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**Important the Editor of Church News will be away during the months of August and September.
The Next Edition of Church News is scheduled for release in mid October.*

CONTENTS:

PERSECUTIONS OF THE AUTONOMOUS ORTHODOX CHURCH IN ZHELEZNOVODSK IN PARTICULAR
REPOSE OF ARCHBISHOP LAZARUS (ZHURBENKO)
A DIPLOMATIC "PILGRIMAGE"
FINALLY A WORD OF TRUTH
"PROBLEMS OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY"
TWO INTERVIEWS WITH HIERARCHS
A BIT MORE ABOUT THE "NEGOTIATING PROCESS" AS VIEWED BY THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE
CLARIFICATION REGARDING THE KURSK MIRACULOUS ICON
MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE PRIEST IN BARI ABOUT RELATIONS WITH CATHOLICS
THE POPE AND THE JEWS
FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS

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PERSECUTIONS OF THE AUTONOMOUS ORTHODOX CHURCH IN ZHELEZNOVODSK IN PARTICULAR

On several occasions we have published information about persecutions of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church in general, and in particular about our parish on Caucasus in Zheleznovodsk.

Now, the rector of this church, Archpriest Roman Novakovsky has sent us a "short history" of this parish and the destructive persecution of it.

Unfortunately, the "short history" consists of more than six pages and therefore we are not able to publish it in our bulletin. However, we would be happy to forward a Xerox copy of this report to whom ever would like to receive it (**in Russian only**).

This history typifies the Jesuitical manner of the court procedures in the present Russian Federation. The very same methods of judicial actions are used against other parishes of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church. It is a very "amusing and instructive" document!

REPOSE OF ARCHBISHOP LAZARUS (ZHURBENKO)

On June 17/30, 2005 Archbishop Lazarus of Odessa and Oboyan died.

His history is rather stormy. In 1982 he was secretly consecrated bishop by the also secretly commissioned to do it Bishop Barnabas (Prokofiev). In those "years of stagnation" in USSR, he could easily go to Russia without much suspicion, because his sister worked in Moscow and the newly consecrated bishop himself for a long time was in antique furniture and rare wines business. Only after the consecration of Bishop Lazarus it became known the Synod of Bishops that the members of Catacomb Church were hoping to get as a bishop Archpriest Michael Rozhdesnvensky. However, the whole matter of the consecration of Bishop Lazarus was led by Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, and the Synod of Bishops was getting information about the Catacomb Church only through him.

The information about the case of Archbishop Lazarus, recently published by the Internet website Portal CReDO.RU, signed by Priest-monk Gregory (Lurie) and Alexander Soldatov unfortunately does not quite correspond with the facts, which is not surprising. The Synod of Bishops very much feared to in any way compromise the Catacomb Church and everything was done the extreme caution. Thus the letters, received at that period from the USSR, before being presented to the Synod members, were retyped on the Synod typewriter. The resolution to consecrate Bishop Lazarus was signed only by Metropolitan Philaret, Archbishop Vitaly and the Secretary of the Synod, Bishop Gregory, and typed and numbered by the Office Manager of the Synod of Bishops! All the members of the Council of Bishops were later informed, that the errand given to the Synod of Bishops by the Council regarding this consecration was fulfilled on that particular date.

When Metropolitan Vitaly demanded from Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) a letter of retirement, the latter, afraid that the secrecy of this ordination might be given away by any one of the hierarchs of the ROCOR, urgently sent the whole documentation of this case to Archbishop Anthony of Geneva.

For some reason, the authors of this articles consider Archbishop Leonty (Filippovich) of Chile to be 'one of the most colorful hierarchs of the ROCOR of the post-war era'. He was a convinced sympathizer with Roman-Catholicism, believing that Catholics have valid sacraments in the same way as the Orthodox and besides that he committed an act of simony, by consecrating for money a Greek Archimandrite Petros. Due to his extreme naiveté, Bishop Seraphim of Venezuela also participated in it, but he didn't accept any money. Were it not for the situation that Metropolitan Anastassy's health was already failing and at the same time the "mutiny of San Francisco's Lay people Society" was staged Metropolitan Anastassy was planning to officially accuse Bishop Leonty of simony and try him in an ecclesiastical court. A Greek handyman working at the Synod headquarters, offered Archbishop Seraphim of Chicago \$5,000, which he refused, but he informed the Synod of Bishops about it. Greek, Gerasimos Tsemidis insisted at that time, that these moneys were a "donation" to Archbishop Leonty for oil for vigil lamps!

The authors of this article arbitrarily ascribe to Bishop Gregory the initiative for opening parishes on Russian territory by the Church Abroad. In one of his letters recently published by "Church News" he writes that he feels the opening of the parishes in Russia was premature, since the Synod was not ready for such action, but once it was already done, he insisted on having an energetic and active bishop in Russia, whom he saw in the person of today's Metropolitan Valentin.

