ambrose, Bishop of Vevey, Agathangel, Bishop of Simpheropol, Gabriel, Bishop of Manhattan and Michael, Bishop of Toronto.

Bishop Seraphim of Brussels and Western Europe did not attend apparently for health reasons.

It seems no ROCOR Council of Bishops created so much concern (among not only clergy of the Church abroad, but also ordinary lay people) since the days of the lay mutiny in San Francisco in the early 60's when they rebelled against the very principle of hierarchical authority (more than 30 years ago) as this council in May.

The unrest was a result of publicly known correspondence between the First Hierarch Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop of Berlin and Germany Mark regarding the question of unification with the Moscow Patriarchate which is so much promoted by the non-Russian Archbishop. The publication of a Declaration of mutual agreement in the name of the ROCOR and Moscow Patriarchate began to worry many Russians. A number of reports and petitions were sent to the Council of Bishops which expressed support for the traditional policies of the ROCOR and her First Hierarch.

At the end of January, the American priests Steven Allen, Alexis Young and Deacon Christopher Johnson, from Colorado, addressed the hierarchs of the ROCOR with a spirited call to condemn the agreement of Archbishop Mark and MP as "a complete surrender to the ideology of the Moscow Patriarchate." Those clergy asked that it be "re-stated with a clear and united voice, as the Synod of our right-believing Church, what you have taught us since 1927 concerning Sergianism and what you have taught us for so many decades concerning Ecumenism."

In mid-February an outstanding critique of the "Declaration" of the Russian Church Abroad Hierarch and a Moscow Patriarchate was written by Bishop Kyrill. Almost simultaneously a common reaction to the notorious "Declaration" was made by the Bishops in Russia and then, separately by Bishop Evtikhy. At the same time, the First Hierarch and members of the Synod of Bishops were addressed by 14 of the most prominent clergy of the Western European Diocese, who expressed their concern over "dialogues" with the MP conducted by Archbishop Mark.

On day of the Feast of Orthodoxy Abbot Adrian from New York wrote his "Open Letter" giving an impartial evaluation of the contemporary situation in the ROCOR.

In another letter addressed to the First Hierarch and whole Episcopate of the ROCOR, 88 clergy "from different countries and continents" wrote that "we just want to state our total solidarity with declarations and articles by Their Graces Bishops Evtikhy and Kyrill, venerable Father Lev Lebedev, Priest George Primak, Priest Timothy Alferov and three clergy from Denver (Colorado)." Fr. Lev Lebedev, asked by the Metropolitan to present his report to the Council of Bishops, suddenly died in the Synod building a few days before the beginning of the Council's sessions. The burial service was conducted in the Synod Cathedral and his coffin was sent to Kursk (Russia).

In opposition to these clergy was a widely circulated letter signed by 28 clergy and 24 laity of the German Diocese, which attempted to justify the dialogues with Patriarchate concluding with the words: "We ask you to trust our hierarch as we trusted him and do trust him as well as our other representatives in the discussions. We want to avoid disagreements and are unanimous in our aspiration toward Christ's truth in order to solve such complicated matters together with you, our archpastors."

The advocates of the German Diocese (in full accord with Archbishop Mark's plan) also petitioned the Council of Bishops to convene an All-Diaspora Council to include participation of clergy and laity and even offered to the council "possible themes of reports and deliberations at the Fourth All-Diasporal Council of the ROCOR." This draft was composed by Deacon Andrew Sikoyev and consists of two pages of small print single spaced. Unfortunately, as we know, the Council of Bishops imprudently agreed to call the All-Diaspora Council in two years. The convocation of such a Council at the present time from all points of view (practical and ideological) presents a very great danger to the Church Abroad and this in the very near future. It will produce only one of two results: a schism or unification with Moscow Patriarchate.

It is self-evident that the well organized German Diocese very soon will offer her own program for the Council and will prepare many reports even before any pre-Conciliar committees can be established.

Among the actions taken against the Moscow Patriarchate, a lay group was organized in Albany, N.Y., which sent petitions to all the parishes for signatures expressing support for the First Hierarch which stated: "We fully support the Epistle of His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly in which the contemporary significance of the Russian Orthodox Church

Abroad is maintained. We unconditionally support its inclusion of the basic positions of our Church against such heresies as Sergianism and Ecumenism, contrary to any possible unification with the Moscow Patriarchate."

A priest of the ROCOR parish in the Novgorod Region Timothy Alferov also reacted. The newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" ("Russian Mind") published in France on April 22 reported his appeal. In his address he states that "activities of Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany are directed toward the loss of the special identity of the ROCOR." Quite correctly noting that "at present only Metropolitan Vitaly stands against the 'powers of apostasy,'" Fr. Timothy also notes that "we see that around Vladyka Metropolitan there is a dark web of conspiracy. Constantly "the advanced age and ill health" of the Metropolitan is mentioned, also pastoral deficiencies, lack of love are referred to..." While further developing his thoughts about a conspiracy against the ROCOR, Fr. Alferov says that in a preparation of the palace revolution "before a dethronement and removal of any monarch, there develops a unlimited campaign of public slander so that the nation and society would turn away from the doomed... But that would be only a Ecclesiastical "February", "October" [Revolution] -- total capitulation before the Moscow Patriarchate will shortly follow." Fr. Timothy calls in his appeal all to unite around the Metropolitan so that he would not stand alone at the upcoming Council.

