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REVERSAL OF CONVICTION IN "CASE" AGAINST METROPOLITAN VALENTIN

According to information from the agency "Portal.Ru" of March 10, 2004 the First Hierarch of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church (AROC) Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir Valentin (Rousantsov) is no longer a "convict". According to Vertograd, on March 3 the Suzdal regional court made the following decision in regard to his case: "To abolish the suspended sentence against Rousantsov A. P. (Metropolitan Valentin) decreed by the Suzdal regional court on August 23, 2002... and to expunge the previous legal convictions of Rousantsov". Thus the court case against the First Hierarch of the AROC has ended in his being victorious.

The main initiator of the unlawful "criminal persecution" of Metropolitan Valentin was former Archpriest Andrew Osetrov, who was defrocked in May, 2001. The former clergyman began with arraigning slanderous publications in the Vladimir newspaper "Prizyv", and then, after securing the support of the FSB (Federal Security Services), he influenced the office of public prosecutor to begin the "case" against the First Hierarch of the AROC. Despite the fact that all four "victims" were subjected to unprecedented pressure, at the very first court session they refuted the witnesses' statements invented by the Vladimir investigator Yegorov against the Metropolitan. The court, after a prolonged interruption has pronounced the suspended sentence against the Metropolitan Valentin. The result of the case was strongly influenced by the activity of the extremist organization "Nashe Delo" (a sort of "Cosa Nostra") which organized constant conveying of two of the "victims" and also would assault in the streets of Suzdal the clergy of the AROC and would threaten the parishioners and the regular residents of the city.

The Suzdal regional court has ordered the newspaper "Prizyv" to publish a refutation of all the "information" which discredited Metropolitan Valentin. The First Hierarch of the AROC, whose flock never doubted that the slanderous accusations against him were based upon fabrications, is now officially no longer considered "guilty" nor even as someone who has a record of a "conviction". So now, any media which continue to spread slanderous, discriminating reports about the ROAC and her First Hierarch will be held responsible for such under Russian law.

The members of the AROC had no doubts that the persecution of Metropolitan Valentin is connected with the aim of certain circles to liquidate this Church as the one most visible after the "capitulation" of the ROCOR and an "alternative" to the ROC MP.

From information received directly from Suzdal "On February 26, 2004, there was a trial presided over by Judge M. A. Zaglazeva and clerk Savchenkova regarding the suit brought by A. P. Rousantsov (Metropolitan Valentin) against the VRRRO "Prizyv" A. V. Raschupkin regarding the defense of his honor, dignity and business reputation. The court has obligated the newspaper "Prizyv" to publish within 30 days in the same spot and same size print a refutation, as not corresponding to the truth, [of statements] which discredited his honor, dignity and the business reputation -- and to cease discussing the subject".

"On March 3, 2004, the Judge I. N. Mysiagina in the presence of public prosecutor T. V. Lezva, the lawyer S. K. Mocheny and clerk Y. N. Suslova handed down a decision to "expunge the previous legal conviction of A. P. Rousantsov (Metropolitan Valentin) which was ordered by the sentence of the Suzdal regional court on August 23, 2002 #132, part 2 'D' UK RF and #133 UK RF and to remove any punishment from the convicted A. P Rousantsov. (underlined by "Ch. N.")

It is worth noting that Judge Mysiagina herself had to expunge her own illegal conviction of the First Hierarch of the AROC, which in August of 2002 she had announced almost in a whisper and with a trembling voice!

FEAST OF ORTHODOXY IN SUZDAL

On day of the celebration of the Feast of Orthodoxy in the Tsar-Constantine Cathedral in Suzdal after the Divine Liturgy there was served the "rite of Orthodoxy" with a text surviving from pre-Revolutionary times. For the first time, during Metropolitan Philaret's tenure, there were additions made of anathemas of the heresies of Sergianism and Ecumenism.

The solemn service was presided over by the First Hierarch of the AROC Metropolitan Valentin, with whom concelebrated the hierarchs: Theodore, Archbishop of Borisovo and Otradneno, Seraphim, Archbishop of Sukhoom and Abhasia, Irinarkh, Bishop of Tula and Briansk and Ambrose, Bishop of Khabarovsk.

On March 3rd the birthday of the First Hierarch, Metropolitan Valentin was marked with a festive service. Concelebrating with him were all the abovementioned Hierarchs and 15 priests.

Due to this occasion and the clergy and numerous parishioners ha joyously greeted their First Hierarch.

According to Vertograd #442 of March 12th this year the Mayor of Suzdal Andrew Ryzhov, who was one of his main persecutors -- congratulated "Anatoly Petrovich" (secular name of Metropolitan Valentin and his patronymic).

The card sent states: "Please accept the sincere good wishes from the administration of the City of Suzdal on your birthday. You have valiantly labored and contributed to the future of our city and our homeland. At all times you have with dignity come out of complicated and vital functions and situations. On the day of your birthday I wish you good health; may good luck, well being and comfort of soul be with you and all close to you. Respectfully, the Mayor of the City of uzdal F. Y. Ryzhov".

It is amazing: what suddenly made the Mayor change his negative attitude toward the Metropolitan and to appreciate his decades' long ' benefits to this city?!

REGARDING ABUSE OF THE INTERNET

As with any new technical discovery, Internet open letters, and the countless polemics connected with them, might be useful, yet at the same time very harmful, since instead of simple information about this or that matter, they are often used to spread personal fabrications of the authors, which get many people involved (ignorant of church matters) and result in slanders and scandals.

Being concerned with these circumstances, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church on January 11th, 2002 #27 issued the following warning:

"To clergy, monastics, editors of the Internet sights and pages, members of the AROC an

EXHORTATION

Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church is forced to direct your attention to the fact that previously the Synod of Bishops gave its blessing to editors of sites and Internet pages to witness the Evangelic Truth.

However, some members of our Church, who actively participate in the Internet, do not preach the Truth, but a distorted understanding of Orthodox beliefs, contrary to the teachings of the Holy Fathers and the Ecumenical and Local Councils.

It is unfortunate, that with some "missionaries" sinful emotions have prevailed over common sense and as a result the activity of the "zealot-theologians" became a great scandal not only within our own Church, but also other Christians, not only in Russia, but far outside her borders, who would have joined the True Orthodoxy, but get restrained, by questioning our Orthodox confession.

For the last time, the Synod of Bishops feels it is necessary to remind all the members of the ROAC, who work with the Internet, to take off from their sights the information, regarding the themes: "rock music", "Club of the Suicides", "God's Name", "Name worshipers" as well as "Romantis", which bring harm to Orthodoxy and create great scandal.

