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HIERARCH OF MP AWARDS CHIEF OF STATE SECURITY FOR HIS STRUGGLE WITH "SCHISM"

According to information received from Suzdal, for the first time in Russian history, the Archbishop of Vladimir and Suzdal Eulogy (ROC MP) has awarded the Orthodox church decoration of St. Daniel of Moscow 3rd grade to the Chief of the Russian Federal Service of Security in the Vladimir Region, Mr. R. V. Sivanov, as was reported by the not unknown to us scandal sheet "Prizyv" ("Appeal") in issue # 1 of January 4, 2003. As is stated in the accompanying documents, the award was given "for cooperation in gathering materials about the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, who have glorified themselves during the years of Soviet government, **as well as for assistance in matters of returning to the ROC property which happened to be in possession of schismatic religious groups.**"

As we know, for a long time the Moscow Patriarchate rented the Kazan church in Suzdal to an art atelier after the then Archimandrite Valentin had restored this church and served in it for several years! In the very same Suzdal (to deceive the numerous tourists) there stand two churches covered with scaffolding. One of them remains closed up till now: one can see through the windows a piano and around it "the abomination of desolation". Another Suzdal church last summer was used for some handicraft exhibition! And, in the mean time, the head of the "schismatic religious groups" has restored 18 churches and built 2 new ones in the city itself and the immediate vicinity.

According to the report "besides the chief, a number of FSB employees received from the diocese certificates of gratitude". The award, which was personally handed to the chief of the FSB by Archbishop Eulogy in his private office, marked, at the end of December, the 85th anniversary of establishment of the system of the state security (the CheKa, NKVD-KGB, FSB and FSK) – which were the criminals against the Russian people whom they enslaved! And yet, the naïve are told that communism in Russia has turned into democracy!

It is worth noting that nothing is known of any "handing over of the property" in the Vladimir Region of the "schismatics". It seems it is sort of an award in-advance. It is also interesting, that the report had as sub-title "The Great Beginning".

It is possible that in order to verify the trustworthiness of the archbishops, Comrade Sivanov came to Suzdal on January 22nd to arrange a reception "for citizens concerning personal matters". As we have reported, the local department of the FSB and the newspaper "Prizyv" played a significant role in the persecution and outrageously unjust conviction of the First Hierarchy of the ROAC Metropolitan Valentin by the Suzdal Regional court in August of last year.

DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF CHURCH WARDENS AND PRESIDENTS OF AUDIT COMMITTEES OF COMMUNITIES OF THE ATOC OF LATVIA

On January 11th, 2003 there was a traditional convention of Church Wardens and presidents of the Auditing Committees of 14 communities of the Autonomous True Orthodox Church of Latvia, presided over by Victor, Archbishop of Daugavpils and Latvia.

The main question discussed at the meeting concerned the status of the legalization of the ATOCL under the spiritual omophorion of the ROAC. Actually, beginning in 1994, the Justice Ministry of the Republic of Latvia (RL) in violation of the 15th and 30th Apostolic Canons refused to legalize communities that do not belong to the Moscow Patriarchate. This is based upon the "Law on Religious Organizations" enacted in 1995 which was passed not without the influence of the white klobuks of the MP.

Although the founders of the communities of the ATOCL in Riga, Yurmala, Limbagi and Tukums have stated that seemingly impregnable wall against the ATOCL was finally broken: the suggestion, made by Archbishop Victor, to omit from the law the paragraph "in one confession there is to be one church", not only was approved, but was even accepted by the Committee for Human Rights and Social Issues of the supreme organ of the state administration – the Saim of the RL. Unfortunately, during the voting in the parliament of the RL (VIIth Saim) some of the representatives lobbying for the interests of the MP prevented the acceptance of this discriminatory paragraph.

Nevertheless, the members of the Pan-Latvian conference and the founders of the ATOCL believe that they have won a substantial victory: for the first time in 7 years almost half the representatives changed their minds in favor of a just realization of the rights of the believers of the Autonomous Orthodox Church. In connection with this it was decided to continue in 2003 the struggle for legal recognition. A resolution addressed to the deputies of the Saim of the RL and a packet of material explaining to the parliament the historical and canonical situation of the ATOCL was unanimously approved and sent out.

In addition, these followers of uncorrupted Orthodoxy have approved a letter of Archbishop Victor to the US Ambassador to Latvia with a request to inform the faithful what kind of assistance they might receive from the State Department in the realization of religious rights and freedom in the Latvian Republic which is about to become a member of NATO.

At this meeting there was also initiated the suggestion of establishing an Orthodox Sisterhood with the aim of assisting the senior members of the church and organizing feast day trapezas and decoration of the church.

SUPREME COURT OF NEW YORK RULES IN FAVOR OF METROPOLITAN VITALY

The internet publication of the Three Saints parish in Garfield, NJ reported on April 4th that the judge of the supreme court in Manhattan, Phyllis Gangel-Jacob has refused to appoint a guardian over the 93 year old Metropolitan, as was requested by the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR, seemingly initiated by Bishop Gabriel (Chemodakov).

The judge has classified this demand as "most unusual" and while the matter is supposedly about the health and well being of the aged Metropolitan, "the subtext suggests intrigue, ideological differences and schism within the church..." "Concern for Metropolitan Ustinov's personal well-being is shown to be only tangential to the real reasons underlying the purpose of this proceeding: the control of Church property and its internal organization."

In her rather extensive decision, the judge said that she is not authorized to appoint a guardian for the Metropolitan, nor as well to fulfill his request to cancel this procedure. However, based upon an investigation made in Canada, she came to the conclusion that the Metropolitan is physically healthy, has ample household help and is sufficiently competent to insist that he wants to stay in Canada.

