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FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS

CHURCH NEWS

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LENTEN EPISTLE

**Of His Eminence Metropolitan VALENTIN of Suzdal and Vladimir,
First Hierarch of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church**

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit!

“A heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise” (Psalm 50)

Right Reverend Archpastors, Pastors beloved in God, Monks and Nuns,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Children of Church of God:

These words of the Psalmist instill a grace-filled and trembling feeling in our souls. As expressed in the penitential hymns which begin to be heard in our churches in the weeks prior to the beginning of Great Lent, as if anticipating its arrival, “trusting in the mercy of Thy kindheartedness, like David I cry to Thee: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy....”

In the life of Orthodox Christians Great Lent is a special period of spiritual joy and experiences, because radiant penitential sorrow and cleansing tears act to refine the soul, to alleviate the heaviness caused by the burden of sin which weighs upon and drags it down to the earth, and to make even our breathing free and deep, promoting the unification of mental prayer with the heart.

Praying is never so easy and joyful as in these great and salutary days, when nothing should be allowed to hinder our ascent “from earth to Heaven,” our return to the Father’s house. For this reason, I humbly beseech you, beloved, if even for a short time, put aside your vain, worldly cares, offer to God your spiritual tithe, and concentrate on prayer and repentance. For it is precisely our thinking, darkened by sin, which inspires in us the absurd notion that the most important thing for man is to seek his sustenance, to be healed from all diseases, or to make arrangements for his earthly condition. Listen to what Christ the Savior Himself has to say to us, who are weak in faith: “Take no care... about what you shall eat or drink, nor for the body, what you shall put on. Is not the soul more than food, and the body more than raiment? Consider the birds in the air; they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not of much more value than are they?...”

And so, take no thought and say not, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?”, or “With what shall we be clothed?” For all these things are sought after by the Nations, and your heavenly Father knoweth that you need these things. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:25-33). Vain cares, the urge to “sow” and to “gather into barns” to which we sacrifice our spiritual life and salvation, is a direct result of the falling into sin of the first humans, the consequences of which we must overcome with the help of God. But if one does not believe or take seriously the words of the Savior about the vanity of sinful worldly cares, then there is no sense in keeping Great Lent, and one will not be able to comprehend the light of Pascha! This kind of faith is futile and hypocritical!

Let us cherish these unique days which the Holy spirit presents to us! If we would but spend these days correctly – in strict accordance with the rules of the Church, attending the Lenten services – there is much, very much spiritual strength that we can draw from these soul-saving days of Great Lent. In these salutary days, days of repentance and softening the heart, there are no bright lights in the churches, because in the quiet and soft atmosphere, it is much easier to hear the beating of your heart, and to feel these blessed and salutary minutes of eternity, and to come to love this eternity with God, with your entire soul.

During the days of Great Lent, every Orthodox Christian – not because he is duty-bound or required, but heeding the call of his own heart, with full recognition of his sinfulness – comes especially often to the Mystery of Confession, and receives the Body and Blood of Christ. Some of our ancestors, who had departed from ancient piety of the Church and concocted a so-called “bureaucratic or formal Orthodoxy,” believed that it was not permissible to receive Holy Communion any more than once a year – during Great Lent. There even appeared in some places a “Confession Register” in which notations were made that the servant of God, so-and-so, has confessed and received Holy Communion for such-and – such a year. This was an extremely blasphemous approach to the Mysteries of the Church, and was one of the reasons for the downfall of Orthodox Russia and her replacement by a satanic and atheistic pseudo-government. The Holy Church calls us to receive Holy Communion at each and every Divine Liturgy with the words: “With fear of God, and faith, draw nigh”! It is only out of extreme condescension that the Church allows individual lay persons, who do not manage to “prepare” for each Divine Liturgy, to receive Holy Communion only from time to time. Great Lent – as the most concentrated time of spiritual activity and for dispensing with the cares of life – is the most favorable time to begin our return to the God-ordained ecclesiastical practice of constant reception of Mysteries of Christ – ideally, at every Divine Liturgy, for according to the words of the Savior, whoever does not eat His Body, nor drink His Blood, which has been poured out for the sins of the world, will not be saved.

Beloved children of the Church of Christ!

I call all of you to concentrated and ceaseless prayer of the heart, through which you will come to a sincere understanding of your unworthiness.

Approaching the sacred labors of Great Lent, let us lift up our sighs to the Lord God from the depths of our hearts with a small voice and say together: "O Lord, according to Thy limitless mercy, engender in our souls a spirit of love, compassion, righteousness and constant prayer, that our souls might remain alive and receptive to all of Thine innumerable gifts, which Thou hast given to us unworthy ones, through Thine ineffable sufferings".

Calling down God's blessing upon you unto the accomplishment of the labor of Great Lent, I must humbly beg your forgiveness and holy Prayers.

Zealous together with you for your salvation,
Valentin, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir
Suzdal Great Lent, 2004

"UKASES" OF METROPOLITAN VITALY

On January 6/19th (the Epiphany of the Lord) – Metropolitan Vitaly's Synod of Bishops proved to be extremely busy, when it issued at the same time four ukases, which do not prove their administrative literacy. They were published in the Internet website "Listok" by Mr. P. N. Budzilovich as an official spokesman for Metropolitan Vitaly. Every ukase has the same date, but no outgoing numbers!

In the first of them, Archbishop Varnava is informed that "On the strength of accusations presented to you of violation of the ecclesiastical canons in the letter dated December 30th/January 12th 2004 and after a conferring of all the Bishops, you are relieved from the position of the ruling Bishop of Western Europe and are retired". This Ukase is signed by: Metropolitan Vitaly, Bishop Sergius, Bishop Vladimir and Bishop Bartholomew. All other ukases are signed by the same hierarchs.

In the second ukase, addressed to "Archbishop Varnava and the West European clergy", it is stated "Due to the resolution concerning the retirement of His Eminence Archbishop Varnava, the Western European Diocese is temporarily placed under direct subordination to His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly with the assistance of Archpriest Nicholas Semenov".

It should have been sent directly to Archpriest Nicholas Semenov, and not to Archbishop Varnava!

The third ukase is in no way any more literate than these two: it is addressed simultaneously to Archbishop Varnava, and... Archpriest Benjamin Joukoff! Was the Chancery in a hurry or just economizing on forms? It states: "Due to the fact that His Eminence Archbishop Varnava has exceeded his authority, and has of his own will suspended the Secretary of the Synod, Mitered Archpriest Benjamin Joukoff, without consulting the members of the Synod of Bishops and a Synod resolution, his ukase of November 27th/December 7th 2003 # 1 is declared invalid.

