

CHURCH NEWS

An Independent Publication of Church Opinion

May – June, 2001
Vol. 13, # 3 (94)

Supported by the voluntary contributions of its readers.
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CHURCH NEWS
639 Center St.
Oradell, NJ 07649
Tel./Fax (201) 967-7684

Find us at: <http://www.russianorthodoxchurch.org>

AN AMAZING UKASE FROM THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA

The Internet "Listok," originally set up with the blessing of Metropolitan Vitaly, published the following Ukase, translated from the Russian by "Ch.N.," suspending clergymen in the Western Europe Diocese:

UKASE

From the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

To: the clergymen of the Western Europe Diocese, Archpriest Michel de Castebaljac, Archpriest Benjamin Joukoff, Archpriest Paul Puarie, Archpriest Radu Apostolesku, Priest Nicholas Semenoff, Priest Quentin de Kastelbajac, Priest Nicholas Apostolesku, Protodeacons Sergius Vsevoljsky and Herman Ivanoff-Trinadzaty.

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

on April 11/24, 2001 heard:

A written report by two clergymen -- Archpriest George Larin and Archpriest Steven Pavlenko of February 10/23, 2001 in which they outlined the details of their investigation related to the unrest that developed in the Western Europe Diocese. They have spent 11 days there.

The Synod of Bishops after a thorough examination of the presented report **decreed**:

The above mentioned clergymen, for distortion of ecclesiastical discipline and disobedience to the Supreme Administration and for refusal to commemorate during the services the diocesan ruling bishop, His Grace Bishop Ambrose, appointed by the Council of Bishops in 2000, based on the ecclesiastical canons 14 and 15 of the Second Constantinople Council and 25 and 31 of the Apostolic Canons, are suspended by the Synod of Bishops until their full repentance.

If they will repent and agree not only to commemorate, but also obey Bishop Ambrose, in this way will discontinue their rebellion against the church authorities and then they may have their right to serve restored. On all of them the duty imposed to come to Munich [Germany, "Ch. N."] on May 2 (new cal.) of the current year in order to meet with Archbishop Luauus to settle their further status. About what Ukase to give them.

Signed: Metropolitan Vitaly, President of the Synod of Bishops
Archbishop Laurus, Secretary to the Synod of Bishops

This ukase shines with a rarely seen administrative and even grammatical illiteracy.

To begin with, it seems that the present Chancery of the Synod of Bishops accepted the view that any sort of Internet announcement may be now accepted as an official document, even if it lacks the genuine signatures of the President and the Secretary, plus the obligatory Synod seal. This "document" is also lacking an outgoing number!

In quoting by this Synod's decree of canons -- there is again a failure. The new Synod's "canonist", it seems, tried to pile up as many canons as he could and didn't notice that the 25th Apostolic canon has absolutely no relationship to the case of the Western Europe clergy. It says: "If a bishop, presbyter, or deacon be found guilty of fornication, perjury, or theft, let him be deposed, but let him not be excommunicated; for the Scripture says, 'thou shall not punish a man twice for the same offense.' In like manner other clergy shall be subject to the same proceeding."

Not one of the Western Europe clergymen was accused of any of the crimes listed in this canon, while The Synod of Bishops demonstrates its own illiteracy by **twice** suspending Priest Nicholas Semenoff! However, this is not the first such blunder in the misuse of the canons by the Synod of Bishops. In the effort to put together as many canons as the page can hold, the Synod of Bishops in the case "defrocking" Bishop Valentine even used a canon referring to the situation of the baptism of the children of the heretical Donatists!

The story of an ukase sent via Internet demonstrates Synod's Office even more. Bad enough that the ukase was forwarded only by the Internet (one might question: will it ever be sent out directly?) -- the Deputy Secretary Bishop Gabriel added (as one can say -- insult to injury) -- he called one of the clergy in France and commissioned him to relay the contents of the ukase to the clergy involved **by telephone!**

The Western Europe clergy refused to submit to this ukase and it is known that they gathered for a meeting, presided by Bishop Barnabas and have sent to the Synod a motivated explanation.

At the same time, the situation in Brussels became more strained. A week before the parish feast (St. Job the Much Suffering), a parishioner warned Bishop Ambrose that his appearance on this day would not be welcomed by them. At the same time information reached Brussels that Archbishops Laurus, Mark and the newly ordained for German diocese Vicar-Bishop Agapit were expected for the parish feast. This information frightened the Rector, Fr. Nicholas Semenoff and his parishioners to such an extent, that they have decided to close the church gates and to cancel services on May 18th and 19th.

Nevertheless, on Friday May 18 around 5 PM Bishop Ambrose arrived. The gates were locked and near them stood a group of parishioners. Bishop Ambrose asked for the keys and Matushka answered, "One of the parishioners has them." No one gave him the keys and parishioners started to shout "anaxios". The red-faced bishop went to his car in anger and served in another parish in Brussels, where the rector is Fr. Stephen Weerts.

A PARALLEL "WESTERN EUROPE DIOCESE"?

We have received a copy (in Russian, translated by "Ch. N.") of the "Epistle to the God-loving flock by the Diocesan Convention Of the Russian Orthodox Church in Europe," dated "Cannes, Day of the Holy Spirit, 2001". The epistle has a sub-title: "Today the grace of Holy Spirit has gathered us." It starts with the sentence: "Gathered around Bishop Barnabas of Cannes from various parts of the Western Europe Diocese, we have today collectively celebrated the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and Disciples of our Savior on the day of Pentecost and we prayed that He would show us the way in these difficult circumstances which our diocese and the whole Russian Church Abroad are facing now."

Then there are discussed 2 points (Ecumenism and Sergianism) and the confusing decisions about them at the unfortunate Council of the ROCOR in 2000 and which introduced "a new extremely perverted spirit of a **dual language** which corrupts and breaks up from within any church group which uses it."

Then after describing the reasons for the tragic schism in the Western-Europe clergy because of the outrageous acts of Ambrose, the Bishop of Western Europe, the Convention closes its Epistle with following paragraph:

"While pausing in order to secure the clerical duties placed upon our clergymen, we are forced to create a diocesan structure under the omophorion of our bishop, the Right Rev. Barnabas, while remaining under the spiritual authority of our blessed Metropolitans Anthony, Anastassy, Philaret and the present First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly, May the Lord let us hear the voice of our conscience and follow its direction, following the narrow path which leads to salvation." (Emphasis by "Ch. N.").

Under this work there are the signatures of Bishop Barnabas, Archpriests Michel de Castebaljac, Radu Apostolesku, Constantine Fedoroff and Priests Nicholas Sememoff, Quentin de Castebaljac and Protodeacons S. Vsevolojky and H. Ivanov-Trinadzaty. Then follow 23 signatures of readers, ordinary lay people and even a few women!

It is seldom that one sees a more absurd and adventurous epistle signed by a bishop and few respected archpriests and priests!

In a private conversation between the "Church News" editor and Metropolitan Vitaly, he stated that he has no knowledge of a newly opened parallel "diocese" without borders. Unfortunately, this adventure was evoked by no means by the grace of the Holy Spirit!

APPEAL TO THE FLOCK OF ROCOR'S WESTERN EUROPE DIOCESE

Christ is Risen!

Gathered in Munich in accord with the resolution of the Council of Bishops, 2000, for the glorification of new saints of God and also the ordination of a vicar bishop for the German diocese, with the Lord's help we have yesterday completed the double celebration in which participated a multitude of clergymen of the Dioceses of Germany and Western Europe.

Disorders in the Western Europe Diocese disturb and trouble us. In connection with this the Synod of Bishops had to take special measures toward those who refused to commemorate their ruling bishop His Grace Ambrose, Bishop of Geneva and Western Europe, be subject to him, obey him and fulfill the conciliar regulations.

Such disobedient behavior and unauthorized acts are a violation of canonical rules and ecclesiastical discipline. As the First Hierarchy, His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly did previously warn, as well as the Synod of Bishops, conducting the services under similar violations is a terrible crime and deprives their sacred acts of legality and grace.

By the Ukase of April 13/26, the Synod of Bishops suspended the following clergymen:

Bishop Barnabas, Archpriest Michel de Castebaljac, Paul Puarie, Radu Apostolesky, Benjamin Joukoff, priests Nicholas Sememoff, Quentin de Castebaljac, Nicholas Apostolesku, Protodeacons Sergius Vsevolojky and Herman Ivanov-Trinadzaty.