Quite in contradistinction is a 28 page letter to Metropolitan Vitaly by Archpriest Victor Potapov. This composition would need a whole book to answer it. This is an extremely detailed critique of the First Hierarch's Declaration, which he entitled "Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (Her Contemporary Significance)."

Archpriest Potapov quite certainly is in sympathy with the negotiations with the Patriarchate and misuses many citations from various letters and epistles of Holy New Martyrs as well as from the writings of Metropolitan Anthony and Anastassy and other hierarchs of the Church Abroad. The letter of Archpriest Potapov in some places sounds very insolent and it is not without reason that some few years ago, when he was making a report (by the way a very valuable one) to the Council of Bishops, he was asked to stop his reading and leave the meeting hall.

Unfortunately, one cannot deny that the citations taken by him from Counciliar epistles issued after 1990 in many cases are extremely ambiguous and even compromising in regard to the relationship with the Moscow Patriarchate.

In an effort to contradict Metropolitan Vitaly's views regarding the loss of grace in the Moscow Patriarchate, Archpriest Potapov lists a whole number of bishops, clergy and laity of the Moscow Patriarchate calling them Righteous. Among them is the name, for example, of Archbishop Lucas Voino-Yassenetsky. This is a confirmed Sergianist, known for his discovery of a new method of treatment in the field of purulent medicine, who when he was awarded by Stalin a very substantial monetary sum returned it to him with a very servile letter asking him to use it for charity. Those, who happened to come in touch with the former spiritual children of Fr. Tavriion (also mentioned among the full of grace Righteous Ones) hardly would doubt that he was at best a petty tyrant, and most probably, just a person in prelest (self-deception).

In general, the contemporary theory (which one must consider to be an invention of the Moscow Patriarchate) states that anyone who suffered at the hands of the godless Soviet government is unquestionably a Confessor and a Righteous One.

The godless Soviet government in its persecution not only of Orthodoxy, but in general of all religions started with the Orthodox. At that time the martyric podvig of tens of thousands of bishops, clergy and lay people was an undoubted one, but already by the early 30's and specially in the mid-thirties, not only Sergianists and Renovationists (as soon as they accomplished their treacherous role) but also heretics and even Jews suffered at the hands of the very same government.

In matters of suffering one has to consider not only physical suffering, but also ideology and a person's beliefs. There were crucified with Christ two thieves: both of them equally suffered physical pain, yet the Church glorifies only one "wise thief", but not the one who was justly executed for his crimes and did not repent.

This truth, rather simple to understand, is a stumbling block not only for Fr. Potapov, but also for many others.

The Council of Bishops, before closing, unanimously repeated the text of the anathema against Ecumenism, which was adopted during Metropolitan Philaret's tenure and decreed that the dialogues with the hierarchs of Moscow Patriarchate must stop, while permitting them with her lower clergy. A dangerous ambiguity lies hidden in this position. While stopping dialogues with representatives of the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archbishop Mark will continue them as before, but now on an approved basis not with bishops, but with clergy, as agents in no way different from the bishops. In other words: there is no difference between being "eaten" and "devoured."

The unanimous support of the First Hierarch by the most prominent part of the clergy of the Church Abroad was unexpected on the part of Archbishop Mark's supporters and therefore did not permit them to openly step forward and question the capability of Metropolitan Vitaly (one should think this will only be the case temporarily) so it was postponed until a more suitable time: maybe the All-Diasporal Council?

After a number of years of having no bishop for South America, the Council of Bishops elected Archimandrite Alexander (Mileant).

The Council also addressed the "Beloved Children of the Church in the Homeland and Diaspora" with an unprecedented epistle in the following words:

Epistle of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

(By order of the President of the council of Bishops Metropolitan Vitaly, this letter is to be read the Sunday of the Blind Man, (May 4/17) from the Amvon for all to hear.)

To the Beloved Children of the Church in the Homeland and in the Diaspora:

Christ is Risen!

Having assembled from all the ends of the world at the Synodal Cathedral in New York, under the protection of the miraculous Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God, the Council of Bishops greet you with this salutation, which is eternal, yet ever new. Although we are scattered throughout the world, and oceans and continents separate us, the one faith in the true and saving teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we have received from His holy Apostles and their successors, the Holy Fathers, unites us.

In these days we are undergoing grievous temptations: in recent times several of our clergymen have been assaulted, and some even murdered; our cathedral in Montreal burned down, the cause of the conflagration being yet unknown; the myrrh-streaming Iveron Icon of the Mother of God disappeared after the murder of its protector, Brother Joseph, and its location is unknown. The monastery in Hebron, with its object of holy veneration, the Oak of Mambre, was wrested from us in the crudest and most violent possible manner, and occupied by the Moscow Patriarchate. By such a course of action the Moscow Patriarchate has taken the path of aggression and deepened the rift which separates us.

It is not surprising that these events have troubled many. But it is more lamentable that they have given rise to the most incredible rumors and false interpretations, which are harmful to the Church.