"Besides, a thorough investigation of accusations made against Fr. Benjamin has revealed their illegality, because in accord with the 16th canon of the Council of Carthage, suspensions may not be made on a basis of 'hatred or partiality' "

The fourth ukase is really "outstanding"! It is addressed to "Archbishop Varnava, the Rector of the church of St. George the Great Martyr in Marseilles, Valentina Fedorovna Grigorieva"! Here one does not know whether to cry or to laugh!

This fantastical ukase states: "Because according to the canons (Apostolic 25th) it is forbidden to punish twice, and in view of the thorough examination of the St. George's parish in Marseilles, the ukase of Archbishop Varnava of 10/23rd of November #10/11/03, which excommunicated the choir director Valentina Fedorovna Grigorieva and forbade her to receive Holy Communion and perform obedience on the clerics, is considered by us as invalid".

It seems that the Secretariat of Metropolitan Vitaly has no idea that any priest may excommunicate his own spiritual child and does not have to report it even to his own diocesan bishop, and even less so to the Synod of Bishops! The very same applies to the right of a Rector to release a parish employee from his job.

The mentioned Apostolic canon decrees: "Any bishop, or presbyter, or deacon that is taken in the act of committing fornication, or perjury, or theft, shall be deposed from office, but shall not be excommunicated. For Scripture says: Thou shall not exact revenge twice for the same offense." The words "for the same offense" are omitted in quoting this canon, not to mention that the 25th Apostolic canon concerns very serious moral sins of clergy and not the poor performance of a choir director.

Undoubtedly, Archpriest Benjamin Joukoff has won a great victory over Archbishop Varnava (who probably never in his life has seen the book of Canons of the Ecumenical Councils). But, as one can see from his published ukases, he himself in the same manner suffers from a lack of knowledge of the canons!

Beginning in 1991, Bishop Gregory on several occasions made reports to the Synod and the Council of Bishops, stating that it is absolutely necessary to suspend Bishop Varnava and to put him on trial in order to defrock him on grounds of serious violations of the canons. But this produced no results, because Metropolitan Vitaly showered him with his protection!

In connection with this matter, in this issue we publish two reports of Bishop Gregory to the Synod of Bishops concerning criminal actions of Bishop Varnava.

UKASE OF THE FIRST HIERARCH OF THE AROC, METROPOLITAN VALENTIN

#15

January 30, 2004

To: Archpriest Vladimir SHISHKOFF

Dear Reverend Father;

According to decision of the Synod of Bishops of Russia, AROC you are the representative of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church in USA with the right to accept clergy into the bosom the AROC as per ukase issued to you on October 14/27th, 2001, # 47.

You are entrusted with the obedience to be the ADMINISTRATOR and REPRESENTATIVE of the AROC in the USA. All the parishes, communities, monasteries, sketes, brotherhoods and sisterhoods within the territory of the USA and other countries, do directly submit to the Synod of Bishops of the AROC, independent of their organizers and missions.

His Grace Bishop Gregory is the ruling bishop of the Denver and Colorado diocese, for which he is responsible before God and the Synod of Bishops

CHAIRMAN
OF THE HIERARCHICAL SYNOD

Seal of the President of the
Synod of Bishops
Translated from the Russian

Signed: M. Valentin,
Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir

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TWO CLERGYMEN LEAVE AROC

Two clergymen of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church: Archpriest Michael Makeyev and Priest Roman Pavlov have presented to the First Hierarchy, Metropolitan Valentine their short "confession of Faith" which states: "We firmly confess the faith in One God – the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity consubstantial and Undivided; We confess 'he One Divinity, worshiped and glorified; We believe in the Lord our Savior, the incarnate true Son of God and true Man, crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and Who resurrected within three days. Also we believe in the One Holy and Catholic Apostolic Church, observe Her Statutes, the traditions and rules of the Ecumenical Councils and Holy Fathers". The final sentence of their "confession" ends with the words: "With all the responsibility we do declare: what have the Holy Fathers accepted – we do accept and kiss, and what they have rejected, we also put aside and reject". With that were included their identical reports:

"In connection with my disagreement in principle with the position of the Synod of AROC regarding many ecclesiastical and canonical matters, I request to no longer be considered a clergyman of the AROAC and to be excluded from the clergy, with the right to join the jurisdiction of another Bishop".

Both of these priests have not presented any explanations of their "disagreement with the positions" of the Russian Orthodox Church, but at the same time have demonstrated their canonical illiteracy: the certificate of release (grammata) is given to a clergyman in order to be presented to the hierarchy of the Church with which the releasing Bishop has Eucharistic communion!

According to Vertograd (News # 423) of February 7th Archpriest Michael Makeyev was a member of the St. Job of Pochayev Brotherhood, established by Alexander Mikhhalchenko, who has created his own "Russian Orthodox Apostolic Church". Beginning in 2000, Archpriest Makeyev for health reasons "stopped ecclesiastical activity". He was, though, attached to the parish of Tsar Martyr Nicholas II on Golovinskoye Cemetery in Moscow. He served the Divine Liturgy only a couple of times during the whole year.

Of course, his request for "the right to join another jurisdiction" was not granted by the Metropolitan Valentin and he was suspended from conducting any services!

In an unofficial way, by using the Internet, Fr. Makeyev ascribed "Sergianism" to the Autonomous Russian Church (and this when the Church is so obviously being persecuted by the government and the MP) and "false dogmatic teachings".

According to Vertograd, he is looking to join some old calendar Greek groups, who are illegally acting in Russia.

The second priest, Roman Pavlov has a stormy biography of very little consequence. Being appointed rector of the St. Basil of Riazan parish, he actually never went there, but instead got busy with internet polemics regarding the matter of the "God-name heresy", and "the heresy of Lurieism" (Priest-monk Gregory Lurie) whom he, at one of the Synod meetings, accused of drug dealings and even atheism.

Vertograd in its issue # 425 has reported that Priest Roman Pavlov on February 7th called a "general meeting of the St. Apostle James Brotherhood" at which he hoped to persuade the members of this brotherhood to join him in separation. However, he did not find enough support, because the active members refused to follow him and the President of the Brotherhood, Serge Maymiasov, and the Trustees Dimitry and Tatiana Holevo refused to follow him.

Also, his information on the Internet, that a parish of the AROC in Serpoukhovo has followed him, is also untrue: The Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church has no church in Serpoukhovo, but there is a tiny community which on rare occasions gathers together to pray in a private apartment.