The Synod of Bishops ordered those clergymen to meet with the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, His Eminence Archbishop Laurus in order to discuss the present situation on April 19/May 2 in the city of Munich, Germany. To our regret, we must state that none of the above mentioned clergymen did apply to himself this order.

We consider it to be our archpastoral duty to inform the flock of the necessity to abstain from the incorrect and unlawful "sacramental acts" of the above-mentioned clergy. Any sort of sacred acts performed by those persons in violation of the suspension are void of grace and serve as condemnation to those who participate in it.

Once again we call all to repentance and a sensible solution of this sad situation

Munich April 19/May 2, 2001

Archbishop Laurus, Archbishop Mark, Archbishop Hilarion, Bishop Ambrose, Bishop Evtikhy, Bishop Agapit.

In this appeal here again we are confronted with the striking illiteracy, not only of the canons, but also of grammar of the present Synod of Bishops. It seems that no one troubled himself to look at the "Statutes of the ROCOR".

To begin with, the feast of "glorification of God's new saints" was a result of the "glorification" performed last year by the Moscow Patriarchate. Further, it is absolutely certain that the masses of Russian Orthodox People have no idea as who all these persons are.

The appeal does not indicate if this is an extraordinary Synod meeting or it is an unexpected Synod conference. It is to be noted that it is for the first time in the history of ROCOR in an official decree is a bishop equated with "clergymen" and his suspension is a matter for separate consideration.

According to the "Statutes of the ROCOR" (Part 3, Synod of Bishops) in paragraph 17 it is stated: "In cases of Synod deliberations of extremely important cases, as well as the trial of a bishop in a court of the first instance the Synod complement is to be increased with other bishops, specifically invited by the First Hierarchy (underlined by "Ch. N.").

In paragraph 20 it is stated: "The meeting Synod of Bishops is considered valid when in addition to the President there participate no less than half of its members. But at deliberations of matters of extreme importance, and also at a trial of a bishop in the first instance, when the enlarged body of the Synod is required, the meeting is considered as valid if there are present no less than 6 bishops, including the President of the Synod (underlined by "Ch. N.").

To any point of view this illiterate "Appeal" has 6 bishop's signatures (1, just ordained, is not a member of the Synod body and 2 are substitutes) – but the main thing – and most scandalous – the President of the Council of Bishops and Synod of Bishops – was not present! What is the value of these suspensions?

THE GLORIFICATION OF METROPOLITAN PHILARET (VOZNESENSKY), FIRST HIERARCH OF ROCOR

According to information from the Orthodox magazine Vertograd (via the Internet May 3, 2001 # 61) in the Tsar Constantine Cathedral in the city of Suzdal, on Tuesday April 18/May1, 2001 there was a festive glorification in the host of saints of Metropolitan Philaret, the late First Hierarchy of the ROCOR.

On Monday, April 17/30 His Eminence Seraphim, Archbishop of Suhum and Abhazia served a Liturgy in memory of Metropolitan Philaret and after that, the First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox (Autonomous) Church Metropolitan Valentine, served the customary last panikhida.

In the evening, in presence of pilgrims from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Ural, Central Russia and Caucasus the 5 Bishops, 21 priests and 4 deacons conducted the vigil service at which for the first time there was sung the glorification to Metropolitan Philaret and hymns from the service to him.

His Grace Bishop Ambrose of Khabarovsk, who has sufficiently recovered after the terrible assault upon him, took part in the glorification services and served a litya in the narthex of the cathedral. Archbishop Theodore of Borisovo and Sanino announced the Synod's Act of the glorification of St. Philaret. During the polyeleon there was brought forth a large icon of the glorified saint, embroidered by Helen Kudriavtsev (an amazing artist in this field) made by a special iconographic technique. During the anointing with the blessed oil performed by Metropolitan Valentin, Archbishop Theodore gave to everyone a paper icon – a reproduction of the original icon.

In the morning of May 1st, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir, Valentin, concelebrated the Liturgy in the Tsar Constantine Cathedral with Theodore, Archbishop of Borisovo and Sanino, Seraphim of Sukhum and Abhazia, Anthony Bishop of Yaranks and Ambrose, Bishop of Khabarovsk with 22 priests and 5 deacons.

After the communion of clergy, the mitred Archpriest George Novakovsky (the rector of St. Olga Church in Zheleznovodsk) announced the Epistle of the ROFC to the god loving flock. After the end of the Liturgy there was a moleben to St. Philaret and a procession around the cathedral and the nearby church of the Icon of "The Joy of All Who Sorrow" Mother of God.

After the traditional "many years" Metropolitan Valentin thanked the participants of this feast and briefly touched on some of the current problems in church. The five hour long service was concluded with a general dinner.

Later in the day there was a meeting in the diocesan building for all present. Metropolitan Valentin informed his flock about the major decisions reached at the Synod meeting held from April 28 to 30. He also said that in October a council of bishops is planned.

The present clergy touched on the subjects of ecclesiastical education, church publications and the present system of electronic registration of Russian citizens.

As opposed to the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church does not believe that they have to keep the flock in ignorance about decisions and regulations. Therefore, it is already known that one of the first questions raised at the Synod meeting was the matter of "the gracelessness of the Moscow Patriarchate, a problem that greatly concerns the Catacomb faithful who are in the jurisdiction of the ROAC. After detailed deliberations on this matter, the Synod of Bishops decreed to create a committee chaired by Anthony, Bishop of Yaransk to investigate the theological and spiritual-canonical status of the Moscow Patriarchate, after deciding upon the membership and the area of problems to be considered by this Committee".

The Synod of Bishops also "took note of the wish of some hierarchs, clergymen and lay people of the ROAC to study the matter of the canonization of some respected hierarchs and zealots of the ROCOR. His Eminence Archbishop Seraphim was appointed as chairman of the Committee which is commissioned with to investigate their biographies and teachings and to present the results to the Synod of Bishops in order to see if there are grounds for their glorification".

The members of the Synod of Bishops studied the matter of missionary activity by clergymen and laity of the ROAC in the global computer Internet, deciding it was proper to annul the blessing of the First Hierarchy of the ROAC in the unofficial Internet-resources. At the same time, it was considered expedient to create an official website for the Russian Church".

Also discussed was the matter of the Gnostic false teaching of "the Imyabozhniki" (a sect which worships the name of God), which lately became a subject of discussion in some theological circles of the Russian Church. The Synod of Bishops confirmed its absolute devotion to the Patristic teaching and the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church regarding this matter. It was noted that the Local Council of the Russian Church in the 1917-1918 did not issue a definite resolution regarding the "Imyaslavtsy" (or Imyabozhniki), therefore the Synod of Bishops believes that the final decision regarding this matter is beyond its competence. The Synod appealed to the clergy and laity of the ROAC to stay away from accusing one another of "heresy". The Epistle of the Synod of Bishops devotes a considerable part to an appeal not to turn a theological argument about "Imyabozhie" into a reason for ecclesiastical schism."

NOTE by Church News: the above quotations are taken not from the original text of Synod decisions, but from the publication of the bulletin Vertograd.

Just a few days after the glorification of Metropolitan Philaret by the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, independently from it, the Holy Orthodox Church of North America glorified him also with its center in Boston. The rite of glorification was performed in a church in Worcester, MA, which was previously in the jurisdiction of the ROCOR. The rector of this church is V. Rev. Victor Melekhov.

After a festive Liturgy at which participated many clergy and some 300 faithful – there was offered a dinner for all present.

AN INTERVIEW WITH METR. VALENTIN

We print below an interview published by the Orthodox magazine Vertograd # 59 of April 24, 2001

How do you evaluate the future of the Russian Orthodox (autonomous) Church in Russia and abroad?

We believe and hope that the Russian people who seek the true Orthodoxy of the Holy Fathers will gather under the omophorion of the Russian Orthodox Church and we, with God's help will restore her canonical structure and normal ecclesiastical life within her – let it be not powerful with numbers, but strong in spirit. We pray to the Lord God and hope for His help, that lawless arbitrariness regarding religious matters in our Fatherland will be stopped, when one confession gets all the advantages, and the Russian Orthodox Church, which disagrees with the MP on a number of matters of faith, morals and canons – persecutions begin.

We put our hopes that in the present extremely difficult situation, which is found not only in Russia, but also far beyond her borders, where practically all the Local Churches participate in the heresy of ecumenism and in this way they destroy the healthy framework of Orthodoxy, we would be able to offer canonical refuge to all those who want to live and confess Orthodoxy, who aspire not only to preserve it, but also to confess Orthodox teachings not only in words, but in their lives.