The Council of Bishops finds its necessary to make clear that our Church has never held any negotiations concerning union with the Moscow Patriarchate -- i.e., concerning the self-abolition of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia -- and it is understood that it does not propose to undertake any such negotiations at this time. [?!] [Italics by "Ch N"]

As in the past, the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia consider it their duty to minister pastorally to you, their children, and to stand firm in the Truth of Orthodox doctrine, despite the fact that many now spurn this. Our refusal to embrace fashionable doctrines, such as ecumenism and Sergianism, renders us unpopular, and may even place us in the minority. But this should not disturb us. Amidst all the difficulties we encounter on the path toward the Truth of Christ, let us remember the words of our divine Teacher: "Fear not, little flock... [Lk.12:32] In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" [Jn. 16:33], and the words of the Apostle: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith" [1 Jn. 5:4]. May our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ make us steadfast in this Faith.

With paternal love in Christ,

The Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

New York City, Feast of Mid-Pentecost, 30 April/13 May, 1998

A CRAFTY INTERVIEW

The newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" ("Russian Mind") in # 4218 on April 22, 1998, published an interview given by Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany to Ms. Bentler.

Asked what are his relations with other Orthodox jurisdictions in Germany, Archbishop Mark started by expressing regret that the representatives of Moscow Patriarchate lied all these years about the freedom of the Church in the USSR, but "even after the fall of the Soviet government, the very same people repeatedly come here and until now they never apologized that they lied in those years... It is sad that after many hard years for the Church, those people who govern this institution could not find the courage to repent and say that their statements were lies."

This remark appears to be a quite correct. Yet, without seeking any sort of repentance on part of the Moscow Patriarchate Archbishop Mark continues: "**Certainly, we feel and we understand, that in spite of everything, we still have to find a common language, because we are two parts of the same Church and this Church, naturally has to be united. Here there can be no differing sides and parties. There has been enough of this kind of activity already**"

Then, speaking of his "numerous" meetings with the Moscow Archbishop Theophan, this Hierarch of the Church Abroad continues: "**Although, not everything is so simple, we still are trying to reach a general understanding.**"

This does not always happen as fast as we would like. One has to overcome major difficulties in order to see indeed what unites us, to overcome what stands between us. There are already changes for the better in this direction. One is our common Declaration, accepted in December of last year".

If previously Archbishop Mark justified his "meetings" by the necessity of dialogue with "all the separated parts of the Russian Church," now he openly talks about her having **only two** parts. Why does he exclude from his dialogue the Orthodox Russian Free Church (with her more than 100 open parishes and a hundred Catacomb communities) under the jurisdiction of Archbishop Valentin of Suzdal and Vladimir as well as about a dozen various catacomb groups who also have their own Bishops and the multitude of Russian Orthodox people, who stand behind them? Or maybe, by the standards of the Moscow Patriarchate they in no way belong to the Russian Church? One can understand such a stand among the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate, but why is it that a hierarch of the ROCOR does not mention their existence, not even by one word? Can this be in order "to overcome what stands between us"?

Among other questions Archbishop Mark was asked: how do you understand Ecumenism?

Here again we see a very ambiguous and sly answer:

After explaining in a few sentences that Ecumenism started in the XXth century with the efforts of Christians "to know each other more closely and somehow to draw near to each other," he further says (and quite correctly) that in this matter "there can be no compromises -- everything is precisely and clearly said in the Gospels and by the Ecumenical Councils." But then he follows this with: "the Ecumenical Movement can be properly evaluated as a being correct and in an ecclesiastical spirit only when **its aim is to give opportunity to those Christians who departed from the single stream of Christian church life, which is preserved only in Orthodoxy, to return to it.**" This explanation closes with the following: "**Therefore we salute such efforts, if they serve re-establishment of the unity within the One Apostolic Church.**" (?)

What sort of return to "unity with the One Apostolic Church" can heretics and sectarians have, when they fell away from this unity a millennium ago?

This amazing statement -- by a hierarch who is very highly educated in theology and one who follows current literature and news -- would make any experienced Jesuit jealous.

Instead of a ponderous phrase like "Christians, who departed from the stream of Christian church life," one can say simply heretics, who, by the way, are in no way interested in conversion to Orthodoxy. Besides, Archbishop Mark should be ashamed of himself, if he, of all people, does not know by now that Ecumenism in no way seeks an opportunity for heretics to return to Orthodoxy, but that this is a mighty and world wide Masonic organization which openly states that it hopes to achieve one world religion by the end of this millennium. It is not a matter of preaching Orthodoxy to heretics, but seducing the Orthodox into anti-Christ's world religion, which by now includes **all humanity!** In other words, while wrapping the whole matter in a veil, in reality what does Archbishop Mark salute?

THE EXCAVATIONS AND BETHANY IN THE HOLY LAND DAMAGED

According to information sent by the Orthodox Palestine Society, on May 3 it was discovered that a number of windows in the "Excavations" building in Jerusalem were broken (so called because it contains some excavations from the time of Christ). Both outside and inside metallic pipes and stones (the main weapon of the local residents) were found. Inside the church, immediately by the window behind the "Judgement Gate" and opposite the wall of Hadrian (1st century), glass splinters and stones were scattered about. Glass in one of the iron doors and a lock were knocked out.

