

Documents

Election of a New Russian Patriarch

On 7 June this year Metropolitan Aleksii of Leningrad and Novgorod was elected as the fifteenth Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia. As expected the church opted for one of its most established hierarchs, though the fact that Aleksii received less than 50 per cent of the votes in the first ballot indicates that he has less than universal support. Nonetheless, he is

clearly the candidate favoured by the current political leadership, being a committed but cautious public supporter of perestroika. Indeed, this new attitude is clearly reflected in the interview he gave to Izvestiya on 16 June which we reprint below. Yet he continues to arouse mixed feelings within the church, as the following documents indicate.

Faith without Deeds is Dead — An Interview with Patriarch Aleksii II

Our conversation with the patriarch took place in unusual circumstances — in a compartment of the 'Red Arrow', a high speed train which had left Moscow at midnight. The patriarch, who has only just been elected to this high office, was returning to Leningrad on business, where he has for the last four years headed this diocese as Metropolitan Aleksii of Leningrad and Novgorod.

Life today is so hectic that a very busy schedule in Moscow had not made it possible for the patriarch to find time for this interview. Taking our chances, not without hope that providence would shine on us, we met the head of the Russian Orthodox Church on the platform at

Moscow's Leningradsky vokzal and asked him if we could do our interview on the train. 'Well,' he smiled, 'we could do it that way. When would you like us to do it, now or in the morning?' We decided that the best thing would be to conduct the interview as soon as the train moved off.

Your Holiness, every believer comes to God in his own way. How did you become a Christian?

I started going to church when I was six years old. It was then that I first thought I would like to become a priest. The church where I was baptised was in Tallinn. My parents were very devout believers.

I think that two pilgrimages as a child to the Valaam Monastery on Lake Lagoda had a profound influence on my personal spiritual journey. I went there with my parents for the first time in 1938, and then a year later. I was nine years old at the time and I can still remember it to this day: the striking beauty of the monastery left a lasting impression. The summer church had only just been restored and it shone with colour and gold. In 1939 we were sad as we left the monastery, sensing that it would be a long time before we could return. Sure enough, the war started soon after that. . .

In later years people suggested on a number of occasions that I should return to the monastery. But, how can I explain, holy things which have been destroyed always leave a painful impression. For me the monastery has remained a well-appointed spiritual centre and for this reason I did not want to destroy my childhood memories. I only returned there during the millennium celebrations. The war and people of ill-will have dealt serious blows to the monastery. However, the opportunity we now have to revive monastic life in Valaam has taken the edge off this loss. The monastery still held the same enchantment for me as it did half a century ago.

You are now travelling to a city which has many associations for you. You will be conducting farewell services.

It is extremely difficult for me to leave Leningrad. The city on the Neva has played a special part in my life. Back in 1946 I tried to enter the Leningrad Theological Seminary. However I was not accepted: I was not even eighteen. The following year I did enter, having passed the exams for the first two years at one sitting as an external student. I graduated from the seminary in 1949 and was ordained priest a year later. After many

years of pastoral work as a priest in Estonia and then as an administrator in Moscow, I returned to Leningrad in 1986. I would not say that those four years were easy ones. When I tried to see the mayor of the town immediately after my arrival, I was told that such things did not happen and were not likely to happen in the future. It was not until a year later that I managed to meet with the town authorities. The then mayor was surprised that it was the first time I had been to the city executive committee. I replied that I had not been allowed in before. In response he said that from then on the doors would always be open to me, day and night.

In fact our meetings began regularly to take place. However, we still had to fight for our rights. For example, the opinion was that the existing churches were sufficient for our needs. After a lot of difficulties they allowed us to open the Church of St Michael the Archangel. Those opposed to this brought forward dozens of arguments, for example that the church should be used to exhibit children's art or that it should be a museum. The main argument, however, was that a working church should not be allowed on Prospekt Yunikh Lenintsev (Young Leninists Prospect). In that case, I replied, how can Leningrad's main cathedral stand on Commune Square?