Certainly, one cannot but feel sorry for those two misguided clerics, one of whom (Fr. Roman Pavlov) is obviously a mental case, but their remaining in the fold of the AROC would bring nothing but harm, especially with their passion for Internet polemics.

THE TIMING OF METROPOLITAN LAURUS' MOSCOW TRIP

The unification of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad with the Moscow Patriarchate for quite some time has been discussed in the pages of the Russian press. The name of Metropolitan Laurus is more and more mentioned in the press in the most favorable tones. The degree of "brotherly relations" was demonstrated by the newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" ("Russian Herald"). In issue # 2 (630) for the current year it published the Christmas Epistle of Patriarch Alexis II, and immediately below it the Epistle of Metropolitan Laurus!

In connection with the endless interviews which were given by the representatives of the ROCOR and important agents of the MP just before the Council of Bishops and immediately after, an interview given by Archpriest George Mitrofanov on January 28th was also published in the "Yezhenedelnyi Zhurnal" ("The Weekly Journal").

Archpriest Mitrofanov was also a participant in the All-Diaspora Clergy Conference in Nyack as a speaker and representative of the Moscow Patriarchate.

To the question: what was the role of President Putin in the development of the dialogue between the two Churches Archpriest Mitrofanov answered:

I believe the role was positive enough. Seeking to add to our foreign policy an aspect of national interest, the President simply realized that **the restoration of the unity of the Church would allow a more active use of the religious factor. Because having in the Church Abroad not an opponent, but an ally, Russia can increase her influence, for example, upon the Russian Diaspora, while the Russian Diaspora in America, let's admit it, is a serious force. Very often the Diaspora from the former country is a transmitter of her interests, so from the point of view of external political aims, the rapprochement is very useful!** (All emphasis by "Ch. N.")

The other question was: And what is involved in the delay of Metropolitan Laurus' visit: after all, the original plan was that he would arrive right after the New Year? Can it be that the "zarubezhniki" [those outside the borders] were discouraged by the parliamentary elections?

That was answered with the following:

I do not have such an impression. After all, the elections have shown that the Communists lost, while the authority of the President is quite high. By the way, I don't expect that they feel much respect for him. Many consider him to be a person well disposed toward defending the interests of the Church in Russia, as well as Abroad. So, in a way, they might have been encouraged that the President has a stable majority in the parliament. **Therefore, the visit of Laurus is delayed for the reason that now it no longer has an informational character, as did the November visit of Archbishop Mark, but a business character, a practical one, and that means it has to be prepared for. Therefore it is a quite proper delay.**"

It seems, that one can not define more clearly the interests of Putin's government, but the riddle is: what now is the real interest of the former Church Abroad and her unofficial leader – the traitor Archbishop Mark?

THE LATEST PROVOCATION OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

In 1993 there arrived in Minneapolis (Chicago-Detroit Diocese) from Kiev at the parish of Great Martyr Panteleimon a person by the name of "Archpriest Alexander Bondarenko".

According to information received from Minneapolis, "Father" Alexander from Ukraine (a mitered archpriest with various priestly awards) was appointed in 1993 by Archbishop Alipy as rector to the St. Panteleimon parish. To various questions regarding this clergyman, in particular from sub-deacon V. Shcheglovsky, Archbishop Alipy insisted that he had checked all his credentials and that he is a "worthy" clergyman.

He arrived in the USA with his matushka and a daughter and moved into the parish house. Soon after the father of his matushka came, who pretended to be either an abbot or archimandrite, also with a miter. He related that he came from the Kiev-Pechersky Lavra. Both clergymen served in the St. Panteleimon church and preached there. Then another "matushka" -- of Fr. Geronty (the mother of Fr. Alexander's wife) -- came and also moved to the parish house. Pretty soon loud family arguments started, so that on several occasions the police were called. These scandals became known to the local press.

As a result, Archbishop Alipy suspended Fr. Alexander and the parish demanded that they be evicted from the parish house. Then, "Father" Geronty moved to the "skete" of the rather scandalous Abbot John Magram, where he started to serve and pretended to be a "catacomb bishop". After some time he returned to Kiev-Pechersky Lavra, where he was awarded by the Moscow Patriarchate with the rank of archimandrite.

"Father" Alexander has moved out of the parish house, has rented an apartment and opened there his private "church".

It seems, that Bondarenko was also a thief, because Archbishop Alipy has suffered some substantial material losses, so that he has sent to his parishes lists of missing objects. At present, Bondarenko represents himself as the head of "the True Orthodox Church in America"!

We have received a Christmas Epistle by this imposter, signed as "Bishop Alexis," in English, as well as a "History of the Russian True Orthodox Church". It states that in the year 2000, this name was added to so that it became also a "Moscow Metropolia" to be distinguished from one of a similar name in Russia.

Now these imposters in America are headed by "Archbishop Viacheslav of Moscow and Kolomna, Bishop Michael of Bronnitsa and Velensk and Bishop Alexis of North America".

Unfortunately, one can expect that all those who would look for a way out of the present very confusing situation in church affairs might fall into this provocation of the Moscow Patriarchate!

This is not the first imposter there. The Roman Catholics in Minneapolis also had their own "Russian bishop", who on several occasions has visited the St. Panteleimon parish.

ISRAELI GOVERNMENT FINALLY APPROVES ELECTION OF JERUSALEM PATRIARCH

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of February 4th has reported that finally, after more than 2 years delay, the Israeli government has acknowledged the election of Jerusalem Patriarch Eireneos, who was elected in August of 2001.

According to centuries' old tradition, the Jerusalem Patriarch is confirmed by the local governments. The Jordanian Government approved the election immediately, while the Israeli, believing the Patriarch to be a friend of Yasser Arafat and would be an enemy of their government, delayed their approval. At the same time, the Jerusalem Patriarchate is owner of large properties in Jerusalem area and even the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) is situated on their land. The government was also afraid that the Patriarchate might not renew the Israeli lease.

The Secretary of State of the Greek foreign ministry, Iannis Magriotis, has declared that: "Even if it comes late, this recognition is the result of efforts by the Greek government to support the Jerusalem Patriarchate".

Israel's failure to recognize the Patriarch has strained relations between Greek Orthodox and Jewish communities in the United States.

Rabbi David Rosen, international interfaith director of the American Jewish Committee in Jerusalem, warmly welcomed the news of the Patriarch's confirmation. He said: "I think Israel has done the right and wise thing, and I regret it took so long for this inevitable and obvious decision".

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH VARTHOLOMEOS AND COMMUNIST CASTRO

The English language Greek newspaper in America, "The National Herald" of January 24-25th and February 1st, 2004 has published a number of articles, describing the visit of Patriarch Vartholomeos to communist Cuba. One of the articles is headlined: "Vartholomaïos: Castro's Ambassador to the World". The reason for this visit by the Ecumenical Patriarch to communist Cuba also is unusual: 43 years ago Castro demolished the 2 Orthodox churches that existed in Cuba. But now, one of the churches (that of St. Nicholas) has been restored on the best plot in Cuba's capitol Havana and with the communist funds!

Castro did all he could to make this event as festive as possible and the Patriarch was met with the honors befitting a head of state. Besides a number of hierarchs of the Patriarchate, he also invited the mayor of Thessalonica, Vasilis Georgopoulos and many important Americans of Greek descent, totaling more than 150 persons!

As per a report of Three Saints parish of the MP in Garfield, NJ, of January 29th, Castro's hospitality went so far that he met privately 3 times with the Patriarch and, altogether 7 times! Violating etiquette, Castro personally went to the hotel in which the Patriarch stayed in order to see him personally off to the airport!

Informed of Vartholomaïos' plans to visit Cuba, the American government pressured him, hoping to prevent this trip.

Patriarch Vartholomaïos in the beginning wanted to award the openly atheist Castro with the Church's highest award – the order of St. Andrew, but then changed his mind and gave him a golden cross with the coat of arms of the Patriarchate. And Castro demonstratively presented him with the key of the new church.

The Patriarch arrived with a large retinue among which were several bishops.

At present, there are some 2,000 Russians in Cuba and only 47 Greeks. Therefore, at present there are arguments about what language the services will be conducted. The church is a gift to the Greeks, but the majority of Orthodox are Russian, but they also have in mind missionary work from this church.

All of a sudden Castro (as did Stalin, when he has realized that he was losing the war) got very "interested" in Orthodoxy! He even asked Vartholomaïos to send him as many books as possible on Orthodoxy which he promised he would distribute in schools. He also expressed a wish to visit Mt. Athos!

Vartholomaïos was so "moved" by these requests that he has categorically refused to meet with representatives of Cuban dissident groups, many of whom for their resistance to communism are in jail. At the same time, he didn't hesitate to openly oppose the American President's policy, who just recently strongly criticized Castro's regime, and has declared, that the "imposing sanctions upon (communist) Cuba was a historical mistake".

The situation of the communist president is very complicated: Cuba is under worldwide economic sanctions. The USSR is not supporting him, while the population is on the verge of an uprising.

Meanwhile, Vartholomaios wants to play an international role. He has already promised Castro that wherever he can, he will advocate the lifting of the sanctions. Leaving Cuba, Vartholomaios met at the airport with the representatives of the press and has shared with them his gratitude to the communist host for his unexpectedly polite reception.

One can assume that in the near future Castro will receive a formal invitation from the Greek government to visit Greece and Mt. Athos!

From the Internet publication "Mir Religii/sobytiya" ("World of Religions/Events") of January 29th it is obvious that the "laurels" of Vartholomaios give no peace to the Moscow Patriarchate. Now, the so-called "Orthodox Community of Russia" also plans to get permission to build a Russian church in Havana!

The authors of the declaration by this organization said: "the Eastern Papist ideology of Constantinople's Patriarch has nothing to do with church tradition and is not accepted by the majority of the Local Churches". While "the pompous meeting of the Patriarch Vartholomaios I, accompanied by delegations of American Protestants and Cuban authorities looks like a challenge to Russia [?!]. Moscow has left Havana and official Cuba is turning toward Washington, and the Constantinople Patriarch is its faithful ally... In order to correct this situation, the leaders of the Union of Orthodox citizens will meet with the Cuban Ambassador and will personally acquaint him with the state of affairs".

A CONCILIAR SOLYANKA (a spicy Russian soup)

by Archpriest Michael Ar dov, rector of the parish of Tsar Nicholas II in Golovinskoye Cemetery, Moscow

On January 21st, when receiving the Patriarch of Alexandria Peter VII in one of his numerous residences, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia declared: "We are sorry that the preparations for the Great and Pan-Orthodox Council at present is not working, although in the 60's theologians and church activists have put a lot of effort into it... In our life there is enough demanding and actual problems which have to be discussed...."

The words "council" and "sobornost" are used appropriately and are not out of place for those who are not lazy. Therefore, a majority of people thought that Alexis II meant that "there should be more meetings". The matter by itself is a serious one and also dangerous. It was not in the 60's, but right after the war that the plan for such a "council" was conceived by Comrade Stalin. He wanted to have power not only over the Moscow Patriarchate he had just created but also over more than a dozen Local Churches. In 1948 their delegates came to Moscow. On orders from the Lubianka [KGB HQ] they condemned the "warmongers", Catholicism and ecumenism and, as was customary, proclaimed hosanna to the great Leader and Teacher. But they could not call this gathering a Council: the representatives of the Constantinople Patriarch were opposed to it. And regarding the 60's - this was the period of "thaw", which hardly prevented Nikita Sergeye vich [Khrushchev] from closing monasteries and churches. And therefore, the leadership of the Patriarchate was openly friendly with the Vatican, hoping for a leading role in the World Council of Churches. The "Great Council" was called to carry out liberal reforms in the Church and to submit her to a worldly agenda. At that time, at the end of the 60's, the Paris magazine "Herald of the Russian Christian Working Movement" published an article by the theologian and historian of the Serbian Church, the zealot Fr. Justin (Popovic). He strongly opposed the project of a "Pan Orthodox Council". His arguments were these: the ancient councils were convoked by the Orthodox emperors in order to establish the victory over some heresy. The emperors vanished long ago, and the Orthodox are extremely divided. We do not have the same calendar and some even permit themselves liturgical communion with heretics.

The words of Fr. Justin sound even more persuasive today. If the Council were to be realized, it is possible it would help the Kremlin attain its far-reaching aims. But in regard to Orthodoxy it would bring nothing but schisms. Alexis II himself has verified this with words addressed to Peter VII, which expressed the following precautions: "In the past, we have discussed this matter with the Patriarch of Antioch Ignatius. His Beatitude has expressed the opinion that some first Hierarchs of Local Churches are excessively attracted to interpretations of canons from the distant past, and therefore are not always able to respond to the problems of current society". Does this not mean that the Moscow Patriarch and those of one mind with him are ready just for immediate, non-churchly interests to forgo those whom the Orthodox Churches can be proud of?

And one should remember another thing. In the history of the Church there were some "councils" which in the past have received the name of "robber councils" because "they contradicted past Councils and annulled their decisions." In this context, the Alexis' declaration doesn't contain any contradictions. The significance of a Council lies in its being accepted by all, participation by all and hearing the opinions of all. Of what kind of "Great Council" one can talk about, if this idea is expressed by the Patriarch of a Church which in violation of its own statutes for years has not convened Local Councils, handing all power over to the hands of five or six members of the Synod? And keeping in mind the latest changes in the administration of the ROC, at this proposed "Council" there would be only the head of the Internal Ministry, Metropolitan Kyril and Alexis II himself.

THE EIGHTH RUSSIAN WORLD-WIDE CONGRESS

The Internet bulletin of Three Saints M P parish in Garfield, NJ reports that on February 3rd that in the Sergiyev Posad in Moscow the Eighth World Russian Congress opened. At this Congress appeals for the unification of the ROCOR and the MP were heard. In his opening address to the members of the Congress Patriarch Alexis Ridiger said that it is "a pleasure for us to point out the positive and clear direction in the relations between the mainstream Russian Church and ROCOR.

There is hope now that the division of our Church produced by the tragic events of the past century will be eliminated." The Patriarch also said that, "This is happening at a time when the integration process is gaining pace and the Muslim nations are consolidating too", therefore, supposedly "The Eastern Orthodox civilization must consider its role in this process".

A speech that testifies to the very political "spirituality" of the leader of the Moscow Patriarchate!

The representatives of 15 autocephalous Churches participated in this congress, and certainly also from the ROCOR, yet no names were revealed!

However, there is nothing secret that eventually will not be revealed. Now we know the name of ROCOR's representative at this Congress: it was Priest Peter Holodny, a grandson of the late Archpriest Alexander Kissilev with whom at one time he cut off any relations because of his sympathies for the Moscow Patriarchate! He is also the official treasurer of Metropolitan Laurus' Synod. According to information received from Russia, "According to radio 'Mayak' ['Lighthouse'] there was a very colorful event at the Russian World Wide People's Congress was the address by ROCOR's Priest Peter Holodny. So far, no ROCOR clergyman has ever participated on the Pan-Orthodox meetings on Russian territory. The speech of Fr. Holodny was short, but capacious. He called for the unity of "two brotherly Churches" and pointed out that the path for unity will be a difficult one, but one has to follow it to its end".

When asked by "Mayak" about the nature of the difficulties in uniting both Churches Fr. Peter answered: "The difficulties are in the first place worldly. It is always easy to separate, but always much more difficult to unite. There are parallel structures, there are real estate matters, there are different concepts of life and all of this has to be overcome. There is no problem of money. But there are painful questions. There is the matter of suspended priests: priests who left for the Moscow Patriarchate and were suspended by us and vice versa. There are cities where two parishes live side by side".

Fr. Peter is in a banking business in Moscow and it seems that dogmatic and canonical matters are simply non-existent for him!

In response to this speech, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad said that the matter is not about the mechanics of merging, but "about the restoration of the fullness of national conscience of the Russian people, a return to the ancient values. Russia, since she is conscious of herself as Orthodox, is capable of supporting various cultures and traditions, that includes those that are very distinctive and at the same time those very much like our tradition: the ROCOR. We believe, said Metropolitan Kirill, that this is a difficult process, but there is no other way. After all, we do have the same holy Martyrs who pray for the unity of Orthodoxy!"

The same Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk ("Mikhailov" in the KGB) has objected to the opinion expressed by some members of the Congress that the ROCOR might be ignored because she has only 300 parishes. He responded saying, "Statistical arguments have no meaning here, when the matter is about the future fate of the people who were the cream of Russian society". He has also declared, that "the union of the two parts of once united Russian Church can have a favorable influence also in Russia". Nowadays, the Catacomb Church persistently is ignored both by the former Church Abroad and, understandably, by the Moscow Patriarchate.

President Putin sent a personal greeting to the Congress, and the Foreign Relations Minister, Igor Ivanov made a speech. He said that the government adheres to Christian principles in its foreign policies and that requires mutual respect toward various countries. In particular, he also declared that the Russian diplomats welcome the prospect of overcoming the separation between the two parts of the Church!

On February 4th the Congress' meetings will be held in the Moscow Patriarchate's center at Danilov Monastery. The fact that President Putin has sent his greetings to the Congress and the Minister of Foreign Relations was there personally to make a speech testifies that the Putin's government does not hide its political interest in a union between the MP and the ROCOR.

The very same bulletin (of the parish of Three Saints) as well as Vertograd news # 422, (which verifies this information) that the English newspaper "The Daily Telegraph" on basis of publications made in Iraq, that 270 various companies and personal businesses have received kick-backs from Saddam Hussein in return for support of his regime. Among others "the Liberal Democratic Party" established by Zhirinovskiy and The Russian Orthodox Church are mentioned. The President of the Foreign Relations Department of the MP, Metropolitan Kirill, as Three Saints church reports, has categorically protested against this information and has declared: "This is an absurdity, I cannot think of any other word for it. Nothing of the sort could happen".

The Russian Internet publication gzt.ru gazeta of January 30th has verified this information. According to this publication, the following companies in Russia had dealings with Saddam: "Companies belonging to CPRF received 137 million barrels; companies belonging to LDPR – 79.8 mln.; Russian Committee of Solidarity with Iraq – 2 contracts for 6.6 and 12.5 mln; the employees of the administration of the RF president – 92 mln; the **Russian Orthodox Church** – 5 mln."

As is reported at the end by Lenta.ru: all contracts were from the end of 1997 until March 2003. They were made based on the UN agreement "oil in exchange for food". The biggest group of contracts were received by the President's administration and members of his government. The total amount received due to these contracts was 3.1 billion barrels. Another contract for the Russian Ambassador in Baghdad was for 1 mln. barrels.

Certainly, if one compares 5 million and 1.3 billion barrels received by other companies and, especially by the President's administration – one can imagine, that Metropolitan Kirill believes the amount of oil to be so insignificant that it is possible to deny it was received!

Everything is possible in the Moscow Patriarchate. The very same Metropolitan Kirill (who got the nick-name of "tobacco Metropolitan" in Russia and abroad – was trading tobacco, alcohol, diamonds and oil, and the Patriarch himself, not to long ago (about a year and a half) appeared on TV advertising the Luk Oil Co.! Most certainly, the Moscow patriarchate received this oil with very profitable conditions but, of course – never from Iraq. Only one question: What made the Patriarch of Moscow advertise a foreign oil company in Russia?