Police were summoned and several high ranking officers immediately arrived at the crime scene and promised to investigate and keep the representatives of the OPS informed of the results of their investigation.

Windows were also broken in the Bethany School. When the noise of broken windows alarmed some nuns, they ran outside. One of the bandits threw at them a piece of metal, which hit one of the nuns in her back.

The local residents constantly threaten the few nuns living there. As in the case of the Excavations, in Bethany the police were called.

AN ATTEMPT TO SPLIT THE ROCOR PARISH IN DENMARK

According to a newspaper we just received from Denmark in an article by Klaus Vinsents it is obvious that the Moscow Patriarchate hopes to grab the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky which was built by Emperor Alexander III when he married a Danish Princess Dagmar, who later became the Empress Maria Feodorovna and after the Revolution returned to Denmark and was buried in the royal vaults.

This parish has some 120 parishioners and lived quietly in the jurisdiction of the ROCA until just recently, when an announcement appeared in Copenhagen from the Moscow Patriarchate's Archbishop Longin that he "is conducting services in the church of St. Ansgar", a Roman Catholic church which is located across the street from our cathedral.

This Archbishop managed to serve the Liturgy of St. Basil within **an hour's time!** The service it seems was very dull, especially without a choir.

After the end of this piece of theater all present went downstairs for a cup of tea and entertainment by a small band of balalaika players.

According to an unofficial source, this "service" and a later meeting were attended by no more than 30 persons, basically old ladies, who have very little to do with the church and they were admitted only by permission of the elderly woman, Lodyzhensky, who organized this attempted schism.

Archbishop Longin from Düsseldorf (Germany) is a certified lawyer and he in particular is trying to gain possession of our churches in Germany by means of legal techniques. According to one report from Copenhagen, "this hierarchs smells of KGB miles away."

The Danish reporter thinks that the parish is splitting, but fortunately only a small fraction fell away, which continues to attend services in the Catholic church.

FROM LIFE OF THE ORTHODOX RUSSIAN FREE CHURCH

The newspaper "Obshchaya Gazeta" ("Common Gazette") in its issue #1 for 1998 published a large article entitled "A Great Clergy Revolution" by Michael Pozdeyev.

This article presents a rather detailed review of the situation in the Church after the fall of Communism "when the Church (here and further on by "Church" he has in mind not the people of God, but an established political structure: the Moscow Patriarchate)" which "got up off her knees by being supported by all and every."

Speaking about the recent "Law on Freedom of Conscience" the author, not without reason, relates that "The first victim are not the Krishnaites or the Mormons, but more than a hundred parishes of the Russian Orthodox Free Church, headed by the Archbishop Valentin of Suzdal and Vladimir. These parishes which began leaving the Moscow Patriarchate already at the end of 80's, at that time registered under the Church Abroad, but most recently were deserted by it and left to their fate. Their status from the legal point of view is uncertain. According to the new law all the faithful outside the Patriarchate are automatically labeled schismatics, extremists, newcomers to foreign 'canonical territory' -- well, anything that they can be accused of! In this manner the last obstacle will be overcome toward the Patriarchate's dream of gathering all [Russian] Orthodox under its omophorion". (Emphasis by "Ch. N")

After informing readers of the seizures by the Patriarchate of property belonging to the ROCOR in "distant foreign lands" -- that means the Holy Land as well as its efforts to grab ROCOR churches in Western Europe -- the author describes the scandalous financial operations by Patriarchate, her cover ups of internal amorality and intrigues and gives a very interesting overview of her "social ministry."

In a section about the government M. Pozdeyev writes: "In sociological matters the Patriarch is separated from the President in a list of the most important personalities in Russia by only about 20 degrees. Actually, today we are governed not by Yeltsin, but Alexis II; the difference between him and the president is that everything is permitted to him. Above him is only the Lord God Himself. Or so he thinks. As does the President. And unfortunately, the majority of Russians think so, too. Even if a critique of the Church is justified, it bounces off like peas from a wall... She declares every critique to be slander and a remnant of atheism..."

"The Church has taken from the government over the last ten years everything she wanted. Now it is a the government's turn to cling to the golden robes." The author believes that the situation of the Moscow Patriarchate will be totally unshakable for decades to come.

He also says that now there is a new conception of what is a Russian, akin to the old one of the "Soviet man", that is, "who combines knowledge of evil with absolute indifference to it; who sees the Faith as participation in rites; a person with the psychology of a Roman slave and with a conception of the world and his own soul of an Tungese shaman; someone who *is afraid* of everyone who is more powerful than he, and who envies anyone who is not like him. Someone who is proud of his own lack of spiritual liberty. A Russian for the beginning of the XX1st century".

These prognoses of the author reveal his depth of thought and observation and may the Lord grant that he is wrong in at least some of it!

Seizure of a church by OMON in Orekhovo-Zooyevo

The newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" of April 22 reported that on April 4th the members of OMON (a sort of private militia) seized in a town near Orekhovo-Zooyevo a small church dedicated to the Grand Duchess Elizabeth under the jurisdiction of Archbishop Valentin. This parish was properly registered in 1997. This chapel was given to parishioners by a private businessman who was renting a number of buildings, this one among them. The building was partly in ruins until restored by the members of the community. Some time earlier, the same businessman offered this ruined chapel to the Moscow Patriarchate, but was refused. As result, he offered it to the ROFC.

