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CORRECTION: In the last number of "Church News" due to a typographical error on p. 2 in the article "Vile Falsification" the third paragraph should read "...in the case of the then Archimandrite Valentin dating back to 1988, when the KGB UNSuccessfully tried to enlist him in their service..." We apologize for the error.

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METROPOLITAN VALENTIN, FIRST HIERARCH OF THE ROAC, ABOUT HIMSELF

The news agency Vertograd.Mailing # 212 of February, 2002, published quotations from a speech of His Eminence Metropolitan Valentin, which was made at a "Christmas meeting in Suzdal". On this occasion the Metropolitan said:

"In opening this meeting, permit me to say a few words about myself. I was born on Kuban, in the Krasnodar region. After the war my father returned without arms and legs – a total invalid. When my mother found out about it she was greatly shocked and was hospitalized. I had to live in an orphanage. After the orphanage, I was taken care of by Catacomb Orthodox Christians. And so, until 1952 I was with the Catacomb "Tikhonites".

For well-known reasons they didn't recognize the MP and so I was brought up in this way of life. I wanted very badly to be a monk and a priest. When a catacomb priest would come to serve, and they always came at night, I would ask him: "When will you tonsure me a monk?" "Next time", was the answer. This "next time" repeated itself, once, twice, ten times and this got on my nerves, so I came and said: "Good evening, Father. I will no longer ask you this question; it seems you will tonsure me a monk next time, and not now". "Right, little child," he said.

I gathered my belongings and went to Georgia. In Georgia I was serving in churches, and later returned home to the Krasnodar region, to see my ailing mother. Then the elders, who were still existing in the Georgia's mountains, told me: "Come and go to serve the Church". I found myself under Metropolitan Boris (Vika) of Krasnodar and Kuban. I read very nicely, was diligent and they accepted me. Shortly after that I happened to be in a monastery in Odessa – where I was a novice, a reader and worked in the refectory, and then I was taken to serve Patriarch Alexis (Simansky). He had a villa in Odessa in which the patriarch would spend two or three months each year.

Once some bishops from abroad (ROCOR bishops) came to this villa that with open arms had been invited by the "mother church". Upon arriving in the USSR in 1946, they were incarcerated and sat in prison until 1956. So when they were released they came to the patriarch's villa, where I met them and right after that I went to Novosibirsk. From that moment, from 1956, I served in the MP.

Being very active, everywhere trying to live for the Church, because of the Church, I became the youngest priest, the youngest dean and received a multitude of awards... While in Suzdal, when the millennium of Russia's baptism was celebrated, I was chairman of the organizing committee of the Vladimir Diocese.

Question of a journalist: As far as I understand, you graduated from the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy?

Metropolitan Valentin: Yes, I graduated from the university, seminary, academy and defended a degree candidate's dissertation.

...At the beginning of the 60's I met Archimandrite Alexis (Ridiger), the present patriarch. He was in charge of MP affairs, so when once I was with him, he said: "You know, there came Catholic Cardinal Willebrands, he was in Suzdal, and the church over there is in a very pitiful condition. For 5 years now they have had no priest and this parish is served by clergy from the Vladimir cathedral, and this city is a tourist center. Please, if possible, go there, maybe you can restore something". I went, looked around and it was a bit frightening... This happened in 1973. From that time I served there.

At the end of 1980, I visited Germany and America for the first time, giving lectures. When I came back from this trip, I was summoned by Archbishop Valentin (Mishchuk) and he said: "I want you to write a report, where have you been, with whom you were, what questions were raised, where they work and so on and so on". Previously I had been approached with similar demands, because, after all, I was responsible for hosting the guests of the diocese, but there it was easier for me -- when I was questioned and this so-called "literature" was demanded, I always used to answer: "There are those who function as escorts, let them take care of this – I have no time, I am cooking," and kept my distance from this. But this time it was a special trip to Germany and America...

When I refused to write these reports, they began to threaten me: "If you will not write them, we will remove you, fire you, bring you to ashes". But, having an "nature of an angel", I immediately responded: "Vladyka, I do not understand where I am: in the reception room of an archbishop an angel of the Church, or in the office of some KGB agent?" He said: "You will find out later". I did not have to wait long. I was dismissed immediately from every position and only remained as rector of the church. But eventually I was relieved also of the post of rector of the parish, although I had built a little house there and restored and recently opened two churches. I was transferred to Pokrov and then I did obey, although, I was so upset that I became ill and landed in a hospital. However, the faithful here revolted against my transfer, they traveled to Vladimir and even went to Moscow in order to have me returned. This lasted for four months, but the [authorities] would not return me.

The people, not only the faithful, but also the other residents, knew what I did here. Knowing me, they nominated me to be a candidate of city representative, so they would leave me alone and not transfer me. After four months of struggle, somehow the idea suggested itself: I said that once I was with the Catacomb Christians and that there is a Church Abroad and maybe we should go under her omophorion.

Question: What was the result of being nominated to be a representative? Did you win"?

Metropolitan Valentin: Certainly, I won 90% of vote. I am still the representative of the Suzdal City Council. This is a second term from 1997. The first one was 1990 to 1994. Just yesterday I was approached with a request to meet with the voters, tell them of my activities... (According to latest information, Metropolitan Valentin, who has the status of honorary citizen of Suzdal and is a representative in the City Council, plans to participate in the elections on March 17th and again become a representative in the City Council).

So we wrote a petition to the Church Abroad and we were accepted – this happened to be the very first parish that left the MP, therefore this became a center for the Church Abroad.

The next year I was summoned to come to America, we talked, socialized, and soon I was invited to Belgium and there I was consecrated a bishop on February 10th, 1991.