CONSIDERABLE REARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE STAFF

Two newspapers in Russia: "Kommersant Daily" (of January 13th) and "NG Religii" (of January 21st) in their Internet issues have published articles that among the powerful hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate, quite unexpectedly even for the clerics – there was dismissed the Manager of the MP Affairs – Metropolitan Sergius (Fomin), who was appointed to the Voronezh diocese. In addition, he also lost (attached to his former position) permanent membership in the Synod of Bishops. According to this report, the decree of the Synod was made in response of his personal request, "due to the great distance from Moscow". However, both authors of these articles do not hide the fact that they are very suspicious about the real reason for this decree. Nevertheless, Metropolitan Sergius has received a formal statement of gratitude for "his work as Manager of the Moscow Patriarchate's Affairs".

According to NG R – "there former Deputy President of the External Relations of the MP, Archbishop of Kalouga and Borovo, Clement (Kapalin) was appointed to his position. And at the same time, another Deputy of the External Relations MP (that is Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk) --- Archimandrite Mark (Golovkov) – by a decision of the Synod of December 26th was promoted to the rank of bishop with the title of Yegorievsky, vicar of the Moscow Patriarchate.

An Internet publication, GZT.ru of January 12th also published an article about staff shifting with the headline "Elevation of Kyrill". It states: "Beginning with spring of 2003 the Synod, presided over by the Patriarch has removed from the key positions in the Church all the "powerful" opponents of Kyrill, Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad. Instead he has appointed those who in this or that way are connected with the Metropolitan or his Foreign Relations Department. Metropolitan Kyrill, already for more than ten years, has been the second ranking figure after the Patriarch, a most active and colorful Orthodox agent. This is acknowledged even by his enemies of many years, who ascribe to him all the sins, -- from limitless real estates 'appetites' to ownership of oil rigs.

Over the last ten years the main opponents of Metropolitan Kyrill (and not competitors?, "Ch. N.") were Metropolitan Methodius of Voronezh and Lipetsk, the president of MP Affairs and Metropolitan Sergius of Solnechnogorsk. It is obvious that he has succeeded in managing to get them smoothed out of the way!

The nomination of Metropolitan Clement was made to the Synod by Patriarch Alexis.

According to the definition of the Kommersant Daily, "the post of Manager of MP Affairs is one of the two key positions in the Russian Church. The appointee automatically becomes a permanent member of the Synod. The second person who due to his position is a permanent member of the Synod is the President of External Affairs of the MP, Metropolitan Kirill. The new position of Archbishop Clement makes him member of the immediate entourage of Alexis II, as his main assistant in the administration of the ROC. Archbishop Clement will officially represent the Patriarch in all functions: religious as well as civil. Besides, he becomes also the Secretary of the Synod (preparing documents for its meetings) and this will even more raise his prestige within the ROC".

The newspaper "Ogonek" ("The Light") also in an extended biographical article by Alexander Soldatov didn't ignore this, with the title "Conductor of a Symphony of Power". The subtitle of this article explains: "the recent session of the Holy Synod of the ROC this year, one may say, finally resolved the question of the future Patriarch. The ecclesiastical "line of power" is already subject to Metropolitan Krill. Who is he? -- the most probable future First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church."

The biographical article by Soldatov reports that Krill of Smolensk, when he started his service in the KGB, took the code name of "Mikhailov", in memory of his father, Priest Michael.

Krill had a breath-taking career under Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) of sorry memory and at just 29 years was already Bishop of Vyborg! From that time on, his career rose only to higher elevations!

Considering the weakened health of Alexis Ridiger, it seems that Metropolitan Kirill is working on making himself very probably the leading candidate at the elections of a future Patriarch.

ABOUT GIBSON'S FILM "THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST"

For quite some time there has been a lively and bitter polemic in the media about the Gibson film, and now when it that it will open on February 25th a whole series of renown publications like "The New York Times," "Newsweek," "National Catholic Reporter" have responded to that, as well as the Internet. Some TV channels have also shown previews of this film.

Some see in this film the means of spreading the preaching of Christianity, while others consider it to be harmful, because the sufferings of Christ depicted in the film are too graphic. Certainly foremost, the Jews are outraged and consider this film to be openly anti-Semitic.

Gibson is extremely rich, belongs to a Roman Catholic conservative group which refuses to recognize the reforms accepted by the Second Vatican Council and attends churches in which the services are conducted in Latin. The actors in this film speak only in Aramaic and Latin, but there are subtitles in English.

Completely aware that his film will spark a very controversial reaction, Gibson, so to say, for quite some time hid his film from the eyes of "society" and showed his film only to a few selected religious people. So, the film was shown to the Pope and also the Protestant, Billy Graham. But, despite Gibson's precautions, the nature of the film leaked out and became a subject of media arguments.

The Pope, asked about his impression of the film, answered: "It is as it was", while Billy Graham was crying with compassion.

The most interesting reaction was that of the Jews. Rabbi Hier saw the film when it was illegally given to him by some friend, and Mr. Foxman, Director of the Anti-Defamation League in New York has admitted that he managed to sneak into a screening provided for pastors, who had gathered to see the film. As expected, Rabbi Hier described the film as openly anti-Semitic and was "horrified by the movie which he said depicted all Jews, except those who were Jesus' followers, as villainous, with dark beards and eyes, like Rasputin".

Gibson's situation is rather peculiar. On one hand, he wanted to follow as closely as possible the Gospel testimonies, on the other – he understood that the fact of the Crucifixion of Christ of itself means to Jews an anti-Semitic attack, because to put all the responsibility on the Romans, while ignoring Jewish demands – would undermine the historical accuracy of his film. Therefore, he presents Pilate not as a person who even wanted to free Christ, but as a cruel and bloodthirsty ruler. The Pilate's words that he does not find any fault in Christ are omitted. Also the cries of Jews "let His blood be upon us and our children". The main accent in the film is upon the cruelty of the Romans and their physical tortures.

At any rate, the making of this film and the secrecy which surrounded its production have resulted in enormous advertising and the 25 million dollars which Gibson laid out from his own pocket, without any doubt will be recovered in abundance. The film has not yet reached the theaters, but the press says that seats have already sold out.

The reaction to this film on part of the Jewish sect "Jews for Jesus" is interesting. They published a full-page letter to Mel Gibson. The main point of the letter is that while recognizing Christ the Savior to be the promised Messiah, the author of this letter, Susan Perlman, insists that all the commotion about this film is useless because why argue about who killed a person Who is known to be alive?

It is characteristic of Catholics that it does not enter their minds that a person who tries to imitate the Gethsemane prayer and crucifixion of the God-Man actually commits a blasphemy.