Yet as soon as it became possible to start services in it, the Moscow Patriarchate began energetic agitation against the Free Russian Church. Flyers were posted in the town informing residents that the Russian Orthodox Free Church is an "American Church which has no business being on Russian soil..." the Patriarchate which formerly refused this building, now turned to the town's administration asking that this building be given to it "as the historically rightful heir of all the pre-Revolutionary Church property within the Moscow region."

This community has filed complaints with the office of prosecutor and a number of human rights organizations.

The Latvian Orthodox Free Church

In connection with the prolonged efforts to register the Orthodox Church (which does not recognize the Moscow Patriarchate) in Latvia and with Bishop Victor's appeals to various governmental institutions, on April 21 he received an answer from a delegate to the Saime (Parliament) of the Latvian Republic which stated:

"Thank you for the extensively informative material which I have received from you. Upon studying it I came to conclusion that your Free Orthodox Church is not registered in the Ministry of Justice according to Section 3 of Article 10 of the 'Law on Religious Organizations.' This supposedly is because its name is not sufficiently different from the already registered Latvian Orthodox Church, but this is not the main reason. *The Moscow Patriarchate, of course, does not want to lose her influence, even partially, which she retained when the Latvian government was reestablished.*

"I believe that you are absolutely right, but due to the present power structure in the Saime, an introduction of a change in the law in order to help solve your problem is not possible. I do hope that after the elections of the 7th Saime the situation will be more favourable.

"With respect and hopes for future cooperation. Juris Dobelis"

"ECUMENICAL CONTACTS" OF THE SERBIAN CHURCH

Russians both in Russia and abroad who sympathize with the Serbs constantly write now that supposedly the Serbian Church, following the example of the Georgian Church (who under pressure from monastics and faithful lay people has departed from the WCC), has also left this heretical assemblage. Unfortunately, this in no way corresponds with the truth.

Under the influence of a splendid report to the Council of Bishops by Artemy, Bishop of Rashka and Prizren, and with the support of monastics, clergy and faithful lay people demanding that the Church withdraw from WCC, the Serbian Council of Bishops adopted a very ambiguous resolution: "Ecumenism is indeed harmful and we have to leave it, but... this matter can be resolved only by a Pan-Orthodox council." Since the Ecumenical Patriarch is "first among equals," the Serbian Council has sent to this heretical Ecumenist a petition to convene a Pan-Orthodox Council which will condemn the heresy of Ecumenism! Under such conditions can one seriously believe the Serbian Church has left the WCC?

According to the official newspaper of the Serbian Church "Pravoslavlje" ("Orthodoxy") on May 1st, in an article by Protodeacon Stephen Rajic (two full newspaper columns long) which quotes Roman Catholic and Protestant delegates who came to visit Serbia arriving on April 3rd who said, **"After the initiative of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which invited us, we will respond with our own invitation made from Germany."**

Thus, the Serbian Church **itself invited** the Evangelical Bishop Rolf Kape and Roman Catholic Bishop Joseph Homaier, Rainer Rine and Thomas Bremer (there is no indication of their denomination in the paper). This Protestant-Roman Catholic delegation was met by Bishop Lavrentije of Shabac and Valjevo (well known for his liberalism), the Secretary of the Ecclesiastical Court, Protodeacon Sephen Rajic, an employee of the Shabac and Valjevo Diocese Deacon Rado Todorovic and the editor of the foreign news section of the newspaper "Pravoslavlje," Zhivica Tucich.

Shortly after these "distinguished visitors" were settled in a hotel, they were received by Patriarch Pavle in presence of the chief of staff, Protodeacon Momir Lechich.

After visiting some sights in Belgrade, on Sunday April 5th this group of heretics attended the Divine Liturgy at Ascension Church in Belgrade, which was celebrated by Patriarch Pavle. Afterwards the guests left for Germany and made a joint announcement to the press. In it the Evangelist Kope among other things said: "We found a warm reception in the Serbian Church. The program included meetings with political leaders... It is important to find a peaceful solution and that the Church would make her input... Our visit was a symbolic one and it is very important that we came as Evangelical and Roman Catholic delegation, which clearly testifies that Ecumenical collaboration is possible..."

The Roman Catholic Homeier on his part declared that he was especially impressed by the personality of Patriarch Pavle and also "the exclusive meeting with Bishops Savva and Lavrentije. We were invited in Kragujevac, so that we could in a prayerful silence [?!] meditate about this sacred place."

When the Byzantine Emperors hoped to save their empire with help from heretics, they entered in the criminal Union of Florence with the Roman Catholics and their kingdom perished. It seems that in imitation of them, now the Serbian Church is trying to save her people with the assistance of the very same heretics, who by now have united all the

former heresies existing in the world under the new name of Ecumenism. It seems that the Lord's words: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33) have become outdated at the end of the XXth century!

A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT

An official publication of the Antiochean Patriarchate in America "The Orthodox Word" for May reported from a newspaper published in Amman, Jordan, that one of the Syrian parishes under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Patriarchate a few years ago initiated a court case in the Israeli Supreme Court against the Patriarchate and won.