The Synod of Bishops of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church persistently appeals to her god-loving flock to repent to God of their errors. To renounce slanders, lies, hatred and malice. To follow the path of Truth, Evangelical forgiveness, Christian love. Not to abandon the path of the truth, to confess the Orthodox faith, as was ordered by the Holy Fathers and the Teachers of God's Church.

In cases of continuing to walk the impious path of spreading heresies, schism, disobedience and opposition, the Synod of Bishops of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church will be forced to **SUSPEND** the clergy from serving, and **EXCOMMUNICATE** the lay people.

Signed by: President of the Synod of Bishops, + VALENTIN, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir

Members of the Synod of Bishops:

+ Theodore, Archbishop of Borisovo and Sanino, + Seraphim of Soukhoom and Abhasia"

In his personal letter to a priest who was recently joined the AROC, His Eminence Metropolitan Valentin sent him the above Exhortation and wrote: "the Internet may serve for the preaching of the Evangelic truths, but not for clarification and not to settle scores. This is not befitting for us. At present, it is the period of Great Lent; it is necessary to pray and not to accumulate one's own lower feelings and pour them out for general knowledge."

SERIOUS DANGER FOR AUTONOMOUS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

When appointing Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) to become the Patriarch of All Russia in 1943, the horrible persecutor of the Church, the atheist Stalin, at the same time created a Council for Religious Affairs, and appointed to that post also renowned persecutor of the Church: Touchkov. Touchkov, then appointed to each diocese his own "representatives" (upolnomochenny), who actually became rulers of the Russian Church dioceses, while the bishops were denied any authority to act without the permission of those godless governmental clerks attached to them.

With the official fall of the Communist government in 1991, the institution of the Council for Religious Affairs ceased to exist. It seems that after the passage of 12 years of freedom for the Church she could become independent of the secular government; however, the ties between the Moscow Patriarchate and Putin's government are with enormous speed becoming closer and more visible.

According to the report we received from Suzdal, "Vladimir Putin has signed a decree by which he has established a new Council structure for cooperation with the religious organizations by the President of RF, as it was reported by 'Pravoslaviye.Ru' with the reference to 'Sedmitza.Ru'.

To the post of President of this Council the manager of presidential administration Dmitry Medvedev was appointed (previously such a Council was chaired by Alexander Voloshin) and his deputies are: Gennady Kara and Andrew Protopopov.

The Council's membership is to stress the multi-confessional character of the Russian government. Coming from the Russian Orthodox Church it's members are: Metropolitans: Yuvenaly (Poyarkov) of Krutitsa and Kolomna (in the KGB – "Adamant"), Kyrill (Gundiayev) of Smolensk and Kaliningrad (in the KGB "Mikhailov"), Sergius (Fomin) of Voronezh and orisoglebsk, as well as Archbishops: Klement (Kapalin) of Kalooga and Borovsk- the manager of the MP affairs and Eugene (Reshetnikov) – the dean of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy and the president of the Educational Committee at the Holy Synod.

According to the Statute of this institution, the Council is a consulting agency for the President were included" and as members the most prominent members of the Moscow Patriarchate Synod. (Emphasis by Ch. N)

Due to this new decree of Putin, the Moscow Patriarchate from its prior lowly and submissive position under the godless Communist regime is now elevated to an honorary level, equal to that of the government officials and becomes a consulting body to the President!

Knowing the hatred of the Moscow Patriarchate toward the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church, and especially to her First Hierarch the Metropolitan Valentin, unfortunately, one can expect a united and organized persecution on the part of the MP and the government of Putin!

A newspaper NG Religii of January 21, 2004 (#1-131) not without cause expressed the opinion: "The commentators believe that by this (decree) Putin has indirectly supported the Moscow Patriarchate in her conflict with the 'alternatives' and this might be accepted by the local authorities as a green light for persecution of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church".

Meanwhile, the crimes against the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church keep piling up.

According to the Internet Vertograd news of March 2nd, #432 the Tsar-Constantine Cathedral in Suzdal was robbed again. "Unknown criminals" managed to get inside the cathedral after cutting through the chain of the screen door which lead from the vestibule into the cathedral and broke the bolt.

From the church were stolen: a Kazan icon of the Holy Virgin, venerated locally as miracle working, a large icon of St. George and another icon of the Theotokos with a silver cover. The local militia this time made an official record of this theft. This is not the first time the cathedral has been robbed.

INTERVIEW BY "VERTOGRAD" WITH BISHOP IRINARKH OF TULA AND BRIANSK

Vertograd: It has already been more than a year since you were ordained bishop. Is it difficult to be a hierarch?

Bp. Irinarkh: To follow God's will is always easier than to oppose it. I wanted to be an ordinary clergyman in Suzdal. But, a human proposes, but the Lord disposes.

Vertograd: Please tell us about your Tula and Briansk diocese.

Bp. Irinarkh: In my diocese nearly all parishes are catacomb.

Vertograd: Yes. The Tula region became a center of the Catacomb movement even before the declaration of Sergius. The believers started to step toward illegal situation when the basic positions in the diocese were taken over by the Renovationists. It is reported that in the archives of the UKGB there is a lot of material about the destruction of Catacomb monasteries in the 30's.

Bp. Irinarkh: In 1943, by the personal order of Stalin, several hundred catacomb Orthodox Christians were transported from the Tula and Riazan regions to Siberia. Many of them perished, but thank God, not all of them. In the Tula region they have been preserved to our days.

Vertograd: You have a Catacomb monastery in the Tula region?

Bp. Irinarkh: Yes.

Vertograd: And in the Briansk region?

Bp. Irinarkh: Before the war just a few catacomb priests survived. But when this region was taken over by the Germans, several hundred churches opened which commemorated as First Hierarch not Sergius Stragorodsky, but Metropolitan Anastassy, the head of the ROCOR. In the Briansk region the catacomb Christians were ministered to by bishop Stephan (Savbo). Under pressure of the Red Army, Bishop Stephan emigrated to Belorussia with many clergy and lay people, and then to Germany. Later Vladyka Stephan was a ruling bishop with ROCOR in Vienna and died in 1965.

Vertograd: And do you have any open parishes?

Bp. Irinarkh: There were three parishes, under tremendous pressure, and lasting many years on part of the MP – were forcibly torn away and at present there remains only one: and at that, for long years there are going on the court litigations, and threats by the Moscow Patriarchate.

Vertograd: Vladyka; What would you wish for readers of our magazine?

Bp. Irinarkh: That they constantly raise their prayers, not only during the period of Great Lent, but also for one's whole life, to remember the words of the Apostle Paul: "watch out how you walk". May the Lord bless all the readers of your soul saving magazine, and may He also assist the laborers of Vertograd in the future to fight the good fight in this salvific and important matter, to overcome the plots of the enemy of our salvation, which are sent to his faithful servants."