Will there be a schism in the ROCOR?

I believe that there will be no big schism, because over there is almost nothing left for a "split". Some of those who didn't agree with the decisions of the hierarchs of ROCOR will be looking for new jurisdictions, and some, who are indifferent to Orthodoxy and Orthodox teachings, will let the Synod Abroad do what they want. It should not be forgotten that the majority, whose conscience was sincerely troubled by what has happened in the ROCOR, left already in the 1995, when the Synod Abroad uncanonically suspended several Russian Hierarchs. After all, the conflict at that time was not over power, but over the most important issue – the future of the Russian Church in Russia – will it become 'barter' in the game of the very same powers who even at that time were seeking union with the MP, so they can get the most profitable conditions for themselves or it will grow and become stronger becoming a refuge to all those who seek the pure Orthodoxy of the Holy Fathers. The Synod Abroad made its choice. Therefore now that the hierarchs Abroad have betrayed a Church which anathematized ecumenism and canonized the New Martyrs, some left them and the rest will rush after their bishops to embrace 'World Orthodoxy'.

What in your belief has to happen in the Russian Church of the Moscow Patriarchate so that your jurisdiction would commune with her?

This is a very hypothetical question. The Moscow Patriarchate, from the moment of her creation by Metropolitan Sergius on the one hand and the tyrant Stalin on the other side – sank very deeply into various deviations, canonical and moral. To expect her to be "self-curing" is in vain since the MP emerged as an organized untruth and her improvement would actually mean her self-destruction. Here one can hope only for a miracle from God. It has happened in Church history that Orthodoxy, totally chased out of existence, reestablished itself, heretics were thrown out and the former persecutors of Orthodoxy bent their heads and hearts before the Truth. What one can suggest and would need to be done is hard even to presume. If there existed some way for this to happen, then surely some one would realize it, yet, so far, all those who no longer want to cheat their consciences and seek to live according to conscience, according to the commandments of

the Gospel, according to the suggestions of the Holy Fathers, do not make any changes in her, but leave the Moscow Patriarchate.

What are your relations with the Old Calendarists?

We love all Orthodox Christians, as the Lord Jesus Christ commands, but we renounce any violation of the Apostolic Canons, the Ecumenical and Local Church Councils. We sympathize with the Old Calendarists in their struggle against ecumenism, the new calendar, etc.

To our great sadness, it has to be noted that the Old Calendarist Greeks have many various groups: Mathewites, Chrysostomites, Kallinikites, Bostonian, all of which so far have been through a period of disorganization, therefore, for time being we consider it to be the best to follow the decision of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad of 1975 under presidency of St. Philaret (Voznesensky) to abstain from communion with them until they unite among themselves or at least establish relationships with one another. The offers are there, but we are not in a hurry to answer in the hope that there will come about a more favorable moment when we will be able to associate with the one Greek True Orthodox Church and not with various separate groups. But this temporary abstinence has a purely church-administrative character.

Are you sorry about leaving the ROC/MP in 1990?

Were the Hebrews sorry that they have left "the house of slavery" -- of Egypt? Those who got used to Egyptian fleshpots-- were sorry. Those who were zealous of God -- certainly not!

Do you believe that you have had no way out and if yes, then why?

While in the MP I was striving for service to God's Church according to my strength, although I grew up in the midst of Catacomb nuns "Tikhonites", who thought me how to scrutinize the whole machinery of the MP inside and out, down to every screw, and while I scrutinized the MP I saw almost always that it was based upon a lie and the disdain of "the pastors" for the flock. At present the Moscow Patriarchate is a state religion. To my shame and great sadness, I happened to make some agonizing compromises of conscience, some times -- refuse to notice what was so striking and was not to be considered normal Orthodox life. I tried to justify the hierarchs of the MP by reason that during the Communist regime, under the muzzle of a gun, there is no other way for people to pray in the churches and be taught the word of God.

Then perestroika began, the gun disappeared, but the monstrosity of this untruth, to which one had to give in and "not to notice," grew even stronger. Sooner or later the cup of patience overflowed. Almost no one manages to leave the MP without difficulty and temptations; there is always some sort of hook which holds one back even when to the conscience everything is clear. Some have human attachments, some a high position, some crafty calculations, but the Lord helps, He releases one from these hooks, some times leading one through stern tests.

I have repented of all my sins committed while in the MP several times in church before all the honorable people, who pardoned me. And now, I daily pray to the Lord and ask Him not to remember my transgressions but to prolong my service to the Church of God, Orthodoxy, Russia and Russian people not only in Russia but also far beyond her borders, not out of fear, but in conscience.

When you have served in the Moscow Patriarchate, what did you know about the Church Abroad?

In my childhood I was brought up in the bosom of the Catacomb Church when during services the name of Metropolitan Anastassy -- the First Hierarch of the Church Abroad -- was commemorated. Then Metropolitan Nestor became my spiritual father, a famous Kamchatka missionary, who for long years served in the Church Abroad in China and after the war came to the USSR believing the promises of the representatives of the MP who constantly insisted that the persecution of the Church in the Fatherland had ended. He paid for his trust with ten years in the camps. From him I also found out about the Church Abroad.

I was tonsured a monk by Archimandrite Seraphim (Smykov, former pastor in the Church Abroad) -- who was at some time ordained by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitzky) who during the war came to Russia from Yugoslavia in order to regenerate the faith in the Russian people, when under the German occupation the churches started to re-open. In particular, he opened the St. Catherine Cathedral in Krasnodar. So, from my childhood and young years I have had many impressions, although certainly, my impressions were to some degree idealized and I was to meet with the Church Abroad not at her best period and experiencing quite a number of disappointments.

I was fortunate to associate with such great hierarch as Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) the Chancellor of the ROCOR for over 50 years and who in the last years, almost alone fought with the apostasy of its hierarchs. Shortly before his death he

insisted he be brought to Suzdal – being already in a wheel chair he prayed and served with us and, so to say, handed over to us the best witness of the Church Abroad.

The Russian Orthodox Church is not simply a continuation of the Church Abroad – in her there are gathered those numerous Catacomb members and those of the ROCOR and those who have left the MP, realizing her untruth, in order to restore the true Orthodox Russian Church, confess the Faith and strictly preserve the canons and ways of Orthodoxy.

What is your attitude toward facts that St. John of Shanghai commemorated Patriarch Alexis I (Simansky) at the proscopedia?

I believe this is a disinformation. Such affirmation is based upon the words of the recently reposed OCA bishop Vassily (Rodzianko). All his life he made efforts to prove that the Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate had good relations and that only the “extremists” in the ROCOR were standing up against the MP: I believe that in his old age he simply exaggerated, trying to present the St. John as a friend of the Moscow Patriarchate.

If St. John considered it possible to commemorate Patriarch Alexis on proscopedia, then why did he so abruptly break away from this patriarch when for a short time he happened to be in his jurisdiction? Why did he, by risking his life try to take his flock outside the boundaries of this patriarch in communist China? Why is his signature found under numerous documents of the Church Abroad that unmask the Patriarchate? Today the situation is much worse. When the Saint reposed in God, Ecumenism was only an idea; there was the hope that the hierarchs of the MP were holding to the Sergianist course just out of fear for their lives. In our time Ecumenism has practically destroyed all Orthodox Local Churches and the MP at her “jubilee council” openly accepted the Ecumenical “doctrine regarding relationship to heterodox”, which directly opposes the Holy Fathers’ teachings, but also at the previous their council accepted the heresies, for example in 1994 the MP decreed by the Council that it is possible to pray with heterodox, which is forbidden by the canons of the Councils and Holy Fathers.

Ten years have passed since all the threats of the MP hierarchs on the part of the Communist government have vanished yet they stubbornly insist upon the Sergianite course even increase it. And when we think of St. John and question ourselves: could he be among the hierarchs of the ROCOR who during the autumn of his life expressed the aspiration to unite with the MP? The answer is clear for us – no he could not.

The bishop of the American Metropolia, Vassily Rodzianko, for this or that reason this time did say a truth, only making something favorable for his politicking.

From 1941 to 1945 the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR (first in Yugoslavia and then in Germany) happened to be in total isolation and had no possibility of having connections with the outside world. The postal service in these countries during the war and even some time after it ended was non-existent. Using this situation the Soviets widely spread rumors that Metropolitan Anastassy disappeared and the Synod no longer existed. At the same time, the Moscow hierarchs, especially Metropolitan Nicholas (Yarushevuch) testified that the Church now is completely free and the “Fatherland has forgiven” everybody, even the old time émigrés and they may safely return home. Like every hierarch in the Far East, St. John of Shanghai also believed this lie and indeed started to commemorate both Metropolitan Anastassy and the Moscow Patriarchate, and he stayed in jurisdiction of the latter for nearly a year.

Yet in 1945 by a sheer miracle, Metropolitan Anastassy managed to come from Germany to Switzerland and from there contact the outside world. At the insistence of the government of the USSR, the Swiss parliament nearly deported Metropolitan Anastassy back to Germany. At that time the intercession of the American government helped. Due to the request of the American Metropolitan region headed by Metropolitan Theofil (who at that time was still in the jurisdiction of ROCOR) and political pressure from America, the Metropolitan was permitted to remain in Switzerland for several months. Upon finding out that Metropolitan Anastassy was alive and the Synod of Bishops was functioning, Vladyka John immediately severed his relationship with the MP, took measures for salvation of his flock and wrote a letter of apology to Metropolitan Anastassy. Earlier it used to be in the Synod’s files.

Even after Metropolitan Anastassy returned to Germany, the Synod had connection with the outside world through a pious Russian woman, Catherine Silin (who later became the nun Eupraxia). She traveled in various ways to the borders of Germany and Switzerland and at an arranged place the exchange was made of correspondence between the Synod Administration and the “free world”.

St. John commemorated the MP being deceived, but also, at that time the MP quite seriously and very convincing condemned the heresy of Ecumenism and without doubt by now he would not recognize her as valid Russian Church and would not agree with the treacherous decisions of the last Council of the Church Abroad.

PROVOCATIONS IN SUZDAL

The last Council of Bishops convened in October of 2000, had a tremendously important consequences of not only for the believers in the ROCOR, but also for her dioceses in Russia.

In connection with the radical change in the almost 80 year long course of the Church Abroad, in various places of the globe there emerged a wide interest in the personality of Metropolitan Valentin and the Russian Orthodox Church he is heading. Several communities already joined his jurisdiction, for example a St. Basil of Riasan parish in Riasan, also the

Brotherhoods of Tsarevitch Alexis and Apostle James, both in Moscow. Some began to gather additional information about him. This inevitably alarmed his enemies, who quickly started a new wave of slanders and provocations against him.

It started with accusation of Metropolitan Valentine by the former Secretary of the Synod, Archpriest Andrew Osetrov that he is a supporter of the heresy of "the Imyabozhniki" (worshippers of the name of God). Three priests and one protodeacon joined him. Not being satisfied with the Synod's decision regarding this matter, Osetrov found a new way to annoy his First Hierarch. Using children's innocence and by bribing them, he composed a dirty film of children's "testimonies" and his own commentaries and delivered it to the local government departments and certainly, the Moscow Patriarchate. A considerable part of deceived children very soon began to write to the Metropolitan their apology letters. At the same time it became known that in this persecution takes part a former hierodeacon John of the Suzdal diocese, which ran away with a nun and returned to the MP. He bribed nun Sophia, who was a Treasurer of the Diocese. She was able to buy a house and received several hundred dollars to resettle; former Protodeacon Dimitry Krassovsky, unemployed, also unexpectedly bought an apartment and a car. In spite of numerous admonitions on part of the Church Administration to repent and stop the schism, calls to attend an ecclesiastical trial and also personal admonitions – they were not taken into consideration and the slander not only never stopped, but also was accompanied with loud and rude threats to separate from the First Hierarch of the Russian Church.

Shortly thereafter the provocations began to take another form: Into the Tsar Constantine Cathedral a gun was tossed, a Major Naumov came into a Dormition church, scattered some 30 bullets and yelled that "Valentin should be killed" with them. Just a few days after that (May 27) the deposed Protodeacon Krassovsky came to the cathedral and brutally beat up an altar boy Andrew Smirnov. The youth was brought to the hospital where it was established that he had a brain concussion. According to Vertograd # 72 this youth was beaten up because he categorically refused to make a "compromising" statement to Krassovsky about Metropolitan Valentin. Despite the fact that militia came to the scene of the crime – they didn't arrest the criminal and the representatives of Ministry of Internal Affairs (similar to the KGB) refused to initiate a criminal case and investigate this crime. According to the latest information, the parents of the youth filed a court case and Krassovsky had to sign a requirement not to leave the Suzdal area.

On Sunday a group of suspended clerics defiled a church built by Metropolitan Valentine with insulting personal inscriptions on the outside walls.

On May 28, Metropolitan Valentin sent to the village of Kideksha (near Suzdal) Archimandrite Irinarkh and Protodeacon Sergius to deliver to the suspended A. Osetrov the summons to attend the ecclesiastical trial. Both envoys of the Metropolitan were sprayed with urine.

Finally, Osetrov, 3 priests who became his allies and a protodeacon were defrocked. By the decree of May 31 # 80 previously suspended Archpriest Andrew Osetrov, Serge Joumbayev, Abbot Paissy and Protodeacon Dimitry Krassovsky.

According to Vertograd # 73 "at the meeting at which these decisions were made, was convened in the Diocesan Building on May 31. Besides the presiding Metropolitan, there participated Theodore, Archbishop of Borisovo and Sanino and number of clergy of the Suzdal diocese, while near to the Synod's building there assembled several dozen of lay people who were afraid of some provocation on part of schismatics, who the night before threatened the Church Administration. The clergy summoned for the trial did show up, but refused to enter the Synod building and demanded the hearing be performed in "a neutral place" – the cathedral. This was refused them.

After the end of the trial, Metropolitan Valentine by foot went to the Diocesan building on Vassilievskaya St., as the defrocked clergy surrounded the walking First Hierarch, screamed out indecent insults and tried to provoke a response. Dimitry Krassovsky (who a week earlier beat up Andrew Smirnov) attacked Protodeacon Sergius, who was videotaping the procession and broke his camera.

"During the trial session the Synod's building was surrounded by the special cars with militia and security forces, who didn't interfere with what was happening, yet the reason for their appearance was unclear."

Despite the obvious participation of the Moscow Patriarchate in the provocations, the popularity of Metropolitan Valentin in Suzdal is so high that the head of the Vladimir region (in view of this fall's elections for city administration) didn't hesitate to come to Suzdal in an effort to create a plan to prevent his reelection to the city council. In spite of the persecution of the Metropolitan, the mayor of Suzdal sent him official notice of the city's gratitude for his charitable work and help of children and pensioners.

EPISTLE BY HIS EMINENCE VALENTIN, METROPOLITAN OF SUZDAL AND VLADIMIR IN CONNECTION WITH EFFORTS TO DISORGANIZE THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

May 23/June 5, 2001

The third day of the Feast of Pentecost

To the God loving archpastors, pastors and honorable monastics,
brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

With fullness of heart I greet all of you on the great feast of Holy Pentecost and at the same time I am forced to inform the clergy and the flock of possible efforts to disorganize the Russian Orthodox Church that may take place in the coming days.

As you know, in May of this year a schismatic group arose among our clergy, which is headed by the formerly suspended Archpriest Andrew Osetrov, who is released from all his obediences and is defrocked for unfounded accusation of the Synod of Bishops for supposedly supporting the heresy of "Imyabozhniki." Andrew Osetrov tried to make a video film, which compromises me and other hierarchs of our Holy Church. Naturally, Andrew Osetrov didn't find the sought for "compromises", therefore he had to supply them from interviews, which he got from some persons who oppose our Church and with "commentaries" which distort people's words in ways useful to him.

This fabricated film by Andrew Osetrov was handed to all "interested" agencies: public prosecutor, militia, Federal Security Services, the mayor of Suzdal, the regional Administration, the Moscow Patriarchate and Vladimir diocesan administration of the MP. Despite the fact that the film contains nothing compromising me in reality, the Vladimir regional prosecution office found it sufficient to start a criminal case.

Considering the scale and danger which the schism started by Andrew Osetrov presents to our Church, the Ecclesiastical Court of the Suzdal Diocese of ROAC at its session of May 31st, decreed to defrock Andrew Osetrov, as well as his assistants Alexis Legostayev, Serge Zhumbayev, Peter Gorbunov and Dimitry Krassovsky. All these people brought discord into our church life.

With sadness I have to point out the close connections of our former clergy with the persecutors of True Orthodoxy – the Moscow Patriarchate as well as the security services. This connection was especially clearly demonstrated on the day of the ecclesiastical trial when the Synod and Diocesan buildings in Suzdal were surrounded by the militia vans, buses of the omon security forces and even an armored transportation car, all of them ready to "enter the case" at the slightest confrontation between our parishioners and the former clergy.