The Palestinian Arabs and the Syrians for quite some time have complained of Greek chauvinism in the Jerusalem Patriarchate and in particular, that the Patriarchate has a limitless control over all their parish properties. As a result of this recent Israeli court decision, the property of this parish, formerly registered as belonging to Patriarchate, was replaced by a new one, giving the ownership to the parish only. The journal sees this case as a very important judicial precedent and it is expected that now the other parishes will follow suit.

A SCANDALOUS STORY

As we noted in "Church News" previously (issue 2 [# 69]) for February, the Old Calendar Greek bishops Paisios and Vikentios petitioned Patriarch Bartholomew to be admitted into his jurisdiction. Only after a period of 3 months did a favourable answer arrive. But the conditions of admission by the Patriarchate seem to be quite unusual even for Greeks, who are used to all kinds of extremes.

Both Paisios and Vikentios were re-tonsured as monks, (although it is a common knowledge that any monk may tonsure someone), then they were tonsured as readers and both men gradually were elevated to the episcopacy! The first, Paisios, became Bishop of Tyanon and the second, Vikentios, Bishop of Apamia. According to some unverified rumors, they were even re-baptized, because the New Calendarists, who do recognize the baptisms of all sorts of heretics and schismatics, reject the sacraments of Old Calendarists! On the 6th week of Great Lent all clergy were ordered to show up in the St. Irene Chrysovolantou church in New York -- for re-ordination? At least that would be a logical step.

The re-ordinations of Paisios and Vikentios were performed in Constantinople, while their flock was in no way informed. Monasteries in Florida and England have stopped commemorating Paisios and a substantial part of his flock has left him.

Bartholomew made the monastery and church of St. Irene stavropigial and all the establishments and property of Paisios became metochias (dependencies) of Patriarchate.

Probably just temporarily, this group has been permitted to retain the Old Calendar with reference to case of the Holy Mountain and with the special remark, that "the above decrees have force exclusively and only with regard to this specific situation in the United States in America and in no way apply to any other Old Calendar schismatic circumstance anywhere else."

On orders of Bartholomew Archbishop Spyridon on April 23 installed Paisios as the abbot of the stavropigial monastery. According to rumors, Vikentios is to become a consultant to Spyridon.

PERFIDIOUS PLAN TO CHANGE THE PASCHALION

Last year in the Syrian city of Aleppo an assembly was held at which the invention of a new Paschalion was discussed which according to Ecumenical plans will unite all "Christians."

The bulletin "International News Ecumenical" of April 2nd states that Dr. Thomas Fitzgerald, an "Orthodox priest" and the chief secretary of the Program for Unity and Renewal at the WCC "was pleasantly surprised by the positive responses. It shows that many churches take the issue seriously, and recognize the value of proposals from the Aleppo meeting."

Representatives of the "world's main traditions... agreed on a proposal **for the churches to retain their current method of calculating the date of Easter, but using the most accurate astronomical techniques.**" (?) This plan was recognized as the most simple one and which supposedly will retain the principle of the decree of the First Ecumenical Council of 325 AD in Nicea about the first Sunday after the Spring full moon. By retaining the Gregorian Roman Catholic calendar the question immediately arises: how is the Spring full moon to be determined?

The conspirators, of course, give no details and one has to be very knowledgeable in astronomy to detect where the trap lies. One is quite obvious: the Ecumenists want by all means to replace the Orthodox Paschalion and to do it, of course, in the least traceable manner.

Fitzgerald declared that "more accurate astronomical calculations could contribute to a solution. But it also depends upon the will of the churches to come to an agreement."

Interestingly, the Orthodox Paschalion has continually irritated all sorts of heretics since at least the 20's.

Fitzgerald also joyfully declared that among the many favourable responses the most enthusiastic was from Vatican. Among the primary traitors of the Patristic traditions are most certainly the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the **Russian Orthodox Church**, represented by the Moscow Patriarchate, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Church of Greece (which briefly mentioned that the Calendar Question produced schism in that country) the Roman Catholics, the Old Catholics in Germany, the South African Anglican Theological Committee, Presbyterians from the USA and a Free Church Federal Council which represents 19 denominations.

The Antiochean Patriarch offered to raise the question of the Paschalion at the Assembly of the WCC which is to be convened in Harare, Zimbabwe, in December.

A crafty Bartholomew informed the WCC that "the only solution for the pan-Christian celebration of Easter on the same date would be the faithful application of the decision taken by the Council in Nicea." If that is so, then why rely on heretical astronomers?

The Moscow Patriarchate expressed hopes that consultations would comply with agreement on a common date for Easter.

According to the same bulletin, but for March 4th, the General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches (including Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican members) Dr. Clements met with Patriarch Alexis and members of the Foreign Relations Department of the Patriarchate a few months ago. He admitted that some members of the ROC criticized Ecumenism for assisting the "prosyllitism" among the Orthodox, but that **the Patriarch assured him that he is personally devoted to cause of the Conference of the European Churches.**

Ecumenists are extremely happy that there are no longer any contradictory proposals such as were made in 1920 when the League of Nations offered to establish a fixed date for the celebration of Easter.