At the beginning, the Moscow Patriarchate recognized my rank – I even have a letter from Archbishop Eulogy where he addresses me as “Valentin, Bishop of the Church Abroad”. Last year the rector from Vladimir came to me as did a protodeacon, the secretary of the diocese — four or five people -- asking me to return again to the MP. They guaranteed that I would be a bishop here in Suzdal, maybe a vicar. I naturally told them: “I do not understand, why did you come and why do you need me? The MP has defrocked me. I am for you just Anatoly Petrovich Rousantsov, a resident of the Vladimir area, just like everybody else here. Here we have one and a half million people, why did you come to me?” – “We want to save your soul”. “Well, please save the souls of these people – after all, I am defrocked.” And they told me: “You know, you are an excellent historian. You know that there were councils and false councils, which defrocked clergymen and then restored them again. Pay no attention; you will be restored to the rank of archimandrite, or the rank of bishop. All this will happen just renounce the “schism”.

The very same thing happened recently when a new persecution of our Church started. In one of the newspapers the secretary of Vladimir Diocese stated: “What they write about Valentin is not bad, the main thing is – if he were to return to us, then everything can be forgiven, everything understood.” This was written in the newspaper “Prizyv” last year. But one would like to ask: “Why do you want me? If I am so bad, just thank God that I have left you”.

Question: Metropolitan Kyril of Smolensk insists that in 1989 the Council for Religious Affairs lobbied to have you ordained a bishop.

Metropolitan Valentin: I do not know all the underground courses of things, but I know for sure that at that time not a single bishop, and even a patriarch could argue with the Council for Religious Affairs. If such a suggestion indeed were to come from the Council, it would never be refused. There was never any confrontation whatsoever. It might happen now, but not then. For some reason I do not believe in it.

I remember when I was summoned for a trial in 1989 to the Holy Synod. There were bishops, Patriarch Pimen, but he was in such a condition at that time, that he just smiled and said: “How are you? Well, God bless you and save yourself”. He even didn’t know why they had put him there. Instead of being judged by the Patriarch, I was judged by Philaret Denisenko. Addressing me he said: “You, Father Archimandrite, are of such an age, how come you are not afraid of sin? Are you not afraid you will die today or tomorrow? How will you meet God?” Then Kyril interrupted: “Leave, reject those unacceptable people — move to Pokrov and everything will be fine with you”. I answered: “I cannot, for four months they petitioned for me when there was severe frost, how can I spit into their souls?”. And Kyril said, “Old chap, what soul? What are you talking about? You have turned the whole Christian ethic upside down”. Here again my “angelic character” responded, I turned to him and said: “Vladyka, if you as a bishop do not know what the soul is, then what there is to talk about?” Other members of the Synod were saying: “Father Archimandrite, everything will be fine — just repent, offer your repentance, go to Pokrov and everything will be fine”. Towards the end Kyril said, “Write out your rejection of these old women, your faithful and do as Kotliarov did (today’s Metropolitan of St. Petersburg) – he was in Krasnodar; he signed everything and look, he is getting promotions...”

THE LATEST INFORMATION REGARDING THE “TRIAL” OF METROPOLITAN VALENTIN

Vertograd.Mailing # 217 of February 14th reported that: “After a short interruption, caused by the unexpected departure of one of the “victims”, on February 12th in the Suzdal regional court the case was resumed which had been initiated against Metropolitan Valentin by the former Archpriest Andrew Osetrov and his adherents. The day before, two of Metropolitan’s lawyers undertook a selfless trip to Voronezh region where one of the “victims” was.

At the morning session, February 12th, the court made an effort to view the videocassette with the “testimony” of the children, which were recorded by Osetrov last May and also the records of the investigations of the “victims” made in the procurator’s office. By some miracle, the cassette, which was prepared by the Vladimir city procurator, which was enclosed in a separate sealed envelope, -- happened to be blank. The court continued to investigate the “victims” and in the evening session the investigator Yegorov participated, who was in charge of the criminal case against Metropolitan Valentin.

According to Vertograd’s report, the clergymen and lay people, who came to show support for their First Hierarch, were not allowed inside the court building, but outside was Osetrov, who was quite obviously directing the actions of the court attendants. Former Protodeacon Krasovsky, in the presence of many witnesses threatened to kill Protodeacon Serge Slonov “with the help of the Mafia”. The Osetrov group also warned Archbishop Theodore that he would be the next one to be accused in criminal court!

Although 4 “accusers” of Metropolitan Valentin have revoked their testimonies, as being forced from them, “on February 13th, the court approved the petition of prosecutor to have the children “victims” undergo a psychological-psychiatric analysis. In the prosecutor’s opinion, the fact that these children gave testimony against Metropolitan Valentin to the preliminary investigation, which on many occasions they have categorically renounced, testifies to their psychological!

However, the lawyer for Metropolitan Valentine, Youri Gervis said at the Moscow press conference that the “victims” have a legal right to refuse this humiliating evaluation and that would speed up further proceedings.

Now it remains only to feel sorry not only about the First Hierarchy upon whom so much of the unimaginable dirt is being thrown, but also for the unfortunate children, who were lured with substantial monetary payments and also threats that they themselves will be locked in the jail if they did not give in to Osetrov's demands.

In violation of the law, the children (one is only 11 years old) were investigated not only in the parents' absence, but also without the latter's knowledge.