BISHOP BARNABAS AGAIN!

In our February issue we acquainted our readers with the remarkably illiterate ukases of Metropolitan Vitaly regarding the retirement of Bishop Barnabas, illegally elevated by Metropolitan Vitaly to the rank of Archbishop, while himself being in retirement! However, the matter was not settled with this.

We have received via the Internet a new publication "The Church Herald of the True Orthodox Church under the mophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly". It is interesting to note, that in the E-mail address there is also the word "catacomb", although Metropolitan Vitaly, actually, had nothing to do with the Catacomb Church, except for Archbishop Lazarus, with whom he has twice officially broken by the end of the past year.

Alas, in this new Internet publication Archbishop Barnabas has announced his "Declaration of Barnabas, Archbishop of Cannes and Western Europe regarding my supposed retirement".

"I received from all sides anxious calls from clergy and lay people, upset by the ukases sent out by the suspended Archpriest B. Zhoukoff and published on various Internet's sites.

In order to calm the church people, I declare the following:

1. I have never requested retirement and do not plan to retire.
2. Those so-called "ukases" have false signatures. Neither did Vladyka Metropolitan (as he himself has immediately confirmed by telephone) affix his signatures and could not, since it would be unlawful on his part. No bishop has the right to interfere in the internal matters of another diocese. [A particular bishop – no, of course, but the President of the Synod of bishops – definitely YES! "Ch. N."].
3. These, so-called 'ukases' not only have no canonical basis, but are also absurd from the legal point of view. I am reproached with having exceeded my authority by suspending on my own the Secretary of the Synod, although on numerous occasions I have written that I did not suspend a secretary of the Synod, but a guilty clergyman of my diocese. The position of secretary has never given any body immunity.
4. I use this opportunity to remind all that no one, except the hierarch who has imposed a suspension, has the right to lift it. Therefore, my ukases regarding Archpriest B. Zhoukoff and the lay-person V. Grigorieva remain valid.

In the approaching period of the Great Lent I wish that everyone not bother with such rubbish and rather think of the salvation of their souls and pray for the unity of the Church under the omophorion of our Vladyka Metropolitan.

+ Archbishop Barnabas of Cannes and Western Europe"

The Internet copy is dated as February 25th, 2004, but it has no outgoing number!

Considering that Metropolitan Vitaly is 93 years old and his failing memory was obvious at times even when he had just become First Hierarch of the ROCOR, one has to assume that this condition after 18 years could not improve in any way!

It seems, that the essence of the problem lies in the clash of two personalities: Archpriest B. Joukoff who has a lust for power and the very ambitious Bishop Barnabas, and the victim of these intrigues is the absolutely senile Metropolitan Vitaly!

The most tragic thing is that the flock is getting involved in this outrageous Internet polemic, while having no idea what is going on and wondering to whom to turn for a spiritual guidance!

Bishop Barnabas has not stopped with this declaration. Having doubts about the authenticity of the ukase by which he was retired, he has published a three page letter, addressed to Bishops Sergius, Vladimir and Bartholomew in which it is stated: "I have received by urgent mail an ultimatum from Vilmuasson, addressed by you to me, supposedly on orders of the Metropolitan".

Further, Bishop Barnabas sharply criticizes Archpriest Zhoukoff, mainly accusing him of lust for power and pride. He writes to those Bishops: "I cannot believe this is your work. I also do not want to think that you have forgotten that were it not for me being at the side of the Metropolitan from the very first days, our Synod would probably not exist, and you would not be hierarchs". Then, Bishop Barnabas decided to call to mind the canons and mentions some regarding rights of a ruling bishop and of the non-interference in matters of his diocese by another bishop. However, he totally ignores the existing rights of the First Hierarch and the Synod.

While reproaching Archpriest Zhoukoff for power-grabbing and pride, he has conveniently forgotten that at the Bishops Council of 1994 he has requested that ALL the parishes of the already existent five bishops in Russia be put under his control! Maybe it would be appropriate to suggest to him: "physician first heal thyself".

It is tragic that no matter what Bishops Barnabas gets involved with – it immediately creates scandals and divisions. It is not without reason that Bishop Gregory on many occasions suggested that Metropolitan Vitaly submit Bishop Barnabas to trial and have him defrocked for numerous and serious canonical violations.

GOVERNMENT COVER UP OF OUTRAGES OF THE MP

According to information received by us from Russia, "The government is covering up all the outrages of the MP and closes its eyes to all this, and those who try to sound an alarm to direct society's attention to the crimes among the clergy of the MP are declared mentally ill or 'agents to destroy the ROC from inside'. It also seems that, all of a sudden, these persons do not have Russian names.

The sensational story within the Nizhny-Novgorod diocese has demonstrated how close is the cooperation between the ecclesiastical and the governmental agencies.

St. Paul was not ashamed to wash one's dirty linen in public, when he exposed sinners and made a judgment. Lenin used to state that in Russia there cannot be two truths. It turns out that it is possible. The office of a public prosecutor, pressed by the Moscow Patriarchate is protecting the pedophile Sazonov.

Newspaper Russkii Vestnik #26, 2003 has published a whole page article by A. Zorin, under the title "Untouchable Sodomite in a Rasa".

In essence the article states that Archpriest Valentin Sozonov spotted a 9 year old pretty boy, who came to church with his mother, little knowledgeable in church matters. Very soon he made him an altar server, started to spoil him with expensive books, and take him along on long trips. In the beginning the mother was touched by such pastoral attention, but then noticed that something was very wrong with her boy, by that time already 12 years old. He became withdrawn and quiet. After much insistence on his mother's part, she became aware that her son had become a victim of a pervert. She has turned for help to various other clergymen. Some sympathized with her; some tried to distance themselves from

this problem. After numerous visits to various church offices of the MP, finally she managed to deliver her written complaint to the diocesan ruling Bishop Gregory, but with no results: the pervert archpriest still retains all his positions and continues to be the editor in chief of a number of publications, and in particular the diocesan newspaper "Orthodox Word".

"Russkii Vestnik" mentions that in the very beginning of the relationship with his future victim, Sazonov was often "bragging about his tremendous connections in all levels of the government, public prosecutor's office and the FSB (Federal Security Services)".

It seems that as a result of this the poor mother didn't turn to the secular authorities, but hoped to save her son with the assistance of important clergy.

At the same time, the artificially created case against Metropolitan Valentin in Suzdal was developing with great speed, despite the protests and refutations of the parents, which were simply dismissed. It is obvious whose interests in the RF "the authorities for the defense of rights and freedom" are guarding: as usual the powerful, in this case, the Moscow Patriarchate. Some members of the media who are under the control of the MP, for example "Russkii Vestnik," declare that censorship under the authority of the Church should be established, obviously to avoid the leaks of undesirable information about the MP. There are cases when journalists themselves happened to mention that they were under pressure not to start a scandal and undermine the authority of the Church.

According to information coming from the MP Ivanovo Diocese, quite a few hieromonks and celibate clergymen of this diocese are now married and live as "legally married", while still serving in parishes. The head of this diocese, Archbishop Ambrose, is famous for his improper zeal to tonsure "all" as monks, often not prepared for it accidental persons and because of this has received by the MP clergy the nick name "the Hairdresser".

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During his Visit to Suzdal on Christmas, Putin also visited Kideksha, where he went to the St. Stephen's church in which Osetrov continues to serve. In the church he was greeted by the director of the Vladimir-Suzdal museum, Alisa Aksenova, who said to him that she is greeting him in a church that once belonged to schismatics, but now is returned to the Church. A MP Archpriest Vitaly, from the suburb of Suzdal "on the Miles", rector of St. Archangel Michael Church, noted that "here now prayers are raised for the health of your Excellency". According to information received, at present the St. Stephen church is under extensive renovation, paid for by Putin's personal funds.

As of now, there is no possibility of thinking that the return of this church to the AROC is scheduled at any time and, probably, it already has a predetermined end.

LENTEN EPISTLE OF METROPOLITAN LAURUS

The official Internet site of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR (L) of February 19th published the Lenten Epistle by Metropolitan Laurus. Actually, to the theme of the Great Lent there are devoted only 7 incomplete sentences! And all the rest of the page is Metropolitan Laurus' information about the last Synod's meeting about his trip to Moscow to bow before the Moscow Patriarchate.

Metropolitan Laurus, in particular, reports that, "The Synod of Bishops has resolved that, with the Lord's help, my trip is scheduled before the feast of the Lord's Ascension. [In private conversations with all those who asked him about the prospective trip to Moscow he resolutely answered that he has no plans for such trip!.] During it I will meet with the head of the Moscow Patriarchate, and I hope also to become acquainted with ecclesiastical life in Russia. In particular I would like to visit Yekaterinburg and other cities of Russia with the aim venerating her holy places. [Metropolitan Laurus was unofficially in Russia on several occasions, but mainly to visit monasteries and parishes of the MP, where he was met with honors and hospitality!] In this way, the trip first of all will have a familiarizing (?) character. This trip is in no way the "beginning of unification" as some journalists sometimes write. There are also no talks about communion in prayer, which is supposed to be a final step of the whole process of curing. This is only a humble effort to find a way to comprehend the basis for our mutual understanding. This path might be a rather long one. But to not even try to step forth upon it would be a great mistake" !

With this official declaration Metropolitan Laurus has actually condemned the path of more than 70 years of Metropolitans Anthony, Anastassy and Philaret, who on numerous occasions warned their flock abroad of the impossibility of having relationships with the Moscow Patriarchate until she repents of the heresies of Ecumenism and Sergianism and until the anathemas proclaimed upon her by the Patriarch Tikhon and the Catacomb Church are lifted by a free All Russian Local Church Council!

And meanwhile, in the process of behind the scenes negotiations over uniting the ROCOR with the MP, the Internet agency Mir Rligij//Sobytiya (World of Religions//Events) on February 18th reported that "quite unexpectedly two nuns from Jerusalem have brought the relics of New Martyr Grand Duchess Elisabeth and Sister Barbara as a gift to a church in Ural". This was reported by Abbott Dimitry (Baykov) "the manager of the information department of Yekaterinburg Diocese.

The relics of these New Martyrs are in the St. Magdalene church in Gethsemane, belonging to the Orthodox Palestine Society of Holy Land. It seems that the MP has established very friendly relations with institutions belonging to the ROCOR, because visitors to the MP bookstores in Moscow are offered particles from the Oak of Mambre and the cover of the Relics of Gethsemane!

This is not the first case of giving relics to the Moscow Patriarchate. Several years ago, after a long telephone conversation with Metropolitan Vitaly and with his agreement, a MP priest came to the Lesna Convent in France who was even permitted himself take out a part of relics of St. Athanassy of Brest. Then the relic was with solemn ceremony handed over to the MP diocesan bishop (whose name we have forgotten, "Ch. N.").

In reporting the meeting of the Synod of Bishops in New York on February 17 – 18 the Chancery of the Synod specified the period of the Metropolitan Laurus' trip. He will go to Moscow "in the latter half of **May**".

However, the newspaper Russkii Vestnik #3 (631) when reporting on the first page about the visit of Metropolitan Laurus refers to the "second part of March"! It seems that the Synod of Bishops does not want it's flock to know the exact dates of when their First Hierarch is leaving on the fateful trip to Moscow!

It must be noted that the Synod decided to revise the "Statutes of the ROCOR" and during the last meeting, the Committee established for this purpose presented to the Synod "revisions of some parts of the Statutes". There is not even a hint of which of the Statutes, approved by the Council of Bishops in the 1956, are to be "revised". It is very doubtful that the ROCOR flock will ever find out what changes to the Statutes were made!

Interesting also is the change in the title of Bishop Ambrose of Geneva and Western Europe to Bishop of Vevey. From the unconfirmed sources we know that Bishop Ambrose was asking for retirement, but the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus decided to approve his request only partially. However, a retired bishop has no title at all, therefore the title of bishop of Vevey has degraded the former ruling Bishop Ambrose to the status of vicar bishop! Such is the contemporary administrative "literacy" of the ROCOR!

TIKHVIN MIRACLE WORKING ICON IN NEW YORK

We previously reported that the adopted grandson of Bishop John Garklavs has decided to return the Tikhvin miracle working icon to Russia on the condition that the MP restore the Tikhvin Monastery, where the icon was kept for many centuries. During the Second World War it happened to be in Smolensk where it was saved by a German soldier from a burning church and who turned it over to the so-called "Pskov Mission" established on territory occupied by the Germans. After going from Germany to the USA, Bishop John joined the "Orthodox Church in America", which once was in communion with the ROCOR, but then split away and received autocephaly from the MP, a status which is not recognized by any other churches, except those in former USSR satellites.

"The New York Times" of March 12th gives some interesting details about the past and present fate of the Tikhvin miracle working icon.

According to the newspaper, Nadezhda Kizenko (daughter of Archpriest Boris, a ROCOR(L) clergyman) who is associate professor of the Russian language in Albany University NY reported that the prior negotiations with the secretary of MP diocese Hieromonk Joseph lasted no less than ten years.