DIFFICULTIES WITHIN THE WCC

According to "Ecumenical News International" of April 30th, on April 28th in Holland in the town of Kamen, Konrad Raiser, the General Secretary of the WCC, sponsored an Ecumenical gathering named "The Day of the Church" in effort to unite all the Christians by the end of the second millennium.

No less than 15 thousand people participated in the open air prayers in spite of heavy rain. In addition, the participants of all faiths were able to attend lectures of some 100 speakers on various themes. At one of the meetings Raiser admitted that Ecumenists had not succeeded in their efforts to unite religions. There were only a few steps made in reconciling Protestants and Anglicans, but it is entirely different matter when there is a question of "Catholic and Orthodox traditions." At present, the Orthodox create the main problem for the Ecumenists. In the majority of the Local Orthodox Churches there has appeared strong pressure upon the hierarchy by faithful lay people and lower clergy. This movement is strong enough that even the convinced hierarch/Ecumenists have to take it into consideration. This is specially noticeable in the Moscow Patriarchate, where the senior hierarchs (the Patriarch and the head of the Department of Foreign Relations, Cyril of Smolensk) are forced to make very contradictory statements.

Just recently there was a pan-Orthodox meeting in Thessalonika, Greece, (from April 29th to May 2nd) in which 15 Local Churches participated. According to "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" ("The Independent Gazette") from May 6th the Moscow Patriarchate raised the question of expediency of the participation of the Orthodox Churches in the WCC.

The resolutions of this meeting were expected to be published by the Nezavisimaya Gazeta not sooner than on May 20th. It seems, that at times the meetings were very stormy and that even the term "schism" was mentioned. The Ecumenical Patriarchate declared that it is willing to go into schism if the demands would not be met. But no mention was made of what kind of demands.

Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk in the name of Moscow Patriarchate presented a rather substantial report saying that the WCC has to undergo a radical change in its structure and threatened that otherwise it will have to withdraw from the WCC. This Patriarchate proposed the other Orthodox Churches boycott the 8th Assembly of the WCC in Zimbabwe, scheduled for December of this year. The Orthodox also complain (and certainly not for the first time) that they feel they are a minority, swallowed up by a Protestant majority.

Priest Tsetis (a consultant at the Ecumenical Patriarchate and also a member of the pan-Orthodox meeting) was especially irritated by the conservative groups within the Orthodox Churches, in particular Russian, Serbian and Georgian (who withdrew from the WCC) and who insist upon a termination of the relationship with WCC. He declared that the pan-Orthodox conference "unanimously denounced those schismatic and extremist groups within the Orthodox Churches that are using the theme of Ecumenism to criticize the Orthodox leadership, and undermine its authority by deliberately misinforming the faithful, thus attempting to create divisions within the Orthodox Churches."

Priest Tsetis insisted that the Orthodox members only want "to have clear ecclesiological criteria for membership in the WCC, because it's not clear with the WCC what the Church is. There are both traditional Protestants and Orthodox member churches, but there are also new entities which join [the WCC] without holding the belief of the traditional churches, such as our Trinitarian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For us it is unacceptable to have formulas different from this."

As a result, the conference decided to send their delegates to the Assembly in order to present their grievances and with the provision that this time the delegates of the Local Churches will not participate in Ecumenical prayers. The Moscow Patriarchate gained the consent of all the members that she will have her own separate delegation, but also will not participate in the votes and other religious ceremonies. This decision not to participate in the common prayers of the Orthodox representatives stays in power until their demands upon the WCC are met and with the warning that if there will be a refusal to reorganize, all will withdraw from this Council. But... no matter how good some of the demands and the resolutions sound, the 6th paragraph of the final document states, that "participants are unanimous in their understanding of the need for continued participation in various forms of inter-Christian activity," and paragraph 7 says that "we do not have the right to renounce the mission laid upon us by our Lord Jesus Christ, the mission of testimony to the truth before the non-Orthodox world. We should not disrupt relations with Christians of other confessions who are ready to cooperate with us."

The unexpected demands of the Orthodox are a terrible blow to the whole structure of the WCC and Raiser in particular, because in Zimbabwe he planned to triumphantly celebrate its 50th anniversary.

It is self-explanatory that these ultimata of the Orthodox upon the WCC are in no way a sudden impulse of repentance by the traitor hierarchs, long convinced Ecumenists. But they were forced to restrain their collaborations with heretics due to the very strong pressure exerted upon them by their flocks, which came from the bottom up. At the same time, talk about possible schism among Orthodox members of the WCC is the result of very obvious rivalries in status, prestige and influence between the nominal priority of the Ecumenical Patriarch and numerically predominant Moscow Patriarchate.

DEATH OF SERAPHIM, ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS

On April 10 at the age of 85 the Primate of the Greek Church, Seraphim of Athens died. He had presided over his Church for 24 years.

The Greek government expressed its sorrow and the City of Athens donated a prestigious plot in its central cemetery.

The Ecumenical Patriarch made a special announcement about this death and said that the deceased was a "humble but strong personality and dedicated to the Ecumenical Patriarchate."

The General Secretary of the WCC Konrad Raiser wrote a letter of condolence to Metropolitan Chrysostomos, locum tenens of Archbishop Seraphim, who ruled the Church while he was ill, saying that the late archbishop was "a spiritual man of extreme simplicity and sincerity... fully aware of the difficulties of Ecumenical relationship and yet fully supportive of any effort aiming at the unity of the church." It is interesting to note that he speaks of "church" and not churches.