In connection with this outrageous procedure against the First Hierarchy of the Russian Autonomous Church, several press conferences were scheduled, dedicated to this case. On Tuesday, February 19th, in the Vladimir art center there was a conference under the title: "The first summary of the court case regarding Metropolitan Valentin". In this conference with the journalists participated Theodore, Archbishop of Borisovo and Sanino, the rector of St. Elisabeth church in St. Petersburg, Priest-monk Gregory (Lurie), the Metropolitan's lawyer Arcady Kolesnikov, the principal of the Suzdal middle school # 1, Dina Barygina and two of the "victims" – Andrew Panow and Yegor Derevianko.

According to Vertograd.Mailing # 191, "The Vladimir press showed considerable interest in the press conference. There were present television stations "TV 6-Vladimir", and "Dobroye", as well as reporters from the newspapers "Komsomolskaya Pravda", Argumenty I Fauty", also journalists from the newspapers "Chronometer", "Periscope", "Tomics" and "Molva". The conference was attended by journalists from Moscow".

On Wednesday, February 20th, in the Central House of Journalists in Moscow, there was another conference, called "The judgment of Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir Valentin (Rousantsov): those who were victims renounce their claims".

At this conference Archbishop Theodore, archpriest Michael Ardov, priest-monk Gregory, priest Roman Pavlov and Metropolitan's lawyers were present again. At the opening of the conference, the Editor in Chief of Vertograd, Alexander Soldatov briefly described the reason for this conference, pointed out that this case was instigated by the Vladimir local procurator and is a conscious slander, which Soldatov connected with the fact that all over the world interest arose in the ROAC and her parishes grew not only in Russia, but also abroad.

Archbishop Theodore said that the present situation reminds one of the Soviet period and complained that the publications which slander the ROAC refuse to publish objections from the "opposite point of view". Archbishop Theodore pointed out that the present head of the region, an activist of the Communist party of the Russian Federation, Nicholas Vinogradov, openly supports the enemies of the ROAC. The Governor and his subordinates tried to prevent the reelection of Metropolitan Valentin to representative of Suzdal City Council for a third term. "With reference to the Sandal's priest of the MP, Dimitry Letko, the Archbishop reported that the decision to 'liquidate' the ROAC was made in May of last year at the conference with Governor Nicholas Vinogradov".

Lawyer Youri Gervis spoke of numerous procedural violations made in the preliminary investigation and stressed the point that Suzdal's and not Vladimir's procurator should investigate the case. He also noted that in the 'case' there is no proof of the Metropolitan's crime, but numerous statements in his defense which were never included in the documentation

Fr. Archpriest Michael Ardov pointed out that after the ROCOR's Council of Bishops in year 2000, which one the way to unification with the MP, "This campaign to discredit our First Hierarchy, in order to discredit the whole Church, is directed toward lowering of number of communities and priests who leave the Church Abroad and join our Church.

One of the Metropolitan's lawyers, Arcady Kolesnikov, described the information about the procedure of the investigation regarding this case. He stressed that the initiative to start this case came from Andrew Osetrov, who has nothing to do with testimonies of those who "suffered". The second peculiarity of this "case" is the fact, that the investigation was ordered by the procurator not of the Suzdal region or Vladimir region, but to procurator of the city of Vladimir, which has jurisdiction to investigate the criminal cases on the territory of only this particular city.

The defense lawyers presented six appeals for adding material to the preliminary investigation.

The stress of this persecution has affected the health of the Metropolitan, so the proposal that he would answer the journalist's telephone calls was cancelled.

"Prizyv," the scandalous newspaper in Vladimir, which only a few months ago was fined by the court for slandering Metropolitan Valentin again started its slander in the just recently published "special issue # 1" in which an absolutely outrageous "biography" of the first Hierarchy was invented by them, this time attacking not only him, but also Archbishop Theodore and a number of the very best clergymen of the Church. Among the attacked ones is the mayor of Suzdal, Illarionov for his support of the persecuted Metropolitan.

According to the latest report by Vertograd, based upon the newspaper "Suzdalskaya Nov" ("Suzdal's Novelty") # 17 (100206) Saturday, March 2nd, some young men, not Suzdal residents, were seen during late night hours to be spreading the outrageous pamphlet. Vertograd reports: "Of course, the thrown dirt didn't remain without some attention. The regional election Committee of Suzdal immediately approached the Suzdal interregional procurator with a demand to investigate into the facts of the dirty and unacceptable methods of the election campaign. The mayor of Suzdal protested against the insulting slander in the city of Vladimir. The investigation has already started. The results would indicate who was behind those people".

All this openly demonstrates that the persecution which at the beginning was directed against the Metropolitan only and which didn't bring the "expected results" for the Osetrov group, now is being directed against the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church itself, which is a considerable "alternative church" to the MP which has had almost no success in Suzdal, where the majority of the faithful in the city belong to the 11 churches restored by Metropolitan Valentin.

IS THIS THE BEGINNING OF A DEAD END FOR ROCOR (Vitaly)?

From a private person we have received a three and a half page document entitled "Regarding the Resolution of Canadian Pastoral Conference" signed by the Rev. Protodeacon Ivanoff-Trinadzaty. Since it has been widely circulated and even translated into English, we feel we have a right to publicly react to it.

Fr. Protodeacon happened to be greatly concerned with the resolution of the Canadian Pastoral Conference regarding the matter of their refusal to be in communion with the so called "Cyprianites" toward whom he and a number of clergy of the newly established jurisdiction of Metropolitan Vitaly, residing in France, have very warm feelings.

Saying that the ROCOR for more than 7 years was in communion with the Cyprianites, Fr. Protodeacon firmly declares that: "without any polemics, we shall state the reasons which do not allow us to accept the Resolution from December 16/29, 2001. The decision was accepted before the appointment of the promised Commission of the interested parties". (Emphasized by "Ch. N.")

An interesting formulation of the question: the First Hierarchy of Fr. Protodeacon with his Synod and clergy on the pastoral Conference decided to sever communion with another autonomous Church and he publicly speaks of two "interested parties"! Whose spokesman is Fr. Herman and on whose authority is he expressing himself regarding this matter?

There reveals itself another interesting aspect of this matter. It is revealed that "the decision of Archbishop Varnava is placed there due to a misunderstanding. Vladyka Varnava asked not to be rushed into giving his signature, in any case not before he could study the text quietly. To this day the text of the Resolution has yet to be sent to him".

For almost the entire three other pages of this composition Fr. Protodeacon makes efforts to prove that the ROCOR always considered "that the new calendar was a gross blunder but that nevertheless we NEVER broke with canonical Churches which hold to the Gregorian calendar".

Here, in order to prove this, he refers to the letter of Metropolitan Anthony (written in 1925), Metropolitan Anastassy's signature under the Council of Bishops Epistle of 1961, which mentions New Calendarists, Metropolitan Philaret and, especially St. John of Shanghai.

Not to go into all the details of the permission in quite exclusive cases of "economy" of Vladyka John (up to the point of his permission to the Dutch to celebrate Pascha on the Gregorian calendar), one can say that the results of this economy were less than minimal.

The Romanian Theofil was exposed as a drug user, John (Kovalevsky) about whom the Synod Chancery received several reports that he was a Mason and even a Satanist, rather soon after his ordination created his own French Church, and the Dutch Jacob who the minute he received the Council of Bishops' requirement that he celebrate Pascha on the old calendar immediately joined the Moscow Patriarchate¹

Fr. Herman nowhere writes that he knows of any New Calendars, who would not at the same time be the ecumenists, and this alone excludes the possibility to be in communion with them, especially after Ecumenism was anathematized by the Church Abroad!

Because of the refusal of French clergymen to accept the resolution about the Cyprianites, Metropolitan Vitaly has at least two problems to solve: to change for the fourth time his mind about this Greek group or immediately to relieve Archbishop Varnava of his status as his deputy. In both cases this is a difficult choice. It means losing about ten of the most prominent clergymen in France, headed by Archbishop Varnava, or losing Fr. Victor Melekhov with his parishes. However, according to non-official, but trustworthy information from Europe, Archbishop Varnava is planning to leave Metropolitan Vitaly and join the Cyprianites!

ABOUT THE "DEFENSE OF ARCHBISHOP VARNAVA" BY FR. HERMAN IVANOFF-TRINADZATY

This is not the first time that Fr. Herman has publicly come forward interpreting some matters in a way that shows a partiality unworthy of his professorial degree.

Thus, in an internet publication "In Defense of Archbishop Veranda "from suspensions put upon him by Metropolitan Laurus (in which the Synod, to make them sound more authoritative canonically mentions the 65th Apostolic Canon, which concerns visiting a synagogue!), Father considerably juggles with the facts.

In a section "basic periods of the archpastoral ministry of Vladyka Veranda" in 1996-1997, he wrote that "Vladyka is appointed a representative of the Synod in the Holy Land", but he does not mention that he was sent there in order to make sure that the arrival of Alexis Ridge and his entourage to Jerusalem and among other holy places visiting of our convent in Gethsemane "would proceed quietly and with no confusions" (Point 2) and Point 3 – "After the church, to offer a cup of tea" (Church Life, #3-4, 1997).

The honor of this "representation" is rather relative, since Bishop Veranda did not fulfill the command of the Synod, although he did not refuse this "honorable" errand!

Concerning the unlawful trial of the foreign clergyman, Fr. Herman justifies this canonical violation on the part of Bishop Veranda by his zeal for morality. However, it is obvious from the existing official documentation that Bishop Veranda wanted badly to get this parish for himself, yet Archimandrite Adrian (Tsarina) under no conditions wanted to be under his jurisdiction and turned to Bishop Valentin. The accusations were not substantiated by the facts and were officially

disproved by the testimony of two supposedly molested young persons, and were officially certified by the court clerk, they were asking for his pardon... because they stole some icons from his church. No other accusations were presented to Archimandrite Adrian. According to a published ukase of the Moscow Patriarchate Archimandrite Adrian was suspended only for leaving MP and joining the "schism".

Regarding the accusation which was brought by Bishop Veranda against Bishop Valentin, signed by one person from the organization "Payment" and a member of the MP, it is very doubtful that being very close to the works of the Council of ROCOR Bishops in Lena in 1994, he did not hear that "according to recommendation of the Ecclesiastical Committee of the Council of Bishops and final decision of the Council's President" – "The accusation of F. R. Still mark is put away, due to its insufficient substance". No other similar accusations were to be found in the personal file of Bishop Valentin.

Fr. Protodeacon Herman justifies even such an outrageous crime as a letter written by Bishop Veranda on a letterhead of the Synod of Bishops (xeroxed as per Bishop Hilarion) in which, in the name of the ROCOR he petitioned the self proclaimed Ukrainian Metropolitan Vladimir Romaniuk (who shortly after became a "patriarch") to enter into eucharistic communion! Supposedly, this was necessary in order to get his assistance in having the parish in Moscow registered, since this character had "legal status" and could help in this matter. It seems that Fr. Herman forgot that at this time, Ukraine was an independent state, had its own laws and had absolutely no influence over the matters in the Russian Federation.

As a punishment for this action, the council of Bishops forbade Bishop Varnava to visit Russia for 5 years and sent him to Jerusalem for period of three months, with no right to serve. Yet, he didn't go there at that time ("Church Life," March 22/April 4th, 1994).