A Message from the recent Pomestny sobor states: 'In a society which has lost its faith, the works of Christian charity have particular importance as witness to the faith.' In your opinion, how should the charitable work of the Russian Orthodox Church develop? Could you give us some concrete examples?

Before going to the *sobor* I took part in the laying of a foundation stone for a church in a strict regime labour colony in Leningrad. Incidentally, today I received a telegram from the

prisoners congratulating me on my election as patriarch. This, take note, is from people who have committed murder and robbery with violence. I was visiting the colony for the first time and was unsure whether I would be able to establish any sort of relationship with the prisoners. As it turned out I did not need to be apprehensive — they have asked me to come again. I will certainly go for the consecration of the church. They promised that within two to three months they will have built the church with their own hands. Among the prisoners are architects, engineers and workmen able to do the job. The prisoners collected 16 thousand roubles to fund the building of the church. When they were asked why they had done this, they replied that they wanted to restore spiritual and moral values as they were the only things which could save them.

Why, then has the church not been involved in charitable work for so long?

You know, it has always been difficult for us to answer that question. It seems that we have willingly distanced ourselves from offering help to the sick, the elderly, the disabled, the orphaned, the poor, the imprisoned and all who suffer. The New Testament says that faith without deeds is dead. But we were bound hand and foot by the 1929 law on religious associations — a law which totally forbids the church to engage in charitable activity and in the education of children. The result was that all of these functions were taken on by the state. Now, *glasnost*' has revealed that millions of needy and sick people need practical help. Unfortunately people have become unused over the years to doing practical good. For this reason I see that the Russian Orthodox Church has a large educative task in front of it. I am not going to pronounce high minded sentiments: people need to be

taught how they should actively do good.

The churches should be allowed to return to those traditional spheres of activity to which they were naturally inclined. From time immemorial churches have opened hostels, workshops, temperance societies, and orphanages for children deprived of parental love, where they could receive a proper upbringing. All of this activity needs to be revived. But today we are starting from nothing and are making only the very first steps in this direction.

Does the new draft law on freedom of conscience and religious associations take into account the interests of the Russian Orthodox Church?

We hope that at last the churches will have greater opportunities for social activity and for education of all age groups. We do have some observations about the draft and we have commented publicly on a number of occasions. This first draft does not satisfy us completely. If this is passed I think we will be taking a step backwards.

When did you first take a Bible in your hands?

The first religious book I had was a copy of the Gospels and I have it to this day. It was given to me by my grandmother in 1936 and she wrote inside it 'To Alyosha. A book for reading and edification.'

I am glad that today many people are again turning to the Bible, to the church. There is a reason for this: the church is the bearer of spiritual and moral values. The church has borne them down the centuries and can share her inheritance with the people. People are suffering from a spiritual hunger and it is no coincidence that one of the most sought-after books today is the Bible. It is interesting that adults as well as children read the Children's Bible. It explains and illustrates those events contained in the standard Bible. The reader needs

to reacquaint himself with a huge amount of cultural knowledge which has been lost and neglected by us. For this reason, the organisation of religious education must be one of the most important areas in the activity of the church. Since such education has not taken place for many decades, it will be no easy matter for us to re-establish it. However, we should not be afraid of difficulties. We must do all in our power to educate children, young people and adults, deprived of religious knowledge, in the Christian tradition. As a matter of priority we should establish a programme of catechetical work for children and adults and publish the necessary literature. But, without delay, we should start some form of religious education according to our own local situation, capabilities and needs. Both clergy and laity must come together in this important work.

I consider it essential that religious education be taught in schools as an extra-curricular subject. This would be of huge benefit to the growing generation and the first step in introducing them to a whole area of human culture and development. . .

Your Holiness, you met the President of the USSR in the Kremlin. What questions did you raise with him?

Life itself presents many questions. For example, I expressed my concern about the situation in a number of areas in Western Ukraine — I mean the Uniate problem. We are also concerned about the appearance of parishes adhering to the Russian Church Abroad within the Soviet Union. That is a clear demonstration of division within the ranks of the church. At the same time as the process of integration is taking place all over the world, in our society and in the church there is disunity. . .

How do you see the role of the state in smoothing over these contradictions?

I must emphasise that we were not asking the head of state to help. We were just acquainting him with our position on these matters.

What position do you take, in your capacity as patriarch, with regard to the resolution of the conflict between Eastern Rite Catholics (Uniates) and the Russian Orthodox?

Only by means of a peaceful dialogue and the renewal of the activity of the quadripartite commission on the Uniate question (which includes Vatican representatives) can the tense situation which has developed in recent months in Western Ukraine be resolved. These days I receive a large number of telegrams from Orthodox in Ukraine telling of the violent seizure of their churches by the Uniates. In these instances political emotions and nationalism have their own sorry role to play, which sharpens interdenominational problems. If the confrontation gets more serious it could well bring about very unhappy consequences. . .

Are you prepared to meet the Pope to discuss these problems?

We informed Pope John Paul II of the outcome of the *sobor* at the earliest opportunity. On 25 June he is to meet the Uniate bishops in Rome. I think that it will be useful for him to know the position of the Russian Orthodox on this question. We have an official communication attesting to the fact that the Pope approves the work of the quadripartite commission, which was set up precisely to arbitrate in the conflict between Eastern Rite Catholics and Russian Orthodox. We hope that he will give his blessing that the Uniate bishops will return to the commission and resolve all of the problems by means of a peaceful dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church. This is how we should resolve the problem: if the majority of parishioners in a given church are Greek Catholics then the church should belong to

enterprise in Moscow which produces church goods. The system is such that we have to get raw materials from the state supply. The Council for Religious Affairs is indispensable in this regard. Its officials help in the organisation of trips abroad for our priests and we are most grateful for this.

What is your opinion about internal church problems?

There was a time when we were strongly criticised by the Russian Church Abroad and by the western world in general. We were accused of betraying the interests of the church. As an archbishop of the church I am bound to say that even in the most difficult times we tried to make the most of the opportunities we had. And we never betrayed the church! We knew that the church had to find its place in Soviet society. Sometimes people would even look at us as if we were second class citizens. But, notwithstanding, we did not abandon our homeland, not a single priest was a traitor. We have always been patriots and have carried the cross which was laid upon us. It is easy for the representatives of the Russian Church Abroad to criticise when they were sitting pretty, having left Russia in the difficult days of the revolution and having escaped Stalinism. We were still able to hold services, even if we were restricted to within the walls of the church. But we continued to preach the word of God, baptised, married and buried. For baptisms it was difficult — you had to have the signed agreement of the parents and their presence at the baptism. These documents would then be sent immediately to the regional executive committee by those same lay people hostile to the church. Then people would come to the parish priest, saying, for example, you married us in church and then you betrayed us. That is the kind of image the state authori-

ties created of us in the eyes of believers.

Is there unanimity in the Holy Synod or is there a divergence of views and opinions?

We are of one mind. The Decision of the Local Council relating to the whole spectrum of internal church problems was passed almost unanimously. At a meeting with the entire episcopacy of the Russian-Orthodox Church after the patriarchal enthronement there was a free exchange of views. In my address I said that this was an informal meeting and that I was available for meetings and for discussion of any questions people wanted to raise. We debated for four hours and parted satisfied with the exchange of views. In any case in the future both the Synod and the episcopacy must rehabilitate the principle of *sobornost* and of general decision-making on all questions. . .

What, in your opinion, is the meaning of life? Are you an optimist or a pessimist?

In the difficult years of the 1960s I went to Sweden and a correspondent from local television asked me what the future held for the church in a socialist society. I said at the time that a Christian should be optimistic by nature and believe in the unchangeable words of Christ our Saviour about the eternal existence of the church of Christ on the earth. I think that the return to eternal, spiritual, moral traditions inspires optimism and opens before us a boundless area of opportunity. History will ask us to account for this time, a time ripe for the revival of spirituality and morality on the earth.