Christodulos Paraskevaïdis was elected as the new Archbishop of Athens who, according to the "Ecumenical News International" of May 13, had a strained relationship with Archbishop Seraphim.

The new head of the Greek Church is characterized as a reformer, much more tolerant than his predecessor. He is 59 years old, has a doctorate in religious studies and speaks English, French, Italian, German and Russian.

While serving as bishop of Volos (near the Aegian Sea) he was renowned for his ministry in social work in different fields, including the combat of drug abuse and the spread of AIDS.

Out of 77 votes he got 49. Upon consenting to the election he stressed that his rule will be a period of modernization and renewal. His flock consists of slightly more than ten and a half million faithful, and there are almost no Roman Catholics in Greece. His predecessor had strained relations with them. It is believed that the new Archbishop will correct this.

The Ecumenical Patriarch sent Archbishop Christodulos a greeting in which he said, "The Mother Church and I personally congratulate Your Beatitude on your worthy election as the head of holy sister Church of Greece".

Asked by the reporters if he will invite the Patriarch to Athens, new Archbishop replied: "It will be my first concern and... the Phanar will be my first visit among the Orthodox Churches."

It seems that the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Greece will be close allies in matters of Ecumenism. It is not without reason that Ecumenists so enthusiastically salute his election

THEY REPENTED, BUT NOT STRONGLY ENOUGH

All kinds of Jewish organizations have insisted that the Roman Catholics should apologize to them for insufficient help rendered them during the Nazi period. They especially attack what seems to them to be the inactivity of Pope Pius XII. The contemporary Pope John Paul II more than 10 years ago promised the Jews that the Vatican will issue a special document condemning the passivity of Roman Catholicism during the persecution of them by the Nazis and that in it Roman Catholicism will also apologize. The papal promise was made good almost 11 years later, 16th of March of current year, when Vatican published a document 14 pages long entitled "We understand."

Before that, independently of the Vatican, the German Roman Catholic bishops and the Archbishop of France, (himself a son of Jewish rabbi, baptized at the age of 14) apologized.

Yet, the Catholic apologies provoked a lot of criticism in the Jewish and pro-Jewish press.

As "Ecumenical News International" reports on April 2nd, Cardinal Cassini (who authored the Vatican document) told journalists: "This is an act of repentance, it is more than apology." The document quotes the Pope's appeal to "repent of past errors and infidelities... as we prepare for the beginning of the third millennium of Christianity."

According to the "The New York Times International" of March 27th a chief rabbi of Brazil Henry Sobel and a representative of the Latin American Jewish Congress visited the Pope. At that audience the rabbi said to him: "The document could have been more emphatic in so far as the church admitting its institutional guilt."

At the same time, Jewish organizations secured the agreement of the Vatican to open for them a substantial part of the archives of that period. The Vatican has already published a portion of the archives, but was insisted that the remaining part has to be closed for researchers for an additional 20 years. Yet Roman Catholics had to agree to open the archives prior to that upon the insistence of Gerhardt Reigner, a honorary president of the World Jewish Congress, who complained that his message, delivered to the papal nunzio in 1942 in Switzerland was not among the documents published by Vatican. Another Jewish activist, the president of the B'nai B'rith, declared that "we have repeatedly asked for access to the war time archives so that the truth of the period can be known... The unpublished documents might well disclose positive aspects of church conduct."

The newspaper "The Jewish Press" of March 27th relates a conversation between the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem, Michael Sabbah, and Israel's chief rabbis Israel Lau and Eliahu Bakshi-Doron. An Arab, Michael Sabbah said (not without a reason) that "the people who carried it out are the enemies of Christianity and not Christians... We share the pain of Jews... It is unreasonable for the Vatican or any other Christian to apologize for such an act because if we do apologize, the implication is that we did it. We did not do it and we are not apologizing for something done by others."

Sabbah mentioned in this conversation that not only Jews suffered at the hands of the Nazis, but also many Christians. To that Rabbi Lau said that, "it is impossible to make such a comparison because there was no systematic action against Christians like there was against Jews."

One can be said with certainty: no apologies will never justify the Vatican in eyes of the world Judaism.

NEW FUNCTIONS FOR ANCIENT SAINTS

by Archpriest Michael Ardov

In its aspiration to replace the Communist Party in Russia, the Moscow Patriarchate has gone quite far. New evidence of this comes from the newspaper "Vecherniyaya Moskva" ("Evening Moscow") of April 2, 1998. This information has the following title: "A Church Built by the Entire Missile World" and it is reported that "the Patriarch of Moscow arrived at the Central Control of Strategic Missiles in Moscow's suburb Vlasikha" in order to consecrate a church in which "there is a side altar dedicated to the Holy Great Martyr Barbara - a heavenly patron of strategic missiles. This became known and was wholeheartedly accepted when by ukaz of the President of Russia the Day of Cruise Missiles for Strategic Purposes was set for December 17th. According to the Orthodox calendar on this particular day the Great Martyr is commemorated."

It would be interesting to find out which of the saints the President and the Patriarch will choose to be patrons of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons?