

Rumachik, vice-president of the Council of Evangelical Christian-Baptists, and Veniamin Markevich, a member of the Council, who were both sentenced under Articles 190-1, 142 part 2 (violation of the laws on separation of church and state and school and church), and 227 (infringement of the person and rights of citizens under the guise of performing religious rituals). Rumachik had, however, been re-sentenced in camp in 1985 under Article 70 and given a further five years' strict regime. Of those religious prisoners who have not been affected by the decrees of the Supreme Soviet, many were sentenced under either Articles 142 or 227. This group includes many of the Baptist prisoners who belong to the Evangelical Christian-Baptist group.

Two religious prisoners, Vladimir Khailo and Algirdas Statkevicius, were released from psychiatric hospital. Both had been in Special Psychiatric Hospital, but Khailo was transferred to an ordinary hospital before his release. It is not clear whether these two cases are related to the releases brought about by the action of the Supreme Soviet.

According to the *Izvestiya* report, those released declared that "they would not in future engage in illegal activities". Dissident sources in the Soviet Union give a rather fuller version of this statement, claiming that the prisoners had to declare that they "had never engaged in anti-Soviet activities, are not currently

engaged in such activity, and do not intend to be in the future". *Izvestiya* implied that it was the prisoners who turned to the authorities with this declaration, whereas from accounts given by individuals released it seems that it was usually the authorities who first approached the prisoners. The declarations seem to be a convenient device, allowing the authorities to provide a basis for the releases, while many prisoners are happy to sign the declarations as they do not amount to a full recantation. Some of the released prisoners had signed their own amended versions of the declaration. Some refused to sign and were released nevertheless, whilst others refused to sign were not. The latter category includes Zoya Krakhmalnikova, Felix Svetov, Lev Lukyanenko, Deacon Vladimir Rusak, Yelena Sannikova and Oksana Popovich.

In several cases, as a preliminary to their release, prisoners were transferred from labour camp to KGB investigation prison in their home town, where they were put under pressure to sign the declaration. Some prisoners at present still in KGB prison may yet be freed. Taking into account this category of possible future releases, and the fact that news of all those freed may not yet have reached the West, the number of releases may increase for some time to come.

*Compiled by members of
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Preparations for the Official Celebrations in 1988 of the Millennium of the Baptism of Kievan Rus'

Preparations for the official celebrations of the millennium by the

Moscow Patriarchate commenced in October 1980, when a 34-strong

commission was appointed by the Holy Synod to plan the events. It includes the senior Metropolitans, several bishops, representatives from monasteries, convents and the theological schools and other departments of the Patriarchate. However, it was some time before more than very cursory announcements about the commission's work were made, and the schedule for the planned celebrations was made public only at the beginning of this year.

Earlier, in July 1986, Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk, chairman of the Department of External Church Relations, gave a press conference for Soviet and foreign journalists to acquaint them with the preparations for the millennium. His main announcement was that there would be a Local (i.e. National) Council (*Sobor*) during 1988, and a solemn celebration in Moscow attended by foreign guests. The guests would then attend further celebrations in Kiev, Moscow, Suzdal', Novgorod, Vladimir and other cities. Filaret also announced that a conference would be held in Kiev later in July 1986 on church history, as a result of which a book would be published. More than sixty historians of the Russian Orthodox and other Orthodox Churches had been invited. It later became clear that the conference had been organised very much at the last minute: many foreign guests were invited late, and as a result the papers given were of uneven quality. However, it is noteworthy that the conference was announced at a press conference in the church's new information centre. It has not been usual in the past for church leaders to give such press conferences. This reflects both the exceptional nature of the millennium, and also the increasingly higher profile being given to the church in international and peace-making activities. In his comments, Filaret laid great em-

phasis on peace-making.

Another conference, this time on theological issues, was to take place in Moscow from 11-19 May 1987. From an organisational point of view, this appears to have been similar to the Kiev conference, in that neither the venue nor dates were publicly announced, and invitations to participants were being issued at very short notice.

More detailed information about the 1988 celebrations was given by Metropolitan Sergi of Odessa, the new chancellor (business manager) of the Moscow Patriarchate. It is contained in an interview with the English-language newspaper *Moscow News*, which is intended almost entirely for foreign consumption. Foreigners, therefore, are being given a fuller description of the planned celebrations than has yet been made available within the USSR.