Subsequently the Synod of Bishops did all it could to force Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentin to leave the Church Abroad. They then established a Temporary Supreme Church Administration headed by Archbishop Lazarus. But not for too long. As we have learned, Archbishop Mark made every effort in order to spoil the good relations between these two Russian hierarchs. As a result, Archbishop Lazarus returned to Metropolitan Vitaly and Bishop Valentin had no other alternative, but to head the newly established Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

After finally leaving the Church Abroad following the election of Metropolitan Laurus, Archbishop Lazarus consecrated a group of bishops and claimed that he is under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Vitaly, although the later on several occasions stated that he has nothing to do with the Archbishop Lazarus group.

In the present chaotic situation in Church life, not in Russia alone but throughout the world, it is hard to predict who will preside over the "Lazarites" after the death of Archbishop Lazarus. It cannot be excluded that it might be Bishop

Agathangel, who at present is in the Metropolitan Laurus jurisdiction, because it seems he will not agree to unification with the Moscow Patriarchate, yet he has to belong to some group!

"Archbishop" Barnabas, who consecrated Archbishop Lazarus, in the same manner claims to belong to the Metropolitan Vitaly jurisdiction, who has stated on several occasions that he and his group (Vitaly consecrated several bishops together with Varnava) have defrocked Barnabas.

What a pitiful end to the history of this movement!

A DIPLOMATIC "PILGRIMAGE"

The official information from the Chancellery of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR(L) of June 24, 2005 has published the following: "On June 19, 2005 a group of teachers and students from Holy Trinity Seminary of the Russian Church Abroad has arrived in Russia. The visit of representatives of the student body and faculty of the Seminary occurred with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Alexis and was one of the practical results of the dialogue, which has gone on recently between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Abroad. The invitation for the students of Jordanville to visit Holy Trinity Sergius Lavra and the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy was extended by the Dean of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy, Archbishop Eugene of Vereia, during his visit to Holy Trinity Seminary and Monastery in 2004.

"Holy Trinity Seminary and the Moscow Academy are connected by the experience and traditions of the pre-revolutionary theological school. Holy Trinity Seminary was established with the blessing of Blessed Metropolitan Anastassy (Gribanovsky), the First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, who at one time was Dean of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy...."

"The itinerary of this trip was very filled. On the Feast of Pentecost the pilgrims participated in a Divine Liturgy, which was celebrated by His Holiness the Patriarch in the Holy Trinity Cathedral of the Lavra".

Unfortunately, the information from the Synod office gives no details regarding this "participation" of the pilgrims in the Liturgy celebrated by "Patriarch" Alexis "Drozdov" and does not mention if there were any clergymen involved!

FINALLY A WORD OF TRUTH

In connection with the negotiations of the ROCOR Synod headed by Metropolitan Laurus with the Moscow Patriarchate – we have read many protests against this treason against the almost 80 year old principles of the glorious history of the Church Abroad by a whole number of clergy, but all of them in discussing these negotiations, mention only the problem of the unification of two parts of the Russian Church, while totally ignoring the existence of the Catacomb Church, which was proclaimed by Archbishop Mark as no longer existent. Certainly this is true if one ignores the more than 160 openly proclaimed parishes and the more than 200 Catacomb parishes headed by Metropolitan Valentin, the First Hierarch of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church, which in no way is prepared to participate in treacherous compromises with the Moscow Patriarchate!

Therefore, as a very pleasant surprise is the appearance in the Internet of article by Priest Dimitri Kaplun, published on June 23rd by the website CReDO.RU in which the author quite soundly states that unless there is a Local Council of all three parts of the Russian Church, none one of them may pretend to be the fullness of the Church including the Moscow Patriarchate.

Father Dimitry is a ROCOR(L) clergyman, but one who lives in Russia, therefore he, as well as other former MP clergymen who have joined the ROCOR, will have to once again to make a decision about their future fate.

He writes: "As the condition for reestablishing the Eucharistic communion with the ROC MP the Bishops' Councils were have mentioned {in the past} the glorification of the Royal Martyrs, the New Martyrs of Russia, and a condemnation of Ecumenism and Sergianism. A condemnation of Ecumenism meant the condemnation of the 'the three branch' theory of Christianity, the condemnation of the practice of concelebrating with heretics and the departure from the WCC. Under the condemnation of Sergianism was meant the condemnation of the church policies of Metropolitan Sergius including his declaration of 1927.

On these, and only on these conditions, have we envisioned the possibility of a sure and wonderful unity of the Russian Church. But what do the Reconciliation Committees offer us?

The only condition fulfilled is the glorification of the Holy Royal Martyrs".

[On our own, we would add that this was done only in response to very strong pressure from the Moscow Patriarchate flock. "Ch N"]

"Those left unfulfilled are many more.

"First of all, we are offered de facto to agree with the patriarchal rank of Patriarch Alexis II and to be under his administration. This makes no sense whatsoever above all with the former resolutions of the ROCOR Councils of Bishops. To recognize the status of the present Patriarch only the Local Council of the Russian Church has the right, and convened by the rules and examples of the Local Council of 1917-1918... Until such an All conciliar resolution the ROCOR children are obliged to be guided by the decisions of their former Bishops Councils, which considered as uncanonical the elections of the patriarchs "under the Soviets".

Secondly, in the matter of condemnation of Ecumenism we are offered a departure from the usual position of the ROCOR to the position of the Moscow Patriarchate in the form of acknowledging her membership in the World Council of

Churches to be a quite normal occurrence (and that the erroneous stay at one time in this organization of the ROCOR is given a 'not guilty' verdict)".

[Here, Fr. Dimitry has probably been misled by such representatives of the Russian Church Abroad as Archpriest Alexander Lebedev or Fr. John Show who are not afraid to publish overt lies about the former Church Abroad. **The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was NEVER a member of the World Council of Bishops**, although sometimes it sent representatives to the heterodox meetings, but **only as observers**. Such cases were: the Second Vatican Council (to which Archpriest Igor Troyanoff was sent), and the Evanston Conference (to which Archpriest George Grabbe went).]

"As if on purpose, it is noted a bit further that precisely on the day of the publication of the agreed documents, on June 21st 2005, Patriarch Alexis received in Chisty Pereulok [the MP hq] a delegation from the WCC. In his welcoming speech he pointed out that **'the Russian Orthodox Church joined the World Council of Churches in 1961. In those difficult times the membership of the WCC helped our Church very much. We remember with gratitude all those who headed the administration of the Council.... We see the growing differences in the teaching of the faith and in the practices in church life, but one should not raise one's hands in despair. It is necessary to continue to follow the path of collaboration, which we together have been following for decades.... Despite the fact that the abyss between Orthodoxy and heresy grows even wider, we are not going to turn away from the path of collaboration, but even consider that it cannot be any different'**" (Underlined by Ch. N.).

Of course, Patriarch Alexis didn't mention with a single word that the joining of the Moscow Patriarchate in the WCC in 1961 was done at **the direct demand of the KGB!**

"But certainly the saddest of all is the position of the Coordinating Committees regarding Sergianism. The church policy of Metropolitan Sergius not only is not condemned, but is called **the podvig [ascetic struggle] of his First-hierarchical ministry**. While the position of the **members of the Catacombs and those who did not commemorate** [the patriarch, Ch. N.], **those heroes of the faith, were a dangerous tendency toward sectarianism**. What is this but a mockery of the martyric podvig of the 'Josephites' and other non-commemorators."

Summarizing the agreement's documents, Fr. Dimitry Kaplun quite correctly states that, **"They do not contain the condemnation of Sergianism, do not contain a condemnation of the practice of prayerful communion with heretics, do not contain a promise to leave the WCC, do no contain an appeal for the final justified instance – a convening of an All-Russian Council"**.

In summarizing his excellent review of the results of the Coordinating Committees, Fr. Dimitry Kaplun declares: 'In contrast, these documents consist of crafty justifications of Sergianism, a justification for remaining a member of the World Council of Churches and, therefore **according to the conscience of an Orthodox Christian cannot be considered as valid for the restoration of the Eucharistic communion with the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate**' (Emphasis by Ch. N.).

An Internet agency The St. Petersburg of June 24th also reports that the delegation of WCC was headed by the Methodist Pastor Kobia, who is the General Secretary of the WCC. With him came Cardinal Kasper, a Romanian "Orthodox" Archbishop Nifont, an Anglican woman, Maria Tanner, Dr. Robert Welsh, as a representative of the "Christian" Church, the Disciples of Christ, and the WCC Deputy Secretary.

Moscow's Patriarch Alexis II, who has been an active participant in the WCC since 1961, cordially greeted this delegation.

The Ecumenists consider the results of this meeting not only to be a restoration of relations with the "Orthodox", but even a "new era" in these relations.

"For some reason" the Coordinating Committee from Metropolitan Laurus' Synod has not "noticed" this important moment.

"PROBLEMS OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY"

With such a title the newspaper "Rus Pravoslavnaya" ("Russia the Orthodox") in issue # 1-2, 2005 has published an excellent article by Michael Nazarov "About the seduction of the elect and the Church of the last days". The almost full page long article is a very well based and sound critique of the latest policies of the head of the ROCOR(L). Under a photograph of Metropolitan Laurus is the caption: "Metropolitan Laurus, the First Hierarchy of the ROCOR: is he a spiritual leader of reunification or a grave-digger of the Church Abroad?"

In this article we find some interesting details, in particular, regarding the Treasurer of the Synod of Bishops, Archpriest Peter Holodny, one of the most active participants in the negotiations over unification with the Moscow Patriarchate. In the opinion of the author of this article, "It is possible that there is not only a bonus on the basis of net profit and that the Moscow Patriarchate no longer will seize the churches Abroad (during the negotiations it was resolved to stop all the court claims). It cannot be excluded that there are much more serious material motives. These are, as many have noticed, **somehow connected with the activities of the Treasurer of the Synod Abroad, Archpriest Holodny, who for a number of years has successfully worked in financial activities in RF, lately in the field of platinum trading together with a well known millionaire**. (Emphasis in the original, Ch. N.). Certainly, it would be better to that this matter be clarified directly by the ROCOR Synod, but **since letters to them on this remain unanswered**, we are left to guess for ourselves." (Underlined by Ch. N.).

A bit further, Mr. Nazarov writes: "According to statements by the newspaper "Moscow News" this beardless archpriest-millionaire was a key person in the negotiations of ROCOR and the MP. There are talks that namely Fr. Peter has arranged the meeting of the ROCOR hierarchs with President Putin, and which gave the very first impulse to the unification-devouring process... It is definitely not an accident that the richest and most successful ROCOR clergyman has played an important role in the unification of "the two branches" of Russian Orthodoxy... The current unification is conditioned by extremely materialistic motives. For some there is the unification of the funds and the new possibilities for business; for others – the only chance to preserve the Church Abroad property, which gradually comes under the control of Moscow; thirdly ones see in it a means to strengthen their positions in the Church hierarchy" ("Moscow News", July 23-29, 2004).

The author of this article stressed that the newspaper quoted above is in no way an ecclesiastical publication, and therefore, it is possible that it sees only the material side. However, he does not fully discount it and states that "it looks plausible when one supplements it with information, which has leaked from the FSB [the former KGB, Ch. N.]. According to these rumors, there was an unexpected 'raid' by some extortionists on the successful financial activities of Fr. Peter under the 'protection' of the FSB and his moneys were frozen, and he himself quickly evacuated to the USA. But, the FSB has generously offered to "change his situation" in exchange for cooperation in the unification process of the ROCOR and the MP, after which Fr. Peter became more noticeable at all the negotiations, starting with the one with the President in September of 2003. (Underlined by Ch.N.)

"...In any case," it states a bit later, **"the question of this version of possible financial blackmail should be presented to the All-Abroad Council we have been promised, and all more so, since there arises a canonical question about allowing the Church to be involved in interest bearing financial operations.** (see the 17th Canon of the 1st Ecumenical Council; the 10th Canon of the VIth Ecumenical Council; the 4th Canon of Laodician Council and others.) (Emphasis in the original).

In the case that the decision about unification will be proclaimed only by the Council of Bishops, the author of the article expects the creation of yet another schism under the leadership of an unknown, at the present time, personality and suggests that the clergyman with a normal conscience start to "find out the truth" with the assistance of an ecclesiastical Court and a demand for an examination of the Synod's financial records.

The author quite correctly points to the developing "New World Order" – unacceptable for the Church – and expects that some minorities within the ROCOR(L) will split from it. He also quite rightly points to the non-canonical foundation of Metropolitan Vitaly's group, but unfortunately he himself has no practical alternatives to offer his readers except to establish one more "jurisdiction" in Russia under an at present unknown hierarch!

Those who have met Archpriest Peter Holodny used to wonder what made this not too religious man become a priest? After all, a total immersion in financial activities contradicts the direct commandment of the Savior: "Ye can not serve God and mammon" (Mt. 6:24; Luke 16:13)

TWO INTERVIEWS WITH HIERARCHS

An Internet web-page "GUEST OF THE SITE" of July 14th 2005 has published an interview given by Cyril, Archbishop of San Francisco and Western America, to an unnamed journalist. This interview consists of six pages and therefore we will extract some of the most important replies of the Archbishop to the questions put to him.

To the question if the Archbishop is satisfied with the recently published documents of the joint committees of ROCOR and MP he answered: "I am joyful about the end results of the works of parallel committees, as well as by the meeting of our Synod of bishops which has several times examined, and later approved and affirmed these materials.

Only not in the far past, who could expect that the two parts of the Russian Church will come to the joint Orthodox vision of the principal matters of church-state relations, the 'Declaration' by Metropolitan Sergius of 1927 and the participation of the Orthodox in the Ecumenical Movement, matters that have separated the Russian Church for so many years".

Then, in order to justify the positions of Metropolitan Sergius Stragorodsky, Archbishop Cyril is not ashamed to slander the last tsar's government. So he says that, "Sometimes, under the successors of Peter the Great, the state protection of the Church turned into open and agonizing persecution. Sometimes the civil authorities unlawfully and unjustifiably interfered in Church affairs, appointing bishops and breaking Church regulations" (Underlined by Ch. N.)

Here, Archbishop Cyril exaggerates matters, especially as concerns appointing bishops. With the appointments of hierarchs to such influential dioceses as St. Petersburg, Moscow or Kiev the tsars proposed three candidates, from which the Church could make its own decision.

Further, Archbishop Cyril reports that for example, "One of the Emperors issued an order abbreviating the Gospel readings during the vigil services on Theotokos Feasts days because he objected to her words: 'He hath put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree'". (Luke 1:52).

It seems it never entered the head of Archbishop Cyril that this would have caused a scandal throughout Russia if it were true! Isn't this the reason why he says 'one of the Emperors' and doesn't mention his name?

While reasoning about Sergius' "Declaration" and trying to justify the policies of Metropolitan Sergius, Archbishop Cyril believes that "we can declare with full assurance that the document [issued jointly with the MP, Ch. N.] entirely

corresponds to the positions which our Church held to in her official documents and that it gives a correct evaluation of the course followed by Metropolitan Sergius".

On the question whether the ROCOR representatives require the condemnation of Patriarch Sergius, Archbishop Cyril answers: "The main thing for us is to condemn the essence of the church-state relations, the course he— and that was chose already done. (Underlined in the original, Ch. N.) After all, the Holy Fathers and teachers have always said that it is possible to condemn a sin and untruth, but not a sinner himself. Jesus Christ Himself speaks about that in His Gospel. Therefore, we may not judge Patriarch Sergius also, because he has already stood before God". (Emphasized by Ch. N.)

Until now, even the most ignorant Orthodox person knew the difference between judging a person for his personal sins (which indeed is forbidden by the Gospel) and sins committed against the Church. After all, the heretics Arius, Nestorius, Balaam and the like also "stood before God", **yet the Church on the Feast of Orthodoxy nevertheless ANATHEMATIZES them!** Maybe, in San Francisco the Rite of the Feast of Orthodoxy is not observed and therefore, the diocesan bishop doesn't know such a simple truth? However, from one knowledgeable member of the San Francisco parish we have learn that as early as under Archbishop Anthony (Medvedev) the Rite of the Feast of Orthodoxy was revised. The very same has happened in the Synod's cathedral in New York.

In his letter to Metropolitan Sergius of May 6/19, 1933, Metropolitan Anthony wrote about his "Declaration", pleading with him to publicly renounce of it with the following words: "If you prove worthy of a martyr's crown then the Earthly Church and the Heavenly Church will join in the glorification of your courage with the Lord, Who has strengthened you, but if you continue to remain on this broad path, which leads to perdition (Mt. 7:13) upon which you now stand, then undoubtedly it will ignominiously bring you to the depths of hell and the Church until the end of her earthly existence will never forget your treason". (Emphasized by Ch. N.)

Archbishop Cyril was asked also about the preparing of Holy Chrism, which is one of the external signs of the independence of a Local Church, especially about the first making of the Holy Chrism performed by Metropolitan Anastassy in 1950.

Archbishop Cyril quite arbitrarily affirms that "the Synod of Bishops had received Holy Chrism from Constantinople [?!] or the Serbian Church. Until the Synod came to the USA Holy Chrism indeed was received from the Serbian Church. However, in America there was no need to do this."

Archbishop Cyril believes that "if the process of rapprochement with the ROC MP is successfully completed, we will then restore Church order and tradition in this matter".

Of interest is also the interview of Archbishop Mark of Berlin, given to newspaper NG-Religii on July 13, 2005, to the reporter Dimitry Urshev.

Much in this interview repeats his previous interviews, however, there is also something new. For example, he stresses that the majority of the Church's masses "have no possibility of looking into eyes of our collocutors, to feel the real atmosphere... Sometimes we hear the responses of our parishioners or clergymen that testify above all to a deep misunderstanding of our positions, and now also to the formulations of the jointly published documents".

Archbishop Mark admits that the "difficulty of these negotiations consists in that on each side there is a multitude of people".

To the question: "Don't you think that the reunion of the Russian Church Abroad will lead to establishment of parallel church-administrative structures? Or will the Moscow's Patriarchate parishes join the jurisdiction of the Church Abroad?" Dimitry Urshev received the following answer: "The final aim of entering into Eucharistic communion should be a blending of all parishes of the Russian Diaspora into one, single body. This aim can be achieved by no mechanical means. One has to approach that very gradually and carefully".

The next question: "What would be the fate of the parishes of Church Abroad in Russia?" Archbishop Mark replied:

"The parishes in Russia, which came under the omophorion of the Church Abroad during a historical moment could blend into the local dioceses, gradually and with some restrictions. For this, in the first place we have to overcome the reasons that have created such separations. Truly, in Russia, due to inertia, there might continue to exist something that is unacceptable to the Orthodox consciousness. Namely, this is 'Sergianism' and 'Ecumenism. Not least, was pointed out the problem of the clergy of Patriarchate not following the canons of the Orthodox Church, which should be carefully preserved...."

The next question was: "What will happen to the priests who at some time left the Moscow Patriarchate and joined the Church Abroad?"

To this Archbishop Mark replied: "If these priests, who have left the Patriarchate, have some canonical violations then they should be put before an ecclesiastical court. Yet, if there were no canonical violations on part of such priests (and I believe that it was not in the majority of cases) that means they had to leave because non-canonical demands were made upon them, but now we must use a pastoral and not an administrative approach toward them".

The last question was about the danger of schism in the Church Abroad over disagreement with her new policies.