BLASPHEMY IN THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

The newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" ("Russian Herald"), published in Russia, (# 2, 2004) has printed a short story with the headline: "Icons with Faces of Sailors from 'Kursk' ". Its content is so unusual that we have decided to reprint it in full, while emphasizing some statements that especially astonished us.

"Four icons with the faces of the 118 sailors who perished in the nuclear submarine 'Kursk' were displayed in the exhibition 'Orthodox Rus' which opened in Moscow on January 21. As was related by the RIA 'Novosti' ('News') in the diocese of Murmansk Monchegorsk, the icons, instead of faces of the saints, had portraits around the edges of the submariners. They were painted immediately after the tragedy, due to a special decision of Symeon, Bishop of Murmansk and Monchegorsk. Two icon painters from St. Petersburg – Nina and Eugene – painted the portraits of the sailors from photographs provided by the relatives of those who perished. As reported, the idea of Bishop Symeon in the beginning created many arguments among the clergy, since some of those who perished might not even been baptized. However, in Bishop Symeon's opinion, 'all the submariners in their martyr deaths received baptism in the waters of the Barents Sea. [?!] Together with the icons, there will be exhibited a vigil lamp with a wreath of metal thorns, made out of a metal plate from the damaged 'Kursk'. This light was the very last one the submariners would have seen during the accident, as was explained by diocesan sources. Among the relics of the 'Kursk', visitors will also see also the ship's bell. In order to install it, a smith from the village of Olenitsa made a special construction – a cross surrounded by anchors, in the middle of which is the ship's bell. 'In this manner the ministers of the polar regions want to present to Russians the destruction of the 'Kirks' not only as a tragedy or a sensation, but as the turning point of the new revival of Russia [?!], the priest monk of Mormons and Monchegorsk diocese, Ft. Mitrophan stressed".

Question: why this blasphemy instead of a large painting with portraits of all the perished submariners"?

SAME SEX "MARRIAGES" SEEM TO GAIN LEGALITY

One of the most renown American newspapers, "The New York Times", has recently devoted several of its issues to the matter of the so-called "same sex marriages", which so far the American legal system does not recognize, although in some places they have already won a general recognition.

The movement toward recognition of "same sex marriages" started in Massachusetts and was nearly passed into law, because by a majority of only two votes the law did not pass. However, the state has passed a compromise. According to

the new regulation "same sex couples who are civilly 'united' will have literally every single right, privilege, benefit and obligation of every sort that our state law confers on opposite sex couples who are civilly married".

Encouraged by such compromises in Massachusetts, the supporters of "same sex marriages" started to seek also for religious approval and the "clergy" of various denominations decided to meet their needs. In the eyes of the law these religious ceremonies have no value, but the persons who seek such "marriages" insist they want the Lord's blessing!

It is interesting to note, that such "marriages" already take place even in synagogues! A rabbi Sharon Goldston from Los Angeles has related that she was "ordained" a year ago and the first service officiated by her was the marriage of two women. She said that, "I think that more and more rabbis are officiating, certainly in Reform and Reconstructionist movements".

One Catholic priest was very much troubled and said: "We can bless a dog, we can bless a boat, we can bless a car, but we can't say a prayer over two people who love each other and want to spend their life together".

The text of the services in such cases is not altered and at present "the Christian denominations" which do recognize such marriages are already working on inventing such a text for general use.

In San Francisco's City Hall such marriage certificates were already issued without any prior arrangement, while the state administrators were debating this matter.

The Mayor of San Francisco, Gevin Newsom, told a City Hall clerk that he may issue licenses for same sex marriages and that they will be valid in this city, but it is not known if other cities will also consider them to be valid. As soon as the Mayor's decision became known, in one day 50 "weddings" were performed.

"The New York Times" reports that between February 12th and 17th there were already issued 2,425 licenses. Being afraid that the opponents of this outrage might win and the Mayor's decision cancelled, were standing in line from the evening to early morning in order to get the \$83 license. The helpful 200 members of the City Hall staff, without pay, and with some added volunteers have been working non-stop over a 3-day holiday weekend.

Usually the City Hall issues about 30 licenses per a day, but in this case on Saturday 485 persons were "married" and on Sunday 469.

At present it is expected that the state of California will demand the acceptance of same sex marriages through the Supreme Court of USA and such decision might be handed down as early as November!

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS

(a report note by Bishop Gregory to the Synod of Bishops, February 8/21, 1994)

I have received a copy of the letter with the letterhead of Synod of Bishops, signed by His Grace Bishop Barnabas as "Plenipotentiary Representative of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad in Moscow" and 'Secretary Archpr. Alexis Averyanov, Rector of the Don Church in Podolsk" addressed to "His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir, the Locum tenens of the Patriarchal See".

As far as I know, the Office of the Synod of Bishops has never given His Grace Bishop Barnabas any kind of letterheads to be used by him.

"To communicate with the representatives of the Autocephalous Churches regarding Church life; to fulfill the resolutions of the Council of Bishops and Synod of Bishops as well as those in his own name" – is the sole prerogative of the First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and, nobody else's. (See paragraph # 37 D of the Statutes of the ROCOR).

His Grace Bishop Barnabas has not only permitted himself to appropriate the exclusive powers of the First Hierarchy, but has in the name of the Synod of Bishops, and without its knowledge, entered into a relationship with the Ukrainian self-ordained person who now has declared himself to be the Ukrainian Patriarch!

Unfortunately, news about this scandalous letter began to leak to our flock and it is to be expected that in a short while it will become common knowledge, because the self-ordained and the enemies of our Church would be delighted to spread the news of this, our disgrace.

I believe that the Synod of Bishops should immediately and formally distance itself from this outrageous action, done in its name by Bishop Barnabas, and regarding him, take urgent and stern measures. Otherwise we will be made a laughing stock of the entire Christian world and in our own flock this will create a great scandal, not to speak of the reaction to this scandal by all believers in Russia

The humble servant of the Synod of Bishops + Bishop Gregory

Note by "Church News": This scandal became known not from condemnation of this outrageous fact by the Synod of Bishops, but from the copy of a letter to Metropolitan Vitaly by the "Kievan Patriarch" which was received by Bishop Gregory. In it was an official invitation to the Metropolitan to come to Kiev in order to formally enter with him into prayerful communion!

A report to Archbishop Laurus, Secretary to the Synod of Bishops, June 21/July 4th 1994

I have already written a whole number of reports to our First Hierarch, Metropolitan Vitaly, and to the Synod of Bishops regarding the lawlessness of Bishop Barnabas in Russia, and despite this I have never been informed about any decisions regarding them.

Unfortunately, Vladyka Metropolitan continues to protect him despite his unprecedented canonical crimes.