This report ends with the sentence: "Bishop Chemodakov could not immediately be reached for comment."

We will add – it is understandable why!

MEETING OF SAN FRANCISCO DIOCESE

According to the Internet publication Vertograd news #355 of March 27th there was a meeting of the San Francisco and Western America Diocese of ROCOR(L), from March 23rd through March 24th.

Cyril, bishop of San Francisco, before opening the meeting, served a panikhida for his predecessor, Archbishop Anthony and then opened the meeting with his speech about the diocese's recent situation.

It is interesting that the diocesan meeting occupied itself with a proposal for new diocesan Statutes for the Western-American Diocese and has decreed to establish a committee for legal matters, regarding the diocese and her parishes. The reason for this is a report by one of the parish rectors that, "the parishes of the Russian Church in the USA, unfortunately may not ignore the fact that they might be liable in court for any of their actions or any occurrence which might happen on their church property" and has said that, at present, his parish is being sued by someone who fell on the church's property.

As it is known, in the works is a court case, far from being settled, regarding the Holy Virgin of Vladimir Convent, headed by the Abbess Eugenia, which has left ROCOR, seemingly to join Metropolitan Vitaly.

It is worth noticing that it seems the diocese is planning to compile its own Statutes, while the Church Abroad long ago provided "Normal Parish By-laws" which was reworked several times and finally approved by the Synod of Bishops in March of 1975.

Since the problem of possible litigations against a diocese or a parish are totally dependent on the local state laws, the creation of a committee for reworking the Normal Parish By-laws is mostly an excuse to replace it.

THE PRINCIPLE OF BELORUSSIA IS: ONE FAITH – ONE GOVERNMENT

While describing the difficulties with which The Latvian Church has to struggle, now we see that the "True Orthodox Church" in Ukraine is facing similar problems. This information comes from an Internet Forum 18 f18-news-server@18.org of April 2nd. This Internet group is based in Oslo (Norway) and has replaced the recently closed Keston News, which defended the rights of "minorities".

According to report by Felix Corley, there is a St. John of Kronstadt parish of the "True Orthodox Church" in Minsk, which can in no way get registered. It seems, (although it is not mentioned in this report), that the parish belongs to Bishop Agathangel of ROCOR(L) and the rector is Fr. Leonid Platz. He informed the Forum on April 2nd that the True Orthodox Church has three parishes of some 300 souls.

Oleg Gulak, executive Chairman of the Byelorussian Helsinki Committee said that "Officially there is no ban on registering Orthodox parishes which are outside the framework of the Moscow Patriarchate, but in practice – of course there is... The authorities are trying to prevent any such registrations, but we must try to use the courts, public opinion and the international community to ensure believer's rights".

However, the lawyer Alexander Antonyuk, a human rights activist, who at present defends the rights of a parish in Grodno belonging to the Belorussian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in the village of Pogranichnaya, sees the situation with more pessimism. "There is no possibility of opening legal non-Moscow Patriarchate parishes at the moment", said he and also stressed that in general, no new religious community, of any given faith, can be registered at present.

The President of Belorussia, Alexander Lukashenko, does not hide his support for the Moscow Patriarchate and her leader in Belorussia, Metropolitan Philaret. He has informed him and the Synod that, "Those that today set as their task schism in the Church will not achieve it. Here all the forces of the state will be deployed, because the unity of the Church is the guarantee of the unity of our society and security of the state. You can completely depend on my support".

The faithful, who do not recognize the MP, have no rights to conduct the services in the open, do missionary work and are constantly under fear of arrest or paying fines, due to violations of laws of the Belorussian government!

It seems, that the Latvian Church is in a more favorable situation than the Church in Belorussia. This partly can be explained by the fact that Belorussia was always one of the poorer provinces of the Russian Empire; she remains in the same state even now, and at present (exactly for this reason) she is trying to unite with Russian Federation. Yet the "Federation", as we observe, is more and more using the Moscow Patriarchate for her political purposes.

NEW IN THE HISTORY OF ESPHIGMENOU MONASTERY

Rather unexpectedly, a welcome change has come about in the life of Esphigmenou Monastery.

According to Internet information published by the monastery, on March 14th the Supreme Court of Greece issued a ruling that sharply rebukes Patriarch Bartholomew and decreed that all restrictions imposed upon Esphigmenou be lifted on January 28th. Now the monks are free to leave the monastery and return, as well, all deliveries of food and oil are to be resumed. The final and official decision of the court is expected to be handed down in October.

The lawyer of the Ifigenia Kamtsidou Monastery said, "We are pleased with the court intervention and are convinced that justice will prevail and the monks will be allowed to remain in their monastic home".

The Abbot of the monastery, Fr. Methodios also said with the sense of relief: "We are obligated in the times we live to defend our rights as human beings first and then as monks. We just want our regular life back".

The monastery has existed for 1,000 years and St. Gregory Palamas was even among its abbots. St. Anthony, who went to Russia and established Kievo-Pechersky Lavra, was also a monk of the famous monastery of Esphigmenou.

From this information we learn that the monastery's library has 372 ancient original manuscripts, as well as 8,000 books dating from the fourth century.

A BIT MORE ON CANONIZATION PSYCHOSIS IN THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

Starting with the year 1995 more and more rumors have been spreading about demands to canonize Tsar Ivan the Terrible, Gregory Rasputin and now – even Stalin!

Recently, responses to these projects have been published in Russia as well as abroad.

The first and a quite correct reaction came from Patriarch Alexis Ridiger, who has declared that one cannot canonize a killer, referring to Ivan the Terrible (by the way, the Russian is literally the Stern or the Awesome, and not the Terrible) and had St. Philip, the Metropolitan of Moscow killed at his order.

The Internet publication of the newspaper "The Moscow Times" of February 5th quoted a declaration by Ridiger from December of 2001, in which he called this idea insane, but several of his other declarations have not been taken into consideration by the promoters of this canonization. In October of last year there was a meeting of several representatives of newspapers and Internet programs who tried to promote this idea. They have even addressed Ridiger, asking him to listen to their suggestion. The representatives of theological circles have called this movement sectarian and have warned that undoubtedly "this may lead to the schism in the church". They were accused of "juggling the facts of church history, distorting the foundations of the Orthodox faith and ultimately creating a sectarian mentality".

A renown journalist, Alexander Dvorkin, who is considered to be a specialist in field of sects within the Russian Church said: "Those demanding the canonization of Ivan the Terrible and Rasputin are a small, but very noisy group" which breeds "religious hysterics that are the basis of pseudo-Orthodox sects acting within our Church".

The Ecumenical News International also responded to this polemic on March 5th. This bulletin, basing its response upon an article by Andrew Zolotov, foretold that the next demand will be to canonize Stalin, who supposedly was even a "secret monk"!

Up to the present, the Moscow Patriarchate has tried somehow to appease these polemics, but according to the commentaries of this bulletin, "the Moscow Patriarchate is seen as having given some signs that it may drop its decade-long of appeasement this vocal minority in order to avoid a schism".

The Internet publication "StranaRu" of February 12th published a substantial article by Mary Sveshnikova "Stalin – a New Russian Saint?"

The author writes that, "the preparation of the common opinion is going on full blast. In Siberia, in the Kamen-na-Obi (Stone on the River Ob) there a serving priest, who venerated Stalin and his followers are only multiplying".

Sveshnikova distinguishes three groups which are interested in the canonization of Ivan the Terrible and Rasputin. "The first one consists of active opponents of adding the Terrible and Rasputin to the host of the saints. To the second group belong no less active defenders of their glorification, and a third insists that by now at least the Terrible and Rasputin are already saints and before long, Stalin will be canonized too".

The latter is extremely strange and just proves how short is the historical memory of the present Russians. Forgotten are the facts that according to various calculations Stalin murdered from 12 to 32 million people, who were the cream of the destroyed by him Russian peasantry and among them no less than 300 thousand clergy, monks and nuns. No less than 150 bishops alone perished at the command of this monster and yet, after the passage of only some 50 years since his death, there can be talk about his canonization!

Those who claim that Stalin before his death could have repented probably have not read the memoirs of his daughter S. Aluluyeva, who witnessed that while being in agony, Stalin with a distorted face threatened someone with his fists!

One of the ferocious defenders of Ivan the Terrible, who was married 7 times, killed his son and was excommunicated – is the publisher and the editor of Newspaper “Rus Pravoslavnyaya” (“Orthodox Russia”) – Constantine Doushenov. He also promotes the canonization of Rasputin in his newspaper.

Doushenov was a notorious assistant to the late Metropolitan of Leningrad John (Snychev) and it is believed that the idea of canonizing John the Terrible was initiated by him, who was also sympathetic to the monarchist ideals.

The “Ecumenical News International” quotes his declaration to its journalist: “They can control cash flow and administrative resources, but not what the faithful really believe. If it is God’s will, no one will be able to stop us – neither the Patriarch nor the Synod”.

AN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE HANDS OF BAPTISTS

A newspaper “Rus Pravoslavnyaya” published in St. Petersburg by Mr. Doushenov in issue 11-12 for 2002 printed a report that Patriarch Alexis II has handed over to the Baptists the church of the Protection of the Holy Virgin located on the Borovaya St. in St. Petersburg. The extensive article is entitled “Sacred Object Trampled Upon”.

The church is more than 100 years old and, as it turns out, was a favorite of the New Martyr Metropolitan Benjamin in which he often served until 1922 when he was arrested by the atheists.

According to the newspaper: “In 1933 the church was closed. For a long period it was desecrated by various factories, but in 1989, by the decision of the Leningrad authorities # 281 of April 17th (secular calendar) was turned over to the community of Evangelical Christian Baptists, who have established in it a so-called “House of the Gospel”.

Initially the Orthodox immediately made an effort to have this outrageous decision retracted, especially because the “state agency for preservation of national monuments has ascertained serious violations of conditions of restoration by the Baptists under which the church was given to them and sided with the Orthodox”.

This has created many doubts whether Ridiger indeed has turned the church over to the Baptists and just exactly when. In clearing this issue the Baptist’s “Bishop” S. I. Nikolayev became very helpful when he related to the journalist that “during the last four or five years when Alexis was here, our relations with him were excellent. I have had a big seminar and the first person to whom he came – was me... and we did have very good contacts, excellent ones. We got used to each other. Together with him we have provided the ecumenical mood in Leningrad and I have to say that during these four years, boy, how much was done!... After all, when we moved in here, a representative of the Orthodox was present, his personal deputy, and he preached with me from the ambo. He evoked the name of God as a blessing, forwarded a greeting from the Leningrad Diocese and personally from Metropolitan Alexis”.

This article, seemingly a reprint from the newspaper “Pravoslavnoye Obozreniye” (“Orthodox Review”) #7 (57) 2002 concludes with the sentence, printed in boldface: “In this way it can be established with certainty that the handing over of the Orthodox sanctuary on Borovaya St. to the heretic Baptists in 1998 was the result of an agreement made by the City Administration, the Council for Religious Affairs and the present head of the Moscow Patriarchate, at that time Metropolitan of Leningrad Alexis Ridiger”.

Another short article, signed by Constantin Doushenov is called “I Am a Living Witness”.

In it Doushenov verifies the truthfulness of the article “The Trampled upon Sacred Object” and at the same time provides a Xerox copy of the letter by the Vicar of Moscow Patriarch, Arseny, Bishop of Istrina, written by him under the letterhead of the Moscow Patriarchate on September 23rd, 1992 # 2774, Chisty Pereulok (the address of the MP) and addressed to the “President of the Committee for determining forms for leasing buildings, V. K. Kalinin”.

It states: “With the blessing of His Holiness, I inform you that His Holiness does not believe that at present time it is expedient to revise the matter of the Protection Church on the Borovaya St. in St. Petersburg and he cannot guarantee that the St. Petersburg Diocese will compensate the funds of 4 million rubles which were invested by the Evangelical Christian Baptists in 1991.

Raising this matter will lead to interfaith confrontation and resistance which, even without it, is very strained in the public of St. Petersburg”!

Judging from the descriptions on a large page of the newspaper, the heretic Baptists have mutilated the church according to their taste, have significantly changed whole interior and covered up the frescoes and this cost them 4 million rubles!

THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND POLITICS

Although the Moscow Patriarchate on several occasions claimed she is staying away from politics, in recent times she is more and more involved in international political games. This was especially obvious with the case of the US war with Iraq. As is known, the Russian Federation, being a member of the United Nations, among several other countries has refused to support the decision of President Bush under any conditions to start a war with Iraq. And then, Patriarch Alexis stepped forward in support of President Putin!

According to a report of the newspaper “Russkii Vestnik” (“Russian Herald”) on March 6, Patriarch Alexis Ridiger (“Drozdv” in the KGB) has received in his residence the extraordinary plenipotentiary Ambassador of Iraq Abbas Khalafa. The Deputy President of the Foreign Relations Department of the MP, Clement Bishop of Kalooga and Borovsk participated in this visit

When greeting the Iraqi Ambassador, the Patriarch said that he believes that "the decisions which have been accepted by the government of Iraq regarding disarmament correspond with the spirit of the United Nations" and also noted that "one can not help but notice the hegemony of one country" and as a result a multitude of peaceful citizens of the country will perish there.

According to the same newspaper, on the very same day of March 6th, the Patriarch managed to visit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, undoubtedly in order to report to his superiors about the visit of the Iraqi Ambassador!

It is not without reason that the "Russian Herald" states: "This is the first such visit in the entire history of the Russian state". Then it was reported that "at the time of visit of the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church there was scheduled a meeting of the corps of the Ministry for Foreign Relations, during which to His Holiness was handed a Gortchakov medal – an honorary award of the Russian diplomatic corps"! In his turn, the Patriarch has awarded Minister Ivanov with the decoration of St. Vladimir 2nd grade and some lower members of the diplomatic corps with other decorations.

An Internet publication "Commerzants Daily" on March 7 published an article by Paul Korobov, who has in detail described this reception in the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

According to his description "At the front gate the head of the ROC was met by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Igor Ivanov, who was in his diplomatic ceremonial dress. The other members of the Ministry met the Patriarch in the hall. Here Alexis II read a prayer while standing before the memorial list of employees of the Ministry who perished during the Second World War..."

After leading the Patriarch into the corps' reception hall, Minister Ivanov greeted him with a speech in which he said: "Today for the first time in a 200 year long history we have the privilege of meeting the head of the ROC." Then Ivanov explained that the Patriarchal visit "is a personification of the traditional (!) ties of cooperation between diplomacy and the church, whose aim was and is the glory of Russia. The close contacts with the Church enrich our diplomacy with the wider dimensions of the national interests of the country. They help us to more deeply understand the global processes which are swiftly developing in the world and do change the face of contemporary civilization".

Ridiger not only made an official declaration in name of the Synod, criticizing the reasons for war in Iraq, but also in his appeal has addressed President Bush and the English Prime Minister Blair.

Besides this, at his own behest, the Muslim delegation of 15 high-ranking Muslims, headed by Kirsan Ilyumzhinov (the President of Kalmykia) that departed for Iraq, included Theophan, Bishop of Magadan and Sinegorsk. As related by the parish of Three Saints in Garfield, NJ the Iraqi Ambassador in Moscow Abbas Khalaf has reported that, "The delegation will meet with the Iraqi administration and take part in prayers for peace." (emphasis by "Ch. N.")

Khalaf also said that, "This is not a private visit. It is being paid with the Department of Religions of the Russian Presidential administration's knowledge. The delegation will meet with high ranking officials, including Deputy Minister Tariq Aziz, who is a Christian".

According to information in the very same publication, but of March 20, the delegation has appealed to Iraqi "to fear nothing and no one except God".

The delegation returned home safely on March 18.

The political goals of the Moscow Patriarchate did not end with this.

As is known, President Putin has on several occasions declared that he wished to invite the Pope to Russia, but would not do it over the head of the Moscow Patriarchate. However, on the Internet publication "Vremia Novostei Online" ("Time for News") #17 of January 31st, Vladimir Putin declared that, "Russia is entering into a political dialogue with the Vatican".

The Internet publication of the Three Saints parish in Garfield, NJ on March 22nd reported that on March 19th the head of the Department for Foreign Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk has already met in Geneva with the head of the Pontifical Council for Promotion of Christian Unity, Cardinal Walter Kasper in order to discuss the matter of relations between the MP and the Catholics. At this meeting it was decided that they will be repeated in the future.

According to Vatican information, both clergymen came to neutral Geneva especially in order to meet person to person. Is this not in order to avoid creating a commotion in Moscow?

POSSIBLE CANDIDATES FOR POSITION OF MOSCOW PATRIARCH

The advanced age and a recent very serious illness of Moscow Patriarch Alexis II has created wide-spread talk about the possible candidates for his post.

In the article by Eugene Komarov, published in an Internet version of newspaper "Noviya Izvestiya" ("New News") on February 28th reported that, "the names of Cyril and Methodios are most often mentioned as future patriarchs".

Cyril, Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad (Goundiayev, and in the KGB "Mikhailov") was a disciple of the infamous Nikodim Rotov, also an undisputable KGB agent.

E. Komarov writes that, "Cyril is very much attracted to the retired 'cheekiest'. He drowes them to the work out his economical projects, about which it was so widely published in the media. Cyril is in general accused of affairs with the duty free import of alcohol, tobacco, permits for trade with crabs and salmon... It is an obvious fact that Cyril is not a poor man and has wide connections".

A second candidate, according to the author, is Methodios (Nemtsov in the KGB "Paul"), Metropolitan of Voronezh and Lipitsa who used to be a favorite of the previous Patriarch Pimen. Komarov writes that "Methodios is smart, according to church measures young (54 years), and he has money". But, "he too long stayed in the shadows" and besides that among those ill disposed to him there circulate the rumors that he has a wife and children. The defenders of Methodios respond: "at least he is not a homosexual"!

Accusations of being a homosexual are being made also against another possible candidate – Metropolitan of Minsk and Slutsk Philaret (Vakhromeyev, in the KGB "Ostrovsky"). He is popular among the bishops residing in the provinces, however, it is said that his candidacy would never get the approval of Belorussian President Lukashenko.

Among the candidates also Metropolitan of Solnechnorod Sergius (Fomin) is mentioned. Unfortunately we do not have his agent code name – Yakunin did not have a chance to make them all public, but, considering that he is the manager of the MP affairs, and for quite some time – a guess that there is one is reasonable.

The two former Patriarchs (Pimen and Alexis II) were elected from precisely this position.

However, there might be some difficulties here for Metropolitan Sergius: both Goulia Sotnikova, a financial trickster and favorite of Alexis Ridiger (in the KGB "Drozdov"), as well as Metropolitan Cyril dislike him.

Cyril also has difficulties: the Patriarch dislikes him and Cyril himself ignored a reception on the patriarchal birthday and went to Africa on a business trip!

According to the regulations of the Pan-Russian Council of 1917 the Patriarch is to be elected also by (in addition to the hierarchy) the representatives of the clergy and laity. Metropolitan Cyril has noticed that to rule the contemporary laity is not easy and with quite some difficulties has managed to change this regulation: now the election of the Patriarch is performed exclusively by the bishops alone.

One can predict that the election of the new Patriarch will occur by the principle of "spiders in a jar," and the one elected will be the one who will survive this dirty struggle for "spiritual power" over the Russian Orthodox laity!

It is not without reason that the newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" ("Russian Herald") published an extensive article (half of a large page) in issue # 8(608) signed by Theodore Prokhorov: "We are obliged to defend our Patriarch" in which it is reported that "the Patriarch is supposedly at the stage where his health seems to be like Yeltsin's, while in our Church there is a 'ferocious struggle for power'".

The newspaper quotes a number of other publications, in particular "Moscow Komsomolets," "Noviya Izvestiya," "Nezavisimaya Gazeta," as well as the Internet source CredoRu, who predict that "the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church will obediently split into a 'democratic liberal church', a 'conservative Suzdal' and that of the 'true Rasputin'!"

The author complains that "the discussions in the press about the 'candidates for the throne' while the Patriarch is alive and well, besides the obvious immorality – also clearly testifies, in addition to the repeated clichés, that the matter is not a particular initiative of journalists, but is indeed a well planned dirty campaign in the worst sense of the word".

MORE ON SERBIAN CHURCH AND CATHOLICS

In our last, February, issue we reported on a visit of the Serbian delegation to Rome. According to the official publication of the Serbian Patriarchate in America, "The Path of Orthodoxy" for March – April, the delegates have returned home and in the "Information Service of the SOC" of February 8th they gave many details of their trip, which was made upon the invitation of Cardinal Walter Kasper.

At a special press conference Metropolitan Amfilohije stated that, "this meeting had great significance because the delegation was able to visit the main administrative departments of the Pontificate and meet with those who head them. Thus we were able to see the life and activities of the Roman Catholic Church in the world. We have had the opportunity to exchange views on practical matters and also on theological problems, and first of all, those which unite us and likewise those that separate us. This is in regard to the structure of the Church and her mission in various areas of life. Everything proceeded with the correct spirit of a real dialogue, on which the Church is based and which is her essence." (!)

To begin with, the true Church has never conducted nor conducts any dialogues, for these are, according to a happy expression of Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), means to agree on how to more imperceptibly and more conveniently sell out the truth. The Church always recognized only methods for preaching to those who are in error!

Metropolitan Amfilohije also stated that the Pope addressed to the Serbian Patriarch with warm greetings wishing peace and calm for the Serbian People who have suffered so much during the last war.

A member of this delegation, Bishop Irinei, declared that after the stay in Rome and visiting its sanctuaries, especially the catacombs, he felt being spiritually enriched.

The newspaper published a welcoming speech to the Pope by Metropolitan Amfilohije. Reading it, one gets the impression that Metropolitan Amfilohije is addressing it not to the ferocious enemy of the True Church, but to some Orthodox hierarch!

The greeting starts with "Your Holiness"!

"I have the great honor to forward to you the most heartfelt greetings of His Holiness the Patriarch of Serbia, Paul and the Holy Synod of our Serbian Church. As a delegation, we represent the one Church of the Apostolic faith and the evangelical way of life, confirmed by the holy Fathers of the first centuries of the East and West.

"We are the Church that has always confessed the crucified and resurrected Christ. As the Apostle Paul said, "The Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles, and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2: 20-21).

" 'But seeking the truth in love' (Eph. 4: 15) we came to the ancient Rome in order to venerate the memory and relics of Apostles Peter and Paul and other martyrs of this wondrous city, as well as to give a brotherly embrace to Your Holiness and your various colleagues in the Pontifical Councils whom we met during these days while establishing a profound Christian dialogue and enjoying your hospitality. (Emphasis by "Ch. N.")

"We need sincere dialogue, without any prejudices, which will develop with humility and faith in God's providence. We need an exchange of opinions, in order to overcome contemporary problems. We pray for the peace of the whole world and for the unity of the Churches.

"We know that 'in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted by Him' (Acts 10: 35) And 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth' (Acts 17: 26).

"Our Church and our people in the 20th century alone have lived through 7 wars and to this day is suffering, deeply wounded, especially in Kosovo and Metochija. As such, our Church and Christian people, together with you, Your Holiness, are calling upon the powerful in this world, especially the United States with its allies, not to start war with Iraq. This new war undoubtedly will be a new defeat, new shame for all humanity, and not only the defeat of the honest Iraqi people and its destruction.

"In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the God of Eternity, we greet you and once more express our gratitude. Thank you!"

It is hard to believe that such a speech of betrayal was given by Metropolitan Amfilohije, a disciple of St. Justin Popovich!

In the responding the Pope said: "With a feeling of joy and brotherly love, receiving your delegation, I greet you most dear brethren, at the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul. In your persons I greet the most valuable Patriarch Paul, all the hierarch, clergy, monastics and the faithful of your Church".

Further the Pope noted the important significance of this delegation, the world wide difficulties, especially experienced in Serbia and has expressed the hope that the Church will be able to fulfill her mission in preaching the evangelical truths.

In concluding his greeting, the head of the Catholics said: "Precious brethren, I thank you for this visit. For me it is a sign that God's Spirit is leading the Church to the renewal of the unity of all the disciples of Christ, about which he prayed before His death. We pray to the Lord that He grant all of us the strength to continue on this path with patience and boldness. I beg you to forward my brotherly greetings to His Beatitude Patriarch Paul and all your Church".

By addressing the Patriarch as "His Beatitude" (a title for Metropolitans) – it seems that the title of "His Holiness" the Pope is leaving for himself alone!

"I assure you," the Pope concludes his greeting, "that I pray to the Lord, Who is guiding all our ways, that He would accompany you at this visit, which is fostering hope for our mutual bonds".

WALL TO SEPARATE BETHLEHEM

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of March 5th reported that under the pretext of self-defense from the Palestinians, the Israeli government has undertaken building a wall, like the infamous "Berlin wall," which will separate the Palestinian territory and will isolate Bethlehem with its Nativity Church even more.

According to the bulletin, after two years of constant confrontations between Palestinians and Jews this resulted in a reduced number of pilgrims. One of the reasons for the conflict is the shrine of Rachel's Tomb, which is in the Bethlehem region and mostly populated by Palestinians who, until 1967, were under the Jordanian government. Now the Israeli government plans to surround Rachel's Tomb with a barrier around 3.5 acres. Even before the wall is built, those who want to venerate Rachel's Tomb already have to pass through an Israeli checkpoint.

The mayor of Bethlehem, Hanna Nasser, a Palestinian Christian, who was born on the street leading to the famous Tomb said that: "This is the entrance to the city where Jesus was born". Now this street is about to be cut off by the wall, and this resident of Bethlehem must get a special permit in order to visit his old home. "This is a mad project," he said and, "These walls will never make for good neighbors".

The government already has approved the plan for this wall that is to be 225 miles long and 26 to 33 feet high and which will separate the Palestinian and Israeli settlements.

Rachel's Tomb was renovated by the Jewish philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore in the 19th century, who rebuilt it in the Muslim style, hoping that it would attract Jews and Muslims. However, about 5 years ago, the Israeli government spent 2 million dollars to convert the exterior into a concrete fort with observation towers.

According to this bulletin of January 22nd, the population of Christians in the Holy Land, due to war conditions and therefore emigration, especially of Palestinians, has decreased to 1.8%.

JERUSALEM PATRIARCHATE AND WESTERN CHRISTIANS

As we reported in the January issue of "Church News," on February 24th in Jerusalem an ecumenical prayer for "Christian unity" was conducted. The Patriarchate sent one of her clergymen, who greeted this gathering with a speech, was present there, but made no liturgical exclamations.

Now the bulletin "Ecumenical News International" has reported that the leaders of Western Christianity have appealed to the Patriarch Ereneos to lift the ban against common prayers with them.

A Catholic priest Frans Bouwen, who is considered to be an expert on Orthodoxy in Jerusalem, has praised the speech of Jerusalem's Archimandrite Alexander as a sign that substantial changes can now be hoped for in this matter and said; "It has been greeted as a step forward by the churches of Jerusalem. We are still hoping for full participation of the Greek Orthodox Church. What is this business of not wanting to pray for unity? We are not talking about uniformity!"

The dangerous decrease in the number of Christians in the Holy Land, will probably force the Jerusalem Patriarchate to make certain concessions.

DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN SCOBA IN USA

The organization of Orthodox Christian Laity in the USA has broad cast widely its announcement through "Orthodox News" about the cancellation of the Standing Conference of Canonical Bishops in the Americas meeting which was scheduled for May 7th, but unexpectedly was cancelled by its President, the Greek Archbishop Demetrios. The members of SCOBA consist of hierarchs of all the autocephalous and autonomous Churches in American territory. Until 1956 the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia participated in SCOBA, but exited from this body after the MP also began to participate in the meetings.

It seems that the reason for the dispute is the friction between the Antiochian and Greek exarchates because several parishes of the Antiochian Church in California have joined the Jerusalem Patriarchate. Until then there were no parishes that belonged to the Jerusalem Patriarchate in USA.

In 1994, when the Jerusalem Patriarch received several parishes in Australia, all the Greek Patriarchates threatened him with excommunication and at that time the Jerusalem Patriarch capitulated! However, it seems that, at present, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has agreed to accept the dissident Antiochian parishes into his Greek-American jurisdiction.

If the information about the acceptance on part of Jerusalem Patriarchate of some Antiochian parishes is correct, then it is to be expected that the disagreement between the Jerusalem and Ecumenical Patriarchates will again take place. For some reason, all the autocephalous and autonomous Churches are allowed to have their parishes on any continent except only the Jerusalem Patriarchate!

Of all SCOBA members, the Antiochian Church suffers more than any of them from acute modernism.

According to information from the OCL, the arbitrary actions in this case have created a division among the SCOBA members.

The President of Orthodox Christian Laity, Dr. Peter Halkis, declared that, "This controversy is a lamentable demonstration of the divisive interference by the Old World patriarchates in the life of our Church in America. To many believers this dispute may just be another example of irrelevant hierarchical maneuverings with little effect on the daily liturgical life of the Church. But this controversy, like that surrounding the new illegal charter of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, which the Patriarchate is attempting to impose, corrodes American Orthodoxy's integrity and more importantly its ability to spread Christ's message through His Holy Orthodox Church".

According to information published by the parish of Three Saints in Garfield, NJ, on March 28th Patriarch Alexis II addressed Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with a letter in which he suggests that he should "renounce his frame of mind that obstructs the achievement of the longed for harmony and begin to act in the direction of convening the Great and Holy Council".

Such a step, according to Patriarch Alexis, would be the implementation of the agreement made in 1996 regarding the misunderstandings between the MP and the Ecumenical Patriarchates regarding the Estonian Church.

The Moscow Patriarch, not without reason, points out that the pretense of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to supreme spiritual power is "destructive for Orthodox unity and capable only of generating a profound crisis in inter-Orthodox relations"... "Claiming universal spiritual power, dissonant as it is with Orthodox canonical tradition and the teaching of the Holy Fathers of the Church, represents a direct challenge to Orthodox unity. There are no reasons to believe that the Orthodox Diaspora comes under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, since it tolerates this situation for reasons of economy and only for the time being".

Then the letter states that, "only a Pan-Orthodox council has the right to settle the complicated problem of Diaspora" and "especially those, who are living far from its historical center are bewildered and bitterly disappointed by such actions and aspirations of Your Holiness".

Concluding his letter, Alexis II writes: "As is known, the preparations for the Council have been seriously undermined by the anti-canonical actions of Your Holiness".

Appeals to convene an "Ecumenical Council" were raised in the mid 1970's and lasted for more than 15 years, until the initiators of this idea had to admit that at the present time such a Council is not possible for no other reason than that the laity would never accept such modernistic programs.

But now, after almost 30 years have passed and the matter of another Ecumenical Council has been forgotten, the MP is again raising the necessity to convene the "Great and Holy Council".

The very same publication reports that the idea of convening of another Ecumenical Council is being raised by a group of Orthodox Laity in USA, especially after disagreements have developed between the Constantinopolitan, Antiochian and Moscow Patriarchates.

The Executive Director of this organization, George Matsukas, recalls that in 1993 at the meeting in the Phanar (Greece) the Patriarch promised that the new "Ecumenical Council" will be definitely convened before the end of the 20th century. He stated that, "Patriarch Bartholomew was emphatic in assuring us that the Pan-Orthodox Synod would most certainly be convened to address the irregular/uncanonical status of a divided Orthodoxy in America... We urge Patriarch Bartholomew in cooperation with other Orthodox leaders to announce an immediate date for a world Pan-Orthodox dialogue and meeting".

"HEALTHY SPIRIT IN A HEALTHY BODY"

According to an Internet publication *Mir religiy/sobytiya* (The World of Religions/Events) of March 3rd, in Voronezh, for the first time in Russia there was a *skiing competition of the clergy!*

According to information given to the agency RIA News, the press service of the sports administration in Voronezh and Lipitsa Diocese, more than a hundred Sunday school teachers, clergy and seminarians participated in the skiing competition.

The participants were from ages 14 to 60. The women competed for a distance of 2km and men for 3.

The local administrator in charge of sports, Paul Briazgounov, said that, "it is hard to overestimate the advantage of such competitions, because the clergy, in most cases, lead a not too active way of life, while a healthy spirit can exist only in a healthy body".

It seems this unorthodox slogan was taken from scouting organizations!

The Voronezh-Lipetsk Diocese has asked the local administration for "physical culture" to arrange such competitions also in other sports. Already planned are walks, swimming, chess, and even football!

It would be interesting to find out what sort of spiritual authority might a priest gain who, let's say, has won a football game? It is also self-evident that when participating in sports events, these priests will not be wearing the prescribed cassocks and riassas!

LITIGATION BETWEEN TWO CATHOLIC DIOCESES

The scandals connected with the amorality of Roman Catholic clergy continue to develop more and more and this has brought some of their dioceses literally to a state of bankruptcy. The decades long custom by Roman Catholic bishops of transferring the guilty clergyman from one parish to another and even from diocese to diocese, has recently started a new phase of developments. Fearing the total bankruptcy of their diocese, for the first time in America, the St. Bernardino Diocese is suing the Boston Diocese, in which all the Catholic troubles started.

"The New York Times" of April 4th reported that on Monday, April 1st the San Bernardino Diocese has sued the Boston Archdiocese on grounds that when the guilty priest Paul Shanley was transferred to California, the diocese not only did not mention his scandalous record but even was assured of his good standing. And that after in Boston 30 official complaints about this clergyman had been filed.