All the protests of Bishop Gregory against such exclusive privileges for Bishop Varnava, Protodeacon Herman characterizes as "a violation of the defined procedures, because a personal opinion remains a personal opinion and is not to considered equal to the opinions of the Ecumenical Councils and the holy Fathers, recognized as Teachers of the Church"!

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS

To: The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad

February 8/21, 1994

Bishop Gregory's

RESPONSE TO THE COMPLAINT OF BISHOP VARNAVA

The Secretary of the Bishops, His Eminence Archbishop Laurus, forwarded to me a copy of the response of His Grace Bishop Varnava regarding my report about his numerous violations of the canons of Ecumenical Councils.

It seems His Grace Bishop Varnava was specially hurt by my statement that "the number of crimes of Bishop Varnava makes it unnecessary to make any investigation". However, some of his canonical violations became known to me in a very official manner. They were not only written in the Council's minutes (see minutes # 5, of April 27th/May 10th, 1993) but these minutes were signed by himself.

1. His Grace Bishop Varnava laments that I speak of his accepting the suspended Priest Peter Astakhov. However, in the Council's minutes # 5, April 27th/May 10th, 1993, which Bishop Varnava signed himself, we read: "Archbishop Mark inquires about the acceptance by Bishop Varnava of Priest Peter Astakhov from Koenigsberg. He was suspended for illegal cohabitation with a woman".

Bishop Varnava replies that he had to accept Fr. Peter because "the authorities wanted to take away his church".

2. In the case of Archimandrite Adrian, Bishop Varnava, according the minutes himself admits: "The President points out that since Archimandrite Adrian was not under the jurisdiction of Bishop Varnava he should not have suspended him, but should have written a protest to Bishop Valentin and informed the Synod of it".

Bishop Varnava replies, that he did it too hurriedly, wishing to console the parents.

In his complaint against me Bishop Varnava speaks about the young man who supposedly hung himself because of Archimandrite Adrian. But he does not mention his name, last name, nor place and time of this crime.

3. He also insists that I "in bringing an accusation against me and being the mouth of Bishop Valentin, didn't find it necessary even to get acquainted with the ukases issued by the Synod".

In this point in his complaint in connection with my affirmation that he, already being under suspension, accepted Archpriest Alexis Averianov he declares that "there was no ukase suspending Archpriest Alexis Averianov".

It seems His Grace Bishop Varnava is not aware of the decision of the Synod of December 25th/May 10th 1992. In it there is a deliberation regarding the complaint of His Eminence Archbishop Lazarus about actions of Archpriest Averianov and in the paragraph # 2 it was resolved to: "suspend from priestly ministry Archpriest A. Averianov and to initiate an investigation of him".

Unfortunately, from all the complaints of His Grace Bishop Varnava against me it becomes quite clear that he has not even the most remote acquaintance with the canons of the Ecumenical and Local Councils.

It seems he imagines that one can somehow debate the matter of accepting a suspended clergyman, but he has no idea that the acceptance of a foreign clergyman without a letter from his diocesan bishop with authorization to leave is punished by the canons with the very same strictness.

A DIOCESAN CONFERENCE OF THE AUTONOMOUS ORTHODOX CHURCH OF LATVIA IN DAUGAVPILS

According to Vertograd.Razsylka # 213 of February 2nd, 2002 in the city of Daugavpils there was a diocesan conference of the true Orthodox Autonomous Church of Latvia under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

In this meeting 12 communities participated that are united into three administrative regions.

It was stated at the meeting that the MP has persecuted the Orthodox Church in Latvia for six years. Despite the claim of the Latvian republic that it is a democratic country, there is effective today a law about "religious organizations" of which the 7th paragraph actually demands (disregarding the beliefs of the faithful) that they must be part of the MP and subject to her canons and rules as they are interpreted by this Patriarchate.

Despite the strong pressure on the Latvian government from the MP, the communities in Daugavpils and Tukums reported that, despite the latter's lawlessness, they still managed to defend their services to a certain degree. Thus, the Daugavpils City Council gave them permission to reconstruct their house of prayer as a cathedral and Tukum's department of architecture permitted them to establish a nursing convent and a church on their personal property.

The conference noted with satisfaction that two Latvian parishes in Kursem have joined the Orthodox Autonomous Church of Latvia. However, there is a basic problem – a shortage of clergy who can conduct services in the Latvian language. Also there is a lack of church service books translated into this language.

APALLING ECUMENISM OF THE SERBIAN "ORTHODOX" CHURCH

According to the Orthodox magazine "Vertograd" # 229 of March 6th, John, the Metropolitan of Zagreb and Ljubiana on February 17th served the Divine Liturgy in the Catholic church of a convent of Ursuline sisters in Milan. Concelebrating with the Metropolitan were several Serbian priests while Milan's Archbishop Francesco Cocolmerio and a Catholic priest were present in the church.

This information came from the "Information Service of the Serbian Orthodox Church".

The same "Vertograd," based upon several Serbian newspapers, reports that according to an agreement between the "Orthodox" Serbs and Roman Catholics – the Catholic Bishop Stanislav Hocevar performed in Smederovo the wedding of 7 mixed couples (Orthodox-Roman Catholic).

The preparation for this event lasted for nearly a whole year. The Catholics were prepared by their priest and the Orthodox by an Orthodox one. After the ceremony a festive banquet was held, about which the newspapers write that were it not for the difference in vestments no one would guess who is who.