The latter had the disgraceful role of being provocateurs: with insults, bad language and even attempts to beat up Protodeacon Sergius Slonov and our parishioners. They provoked us for "retroactive acts", but to the credit of our faithful flock, who courageously and humbly endured all insults, not being provoked, as befits Christians.

But the schismatics and those powerful forces that stand behind them and direct this perishing fight against the Church do not intend to "lay down their weapons". With help of a criminal case, which is lawlessly started by the Vladimir regional public prosecutor, they believe they can deprive me of any possibility of ruling the Church, kick out the organizational supports, the Synod of Bishops and Suzdal Diocesan Administration.

Regarding their plans by the persecutors of our Church, Osetrov and those with him, publicly declare that the law-enforcement organs of the government support them. They send out telegrams and letters with information that Metropolitan Valentin is already arrested and will be sentenced to prolonged jail time, therefore, he is to be immediately replaced with another hierarch, who would be able to "work" with the schismatics.

I consider it my sacred duty to warn you that from minute to minute there might follow new strikes upon our Church. In the words of Andrew Osetrov and Dimitry Krassovsky, the Vladimir regional prosecutor's office intends to make searches in the buildings of our Church in Suzdal. The intention is to extract church's documentation. During the search, without any doubt, there will be planted some sort of literature and objects, which will become grounds for my arrest and jail sentence...

Therefore I beg you, my dear ones, do not believe any information about the "compromising" objects found in process of search, "witnesses' testimonies" and "convincing accusations".

My entire life is conducted in full view of my co-brethren and flock. Any announcements of this sort are just another round of persecutions of our Church. If for a while our persecutors manage to disorganize our Supreme Church Administration, do not be grieved, remembering, that against the True Church "the gates of Hades will not prevail"; that it was preserved in the Catacombs under the much more severe conditions of Soviet persecutions. Therefore, in case I am arrested and there is an attempt to liquidate the organs of our church administration, I beg you to recognize the fullness of your responsibility before God and Holy Church, and to continue to minister to the flock entrusted to you on conciliar grounds, preserving unflinching faithfulness to the Russian Orthodox Church.

I ask for your holy prayers for me a sinner and for our Church, which suffers new tests.

May the God's blessing be with you!

Zealous with you for your salvation,

Valentin, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir

Upon the insistence of friends and admirers of the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox (Autonomous) Church, in the defense of the Church and his good name, a fairly well known lawyer has been hired.

A REPLY BY "CHURCH NEWS" TO A LETTER PUBLISHED IN "ORTHODOX REVIEW"

In connection with the short article published by the Church News # 10 (92) of January, 2001, our editorial office received a response by fax, which later was published on the first page of the newspaper "Orthodox Review" #2 (40), 2001, with the title "There is nothing for us to return to Evtikhy". Below we publish in full this response.

"To Anastasia Schatiloff

Respectable Anastasia Georgievna!

While always reading with an interest your "Church News," at the same time I cannot avoid expressing some objections to your commentaries, published in issue # 10 (92) of January 2001

I do not agree with your following words, published on pages 5-6 of the issue of "Church News." "Almost every single sentence of Bishop Eutikhy in this statement to clergy who left ROCOR requires comment..." "The St. Petersburg fathers left the Church Abroad on quite correct basis of the fall of the entire hierarchy into heresy.

Unfortunately this is not the first time that I have to announce that it is not we, who are leaving the ROCOR (where is there at least one quotation to be found from our documents?), but those who performed this criminal "October" revolution, who quite clearly and by now verified through documented secret thoughts not one decade were selecting the pro-Moscow and pro-ecumenical clergy, who brought up a weak flock – those various Marks Arndts – those we declare to be apostates and enemies of our Church – the True Russian Orthodox -- Catacomb and Abroad.

Those who were caught stealing in the Holy Land, who defamed the name of the Church Abroad and who did everything to discredit the very idea of Russian patriotism in our Homeland, the shameless church politicians and liars — this is not the ROCOR.

Before our very eyes there is being realized an attempt to annihilate the Russian Orthodox Church, to bring a majority of her parishes into the Moscow Patriarchate and the rest – to spread in the catacomb and Old Calendar jurisdictions.

We are trying to oppose this by calling the remnants of the ROCOR to unity (and by all means not to leave her!)

I also protest against your second thesis: "If, as we have said above, the Petersburg fathers have left the Church Abroad due to the fall of their hierarchy into heresy, than why they have not immediately returned the antimension, given them by the heretical bishop? After all – antimension grants the authority to a priest to perform liturgies and some needed services. They should have returned it even without a hierarchical request. Since they have not done so even after in this case a very legitimate demand – their zeal for church Truth significantly loses value.

1. I do not believe that "for the reason of falling into heresy... of the hierarchy" – one can consider the Church to be annihilated.
2. Also, one should not trust the words of the former Bishop Eutikhy that we, quoting you, "did not return the antimension, given out... by a heretical bishop".

Fortunately, we do serve not on antimensia "blessed" by Evtikhy. The only one which was in the community of St. John of Kronstadt signed by him, was handed over to the part of parishioners which headed by Deacon Nicholas Savchenko decided to accept the decisions of the robber Council of 2000. So, there is nothing for us to return to Evtikhy.

We serve on antimensia which were signed by Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory, under whom Evtikhy hardly would be today a junior deacon, and were given to us by Metropolitan Vitaly in 1992, which we also consider to belong to the as yet unspoiled Church, but to the Holy True Orthodox Church – ROCOR and we are not clouded enough to reproach ourselves of this "non-return".

In the same manner I believe that it would have been impossible for the leaders of the White armies to "return" to Lenin and Trotsky the banners of their regiments, which were blessed before the "October Revolution" in Russia.

I write all this to you, Anastasia Georgievna, first of all, to raise my voice from the swamp of lies and disinformation, which almost flooded us, and secondly, so that you would consider the thoughts, I believe are similar to yours in your future publications.

Your great admirer personally and of your always remembered father, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe).

Archimandrite Alexis

I value highly the zeal for the Orthodox Truth of Fr. Archimandrite Alexis as well as that of the clergy with him, but nevertheless, while spending the considerable part of my life first unofficially helping my overworked father and then being employed as the Synod office manager for 8 years – having such experience, I cannot agree with number of points which are expressed in this letter.

Fr. Alexis insists that he himself and his fellow clergy have not left the ROCOR, but they are the "remnants" of this Church Abroad, which they attempt to unite. But it is a common knowledge that in the Church, without a bishop, no "remnants" can ever be united.

Despite the fact that three bishops, members of the Council of Bishops, revoked their signatures on the letter to heretic Paul of Serbia (one bishop didn't sign the common Epistle and two of them post factum revoked their signatures on the Epistle) – this does not change matters. All three hierarchs continue to remain in bosom of ROCOR and have not refused to be in communion with all those brethren who signed the Epistle and the letter to Serbian Paul. Also they didn't take under their Episcopal stole any of clergy and lay people who protested the decisions of the Council in 2000.

The creation of a "Diocesan Council of St. Petersburg and North-Russian Dioceses of the ROCOR – also can in no way be recognized as a legal move. Diocesan Councils certainly do exist, but they have to be attached to a ruling bishop. He is the one who appoints them and the one who confirms them. It is also unheard of in a church administration that a group of clergy publicly could declare the diocese to be "widowed" and her bishop (although very undesirable) to be "former". Is it possible, for one of the several diocesan administrations, as it not headed by a bishop, could defrock him?

No matter how Fr. Alexis would interpret the matter of the antimensia – the fact remains unchanged. Antimensia, from very ancient times, are a bishop's authority given to a priest to perform the services. An antimensia, blessed by Metropolitan Philaret, in this particular case might serve only as a valuable relic and nothing more. It is not a secular "banner" or some sort of ancient "amulet", which has nothing to do with the ruling bishop. I know of a case when one

clergyman, living outside of Russia, who has one signed by Patriarch Tikhon, the Confessor. Does this mean that the antimimension is authority for a priest to serve on it, and even more – in another jurisdiction?

Against all the logic, Fr. Archimandrite (according to his letter) uses the antimimension signed by Metropolitan Vitaly, who (willingly or unwillingly) signed absolutely ALL the decisions of the very same Council that Fr. Administrator quite correctly labels as treacherous! Metropolitan Vitaly has not renounced a single decree, but even continues to sign all the restrictions against those clergy who protested the Council's decisions!

And regarding the order by the Dean-Administrator of St. Petersburg and North-Russian Diocese of the ROCOR, Archimandrite Alexis, to commemorate the Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration during the service with formula "for the Orthodox episcopacy of the persecuted Russian Church and all the episcopate of the Orthodox who rightly divide the word of Truth" (Orthodox Review # 3(41), 2001). Here is also some sort of lack of coordination.

The official publication of the ROCOR, "Church Life", # 4-5, 1937, published information about the repose of Metropolitan Peter of Krutitza and the Synod of Bishop in his meeting on April 24/May 7, 1937, decreed the following:

1. With great sadness and devotion to God's will while accepting the news of repose of the sufferer and confessor His Eminence Metropolitan of Krutitza Peter, the Deputy of the Patriarchal Throne, the Synod of Bishops prays to the Almighty that He would give rest to the soul of the reposed hierarch and raise to the suffering Church of Russia a new helmsman, who would serve with the same unshakable and indisputable banner for unity of the Russian Church and faithfulness to Orthodoxy, as used to be with Metropolitan Peter.
2. To commission His Eminence the President to order memorial services for the reposed in God First Hierarch the Confessor in all the churches on the closest and convenient day, as well as to discontinue the commemorate his name during the services as the head of the Russian Church and in the future to commemorate in those places of the services where used to be the name of Metropolitan Peter, as Deputy of the Patriarchal Throne – the prayers about "the Orthodox Episcopate of the Russian Church".

In another words, the decree had in mind not the Catacomb Church, which due to persecutions could not have a publicly known head. At that time the Synod of Bishops still hoped that the Russian Church would get a new legal First Hierarch and the temporarily accepted formula would be discontinued when his name became known.

This formula, at a certain time was offered to Metropolitan Anastassy by Count George Grabbe, since there was no way to find out who actually became the canonical head of the Russian Church after the repose of Metropolitan Peter. The word "persecuted" was added at some time later, probably in the beginning of the fifties.

In the last paragraph of the instruction by the Administrator of St. Petersburg Diocese it is said: " At the same time, the Diocesan Council explains that the commemoration of the "Orthodox Episcopate of the persecuted Russian Church" in no way has in mind any one of the ROCOR bishops who are directly indirectly in communion with the so called "Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR".

Does this Diocesan Council know a single Bishop of ROCOR who severed relations with the Synod of Bishops immediately after October 2000?

Thus, with all sympathy for the "Diocesan Council" and its difficult situation, according to canonical and administrative principles, they would have a legal way out only by formally exiting the ROCOR on the basis of the 15th canon of the 2nd Constantinople Council and joining the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church or, some dubious Greek Old Calendar Church ("luckily" the options are many)!

ECUMENICAL ADVENTURISM OF ARCHBISHOP MARK

The "Herald of the German Diocese" of ROCOR in # 2, 2001, published a richly illustrated report about Archbishop Mark's official visit the Serbian Church.

On Saturday February 4/17th Archbishop Mark arrived in Belgrade, was met at the airport by a representative of Patriarch and in the Patriarchate's car preceded to the Monastery of Krushedol on Frushka Mountain. Archbishop Mark also visited the patriarchal summer residence in Sremski Karlovci, where Metropolitan Anthony lived during his life in Yugoslavia. Then he went to a monastery in Kovilje, where he was met by the Vicar Bishop Porphyry and at that time Iriney, Bishop of Novi Sad and Bachka. On Sunday, in the morning, from the monastery in Kovilje, together with Bishop Porphyry they went to Novi Sad to Bishop Iriney. There he was granted a very special honor. He was offered to preside at the liturgy and serve with the miter, while the Serbian hierarchs (on this occasion using a Greek custom, while all of them normally serve in miters) concelebrated wearing their monastic kamilavkas with the veil and even stood to the sides of the altar, as is usual, but as do priests!

After the Liturgy, Bishop Iriney (by the way, famous for his ecumenical zeal) presented Archbishop Mark to the flock and asked him to give a sermon. Then he expressed the hope that such visits by Archbishop Mark will be more frequent in the future. Here we quote the magazine's report:

After taking a rest, "Archbishop Mark and Vladyka Iriney had a talk. Vladyka Iriney spoke of difficulties emerging from conversations with the Roman-Catholics. When asked by Archbishop Mark about the confusions that are introduced by such conversations, Vladyka Iriney said that the believers and clergy must trust in their Hierarchy [exactly as is now demanded by the administration of ROCOR, "Ch. N."] The hierarchy is acting in accordance with their consciences. His Grace stressed that the Serbian Orthodox Church participates in those ecumenical measures because the heterodox

approach them with questions. And the SOC considers it to be wrong to refuse them the answers. The SOC does it realizing her responsibility to return into the bosom of the Church those, who fell away from her unity. But the SOC cannot imagine the unity outside of the borders of Orthodoxy. And indeed, the SOC does not participate in any concelebrations, does not compromise the purity of Orthodoxy and does not renounce any truth".

In this case the Serbian Bishop Iriney bluntly lies (and Archbishop Mark as well, who is not senile at present) when he quotes Bishop Iriney's words that "no concelebrations with Catholics took place". The Serbian Patriarchate's official publication, the newspaper "Pravoslavlje" of September 1, 2000 reported (see Ch. N. #7 (89) 2000) reported that "a delegation of Catholic bishops came at the invitation of the Serbian Church in Belgrade". As if not enough in the joint communiqué it was reported that "for three days we prayed together and listened to each other. On our common pilgrimage path we newly discovered a lot of common. Verily, those were three days of hope".

"On Monday, Archbishop Mark with Vladyka Iriney went to **Belgrade to the Synod of the SOC** [emphasis by the magazine], Vladyka Iriney went into the meeting first in order to make a report regarding his matters. Then Archbishop Mark was called in. Patriarch Paul himself was presiding and participating were Metropolitan John of Zagreb, Savva of Shumadia, Basil of Tusla and Justin of Timok.

Patriarch greeted Archbishop Mark very warmly and asked him to explain the reason for coming. Archbishop Mark spoke about the Council of 2000, about the creation of 2 (?!) committees [in the Council's minutes only one was mentioned, "Ch. N"] and about the letter addressed to Patriarch. Patriarch Paul and replied that the SOC related to the Russian hierarchs with much love and respect, clergy and lay people, who found the refuge in Serbia after the revolution and joyfully will do everything possible to assist the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church" (underlined by "Ch. N").

This story seems very strange. The scandalous letter by the Council of Bishops of ROCOR was sent to the Patriarch in October of last year and now there is a need for Archbishop Mark to start the history of writing this letter "beginning with Adam" – a story about the Council! It is worthwhile to recall the demand of the MP to the Serbian Patriarchate to sever any kind of relations with the "schismatics" (regarding service of a Serbian priest in Bari), to what the Serbian Church, degrading her autocephalous status agreed to obey Ridiger. (See "Ch. N." # 6 - 88, 2000)

The contacts of Archbishop Mark with the representatives of the MP have in no way ceased. The very same "Herald of the German Diocese" # 1, 2001, reports an Orthodox convention, which was held at the end of December in Munich. Participants were the Serbian Western Europe Bishop Constantine and Archpriest Alexis Babourin, a "pharmacist-physician with many years of experience". On this convention he made 2 reports as a specialist on drug abuse treatments.

As per the Herald, "according to existing tradition, during the sessions of the convention there were every day the services of Vespers, Matins and Liturgy." One has to believe that the Serbian and Moscow Ecumenists have not ignored those services!

ALEXIS KHOMIAKOFF AND CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA

From May 11 to May 14, 2001 in village of Khmelita in the Smolensk region, where is located a government protected reserve- museum there was an international scientific conference called "Historiosophical and literary heritage of A. S. Khomiakoff and contemporary Russia". Originally the Khmelita estate, with a now restored house-palace from the 18th century, belonged to the famous writer A. Griboyedoff and was transferred to the Khomiakoffs as a dowry, received by a Griboyedoff who married one of the Khomiakoffs.

The conference had an extremely scientific character. Suffice it to say that the only speakers were the professors of various specialties. Over three days there were heard some 59 reports. Each was restricted to only 20 minutes. The themes of the reports varied according to the specialty of the speaker and each one of them spoke from the point of view of Khomiakoff's ideas and influence upon his profession. The meetings were held in the restored former theater with places for several hundred people. The walls of the hall were decorated with portraits and paintings connected to Khomiakoff and few of his own drawings and a portrait of his wife. On the stage there was a good portrait of Khomiakoff himself. Khomiakoff's estates had three ponds. In Khmelita park there are 4 oaks believed to be more than 400 years old.

In other Khomiakoff estates, Lipitzky and Obidino (Smolensk region) the owner's mansions were destroyed, but the admirers of Khomiakoff in Lipitzky are beginning to restore of one of the outbuildings, which will be turned into a Khomiakoff museum.

On May 19, there was another conference dedicated to Khomiakoff (Tula region) in the main family estate Bogutcharovo. After the liturgy in the estate's church with icons by Khomiakoff himself (unfortunately in a very Western style) a memorial service for him and his wife was served. After that in the local school hall, in presence of at least some 300 people three reports were given and after that a banquet for about 200 people, including the highest local authorities.

From the reports it was obvious, that the memory of Khomiakoff is very much alive, that the local schools include in their program special courses about him: children also raise special plants which were cultivated in this estate by Khomiakoff, write essays about him and memorize his poems.

After the Banquet musical performances by various local schools were held in a place where there used to be a summer theater. Khomiakoff himself introduced such kind of entertainments for his employees. The wonderful two hour long program of children dressed in native local dress lasted for 2 hours.

In a private conversation, one of the professor-speakers related that when the coffins of Khomiakoff, his wife and his brother-in-law poet Yazykoff were transferred from the cemetery of Danilov Monastery to Novo-Devichy, it was found that his and his wife's bodies remained incorrupt, while in the Yazykoff coffin next to them only bones were found.

When Khomiakoff died, besides his family members at the funeral, there were only 6 close friends of his and now, the residents of Smolensk and Tula regions hope to live to see a day when in 2004 (200 years of his birthday) this date will be proclaimed a national holiday.

ABOUT THE ELECTION OF A NEW PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

The official publication of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the newspaper "Pravoslavljje" on April 1st, 2001 published a report of the journalist Zhivica Tutzich about difficulties connected with election of new Jerusalem Patriarch after Patriarch Diodor reposed on December 19 of the last year. According to regulations of Jerusalem Church, new Patriarch has to be elected within a 2-month period. Meanwhile the Deputy Patriarch governs the Church. Yet, more than four months have passed and the matter of the election of a new Patriarch remains open.

The elections of Patriarch, including clergy and flock are held in diocese of Jerusalem Patriarchate located in Israel, Palestine areas and Jordan Kingdom. There were nominated three candidates for Patriarchal throne. The results showed that of 17 votes, 8 were given to patriarchal representative in Athens, Metropolitan of Erapolis Ireneos (Kopelilis). The General secretary of the Synod, Metropolitan Timotheos (Margaritis) got 7 votes and the Deputy Patriarch Metropolitan of Petria, Kornelius (Rodusakis) received 1 vote. One remaining extra vote was for the fourth Metropolitan.

The Deputy Patriarch presented the list of candidates to the Israeli government, Palestinians and Jordanians for their remarks about these candidates and if they have any objections to the candidates.

The Israeli government immediately stated Metropolitan Ireneos is unacceptable for them as an anti-Semite. Arafat didn't like Metropolitan Timotheos, the Jordanian government made no remarks. Therefore, there remains Metropolitan Kornelios, who had only one vote.

In the beginning it was expected that the meeting between Israel's Prime Minister and Arafat might help the political situation as well as the church's. However this didn't happen. Then Great Lent started, during which elections are not permitted. In this way, the Holy Fire on Great Saturday was received not by the Patriarch, as is usual, but his Deputy.

So far Israel has not presented any material proof of the alleged anti-Semitism of Metropolitan Ireneos. The position of the Arabs is more clear: they by no means want a Greek for Patriarch and all three candidates are Greeks, as well as also all the other hierarchy of the Patriarchate (except for one, who is Arab).

Arafat dreams of grabbing the Patriarchate because it is the main landowner in the Holy Land especially in Jerusalem and its suburbs. A whole number of Israeli government institutions rent the buildings belonging to Jerusalem Patriarchate.

At the same time, the Greek government is very much concerned that a Greek occupies the see of Jerusalem Patriarchate. It seems, that while Arafat was visiting Greece there was a conversation with him about it, but there were no results.

From the beginning of the fourth century the Jerusalem Patriarchate has always had a Greek as its head, even during times when the Turks persecuted Christians and the Patriarchs became refugees.

The majority of the Jerusalem Church is Arab-Christians and in most cases they do not object to having a Greek Patriarch. In many Arabic parishes the services are conducted in Arabic.

It seems that situation of the Jerusalem Patriarchate is very serious one and at present no resolution of the problem is in view.

By now, at the end of June, there is nothing new in regards to the Patriarchal elections!

"PILGRIMAGES" OF THE ROMAN POPE

For number of years already the Pope has not hidden his dream to visit Kiev and Moscow. Here and there those his dreams were met with severe hostility. Then Rome got the idea that under the pretext of the Pope visiting and venerating the historical holy places of the Christian East he will be able to visit as many countries as possible with an Orthodox majority.

The head of Roman Catholicism received an invitation from the Romanian government and recently (in 1999) was met there with open arms and "prayed" along with the Patriarch. His trip to Orthodox Georgia was less successful. According to press reports the clergy and population met him very coolly.

The invitation extended by the Ukrainian president Kouchma was jubilantly received by the papists, but also there were some problems. The Orthodox under the jurisdiction of the MP (and they are the majority) very strongly opposed this plan. In Ukraine as well as in Russia, the "Orthodox Sacred Authorities" put all the problems on a purely material basis. Supposedly, when they will be properly resolved, the matter of the Pope's arrival will be accepted favorably. Much more seldom is spoken about stopping Catholic (and especially Uniate) propaganda. Yet genuine Orthodox Christians protest so vigorously, that even some Catholic priests recommended to the Vatican that it not hurry with "pilgrimage" to the Orthodox Countries.

Thus one of the prominent Catholic priests in Greece, Dominic Psaltis, declared that living in Greece he understands much better the mood of Orthodox people than visitors from the Vatican who spend two days there. According to him,

"some Orthodox Christians would like to see the Pope, but they are an obvious minority and even those who are not interested in Church matters –object to his coming. Although the Orthodox priests and bishops formally agreed to the Pope's visit, they in practice object to it. At present we can expect only negative results".

But the Pope is extremely thick-skinned: all the countless protests of Orthodox and even the demonstrations of multitudes in Ukraine and Greece had no influence upon him.

Due to numerous protests of the faithful in Greece, the Synod in its decision of March 5th declared that Pope might come, but only in capacity of a "pilgrim" and not as head of the Catholic Church.

In the beginning the head of the Greek Church, Archbishop Christodoulos tried to hold to the Orthodox line, but under the pressure from his government started to give up one position after another and proved to be a very spurious man. On one side he supported the Orthodox views about undesirability of Pope's trip and on the other did not hide that he welcomed his coming. According to the agency Orthodox Christian News Service, Inc. of March 31st, Archbishop Christodoulos said in his sermon that "he was not invited by the Church but by the government" and he asked his flock not to make any sort of demonstrations, because "because the press will show them to the entire world and they will say that the Orthodox believers are fanatical and intolerant"

The Pope's arrival to Athens was briefly shown in TV, but "The New York Times" of May 5th devoted to this event quite a long article.

None of the representatives of the Greek Church met the pope at the airport and in the city there was a number of minor demonstrations. Yet the TV showed the Pope and Archbishop Christodoulos sitting in the armchairs at a certain distance: both had folders in their hands. Christodoulos was reading a supposedly accusatory speech and the Catholic head muttered something unclear about regrets of his church for crimes committed toward Orthodox by the crusaders. Christodoulos was so moved that he started to applaud the Pope!

Interesting, that the Pope made no secret that a reason for his "pilgrimage" is the hope for better relations between Orthodox and Catholics. But in not a single Orthodox country did the hierarchs who betrayed their faithful raise a single question about the faith: everything revolved only around materialistic problems.

The Pope, who in Greece repented for crusaders' sins, not only didn't think to return to the Greeks any of the robbed property, but never even mentioned that the Vatican's churches and museum still keep this property stolen from Constantinople, not only of extreme spiritual value, but also material. For example, it was common knowledge that the altar in Hagia Sophia was made out of solid gold.

The Greek press devoted to the world's most famous heretic a lot of attention. All TV channels were broadcast the Papal arrival in Greece, details of his biography, election to the throne and even his trip to Cuba and Poland, that happened quite some time ago.