The meaning of life for man lies in the achievement of perfection, so that as the years pass he becomes more good and kind, and thus sow this goodness in the hearts of the people who surround him.

them. If the majority are Orthodox, the church will belong to the Orthodox Church. It is unacceptable for the Uniates to seize every church in L'vov without leaving a single one for the Russian Orthodox. The fact that since February our priests have been forced to celebrate the liturgy in the open air in many parts of Western Ukraine constitutes a violation of human rights, of religious principles and ethical norms.

In the same Message from the Local Council we read 'Until recently, one of the difficulties encountered in parish life was that in many parishes important positions of responsibility fell into the hands of non-church people, sometimes complete unbelievers, who exploited their position for their own ends.' What would you add to this?

The Local Council of 1945 passed a resolution relating to church management which stated that the incumbent was, by virtue of his position, also the chairman of the parish council. In 1961 they suddenly remembered that the 1929 law on religious associations was still in effect. Then priests were deprived of their voting rights, were excluded from the parish *dvadtsatka* and the church council. All of the financial affairs of the parish were in the hands of lay people. In a number of dioceses this worked normally, retaining the principle of elected responsibility. However, in a whole series of areas, unfortunately, the regional executive committee appointed the *starost*, who were unbelievers and alien to the church. They fulfilled the wishes of the local plenipotentiary from the Council for Religious Affairs. The priests complained, but they were powerless. Try and imagine, we had to sign a contract with them which contradicted canonical norms. We had to hire a priest to conduct the liturgy! It is unbelievable!

These non-church people fre-

quently decided which day you could hold a service and which not. In many churches they designated several days in a week as sanitary inspection days to reduce the number of services being held.

In the regional executive committees commissions for the observance of the law were created. They interfered in the life of the church and sometimes even became the unquestioned masters of parish life.

Most of the church's finances went into the Soviet Peace Fund, for which the *starost* would receive a medal from the fund. Any priest who tried to oppose them found his so-called labour contract terminated.

We have always been honourable in our support for the Peace Fund, especially in the years where there was a tense international situation. In some regions up to 80 per cent of the parish income was taken up by the fund. This is supposed to be a voluntary organisation which inspires people to give willingly of their money for the general good.

Now things are changing for the better. But all the same parishes remain where the 'appointed' *starost*, who has put down deep roots into parish life, has still not given up his position.

What should be the relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church and other confessions with the Council for Religious Affairs? Do you not think that this body has outlived its usefulness?

We did discuss this in the law-making commission of the USSR Supreme Soviet. I think that there should be some kind of official body. In many countries there are departments for religious affairs or ministries which do not perform the function of control and interference, but give help to the churches and religious bodies in questions which concern them.

Let us say that we have a large

Our conversation had come to an end, even though we had not managed to ask all the questions we had prepared. It was already 2am. In the morning the platform at Moskovsky vokzal was a sea of flowers. The people of Leningrad had come to

greet the patriarch. The deputation was headed by the new chairman of the Leningrad city soviet, Anatoli Sobchak.

G. Alimov, G. Charodeev
Izvestiya, 16 June 1990.

The Election of a Patriarch — Crossroads or Dead-End?

Shortly before the sobor met, Father Georgi Edelstein wrote a lengthy article criticising the speed with which it was proposed to elect the new patriarch. He also had some very sharp words to say about the candidates for the patriarchal throne, including Metropolitan Aleksii.

On 6 May, the day which commemorates the memory of the holy defender of Moscow, the martyr Georgi the Victorious, the funeral and burial of Pimen, the Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia took place. The capital has been widowed.