To this Archbishop Mark gave the following reply:

"Any decision about our future path should be accepted by the Council. The conciliar decisions should be accepted by all members of our Church who are of a sound mind. Yet, if one is already preparing to go into the schism, then he will go not because of this decision, which is not of the same 'spirit'. Not having the necessary openness of mind to accept the

conciliar decision he is actually standing at this very moment not on the foundation of the Church, of her conciliar spirit. One can just feel sorrow over this".

The Coordinating Committees completely disregard the fact that Patriarch Tikhon anathematized the Communist government and all those who collaborate with it; then it was twice anathematized by the Catacomb Church. And those anathemas remain in force against the Moscow Patriarchate. He is not bothered nor were these negotiating committees by the fact that the ROCOR's Council of Bishops after every election of a new Moscow "Patriarch" issued an epistle stating that they consider them to be **illegal** on the basis of the 30th Apostolic Canon condemning those who receive authority in the Church from civil governments. Only with the election of Metropolitan Vitaly as First Hierarch of the ROCOR did the Council of Bishops of the Church Abroad in no way react to the "election" of Alexis Ridiger "Drozdov"!

A BIT MORE ABOUT THE "NEGOTIATING PROCESS" AS VIEWED BY THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

On several occasions we published data about the negotiations between the ROCOR(L) and the Moscow Patriarchate, basing it upon information sparingly available in the Internet from the Chancery of the Synod of Bishops of the Church Abroad. Now we have the opportunity to hear about these negotiations from the point of view of the Moscow Patriarchate.

In the "Vestnik" ("Herald") of the New York diocese of July 6th on the first page there is an article (seemingly an editorial) with a photograph of Metropolitan Laurus standing next to the Moscow Patriarch. The Patriarch is fully vested, while the Metropolitan is in riassa and klobuk.

The Herald quotes information previously published from the "proposal" of the unification. The proposal, in our opinion, is very crafty. In it the future "privileges" are described in detail which are promised to the Church Abroad, yet it mentions that "the decisions which go beyond the limits of the competence of the ROCOR Council of Bishops are to be made after coordination with the Patriarch of Moscow and of All Russia and sacred Synod of the ROC." Certainly, nothing is said about what is meant by what "decisions" go beyond the competence of the ROCOR and therefore, this is left according to agreement to the decision of the MP and its First Hierarch. At the same time it is explained that the "standing supreme authority is the Local Council of the ROC", in other words the Moscow Patriarchate. The hierarchs of the ROCOR have right to participate in the Synod meetings and the Councils of the MP, but that Holy Chrism is to be received from the "standing supreme authority".

"Among the published materials is also a review of the as yet unfinished work of the joint committees, among which are matters about regulating the status of clergymen who have transferred from one ecclesiastical jurisdiction to another one, about the future of the ROCOR parishes that are within the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as the relationship to some groups that have separated from their Local Churches..."

"Regarding the matter of the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is ready to renounce the accusations of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. The members of the committee have admitted that the declaration was a painful and tragic compromise on the part of Metropolitan Sergius who was trying to save the Church which the theomachists wanted to destroy. (Underlined by Ch. N.)

In other words we see a shameful capitulation of the ROCOR which has publicly renounced all its formed conditions in order to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate! This is not to mention that Metropolitan Laurus and his Synod **have formally renounced the principles of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia held for its entire 80 years!**

CLARIFICATION REGARDING THE KURSK MIRACULOUS ICON

In our June issue we published the data from the newspaper "Russian Life" about the danger of losing the miraculous icon of Kursk. It was stated there that the Moscow Patriarch has expressed the hope that this holy icon would visit Russia.

But now there is some more definite information regarding this matter.

A periodical of the Serbian Patriarchate "Pravoslavlje" in issue # 919 of July 1st reported that, "The Moscow Patriarch Alexis has expressed the hope and wish that the Theotokos Icon Kursk-Root of the Sign of would be returned from abroad to Russia.

It is very doubtful that under the present conditions Metropolitan Laurus would refuse to satisfy the very clearly expressed Patriarchal "wish"!

MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE PRIEST IN BARI ABOUT RELATIONS WITH CATHOLICS

The Internet site CReDO.Ru on June 24th published an interview with a Moscow Patriarchate Priest Vladimir Kuchumov. The journalist was mainly interested about the relationship of the "Orthodox" with the Catholics. The interview was given in connection with opening in St. Nicholas basilica of an exhibition "The Treasures of the St. Nicholas Basilica in Bari".

As is known, the new Pope Benedict XVI (on almost the first day after his election) stated that he plans to convene in Bari a Catholic-Orthodox Council. The Moscow Patriarchate has greeted such a "friendly" move by the new Pope.

When asked by a woman-journalist about the relations with the Catholics in Bari, the Moscow Patriarchate clergyman replied that, "The relations turned out to be very warm and friendly. We work together, resolve some common problems, we can always agree, and often sit at the same table... It turns out, that we together with Catholics have built an ideal model for the coexistence of the two Churches on the same territory, Churches who are not equal in the sense that one of

them is a guest of another as in the majority of cases we have in Italy. It becomes a wonderful form of communication, and mutual assistance...."