The Chancellor of the Archbishop Priest Thomas Sinodinos declared that "even those who were negative are now seeing a different picture".

One can state that the papists by all means have won the battle over the "Orthodox."

ARCHBISHOP MARK SHOWS HIS HAND

We received a photocopy of a letter by Archbishop Mark of Germany to the late Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco dated July 25/August 7, 1999. We would not publish this private letter were it not for the fact that it already has circulated through various faxes and on the Internet and at the same time it very clearly explains the ideology of the treacherous activity of Archbishop Mark.

"Your Eminence. Venerable Vladyko!

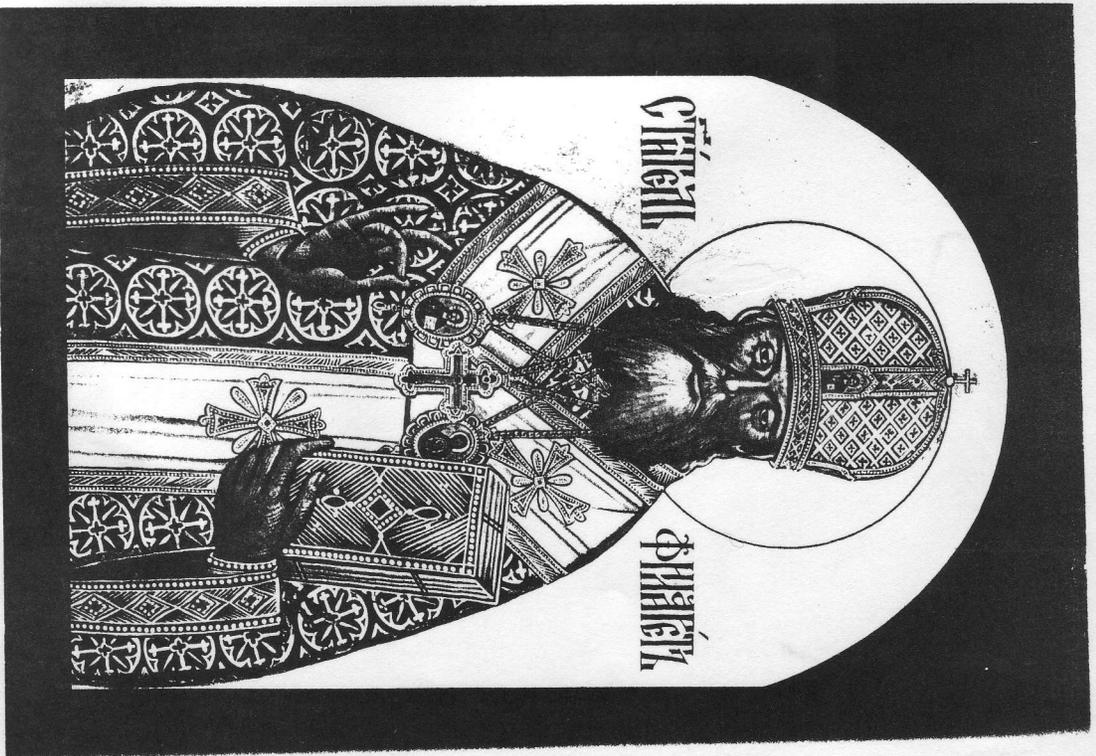
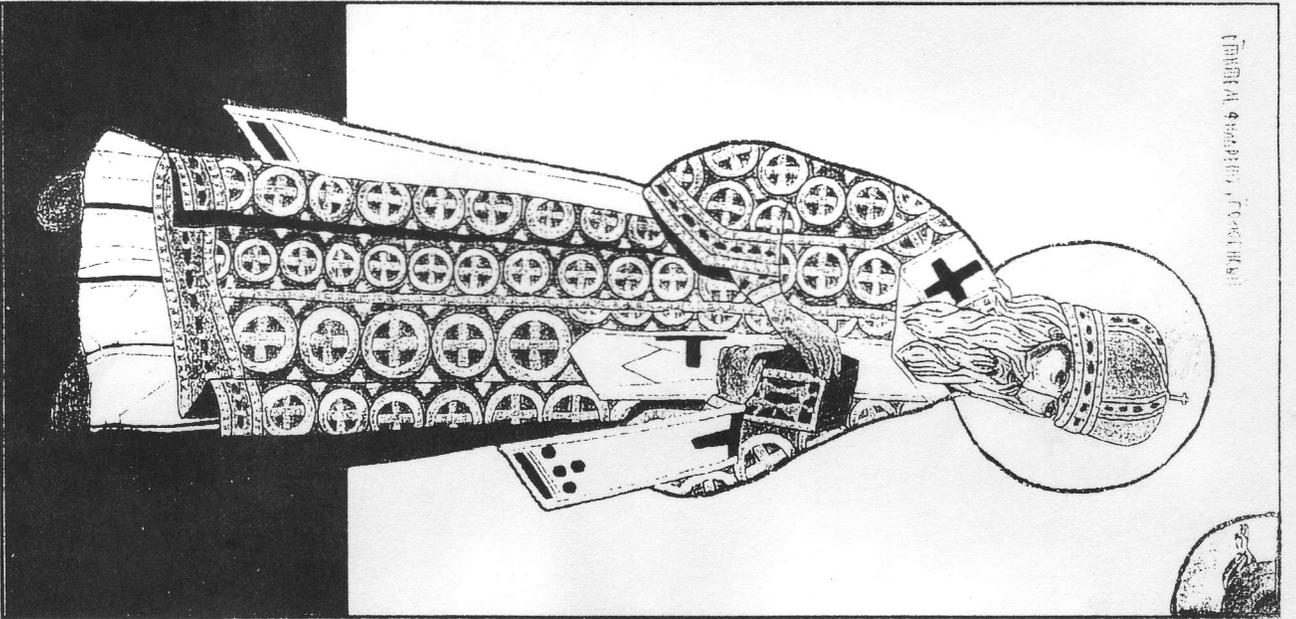
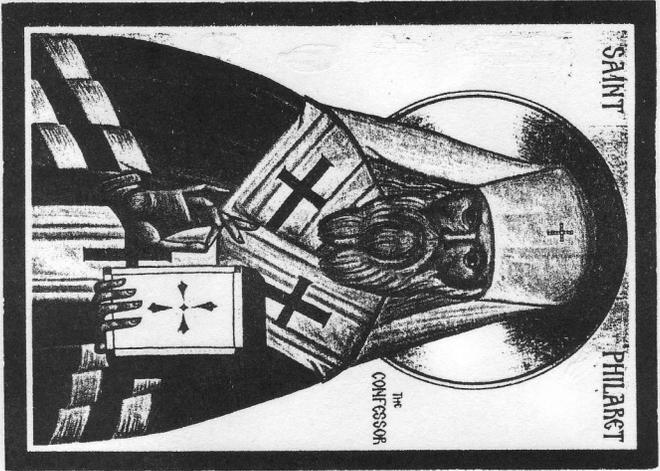
I turn to Your Eminence with the request to help me with fatherly advice. I am greatly confused by the circular letter of the Metropolitan regarding the Serbian Church. You know that at one time I studied in Serbia, but it is not this alone that makes me value communion with the SOC. Much more I am urged by the awareness that this is the only Church that lets us feel we are in the bosom of the Ecumenical Church. If, at the bidding of fanatics, we will refuse communion with the Serbian Church, then we will simply slide into sectarianism. It is not enough that we, in contrast to our own decision, are denied communion with the Russian Church and do not fulfill the directives of all our former Councils at which it was discussed that we should restore union with the Russian Church in its fullness, now we are in danger of totally losing the connection with Ecumenical Orthodoxy.

Our Church Abroad in which I received holy orders was a different one, not fanatical. Now all of it is collapsing with the speed of lightening. According to my conscience I cannot participate in this. Should I retire?

I do not want to sadden our First Hierarch. It is bad enough that quite unjustly he considers me to be his enemy. But I cannot follow this ukase.

Asking for your holy prayers and your suggestion,
Devoted to you as a son, Archbishop Mark"

In this letter the German nature of Archbishop Mark is clearly visible. The confession of faith is strange to him and he dreams only about the possibility of a united "Orthodoxy" and that, one can say on the threshold of the end of the world!



New icons of St. Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky)
Hand Embroidered in Suzdal (center print). Greek Holy Orthodox Church of North America used at the glorification -
right print; and the left print is from the Ascension skete in Pennsylvania.