According to centuries-old Christian traditions, a widow stays in mourning for forty days, does not hold or go to any banquets or similar forms of entertainment, and remains in an attitude of prayer and fasting. The Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church, passed in 1988, states that a Local Council must be held to elect a new patriarch within six months of the patriarchal throne becoming vacant. The letter of the law does not prevent it from being held the day after the funeral. The Statute is deliberately silent about when in the six month period the Council can be convened, assuming that to elect a patriarch before the customary forty days of mourning are over would be

considered both dishonourable and inconceivable. . .

At its meeting of 8 May, the Synod decided that the Local Council would open on 6 June, with the election of the new patriarch to take place on the following day, 7 June. This was done in order to avoid the possibility of any criticism or alternative suggestions and to exclude any discussion of the problems of church life which have for many years concerned the laity. The patriarch would then be enthroned on 10 June, thus bringing an end to the church's period of official mourning on the 36th day. Now the church could be consoled for its loss and lay aside its mourning clothes. The delegates would then celebrate the election of the patriarch and the continuation of the schism in the traditional manner — a lavish banquet in a Moscow restaurant, all at the expense of ordinary believers. In the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church there are six permanent members, one of whom is being earmarked for the patriarchal throne. On the very same day of Pimen's death the Synod met and, marshalling its forces, conducted a mini-rehearsal of the forthcoming Local Council. The doings of the Synod on the 3 May can only lead to very sad reflections on what our

synodal bishops are capable of dreaming up. Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev and Galicia was elected *locum tenens* by secret ballot. . .

[A likely candidate for patriarch, apart from Metropolitan Filaret, is Metropolitan Aleksii of Leningrad and Novgorod.]

Metropolitan Aleksii's ecclesiastical career took off during the fierce repressions Khrushchev launched against the church. It was during this time that Aleksii became an important functionary in the Moscow Patriarchate *apparat*, as the church administrator and permanent member of the Holy Synod. For decades he co-operated with the godless authorities in persecuting the church and believers, he systematically tormented and persecuted Archbishop Yermogen, who had dared to raise his voice in defence of the Orthodox Church. He has constantly borne false witness to the whole world about the situation of religion and the church in our country. There is no one who has worked so zealously, hand in hand with the leadership of the Council for Religious Affairs, as Metropolitan Aleksii. So let us not slander him — he has never been apolitical.

For many years, Metropolitan Aleksii went on his own initiative to the Council for Religious Affairs with foul accusations against Moscow priests and against his brother bishops. A small section of these records from the archives of the CRA were published in *Glasnost No 13* and reprinted in many other publications. Doubtless new documents will come to light in the near future as the CRA intends gradually to open up its archives. Surely the election of a hardened stoolpigeon to the patriarchal throne will add a sense of scandal to the current situation of the Russian Orthodox Church, where practically every second priest is

directly or indirectly linked with the 'competant organs', with 'interested parties', with representatives of the CRA, where they try to keep tabs on every seminarian, every priest, every 'religious fanatic'?

Some additional details about Aleksii's dealings with the CRA: On 9 February 1967 Archbishop Aleksii went to the CRA and was received by the deputy chairman, V. G. Furov. During the course of the conversation, Aleksii assured Furov that after the last discussion on certain questions he and Metropolitan Nikodim had had at the CRA, they had continued their own discussion, during which Nikodim assured Aleksii that there was no one better than him to fill the Leningrad diocese and that he would do all in his power to make sure that Aleksii was appointed as his successor. Metropolitan Nikodim insisted that he take this line at the Council for Religious Affairs. He must stand firm.

In his conversation, giving opinions on the various bishops, Aleksii spoke favourably about Archbishop Ioann of Pskov, saying that he was quite intelligent, loyal towards the state, good at meetings and often received guests from churches abroad. His only shortcoming was that he did not have higher education qualifications. Archbishop Ioann was indifferent to the Patriarchate, saying that 'once a laybrother simply knew the patriarch and carried chamber pots to him, now he directs the church', referring in this instance to Ostapov* and remembering his obligations as laybrother to Patriarch Sergii.