Metropolitan Sergi gave further information about the *Sobor* to be held in 1988. It is significant that permission has been granted to hold the *Sobor*, as there have been only three in the Soviet period, in 1917-18, 1945 and 1971. The last two were convened only because it was necessary to elect a new patriarch, and normally a *Sobor* would not have been held until it became necessary to elect a successor to Patriarch Pimen, who is 76 years old and in failing health. The Council, which consists of the bishop, a priest and a layman from every diocese of the church, including overseas dioceses, is the supreme authority of the church. The interviewer notes that there will be three hundred delegates to the Council. According to Metropolitan Sergi, the 1988 Council will be held from 6-9 June at the Holy Trinity Monastery of St Sergius at Zagorsk, and will be "closely connected with the millennium of the baptism of Rus' ". Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev is expected to deliver the main report on

this subject. There are also to be reports concerning the Charter of the Russian Orthodox Church, foreign relations, peace-making efforts, publishing, and canonisation of saints.

The question of the possible canonisation of saints is an interesting one, but evidently Metropolitan Sergi did not feel able to be forthcoming about it at the time of the interview. The interviewer suggests that the Council would discuss the canonisation of the warrior prince Dimitri of the Don ("Dimitri Donskoi") Andrei Rublyov, and *starets* Amvrosi of the monastery of Optina. Sergi replies that the canonisation of saints is an extremely important matter for the church, requiring scrupulous investigation, and therefore he can say only that preparations for possible canonisations are being supervised by Metropolitan Yuvenali of Krutitsy and Kolomna.

The 1988 Council, according to Metropolitan Sergi, is to be preceded by a liturgy in the patriarchal Cathedral of the Epiphany in Moscow on 5 June. On 10 June the main ceremony to celebrate the millennium is to be held in the Cathedral of the Resurrection in the Danilov Monastery in Moscow. There are also to be ceremonies in Kiev, Leningrad and Vladimir, attended by delegates to the Council and visitors from abroad. Jubilee services and meetings will also be held in all the dioceses and parishes.

The interviewer suggests that the Council and the celebratory services may run into practical difficulties. A recent fire at the Holy Trinity Monastery at Zagorsk has inflicted great damage on some of the buildings, and he asks whether in the next year and a half the church will be able not only to repair the damage but also "to impart to the *Lavra* (monastery) the look befitting the

importance of the event". He also says that the Cathedral of the Resurrection in the Danilov Monastery, where the main celebratory event is to take place, is currently still occupied by an umbrella-making production association, and that there is a great deal of restoration work still to be done at the monastery. Metropolitan Sergi replies simply that both places will be ready in time for the events of 1988. He pays tribute to the support the church has received from the state following the fire at the Holy Trinity Monastery: the blueprints were prepared "in the shortest 'possible time'" and materials and machinery necessary to do the work quickly were provided. Metropolitan Sergi adds that within a month after the fire believers had sent two million roubles (about two million pounds) to the account of the Moscow Theological Academy at Zagorsk, and that donations are continuing to pour in.

An interesting innovation in preparation for the millennium was an interview in *JMP* (1987 No. 2, pp. 8-11) with two representatives of churches in the USA, Dr Paul Valliere and Dr Bruce Rigdon. It chiefly concerned their attitudes to and interest in Russian Orthodoxy, their views on several leading Russian Orthodox writers of the past, and plans to mark the millennium next year in the USA. This will no doubt be of interest to readers of *JMP*, who until now have not been provided with such material in the journal's pages. The two interviewees are at pains to underline their very positive attitude towards the Russian Orthodox Church, and towards its spirituality in particular, and also to emphasise the need to work for peace. This is only to be expected in such an interview. However, two points are made which one would not have expected to see in *JMP*. Bruce Rigdon alludes to the fact that in the

USA there are strongly differing points of view as to whether or not freedom of religion exists in the USSR and that "sometimes heated discussions flare up". True, he does not enter into further discussion, or give his own view, but the allusion is exceptional nonetheless. Later Rigdon says that each side now expects above all from the other "fulfilment of their promises", which can be achieved through the development of friendly relations and the following-up of agreements in, "for example, the area of mutual peace-making efforts and also in the area of human rights". The linking of the two is important in a journal which customarily heavily emphasises the former and mentions the latter hardly at all. Whether or not this is a case of greater *glasnost*' in JMP editorial policy will be shown in subsequent issues.