It was also reported that during the summer of last year, Patriarch Paul donated to the Belgrade mufti, Hamid Yousufspahic, 1,000 DM to build a Muslim middle school in Belgrade. The mufti also secured for himself the Patriarch's support in solving a number of various important problems, among them – having a Muslim Cemetery in Belgrade!

A DANGEROUS PROJECT OF THE STATE DUMA OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" #3-4 (553-554) for year 2002 reported that a project is being studied in the State Duma "to introduce changes and supplements to the laws of the Russian Federation (to strengthen them for the war against terrorism)."

The world, dragged along by the USA under the pretext of "a war against terrorism," actually more and more restricts the liberty of citizens not only in its own country, but also abroad, in particular, in Russia.

As reported by this newspaper, "It follows from the projected law that religious organizations are being considered on the same level as terrorist ones. For example, from this proposed law it follows that if in public speeches or in the media an Orthodox priest were to say that the Truth is found only within our Church, then the ROC for this discrimination and having a high opinion of itself, should be liquidated as a legal entity. And if, after the liquidation, similar words were repeated, the speaker is threatened with 5 years imprisonment.

"Who is preparing a new persecution of Christians?" concludes this very important short warning article in the "Russkii Vestnik."

ABOUT CHRIST THE SAVIOUR CATHEDRAL

On several occasions we have written about the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. At the beginning there was much information published in Russia in connection with the process of building the gigantic structure. Then, for a while the press, so to say, kept silent about it. Now the media is informing us again about the interior of the building and the decorations of this temple.

Our naïve fellow citizens, living abroad are convinced (and maybe they are trying to convince themselves) that the cathedral belongs to the MP and they see in it a sign of "the revival" of the Church in Russia. But the actual condition of this huge building in no way corresponds to their ideas. Just recently, in a very short report by "Russkii Vestnik" said that about two years ago, Alexis Ridiger went to the cathedral to conduct some service without previously making the arrangements with the administration and he was not permitted inside!

"Russkii Vestnik" #3-4, 2002 devoted two full pages to detail the legal status of this temple. The newspaper has published a xerox copy of the "Moscow Committee of state registry for real-estate and dealings with it". This document with whiteout over the dates and the clerical number, describes the temple as "an object", "room with no one living there" and as the "owner" the "city of Moscow".

Within this temple there are a multitude of various halls for meetings, concerts and banquets. It also has a "system of parking lots" whose justification, the Moscow Patriarchate said, was that it "was foreseen by the building specifications in correspondence with requirements of the city authorities regarding *objects of cultural-educational significance*".

The newspaper also reports that once, when the cathedral was closed, "cameraman Dimitry S." was making a film about life in the Church. He noticed a group of tourists from Israel who "for unknown reasons had been admitted into the church at a time when there was no service". The group consisted of 30-35 people among whom were persons in clothes typical of rabbis. This group, "did not stay long in the side altars of the church, but gathered near the soleia, as close as possible given the church's guardrail. After turning their backs to the altar and pointing to something in the center cupola, the guests started to discuss very excitedly something they had seen. It was obvious that they knew beforehand where to look for something that excited them so much. Afterwards, the group hastily left. Definitely they were not interested in subjects from Holy Scripture brilliantly painted by contemporary artists".

The film technician got interested in the unusual behavior of these visitors and "in the lens of his camera, with very powerful enlargement, he noticed a strange tracing in the west side of the cupola. This tracing presented a word unusual in an Orthodox church, written in Hebrew. It was sort of shaded, so that for regular visitors to be able to examine it closely was practically impossible. In order to read it one had to turn one's back to the altar".

In the center of the cupola, painted in a very western style was an icon of Holy Trinity, but the inscriptions "Holy, Holy, Holy" were not placed over the heads of the Holy Trinity as usual, but over a mysterious foreign word. According to the authors of this article, S. Bagriantsev and V. Orlov, "experts have translated this word as 'Elohim,' 'gods' in the plural!"

In order to prove their point the authors published 2 large photographs of this accidental discovery. One must realize that "the subjects brilliantly painted by the contemporary artists" – was done by Jews. Unfortunately, the ecclesiastical requirements that iconographers be pious Orthodox, observe the fasts and lead an exemplary spiritual life are no longer taken into consideration. Today, anyone, who can draw may easily become an "iconographer". One very often hears that the factory for church things in Sofrino is packed with Jews.

In July of last year, the magazine "Itogi" published a long article about the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow, entitling it: "Who's temple is it?" and as a subtitle: "To whom does the temple of Christ the Savior in Moscow belong?"

After describing a multitude of different rooms under the cathedral's roof, the magazine wrote that only the hall for meetings of the Synod, the quarters of Patriarch and the room for a library – are given to the MP to use. All the other rooms are in the hands of the civil authorities who are responsible for their security and their technical services.

Despite the published information that the building cost 650 million of dollars, it is known now that the cost exceeded 850 million dollars! "Itogi" reports that the management of this gigantic institution calls for no less than \$1,300,000 annually. In the beginning, this sum was provided from the city's funds, but the question is: "Who is to maintain this church?"

Priest Leonid Kalinin, who is in charge of the artistic decoration of the churches (the main and lower churches), when directly asked the question: "Is the Church able to maintain the building complex without the support of state and municipal subsidies – gave a vague answer".

When Luzhkov started rebuilding the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, everyone was told that it was necessary to give donations for the restoration of a historical memorial. The donations came in a flood from all parts of Russia and even from abroad. Few then knew that of this gigantic building only a small part would belong to the Church while the nave itself is the property of the city!

At the same time that Luzhkov was building the Christ the Savior he also built a Jewish synagogue. One would be interested to know: does this belong to the city of Moscow or to the Moscow Jews?