Asked if he could speak about the Orthodox mission in Bari, the Moscow priest talked mostly about the chance for tourists to thoroughly investigate the Orthodox services".

Among the questions was also the following: "Does it happen that there are Catholics who want to convert to the Orthodoxy?"

The "Orthodox" clergyman gave this amazing answer: "Yes, there were such cases: the beauty of the Orthodox services attracts them, the singing... I always very attentively talk to such people asking them what is wrong with their own Church. As a rule it happens that the person does not understand his own religion's position, hasn't carefully gone into it, and is looking to Orthodoxy for something better. **But our services are in some sense even more complicated! How can there be talk about converting?"**" (underlined by Ch. N.)

The Patriarchal priest does not at all mention the problem of the numerous heresies of Roman Catholicism!

Certainly, if he would start teaching true Orthodoxy in Bari his "ideal model of coexistence" would collapse in no time. Therefore, he sacrifices the souls of Catholics who seek salvation for the sake of coexistence with heretics!

THE POPE AND THE JEWS

"The New York Times" of July 6th reported that the newly-elected Pope Benedict plans to visit his homeland in Germany, in the near future. In particular he will go to Cologne where in August a "World Day of Youth" will be celebrated by the Catholics.

The Pope's visit is being organized by Cologne's Cardinal Joachim Meisner. The visit will include also the "prayer service" in a synagogue, which will be the very **first** time that the Roman Pope will participate in a Jewish service. Because of this the cardinal and the Pope **have learned by heart several psalms in Hebrew!**

This trip was planed already for the late Pope John Paul, who died recently. He was the very first Pope in the history of Roman Catholicism to visit the synagogue in Rome, but at that time, he didn't pray there. The new Pope has much surpassed his predecessor!

By the way, he has already abolished the Catholic rule, requiring a 5 year period before starting the process of making a future saint and in the near future the Catholics will have another saint in the person of Pope John Paul II

According to Catholic rules, one miracle is required for beatification and a second one for sainthood! However, for Catholics this is an easy task: the Vatican has already reported that it received a lot information about new miracles performed by the late Pope!

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED: Letter of Bishop Gregory to Archbishop Anthony of Geneva of September 5/18, 1989

Your Eminence, Dear Vladyko!

I am afraid that I am boring you with frequent letters. Yet, on the other hand I believe that you, as a Vice President should know what is happening here.

Being embarrassed that his idea of selling the Synod's building meets with obvious opposition the Metropolitan (Vitaly, Ch. N.) the day before yesterday held an informative meeting, trying to change people's mind. Some more than 150 persons came, who signed their names. Metropolitan described very wide perspectives after building new cathedral on the new place, with his own radio program and so on. He has immediately met with a number of well thought out objections. One of the church ladies said that after the repose of Metropolitan Philaret, all we see is the systematic destruction of the Synodal Church: all the former educational activities were cancelled, the missionary parishes, active and respected clergymen chased out and so on. And now they begin to liquidate of the very headquarters of our Church. There were other similar speeches in the same spirit. There were very few objections and at that, only on part of people connected with Bishop Hilarion or the Metropolitan.

Metropolitan has mentioned a fantastic sum for expenses, and has admitted that the expenses are necessary to pay for litigations and therefore the funds of Jerusalem Mission are being spent. The expenses are double what they were in my time. There is also no office.

The young business people who have settled with their families near the Synod and willing to help the Church, seeing what is going on have participated in the polite critique.

Realizing that he is facing serious opposition by those raised to be polite and dedicated to the Church, Metropolitan started to talk differently. He tried to present the matter as if what he had said previously was just to ask for a critique in order to find out how many active people there are. He has convinced no one, but just has deeply diminished his authority and the credibility in his truthfulness. At any rate, it became obvious that we do have active and dedicated people, who have settled around the Synod and are willing to work for the Church.

We still do not know whether there will be convened in September a Council or a Synod. There are rumors that the Council is being postponed because Vladyka Anthony of San Francisco could not prepare the service for the Optina Elders. If to judge by he writes to me about his health I am afraid that he will not be able to complete this work. At any rate, we do have a "presidential crisis" such as we never had before and we have to organize our economic life, of which neither the President of the Synod, nor the Secretary are capable. The active parishioners would like to meet with you

before the Synod's meeting. So far we have never had so many faithful and active young men. And there are many household problems. So far, the household problems were built around the idea of leading matters toward a total crash, to sell everything and to create something fantastic, totally connected with the name of the new Metropolitan. People do not agree with that, but want to remain loyal. In order to clarify this for you, I will try to get and send you the tape cassette of this meeting, which was convened by the Metropolitan.