One stage before the icon will be returned to Russia was a three-day stay New York's OCA cathedral and the St. Nicholas Cathedral of the MP.

The newspaper reports that because of friction with the other bodies of the ROC, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad will not host the icon.

Then it reported: "The dean of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad cathedral on East 93rd St. Archpriest Andrei Sommer said he would venerate the icon at St. Nicholas Cathedral [Moscow Patriarchate, "Ch. N."] along with believers from all branches. But he said he was disappointed at not being allowed to take part in the liturgy because of the division". (The newspaper does not specify by whom). "My whole heart wishes and desires to participate," he said.

There is no doubt that the crafty and the two-faced ROCOR(L) policy regarding the MP has resulted in a loss of ecclesiastical principles, in all probability not only by one dean of the Synod cathedral!

However, this was not the end of the story! From the Internet information as well as personal witnesses, it became known that at the invitation of the MP Bishop Mercury of Zarsk in the St. Nicholas cathedral in New York with the blessing of Metropolitan Laurus, the dean of Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, Archimandrite Luke (Muryanka) after arriving with a group of seminarians, served a moleben before the Tikhvin icon!

Also, Metropolitan Laurus himself, unofficially, came into the MP cathedral to venerate the Tikhvin icon. This is the very first public act of fraternization of representatives of the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus with the Moscow Patriarchate!

If one continues the logical development of this precedent, one would expect that in the near future Bishop Mercury and his clergy would be inspired to venerate the miracle-working Kursk Icon and on that occasion, undoubtedly, they will receive permission to serve a moleben in the Synod cathedral!

DANGEROUS DUPLICITY

World-wide Orthodoxy lives in troubled and dangerous times, since the once dignified and authoritative part of it, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, is slipping off the ambo of the canonical faith. Her leaders, in the beginning very quietly, and secretly from the Diaspora flock, in a foxy manner have flirted with the murderers from the MP, but now, openly remove the veil from the face of their apostasy from the more than 80-year struggle. They shamelessly cross out

the bright memory of the luminaries of canonical and unspoiled Orthodoxy: Metropolitans **Anthony, Anastassy and Philaret**.

For us Orthodox who live in Latvia and who have lived through the spiritual genocide of the Soviet occupation, it is especially painful to realize the tragedy of the corruption of the testament of St. Tikhon and his faithful disciple – New Martyr Archbishop John (Pommer) at the present persistent priority of the wine-tobacco “hierarchs” of the MP.

The indifference and flirting grimaces of Archbishop Mark in 1992 with the MP Bishop of Latvia Kudriashov, have very painfully warned the Orthodox, who wanted to avoid shaking hands, against their conscience and convictions, with the Sergianist Ecumenists: in 1996 the ROCOR parishes stopped being legally alive, and the 10 communities of the Autonomous Latvian Church for ten years were left without spiritual support from the ROCOR. It seems Archbishop Mark was embarrassed that the true Orthodoxy in Latvia, based upon the 30th Apostolic Canon, has refused to fraternize with the KGB hierarchs.

It is not an accident that the MP publications in Latvia happily wrote about the meeting of Metropolitan Laurus and Patriarch Ridiger. They look for rapprochement, ignoring the eternal disagreements; they look after the letter, while forgetting about the Spirit. The smacking of the lips of the old men over the compromising agreements by which the various elements are united. Such “union” puts those Latvians who confess true Orthodoxy, on guard, because the spiritual death, called Sergianism, is ready to scream: I lived, I live and I will live.

Unfortunately this death dealing nonsense is planned for March. The human mind, and even more so believers, can hardly imagine the results of this meeting. Do not expect anything good: The representatives of the ROCOR and the MP keep crucifying Jesus Christ. A dangerous duplicity is quite obvious!

It would be criminal to agree with such a plan. One must resist this diabolical plan. It is plain: Metropolitan Laurus and Archbishop Mark and their collaborators, having exhausted the faith and hope of their flock, have spiritually fallen. They have separated themselves from the ROCOR. The vessel of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is actually without proper direction. However, hope for preserving canonical Orthodoxy still exists. It is almost 15 years since exists and lives **the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church**, which is ready to extend its omophorion of salvation to the Orthodox in Diaspora (ROCOR), in accord with the testament of the St. Tikhon, the very last canonical Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia.

The Russian Orthodox Church prays during each liturgy **about the union of all** and Christ prayed for His disciples **“that all would be one”** (John 17:11). But one has to keep in mind that the Church prays not about the union of various, mutually contradicting parts, but that **all would become one**, that we would with repentance accept the Truth, would realize our delusions in which we have lived since 1917. This is what the Church is praying about.

Gather the dispersed, the lost convert and unite them with Thy Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.”

+ Victor, Archbishop of Daugavpils and Latvija

WHERE IS METROPOLITAN VITALY NOW?

The Internet agency Vertograd of March 2nd (#432) has published information that “The police officer and several policemen have appeared in the evening of February 28th in the monastery in Mansonville, the residence of Metropolitan Vitaly. The officer wanted to personally deliver to Metropolitan Vitaly a summons to appear in court. When Fr. Seraphim of the monastery told them that the Metropolitan was not there and his whereabouts were unknown [underlined by Ch.N.] the unexpected guests made themselves comfortable in the monastery’s refectory and said that they would wait for him.

After waiting for some time, the officer and the policemen started to search all the rooms. The search lasted until noon the next day. After that, the officer and his assistants left, but made the remark: “nevertheless, we will find him”.

No doubt the circle around Metropolitan Vitaly expected something of that sort and have taken him some where else (Maybe to the apartment of Mrs. Rosniansky?).

As it is known, the “monastery” in Mansonville (never had more than two people: a hieromonk and sometimes a novice) -- is a property of Metropolitan Vitaly. There is a beautiful little church located up on a hill, and below, not far away is a large pond which this church reflects nicely. There are also several houses on this property.

Under the pretext of worrying about Metropolitan Vitaly’s health, the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus has started litigation and demands official guardianship over him. Probably this is not at all any concern about the health of the 93 year-old man, but a pretext to seize this large and beautifully located property.

MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND CATHOLICS

The negotiations about building friendly relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Vatican have lasted for number of years, but a significant result still has not been reached.

The Catholics stubbornly deny the propaganda they have introduced into Russia, but, nevertheless, sometimes they have to take off their mask. The Uniates (Roman Catholics of the Eastern rite) just a while ago declared that they want to have their own Patriarch in Kiev. The head of the Foreign Relations Department of the MP, Metropolitan Kyrill, has informed all heads of the other Orthodox Churches about this Catholic plan. In return, the Patriarchate has received 14 negative responses, in fact from all the existing Orthodox Local Churches.