The resolutions regarding Bishop Barnabas do not take into consideration a number of circumstances.

His ordination was performed because of need in secret and did not foresee the possibility of its being exposed in the future and without having the referendum of the whole Episcopate, usual for such cases, and acquiring the data of his qualifications for accepting this high rank. The point was that he was the rare person from the West who could at the end of the seventies get a USSR visa.

The announcement of his episcopal rank was made against this, by a personal decision of the First Hierarch and without the knowledge and agreement of his Archbishop, Anthony, who considered this to be a grave mistake and has complained to me in a letter about the unexpected revealing of this consecration.

The President of the Synod has not informed the Episcopate of this, in violation of 24th Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. Therefore, the competence of Bishop Barnabas, from this point of view, should be deliberated by the Council of Bishops.

A whole number of uncanonical acts of Bishops Barnabas might be explained by his total canonical illiteracy. To have such person as a member of the Council – is extremely dangerous. As it is, he has already covered with the ineradicable shame the name of the Church Abroad in Russia. Despite all of this, to this time he has not been put to trial and his case was resolved personally by the First Hierarch.

The three months leave (although without permission to serve) for crimes which according to canons are punished by defrocking – means to encourage the crimes. I have already made reports about this to the First Hierarch and the Synod of Bishops.

Humble servant of the Synod of Bishops,

+ Bishop Gregory

A report note to the President of the Synod of Bishops, Metropolitan Vitaly, March 30th/April 12th 1994

I was given a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Synod of Bishops of March 23rd/April 5th # 713, regarding the establishment in Russia of a "Provisional Church Administration of the Russian Orthodox Church" at the Diocesan Conference convened on March 9/22 of the current year in Suzdal. Concerning the resolution of the Russian Hierarchs it states that "it cannot be accepted as valid, since it violates basic Church canons and the Synod of Bishops cannot give to his its blessing".

The resolution quotes the 14th Canon of the First and Second Constantinople Council in which a bishop who shall abstain from communion with him "and fail to mention his name, in accordance with custom in the course of the divine mystagogy".

However, the resolution of the Conference in Suzdal quite resolutely states that the name of the First Hierarch of the Church Abroad WILL be mentioned.

The 13th Canon of the same Council relates to priests and deacons, but not to bishops, as well as the quoted 31st Apostolic Canon, while the 18th Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council refers to unlawful gatherings committed by clerics or monks against their bishops.

The thought running through the Apostolic canons and canons of the Ecumenical Councils like a red thread is that the Holy Fathers considered her prayerful and Eucharistic unity the most important thing in the life of Christ's Church. *From this unity our Synod of Bishops has itself broken away.*

The declaration of the Conference of the two dioceses (of Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentin) was convened absolutely legally in order to discuss the difficult situation of the Church in Russia. Any "engagement in factiousness of any kind, or hatching of plots" at this meeting is impossible to note. None of the monks exchanged oaths among themselves and nor hatched any plots against their bishops. As is obvious from this meeting's resolution everything proceeded in the spirit of love and mutual trust.

While accusing the Russian Hierarchs of unlawfulness in their establishing a Provisional Supreme Administration and quoting parts of their resolution, the Synod's definition completely ignores *all the accusations that motivated these hierarchs, which forced them to cut off administrative connection with the Synod of Bishops.*

This Conference came as a direct result of *the numerous and serious violations of canons by our Hierarchs, and unfortunately, also the First Hierarch himself.* When all the requests, complaints and questions addressed to the Metropolitan and the Synod, of over almost 2 years, evoked no reaction, in May of 1993 Archbishop Lazarus declared that his is leaving administrative subordination to the Synod, and in February of the current year Bishop Valentin was forced to do the same.

The decision of the Synod of Bishops of March 23rd/April 5th *contains a terrible mistake:* it refers to laws which have nothing to do with the case of the Russian Hierarchs and ignores the actual Regulation of Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20, 1920, to which the Hierarchs, who have signed the resolution of the Conference, refer (see pars. 2, 3, & 9).

It is obvious that the Hierarchs who wrote the Synod's resolution have not read the Patriarchal Synodal decision made in the united presence of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council in the event of the already expected destruction of

conditions for the canonical existence of the dioceses of the Russian Church. The instruction in ten paragraphs gives detailed advice on how to reestablish the Supreme Administration of the Russian Church in the event of its liberation.

This document of the 20's, truly inspired by God, served the children of the Russian Orthodox Church as a guiding star. Without it, the Catacomb Church in Russia would not have been preserved for so many years and the Church Abroad would not have had canonical grounds for its founding.

It is very sad that our Synod, in order to "restore order", issued a resolution, actually *having no knowledge of the rights and obligations of the Russian Hierarchs after the period of the cruel persecutions*. This at present makes the Synod's resolution to be a punishment for a non-committed crime, which is pointed out also in the resolution of the Hierarchs in Russia. The punitive resolution, based upon non-existent documentation, may not be considered valid, and the erroneous references given as basis of punishment will not be accepted neither in Russia, nor Abroad.

From the entire conduct of affairs in Russia, it is obvious *that we, Abroad, have demonstrated our total inability to look after the ecclesiastical situation in Russia, and besides, our own "statutes about the ROCOR" have no provisions for the possibility of our administrating in Russia*. The events there quite often demand that urgent decisions be made on the spot, and the past years have shown that *nothing constructive was achieved in that period*. On the contrary, the intrigues of the Moscow Patriarchate and the destructive activity of Bishop Barnabas delegated to Russia, under the influence of the provocateur Averyanov, have resulted only in irreparable damage to the prestige of the Church Abroad.

It is very sad that we didn't want to hear the cries for help on the part of our brothers in the Homeland, and, because of pride and self esteem, would not recognize the mistakes made on our part, so that in brotherly unity we could live under the protection of the Patriarchal decree, which we have used Abroad for almost 75 years, and realize that the time had come for the Russian Hierarchy to use it.

Certainly, one cannot but be sorry that the Russian Hierarchs had to make such resolute measures in an urgent manner, and without previous agreement with our Synod. However, *fairness has to point out that the basic fault in this matter basically lies in our inactivity, and then the unsuccessful actions of our Synod*.

If I could have participated in the discussion of my last report to the Synod, undoubtedly I would have directed the attention of our Hierarchs also to this situation and the necessity to make active the outstanding Decree of Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20, 1920.

Herewith I enclose a copy of this Patriarchal Ukase, which *gives a complete basis for the separation of Russian Dioceses aimed at their development of their special situation*. (Emphasis by "Ch. N.")

+ Bishop Gregory