Asking for your holy prayers, I remain Your Eminences loving brother + Bishop Gregory

Editors' note:

The urge on part of Metropolitan Vitaly to liquidate the headquarters of the Synod of Bishops was successfully continued by Metropolitan Laurus. This First Hierarchy himself lives in Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville and only occasionally visits the Synod building, while almost all meetings of the Synod and Councils are happening in places (even abroad), but only not in the headquarters of the Church Abroad! By the way, it is located in the most "prestigious" area of New York City, which do not only "the Orthodox Church in America", but also the very rich Greek Archdiocese in the USA do not have!

Letter of Bishop Gregory to Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco of February 7/20th, 1991

Your Eminence, dear Vladyko!

I have received the vestments for His Grace Bishop Valentin from San Francisco in time to be able to bring it to Brussels for his ordination. He has put on this vestment at his consecration, and your letter to him was announced during the trapeza at the Memorial Church. At the trapeza, besides the hierarchs who participated in the consecration were some number of altar-boys and some parishioners, as many as they could fit into the small space. There were many praying in the church. Vladyka Valentin was very much touched by care taken by your parishioners, and the latter together with him were delighted by the beauty of the vestments.

It a joy that the Lord has helped us to perform this consecration. The Soviets have obviously tried to frustrate their enemy's plans, but you do not bear any responsibility. They returned Vladyka's passport with the exit visa, but without the German transit visa, which is now required when leaving Germany. Vladyka Valentin found out about it from a German officer, who was checking the documents. He already expected that he will not be left free, but the officer soon returned with the visa, took no payment for it and wished him God's help.

The second such help was at his departure. Vladyka was escorted by two cars and his luggage was distributed upon both cars. On the way to the station, one of the cars broke down. Since there was confusion about transferring the luggage, they were late for the train, which had already left. Some one addressed the chief of the station with this problem. He has suggested going by the car to the next station, while he called it on the phone. They were 15 minutes late to that station, but the train was held until Vladyka came and he could continue his trip. From a telephone call we found out that he arrived safely. The train was a bit late, but the flock waited for Vladyka until 10 PM. He was joyfully met and greeted, and when he arrived at his residence, there was another meeting with many neighbors.

Certainly, it was not easy for me to make this trip. But with the Lord's help everything went well for me and I didn't feel tired. Hope to see you when there will be the Synod meeting.

Asking for your holy prayers I remain your loving brother in Christ + Bishop Gregory

Letter of Bishop Gregory to N. P. Churilov of January 22/February 4th, 1992

Dear Nikolai Pavlovich;

I do feel upset that until now I was not able to find you the quotation of the elder Ambrose (of Optina, Ch.N.).

It is neither among my books, nor others'. I could not find the necessary book, and in the monastery I do not have 'my own "person" whom I could have commissioned it. Certainty, I am not going to abandon my efforts. I hope, Fr. Vladimir (Shishkoff, Ch. N.) will help me out when he returns from a rather long trip to Europe.

I still haven't gotten any information about the third volume coming out in print and about a separate booklet with the refutation of Pospelovsky about the Church Abroad, although already for some time I have information that the type-setting is already done.

I would like to start as soon as possible the distribution of my books in Russia. In the third volume there is an extensive report about the preparation of the world for the coming of Antichrist. At present it is already visible how far this preparation has gone. After all, actually there is already established an international government with the participation of a representative from "Russia". It seems this place was being prepared for Gorbachev, but this position, a bit unwillingly, has been given to Yeltsin.

From the Russian point of view there is not a big difference. Neither can be considered a true representative of Russia and her interests. I am terrified when observing the development of the events and believe that the true aim of the international antichrist's powers is the annihilation of our nation, a physical annihilation. However, we are threatened by lobal disaster. They will not bypass also the seemingly secure America. It has already sunk into debts that cannot be repaid and at present create multiple crises.

That you are starting to feel your age is not surprising to me. In this matter I surpass you: I will be 90 in April, if will live that long, which is not certain.

May the Lord protect and strengthen you. With love in Christ + Bishop Gregory

Letter of Bishop Gregory to an unknown person on August 12/25th, 1992

Dear Leonid Yuryevich;

Than you for your letter of August 16th. Unfortunately, Jordanville indeed takes a lot of time to fulfill orders.

Pardon me that I have not sufficiently investigated the essence of your question.

The canons forbidding acting and dancing were issued because in the Roman times these were as indecent as they are now, although, to judge by the protests against what the Congress pays out in its budget, our contemporaries have surpassed even the corrupt Romans. However, I believe that these canonical restrictions do not necessarily apply to listening to classical music.

Regarding the present times we are living through, I believe that we both will not live to see times of a normalization of life in Russia. I believe that at present being arranged a world chaos, which will provide the basis for strengthening the already created world government under the leadership of the "Son of perdition". I have passed 90 years of age and believe, that I might happen to live to see that time. I get more and more such letters from Russia. I do not see how they can last until the full revival. May the Lord help us. But we have to work and to confess the Truth until the very end.

May the Lord preserve you + Bishop Gregory