According to the MP parish of the Three Hierarchs in Garfield, NJ of 18 of February, Cardinal Kasper visited Moscow for the first time, after an unexplained 24 hour delay, and immediately declared: "We don't want polemics. We want friendship. I came here in order to turn the old page to a new one, filled with friendship and love [?!] between the two Churches'.

Originally, when Kasper's arrival in Moscow was scheduled for January 22, it was presumed that he would meet with Alexis Ridiger, however, the latter long ago expressed his disapproval of Roman Catholics and Kasper was to meet only with Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk.

Nevertheless, according to Internet agency "Strana.Ru" of February 23, his meeting with Alexis Ridiger did take place.

According to information from "Blagovest-Info" of February 25, Cardinal Kasper personally greeted the false-Patriarch Ridiger on his birthday and even brought a gift!

In his letter the Pope assured Ridiger of his respect and informed him "that he always commemorates the First Hierarch of the Russian Church in his prayers". The Patriarch also received a birthday greeting from the Catholic "Metropolitan" Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz!

Kasper managed to negotiate from Kyrill of Smolensk to establish a mutual Committee (by the way, such offers by the MP were made to the Catholics some six years ago) which would decide "what kind of concessions the Catholic Church is willing to make in order to adjust the relations and obtain the possibility of Papal visit to Moscow. At the same time, Kasper agreed not to insist upon appointment of the Catholic/Uniate "Patriarch" in Kiev. He also stated, that "Russia needs Rome, otherwise she is risking being isolated".

Can one not explain the considerable concessions by the Moscow Patriarchate with the fact that she it to take into account the wishes of President Putin, who, while visiting Roman Pope invited him to come to Russia? After all, now with the creation of the "Council for Interaction with Religious Unions" – the MP has been elevated to the position of a consultant to the President.

Isn't this the reason that Ridiger, who previously was absolutely irreconcilably opposed to the Catholics, has started to "sing another song", while reminding Kasper of the charitable acts by Moscow Patriarchate toward Uniates?

Vertograd agency reported on March 8 #438 that at the meeting with the Vatican representative, Ridiger told him: "Many of those who today are serving in the Greek-Catholic Church received their ecclesiastical education in our ecclesiastical schools, in particular in St. Petersburg. And over the last 50 years Greek-Catholics were ministered to in our Orthodox churches". He has pointed out that because of this, "when religious liberty came, the sister Church should thank us for it"! It is important to note that the "Orthodox Patriarch" considers the heretic Catholics to be his "sister Church"!

Although this is not the first time such treason to Orthodoxy by this false Patriarch has happened for: can one forget his address to rabbis of New York in 1991, when he has greeted them with: "Dear brothers! Shalom to you in name of God of love and peace!" Then he told them that "your prophets are our prophets". One has to remember that he has called the most violent haters of Christ the Savior "brothers"! Ridiger also asked Kasper not to regard him, the Moscow Patriarch, to be "a person of anti-Catholics convictions"

Kasper also visited Holy Trinity Lavra and there invited the professors of the Ecclesiastical Academy and the seminary as well to Rome; he proposed an exchange of professors, teachers and students. He named several universities, which are willing to take in the Orthodox students.

STATE "MACEDONIAN CHURCH" PERSECUTES SERBIAN OHRID DIOCESE

The newspaper of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America "The Path of Orthodoxy" for the month of March reported that the persecution of Metropolitan John continues on part of the "Macedonian church".

As we reported previously, Metropolitan John was arrested by the Macedonian police while serving the Divine Liturgy in his father's house. He was accused of "spreading ethnic, religious and racial hatred". After pressure from a whole number of Orthodox Churches, Metropolitan John was released from jail in February.

However, on February 20, the house in which a convent is also located, was attacked by several masked men. Fortunately, a short while before the attack the Metropolitan and Bishops Mark and Joachim had gone out. Upon finding out that the Metropolitan was not home, the attackers humiliated the nuns and cut off their hair. After that, they set the house on fire and vanished.

Metropolitan John is a target of hate by the Macedonians, because some time ago he was a member of their "church", but when he found out that not a single Orthodox Autocephalous Church recognizes it, he joined Patriarch Pavle and was appointed to the autonomous Ohrid Diocese.

At present, the Macedonians, with no proof what so ever, accuse him of mishandling a huge amount of money, spying on them for Belgrade and Athens and being a traitor to the Macedonian people.

These persecutions have created a great deal of sympathy for him not only on the part of the Serbian Church, but also the Greeks, who have tried to meet with him and help him, but all of them are turned back at the border under the pretext that they do not have an official invitation from the illegal "Macedonian Church".

MORE ABOUT SAME SEX "MARRIAGES"

As we reported in our last February issue, in violation of the US Constitution, the San Francisco mayor has started giving out marriage licenses to same sex partners. "U.S. News and World Report" of March 15 published an article about the illegality of same sex "marriages" and has named it the "San Francisco Disease" (or FSD)!

As expected, the example proved to be very contagious and in more than tens cities in America people who would like to legalize their abomination stood in lines before the city halls. In some cases the mayors refused to issue "marriage licenses" but some did agree to the requests. When refused, the petitioners warned that they will present cases in the courts of law and demand a change of the Constitution. This movement is growing out of proportion and very fast. It already became a cause for argument among politicians, especially in view of the upcoming presidential elections in November. Meanwhile, the candidates of both political parties (Republican and Democrat) are doing their best to avoid giving a straight answer in this matter.

Jest a few days ago "The New York Times" reported that Brazil, which a short time ago was nearly entirely Roman Catholic, has already made same sex "marriages" legal!

DECLARATION OF GRAND DUCHESS MARIA OF RUSSIA

The Internet agency <http://www.russia-talk.com> on March 6 published the following declaration made by the Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna regarding the relations of the ROCOR(L) with the MP

"It is pleasing to see that on this path considerable improvements have been made. One wants to believe that the meeting of the President of Russia with the Hierarchs of the Russian Church in America and their trip to Moscow following this and their presence during a Patriarchal service will serve as the start of reunion. Although, as far as I know, up to now the hierarchs of the Church Abroad, while talking about the possibility of the reinstatement of Eucharistic unity, at the same time state that there can be no talk about administrative unity. I believe this position to be contrary to logic. It is dictated not by ecclesiastical motives, but by political ones and about property.

If Eucharistic unity is reinstated, this would mean that the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad has found in itself the courage to turn down the long standing senseless pretensions in regard to the Moscow Patriarchate. Consequently, there is no reason for the independent existence of the ROCOR. Either she will go under the omophorion of His Holiness the Patriarch or will cease to be Russian. Certainly, considering the specifics of life outside Russia, the Church Abroad should retain an extensive autonomy, as is the case, for example, with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. But the only First Hierarch of all the parts of the Russian Orthodox Church should be the Patriarch of Moscow and all "Russia".