The lawyer for the San Bernardino Diocese said that the litigation is started as a protection of its finances. Under the law a party named in a lawsuit that wants to shift the legal burden to a responsible third party must file an action, known as cross-complaint, against that party.

The suing diocese believes that the Boston diocese has to take upon herself the potential expenses for covering up the damages.

When explaining this suit, the lawyer Bill Lemann said: "This action is about determining responsibility, not causing blame... We have no responsibility in the actions that caused the lawsuit so we didn't believe our parishioners should have to bear its financial burden".

The St. Bernardino diocese is considered to be the largest in USA, it has 97 parishes and more than a million parishioners.

The spokesman for the diocese, Fr. Lincoln, said that "Paying an enormous settlement would have a devastating impact on us, forcing us to cut social programs, close schools and plans to build new churches".

Newspaper "National Catholic International" of April 4th reported that the bishop of Manchester, NH already is looking for another residence, because the diocese is forced to sell a luxurious brick mansion. The diocese had to cut its budget of 2 million 200 thousand dollars; it already has paid 6 million 290 thousand in sex abuse claims and also was forced to take 2 and a half million from the diocese's savings account.

Cardinal Francis George of Chicago also speaks of the need to sell his residence!

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS (a letter to Bishop Innocent of Buenos Aires, undated, but from 1986)

Your Grace, dear Vladyko!

Your letter of March 8/21st was received by me, but already I am in a powerless position, since at the last meeting of the Synod, it was demanded that I present a letter of resignation. I had just started a report about the organization of the **diocese, to which I was appointed by the Council of Bishops**, according to the plan confirmed by me with Vladyka Metropolitan, but I was interrupted by him with reproaches of my inability to rule and the demand in the name of all the episcopate to present a request for retirement. What could I do, having no support? To resist? For the sake of my position to create a split and that at an age, when just the same I might be soon incapable of continuing the ministry? I could not make such a decision and I have presented the request that was demanded of me, although inwardly I cannot agree with the correctness of this demand.

Unfortunately, I see that an intrusive element has burst within us. It is hard to imagine that the destruction of our center is accidental and that the creators of it do not see what is going on. It is sufficient to say that our Synod actually has no Office yet this does not concern anybody. The Secretary lives far away and very seldom comes to New York for 1 to 3 days and his office assistant has no idea about this job, although he is very capable in the area of intrigues.

Jerusalem suffers first of all. There, without a specific need, a fight with the Palestine Society was started. Instead of its total resolution, a lawyers' competition is going on and the possibility of litigation is not to be excluded, instead of the unity that was achieved by Fr. Anthony. A collision with the local department of the Society was provoked, which, for no reason whatsoever, was made public. In Jerusalem itself there are brewing complications with the temporary Chief, who is totally unfit for this position as he has already demonstrated.

I observe this with alarm, but am unable to help, because I was made to understand rather clearly that my warnings (of which the majority have already come true) are the main reason for getting rid of me. After working for 55 years in the establishment and development of the Church Abroad, I observe with great sadness how it is being destroyed, but I understand that this is not obvious enough, so that I could officially raise this question.

As regarding Fr. Michael and your letter of March 8/21 – I am forwarding it to Vladyka Metropolitan and I suggest Fr. Michael temporarily get a civil job in America, if this is possible practically.

As for myself, I am preparing to move to Lesna Convent, but it is possible practically only in a month's time, because the visa has to be obtained while in America.

Asking for your holy prayers, I remain your devoted brother in Christ

+ Bishop Gregory

A letter to Archbishop Mark of Berlin, dated September 20th/October 3rd, 1993

Your Grace, dear Vladyko;

Irrespective of matters to which I am devoting another letter, I cannot but express my disagreement with your opinion about "our idealization of an exclusively martyric path", which you dislike. I was surprised by this. After all, such an idealization is characteristic of Orthodoxy from time immemorial. Orthodoxy from Apostolic times to this day invariably was connected with confessing the faith, and this has to be ready always to witness to the Truth "even unto death".

I enclose a copy of my article, which I believe outlines the Orthodox view of what distinguishes the "New Age" presently being constructed. I understand the sadness which overwhelms you at observing how the basics of what is actually antichrist's world are coming about, which produces in you a feeling of loneliness. But even more, then, do we have to value those, at present not many parishes (a bit more than 70), which have joined us and are growing. I know this from my personal encounters and from dependable friends who have visited them. There are very good priests there, young and self-sacrificial. Now, according to your proposition, one should not be concerned for them?

This does not seem appropriate to my mind. You see, these are thousands of people who have come after us following Vladyka Valentin. Some of them already have restored churches. There are schools, a gymnasium... We should think now about their proper organization, as you were previously saying, a more independent one, since we do not know how to cooperate with them.

It seems you have a lively mistrust of Vladyka Valentin, planted in you by Vladyka Barnabas and which has no support among his (VI. Valentine's) clergy.

It is significant that in a short period, even with the absence of the favor of our First Hierarch for Vladyka Valentin, the flock of Vladyka Valentin has substantially grown. The realization of your plan to find a compromise might be taken as betrayal on our part, not to mention that any kind of compromise with the Patriarchate, which remains connected with the remnants of the KGB, would be as faulty as the Sergianism of 1927. There are more than seventy of our parishes in Russia. Why should we capitulate, when we have our own army in Russia, a small one, but trustworthy?

I suggest, Vladyko, that you reject your own proposition, which sounds like Neo-Sergianism and join in a continuation of our struggle for Truth. Is not it better to have as a watchword the words of the Savior: "Do not fear, little flock"?

Pardon me Vladyko, if I have in some way offended you with this letter.

Asking for your holy prayers I remain your loving brother in Christ,

+ Bishop Gregory