THE LATEST ABOUT THE KORAN

In our last issue #1 (102) we reported that the California middle schools have introduced a program of Koran studies. To the great shame of Christians in America, not a single religious denomination (including the ROCOR which has 20 parishes in that state) protested against this course repellant to a Christian. Based on the law of separation of Church and state in America's schools, just mentioning the name of Jesus Christ in school sooner or later results in bitter protests. This time only the Jews came forward with formal protests.

According to the newspaper "The Jewish Press" of February 22nd, the Jews have filed their protest against the Koran program under the pretext that in this work itself and in the commentaries there are expressions insulting to Jews, calling them illiterate, arrogant and men without faith.

In connection with this there was a special meeting of Muslim and Jewish representatives. Both groups agreed that the book "The Meaning of the Koran" will be permanently removed from school libraries and instead a committee will be created to watch all books with content that describes the differences between both religions!

The newspaper "The New York Times" in connection with the Koran story published a full-page article which reports that according to the latest scientific discoveries, it was subject to unprofessional translations, including those by well-

educated Muslims, who were then threatened by fanatics. Some were killed only for their efforts to prove that the translation was incorrect. It is interesting to note, that some scientists who criticized the existing translations preferred not to let us know their true names but used pseudonyms!

ABOUT PERSECUTION OF MT. ATHOS MONASTERY ESPHIGMENOU

The Greek Masonic government and its closest collaborator, the world-renowned heretic, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, have persecuted monasticism on Mt. Athos for a long time. After many years of work in this matter, Bartholomew managed to bring to their knees all the stubborn monasteries on Mt. Athos, who at one time had refused to commemorate him during the services. However, he has yet to succeed in breaking down Esphigmenou, despite his dismissals of its abbots and evictions of its most steadfast monks.

The latest act against this monastery was to freeze of all its bank accounts so the banks would not honor checks donated to it!

Pilgrims who indicate their intent to visit Esphigmenou are now refused visas to Mt. Athos!

This constant persecution of monasticism on Mt. Athos, especially this latest attack by the modernists, have very much alarmed the Orthodox people around the world. The Newspaper Russkii Vestnik in issue # 1-2, 2002 published a full-page reprinted article which was originally printed in the bulletin "Strazh Afona" ("The Guardian of Athos") in 1994.

Many Orthodox sounded the alarm also over the Internet and offered to write letters of protest to the Greek Prime Minister [mail @primeminister.gr](mailto:mail@primeminister.gr) and to the European Parliament, http://www.europarl.eu.int/petition/petition_en.htm

In general, the Greek government has tried for years to deprive Mt. Athos of all its millennium old unique qualities. This included the cancellation of the ban on women entering Mt. Athos, a declaration that Mt. Athos is an archeological region and the creation of museums in the monasteries. To achieve this plan one can expect at every monastery only few well-educated monks will remain who can become the managers of these "museums". Also on the agenda are highways (the work already has begun) and even to open discotheques and a casino!

It seems that under such conditions the present Mt. Athos will not be able to stand its ground against such a plot for long.

THE RESULTS OF MILITARY OPERATIONS IN ISRAEL

Every day media reports are filled with news about the countless confrontations between the military forces of Israel and Palestine. The media does report about it, but without details and in every case, the Arabs are guilty.

But actually the present situation was created by the actions of the old terrorist Sharon, who in the fall of 2000 went to the Temple Mount and thus desecrated it, where one of the most important mosques for Muslim world is located. The Jerusalem mufti sheikh Ikri Masabri said that, "The Israeli authorities have taken irresponsible and very risky decision". Sharon permitted the building of numerous Jewish settlements in exclusively Arab regions which, according to the last agreements, were to be under Palestinian jurisdiction. The newspapers hide the facts that Sharon is sending troops and tanks who raze the Palestinian villages and in their place come heavily armed Jews. Such actions cannot result in anything else but the opposing actions of the Palestinians and this results in many victims among them, as well as the Jewish population. All this is generating more and more criticism among the Israeli citizens.

The newspaper "National Catholic Reporter" of February 8th reported that on January 25th 50 Israeli officers and privates published in a Jewish newspaper a declaration that they refuse to be assigned military duty in the Palestinian territories. A bit later, the same newspaper reported that this number rose to 235 servicemen who refuse these assignments.

An artillery master sergeant, Ariel Shatil said: "People say that the Palestinians shoot first and we just respond. This is not true".

It is quite obvious that in Israel dissatisfaction with Sharon's politics regarding the Palestinians spreading. A newspaper, "The Christian News" of February 18th 2002 published information that according to a decision of the Rabbinical Congress of Upper New York a thousand very Orthodox rabbis scheduled a demonstration in front of the White House in Washington on February 7th. At the same time, the Rabbinical Congress published an appeal to President Bush. It states: "According to the Torah, the Jews are forbidden to have a State, even a religious State. Therefore, all the Rabbis and God-fearing Jews, since its inception have opposed Zionism in any form and all of its ensuing actions. With pain and sorrow we will gather to protest against the Torah-defying 'State of Israel' specifically against their leader the bloodthirsty Sharon!... It is he who, in defiance of the Torah, desecrated the name of the Almighty by going on the holy mount proclaiming war against the Palestinian people. He thereby instigated and exploded an endless chain of murder and bloodshed of all people in the Holy Land. He is constantly fueling this war together with his atheist colleagues in the government of Israel". Addressing the President, the rabbis asked for release of rabbis arrested by Sharon and some Jewish leaders.