To this declaration of the Grand Duchess were attached 5 more pages, based upon the book by Mr. Nazarov, who completely denies any right of the "Kyrill line" to be head of the Russian Imperial House.

Unfortunately, Grand Duke Kyrill, fell into pusillanimity and has even put on a "red cockade." However, considering that during the Revolution nearly the entire Imperial Family was annihilated by the Bolsheviks and just a few survived abroad -- among them the Grand Duke, without doubt senior in rank. Considering this situation, Metropolitan Anthony felt it was necessary swear allegiance to Grand Duke Kirill.

Metropolitan Anastassy as well as Metropolitan Philaret did not so swear, but the Grand Duke and his son Vladimir were unflinchingly informed by the Synod of all major decisions of the Synods and Councils of Bishops. The ROCOR councils regularly sent greetings to the Grand Duke as well as on his name's days.

This article states that "the bishops of ROCOR did not bless his marriage" (of Grand Duke Vladimir and Leonida Georgievna). After learning of this marriage, Metropolitan Anastassy was not pleased; however, the Synod of Bishops decreed that the title of Grand Duchess, given to her by her husband, is a matter of no concern to the Church and therefore, she is to be accepted as the Grand Duchess. The Synod even instructed Abbess Tamara (the daughter of Grand Duke Constantine Constantinovich) that if the Grand Duchess Leonida were to come to Jerusalem she was to be treated as royalty. At the same time, in the Synod cathedral on name's days of the Grand Duke, a thanksgiving service was always served at which the Grand Duke was commemorated. And when the Grand Duke came to New York during sessions of the Council of Bishops (during the tenure of Metropolitan Philaret) and came to the liturgy in the cathedral, a special place was prepared for him and during the service he was commemorated in the litanies.

All the First Hierarchs felt it to be wrong to break from the tradition of the relationship between the Synod of Bishops and the person of the Grand Duke that had lasted for so many decades, being the very last link with the Russian monarchy. It is very sad that Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna, for nothing but political reasons, at present so vigorously defends the Moscow Patriarchate!

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS: Letter to Archpriest Igor Troyanov of November 7/20, 1970

Dear Fr. Igor;

Thank you for your letter and favorable response to my book. I value your opinion. It does not correspond with Jordanville's. Fr. Constantine wrote me that my book is very interesting, but that he sees from it how deep is our disagreement. (The book "Truth about the Russian Church in the Homeland and Abroad", "Ch. N."). However, he didn't clarify this disagreement, but preferred to fall silent about the book. I believe that one of the main points of our disagreement is that Fr. Constantine does not have a strong belief in the unity of the Church. He accepts grace among the

heretics, while at the same time quite illogically expressing himself against Ecumenism. Therefore he dislikes Khomiakov. People of his opinion will probably be upset when the Book of [Church] Canons with my commentaries is published. Vladyka Vitaly has informed me that he has already started the type-setting. The book will be in 3 volumes, as at one time the edition of the Society of Lovers of Spiritual Enlightenment was.

I am not so happy with the postponement of the Council. Maybe I am an optimist, but I believe that the supporters of disintegration would not increase their influence there. Meanwhile, the Council could strengthen the force of our basic course as the single voice of the free Russian Church. One can note that in this respect we have no competition now. Your Western European Exarchate is no longer Russian. The Metropolia here also does not call herself Russian. All the efforts of the Council should be directed to this trend and decidedly not to the minutiae of the dynastic question.

Therefore, the zeal of Sergei Georgievich (Duke Leuchtenberg-Romanovsky ?), whom I do like, is inexplicable to me, as is the statement of the three princes. All of them have no interest in the Russian way of life and the only matter in which they have revealed themselves is in protesting against the Grand Duke. The latter may liked or disliked; he might make mistakes, but at least he demonstrates his interest in patriotism. He speaks excellent Russian and teaches Russian to his daughter. Really, one cannot compare him with Vsevolod Ioannovich, who does not speak Russian and was married 4 times. Regarding Vladimir Kirillovich, we have to be consistent. Our [Episcopal] Council with the laity in 1938 addressed his father as the Head of the Imperial Family. Our Council greeted in the same capacity him when his father Kirill Vladimirovich died. Metropolitan Anastassy invariably addressed him in this capacity and was so careful toward him that, while being displeased with his marriage, on the Synod's advice has reached a decision not to go into the considerations about her title, but to address her as Grand Duchess. According to his directives, Mother Tamara [in Jerusalem, "Ch. N. "] received her in this capacity. Metropolitan Philaret does not have any interest in such matters as did his predecessors, and simply followed the accepted form of communication. I personally consider this to be correct: it would be erroneous to change something that was accepted before him. However, one has to consider that over 50 years much has changed. The matter that bothers you has ceased to be topical. In no way would it be included in the Council's agenda. The Head of the Dynasty is only the symbol of the good monarchist principle, but not the head of a party, which actually is non-existent. He does not issue any orders. At present our monarchist beliefs are expressed only in greeting the Grand Duke on major holidays and when meeting him, to show in his person our respect for the monarchy. Therefore, in this area I see no problems and believe that Sergei Georgievich is worried for no reason.

I am even busier with the Sea Cliff litigation. Our lawyer hopes to present to the court in full the matter of the Moscow Patriarchate, and not only the Metropolia. We have prepared the material about the latter and we accumulate more data in order to prove that with the advent of Sergianism the open, legal succession of authority ceased. It took a lot of time to train the lawyer in our laws. It is not easy for an American to grasp. But now, in the Sea Cliff parish there are more conscious members of our church than in any other parish. They have lived through something that others have only inherited.

Orthodox Action creates in me a genuine interest and compassion. I always feel sorry that its center is so far away that I am not able to participate in its conventions.

Fr. Korobkov, certainly, was no strong leader, but at least he occupied a position and there was no vacuum. Fr. Prodrom, was ordained a deacon in my presence and I did like him.

Fr. Vladimir Shishkoff is progressing well. Last Sunday was the consecration of the church purchased while he was there and his parish has come to life from a state of dormancy. For consecrating the church, Vladyka Metropolitan has awarded him with a "nabedrennik". He really worked very hard. Of course, whole families were present in the church, from old to young and helped fill the church.

I went for 10 days to visit my son Dimitry, not for rest, but to prepare material for the upcoming court case.

May the Lord help you. I ask for your holy prayers and remain devoted in Christ + Prototropesbyter George Grabbe

(Letter to Abbess Magdalena (Grabbe) of March 18/31st 1987)

Dear Matushka Magdalena [his sister];

Thank you for a letter, started on March 9th.