The atheist press, however, is taking a negative line towards the millennium. Following a special conference of ideological workers in June 1983, articles have appeared in both the daily press and more specialised journals criticising assertions by churchmen that the church has played a positive and beneficial role in Russian history. What are portrayed as negative influences exerted by the church have been brought to the fore. A typical article, published in the daily youth newspaper in Moldavia, declared:

The ideologues of Orthodoxy in numerous articles and sermons distort the historical past of our country and Russian Orthodoxy's place in it: they exaggerate the role of the religious factor in the historical process, idealise Russian Orthodoxy of the pre-revolutionary period, cast an unobjective light on the anti-popular activity of the clergy at critical moments in patriotic history, especially in the revolu-

tionary period and the civil war period, when the church waged an open war with the Soviet people, in favour of a return to the past.

The author, V. Tashchuk, a senior lecturer in philosophy, concludes his lengthy article:

Contemporary Orthodoxy, snatching at various positive features from its activity in the past, wishes to preserve and strengthen its extremely shaky positions in the conditions of our socialist society. Therefore, convincingly and insistently to expose the attempts of Orthodox theologians to use the church jubilee in question for their own mercenary aims is a task not only for social scientists, ideological workers and propagandists of scientific atheism. It is the patriotic duty of every young Soviet person who knows the history of his Motherland and the past of his people and is able accurately and from a scientific standpoint to illuminate every stage in the historical development of the country. ("How and Why Rus' was Baptised", *Molodyozh Moldavii*, 7 and 9 April 1987.)

It is interesting that the Soviet press feels it necessary to attack the church's view of the millennium in such strong terms. While churchmen undoubtedly do put forward a positive view of the church's role in national history and culture, their opportunities for reaching a mass audience are non-existent. Although the average Soviet reader would be most unlikely to have any idea what church spokesmen have been saying, the atheist propagandists obviously feel that it is more important to attack them than to ignore them. At the same time, some articles describing the church's preparations for the millennium celebrations have appeared in the daily press. The dual approach is evidently intended to convey that while there is freedom to

celebrate a purely church anniversary in a normal way, it is not acceptable for churchmen to attempt to extend the church's influence further.

However, the church's viewpoint has been expressed more freely in Soviet media intended for foreign consumption, as opposed to the domestic media discussed above. For example, the comments of Prot-priest Georgi Goncharov at a press conference at the United Nations in Geneva were reported in a positive way by TASS, which noted that he had said that the Russian Orthodox Church was

indissolubly connected with the history of its people, with the development of its exceptionally rich cultural traditions which had strengthened it in this extremely inspiring historical period.

Another apparently positive item carried for foreign consumption by TASS was the report of a conference of scientific workers devoted to the millennium, held in Moscow from 4-6 March 1987. Professor Nikita Tolstoi, of Moscow University, a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, was quoted as saying:

We scientists are interested in the role this event has played in the country's history and the unique historical situation which had come about in Russia on the eve of the adoption of Christianity. The scientists' interest is understandable, in so far as the adoption of Christianity was of great importance and was at the time undoubtedly progressive in nature.

This remark needs to be put into

context. Clearly, the adoption of Christianity was an important event of interest to academic Slavists and historians, as Professor Tolstoi states. It will be interesting, however, when the conference proceedings are published, to see if they take any less negative an attitude to the influence of Christianity than do the propagandists referred to above. A similar conference held in Vladimir on 18-19 March 1986, also undoubtedly of considerable interest to academic specialists, consisted of papers which took issue with the church's claim that it has played a beneficial and positive role in history. As for Professor Tolstoi's comment that Christianity was "at the time undoubtedly progressive in nature" — on the face of it, displaying a very positive attitude towards religion — it is in fact nothing more than an orthodox Marxist assessment of the event. According to this, Christianity, by contributing to and strengthening feudalism, fuelled the historical dialectic process which led inevitably to the adoption of socialism.

Rumours continue to circulate to the effect that the Pope will visit the Soviet Union for the millennium celebrations. However, no official statement has been made by either party. Nonetheless, it is significant that the Pope has placed especial emphasis on the millennium of the Baptism of Rus' in his recently published encyclical on the Marian Year, *Redemptoris Mater*. The Marian year is due to end at about the time that the millennium celebrations will be taking place.

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