As expected, there was not a word about this demonstration in the media, although about half of the newspaper's page was devoted to the interview, which was titled "Questions and answers concerning today's protest against Sharon and his cabinet, meeting today with our distinguished President George Bush."

The extremely fanatical Jews of the Hasidic group not only renounce the possibility of having a government until the coming of their Messiah, but they also do not permit the possibility of building the Temple which according to their beliefs will descend when Messiah comes.

Also, not a word in the media about the Jewish demonstration on February 12th in front of the Israeli embassy in New York against Sharon's policies in which 20 thousand people participated!

THE VATICAN AND THE JEWS

The newspaper "The Christian News" of February 11th published an article by Rabbi James Rudin regarding the relationship between the Vatican and the Jews.

He starts with laments that Christians since their childhood hear only that the Messiah came long ago, the Jews have not accepted Him, and that the Christianity has become a superior religion. However, he mentions that the majority of Christian faiths already took measures that this opinion humiliating to Jews will be changed. He noted with satisfaction that during last November the renowned theologian of the Vatican, Cardinal Ratzinger signed a 210-page document, approved after many years of hard work by the Pontifical Bible Committee (with the participation of Jews). This document was published in form of a book titled "The Jewish People and the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Bible". The book was published in Italian and French languages only. As this rabbi writes: "It is an attempt to change the negative Catholic view of Jews and Judaism to one of mutual respect and understanding". As is stated in the article, since the book is not yet published in English, the American Jews and the Christians cannot make a definite direct statement to express their opinion about this matter. However, according to the press, it is already known that "Rome's commission offers an apology and rejection for the way certain New Testament passages have been used throughout history to theologically justify anti-Semitism." This commission has also declared that, "the Jewish wait for Messiah is not in vain, but rather has great spiritual validity".

The very same newspaper, but dated February 18th, quoting the Vatican document regarding Jews writes that the Biblical commission declared that the "Christians were mistaken in viewing the Old Testament solely as a 'prophetic preparation' for the coming of Jesus. The Jewish Scriptures occupy a place of extreme importance in the Christian Bible. We like them, live in expectation. The difference is in the fact that for us, he who will come will have the traits of that Jesus who has already come and is already present and active among us".

The main spokesman for the Vatican Joaquin Navarro-Valls said that the document instructs Catholics how to recognize the Jewish (!) Bible "not just as literature, but for its moral value... You cannot say: 'Now that Jesus has come, it becomes a second-rate document'... and Catholics cannot just say all the Jews were wrong and we are right".

Rabbi Rudin paid attention to the fact that usually all the documents regarding relations between Catholics and Jews so far have been published in various languages and were widely distributed, but in this case, it was all very different. There was no press conference about it. There was also no distribution of the book, but instead, it was very quietly put in Rome's bookstores. To the point, that one news agency just accidentally came across it in mid-January and then, in addition, only very briefly mentions this book.

Then the rabbi puts a number of questions. In general they are: what influence will this book have upon Roman Catholics and for how long?

"WORLD WIDE RUSSIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL"

On December 13th in one of the halls of Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow "A World Wide Russian National Council" was convened. The name is very unfortunate: either it is universal world council with the participation of all nations and confessions, or – which is what it was actually – a council of representatives of all citizens of Russian.

The Council was honored by the presence of the President of Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, the Moscow Patriarch Alexis Ridiger-Drozhdov, Metropolitan Kiril (Goundiayev) of Smolensk (Mikhailov in the KGB) plus a number of hierarchs and distinguished clergy and lay people. The theme of this council was "Russia: faith and civilization. Dialogue of an era".

According to an Internet account of Alexander Soldatov in the article "Deliver, Oh Lord" – the main leader at the gathering was Kiril Gundiayev. Soldatov mentions that "many noticed that Metropolitan Kiril was the only one with whom Vladimir Putin shook hands when entering the council room".

Although the defenders of Putin's activities try to present him to the world as a very religious person, his greeting of Metropolitan Kiril demonstrates that he either has no knowledge of the basic manners regarding clergy or, after seeing a number of his colleagues who served in the KGB, just greeted them as comrades!

When opening the "council" Ridiger said that the millennium long experience of dialogue (!) of the Russian Church with Islam, which it has accumulated should be used today by the world, after the attack on New York on September 11, to open in a new way into the Muslim world and it may ask: how did she manage to live peacefully and cooperate (!) with it for so long? Ridiger, in his foresight, did not specify when Muslims happened to live in Russia.

Metropolitan Kiril said that they were talking about the West which is trying to impose upon the whole world its own "standard of civilization". Many were perplexed by the words of Metropolitan Kiril that "No matter who insists only his own approach is universal, progressive and for all humanity puts himself in opposition to all other people". And what should the

Russian Orthodox people do, who believe that their approach is indeed correct and for all humanity when their preaching of Orthodoxy reaches other nationalities and makes them equal citizens of their Russian Homeland?

In the article, Soldatov stated that at the "council" there was a genuine fraternization of Orthodox and Muslims who were represented by a mufti from Ufa, Talgat Tadjudin. This mufti was appointed to this post during the Soviet regime.

The chief rabbi in Russia, Adolf Shayevich and the Buddhist pandito-hambo-lama Damba Ayusheyev, spoke for the other "traditional confessions". Protestants and Old-believers, but no Catholics were present in the hall.

We have made a short digest of information about this outrageous gathering, which calls itself no more and no less but a "World Wide Russian Council", but at which everything Orthodox and Russian was consciously hushed up, and those minority nationalities, to whom the Russian Church used to preach the Orthodoxy (without the help of conducting dialogues) – now suddenly have become equal to native Russians. Truly – poor Russia!