As far as I know, the decision carried out by Vladyka Anthony has not yet been announced. Nobody knows about it. However, the former serious attitude toward suspensions no longer exists and people are getting used to the idea that it is important only that a priest be accepted by some bishop pretending to be canonical.

I am sorry for Father Victor [Melekhov], who became fearful of persecution by Bishop Hilarion. Unfortunately, he didn't wait long enough to meet with me. I believe, I could have restrained him from headstrong action. It is bad that now they have introduced the lawyers in all these matters and the requirements of the Synod were stated to Fr. Victor not by the diocesan administration, but by the female lawyer, Helen Zedulina, with a copy to Bishop Hilarion. So too, the subsequent resolution of the Synod on the dismissal of Fr. Anthony was composed not by a bishop, but by the very same Zedulina (in English); now she even, in the name of the Synod, sends decisions to priests from her lawyer's office with a copy to the bishop. All this to avoid the Diocesan Administration. Can one wonder that the authority of ecclesiastical administration has fallen? For the first time in my life I have seen a decision to suspend a clergyman issued not by ecclesiastical ukase, but by a letter from a lawyer and, at that, a woman.

In Jerusalem, the invasion of the property of the Palestine Society, instigated by Vl. Anthony of Los Angeles, with restriction to the members of the society to enter Raskopki has complicated with a further arguments, lawyers and so on. The Synod, instead of the leading status of the Chief of the Mission, achieved by Fr. Anthony, now has countless negotiations through lawyers, who charge enormous amounts of money, in order to avoid even more expensive court litigations. In any case, the Society will be now much more independent from the Synod than it was under the reposed Metropolitan [Philaret]. We have Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles to thank for this, who became a canonical and legal authority, since no one has had as many litigations as has he himself. I have seen once the lawyer of the Palestine Society (at a Synod meeting) . He is one of the very best and can be a very dangerous enemy. Let us hope that all this will end with out of court settlement, although with great damage to the Synod in comparison with the former situation. And still, it is better than court litigation, which is much more expensive and damaging to the prestige of the Church, especially, if the Metropolitan and Archbishop Laurus are called as witnesses. I am afraid that our Synod's members were far from considering the danger of this matter and trusted the "experience" of Vladyka Anthony of LA. The situation will be even more complicated if (as it is claimed) the neutral inspectors find no abuses in Jerusalem on the part of Fr. Anthony [Grabbe].

I still cannot boast of my better health. Probably, I will not be able to serve on Passion Week and Pascha.

I have seen none of the hierarchs. Bishop Hilarion said he will come over, and the Metropolitan did not once ask about my health, and to my letter that I must come – he didn't answer a word.

Greet and blessings to the sisters of the convent. I hug you and ask for prayers.

Loving you + Bishop Gregory

P.S. If you want, you may read this letter to Vladyka Anthony. Pardon the corrections.

Letter to Nicholas Churilov of February 12/25th 1994

Dear Nikolai Pavlovich;

I do remember very well the separation about which you write. However, I believe that it actually is already eliminated or is being eliminated. Archbishop Theophan [of Poltava, "Ch. N."] was in a state of delusion and even crossed the borders of normality, while Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev) was not talented. His big book is written slow-wittedly and is boring. Therefore, despite the correctness of his exposure of Sophian [heresy] there were few who were thrilled by it. But the main reason for interest in his work against Metropolitan Anthony was because the latter was a preacher of Orthodox ecclesiology in an era before antichrist. Sophianism to a great degree exists only in Paris. At present, enmity against Orthodoxy is operating on a global scale through Ecumenism and is carried out world-wide by the Patriarchs. The Jerusalem Patriarch tried to struggle with it, but fell under the blows of international Masonic ecumenists. It is necessary to struggle against all the heresies, but inter-confessionalism has now become very strong and the Jerusalem Patriarch felt directed against him the power of Ecumenism and capitulated. His immediate assistant in this struggle was defrocked and has joined the Greek Old Calendarists.

This is the present panorama, as I see it: the agreement of many various heretics. In any case, you are on the right path. May the Lord help you. + Bishop Gregory

Letter to Nicholas Churilov of August 2/15TH 1993

Dear Nikolai Pavlovich;

I am very sorry that a parting of the ways between us, until now unusual, has been revealed, although I knew of your attachment to Vladyka Sergius [Stragorodsky, "Ch. N."]. My first youthful impressions of him were based upon the attachment of Metropolitan Anthony, as toward a former disciple. A critical attitude arose when I found out that the whole Synod body had retired in protest, not able to stand the Ober-procurator V. N. Lvov, who was extremely rude with the Synod. Only Sergius remained, and gathered as members those who were of more leftist opinions and of less competence. This, his compromising operation, was successful: the All Russian Council was gathered. But from the senior hierarchs I did hear many criticisms.

Certainly, with the KGB it was much more complicated. Stalin was not only a liar, but also low. It is very possible that in his secret negotiations he didn't disclose his immediate plans, just as the Provisional Government, after agreeing to a convening of the Council, didn't expect it would restore the Patriarchate, while Metropolitan Sergius did expect it. Not putting his hope in God's power, which more than once has saved the Church, but in lawlessness, Metropolitan Sergius agreed to compromise, which later subjected the Church to the atheists in an unexpected degree, especially after he died. We cannot know the details of Sergius' sufferings, but from historical experience we know the results of compromises to the enemy of our salvation and of a weakening of faith and hope on the power of God under the most terrible threats. Certainly, for Metropolitan Anthony and all of us it was easier than for Metropolitan Sergius, when there were close to him probable victims and he had responsibility for them. This is the recipe for persecutions of the truth and soon we might feel it in living during antichrist's time. The Jerusalem Patriarch has already felt it, and in the autumn the threat might gain global importance. In the matter of truth and its betrayal, at some point a critical moment will come: either-or.

The situation of the All Russian Council, which at the beginning was convened with no principles, then changed. I can judge from the minutes, since just recently I received a great rarity: a copy of 10 volumes of minutes. At present I have

been able to look through 3 volumes, ending with the Communist Revolution. My father was the first to suggest the arguments stop and immediately the election of Patriarch be started. He received the support of many and a resolution followed, which was a surprise for the Renovationists, headed by Titlinov. I am afraid that the position that you would like to hold on to is now behind the times.

The present Sergianists who went through the KGB school have no interest in the truth. Now, Patriarch Alexis has compromised his entire flock in America to the Constantinople heretic. So far I have not seen this in the press, but I know this from the Greeks.

The time of the beginning of the end is approaching. May the Lord help all of us to preserve faithfulness to the Truth.

May the Lord's blessing be with you. With love in Christ + Bishop Gregory