* Daniil Ostapov was the private secretary of Patriarch Aleksii and, according to some critics, totally dominated the patriarch — *Ed.*

On this occasion Aleksii also informed the authorities that Father Schpillar* (of the Novo-Kuznetskaya Church, Moscow) had thrown off all restraint and was circulating amongst the clergy letters to the patriarch complaining about the local authorities and their alleged interference in the life of the church. Priests Timakov and Kulikov, who were under the authority of Schpillar, had been told by him to distribute this letter to Moscow priests. It seems that Metropolitan Pimen is doing nothing about Schpillar's actions.

Wanting to exploit the opportunity which Aleksii had given by discussing Pimen, I asked him to express his opinions about him freely. This is what he said: He has known Pimen since the beginning of the 1950s, when Pimen was father superior of the Pskovsko-Pechersky Monastery. To those under his authority he was demanding and sometimes even rude. A laybrother or deacon can be beaten indiscriminately, but as archbishop Pimen does not seem to run his diocese, he does not really display any initiative; and although as Archbishop of Krutitsy he is considered to be the first hierarch in the Holy Synod, his role in the Patriarchate is barely noticeable. Pimen, continued Aleksii, seems to have isolated himself, he does not associate with anybody and any meeting with him is simply chance. Archbishops visiting the Patriarchate rarely come to see him. It is hard to decide whether he is simply an unsociable character, or whether he has consciously sought to distance himself from all the goings-on in the Patriarchate. Perhaps he is in some way dependent on Ostapov, perhaps the latter knows something about Pimen which he uses to keep

him under his influence; sometimes there are instances when Ostapov is rude to Pimen and Pimen just takes it without a murmur. At one time there were rumours that Pimen had a family in Rostov-on-Don. Perhaps it is this information that Ostapov is using against him. This, however, is just a theory. As far as his activities in Moscow are concerned, everyone knows that Pimen has ladyfriends and there was one occasion when I overheard a conversation on the house telephone when he seemed to be expressing words of endearment to one lady. One must give Pimen his due, the archbishop said, he does celebrate the liturgy in an inspiring way and this creates a certain impression of him. He does not display sufficient strength of will and holds no firm opinions. He is easily influenced and readily changes his opinions. (*Glasnost*, No 13, pp. 11-13)

And so it went on, day after day, month after month. Intrigue, gossip, betrayal. When one reads the transcripts of these cosy little chats the Chairman of the Economic Department and permanent member of the Holy Synod had at the CRA, one gets the impression of being immersed in some stinking mire. Confidential, For Trusted Persons only, Secret, Open Information. Cordial relations with Plekhanov of the KGB, cordial relations with that devoted enemy of the Russian Orthodox Church, Furov. The portrait which emerges is not that of an amateur or a dilettante, but of a professional informer. So the links which the present Metropolitan of Leningrad has with the CRA and other competent organs are a good deal stronger and more intimate than those of his fellow Metropolitan of Kiev. It was Aleksii who was considered to be the most loyal and the most desirable candidate for nomination to the Congress of People's Deputies by a public organ-

* Fr Schpillar was a popular priest who in the 1960s attempted to resist state interference in the life of his parish — *Ed.*

isation. It is no coincidence that Furov, the deputy chairman of the CRA, in his famous report for the Central Committee of the CPSU puts Aleksii, his long-established and trusted informant, higher on the list of trusted bishops than Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev. In Furov's list of the best, most sympathetic, most desir-

able bishops from the soviet point of view, Metropolitan Aleksii comes second only to His Holiness Pimen, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Father Georgi Edelstein, Kostroma
Translated from *Russkaya mysl'*,
8 June 1990

New Patriarch, New Problems

So it has happened. On 10 June 1990 the newly elected patriarch sat down on the patriarchal throne in the Cathedral of the Epiphany to the singing of the majestic *Aksios*; he now bears the patriarchal cowl and staff and in all of Moscow's churches the traditional liturgical prayer 'For our most holy father Aleksii, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, we pray to you O Lord' has rung out.

Thus Patriarch Aleksii is the successor of the late Pimen and his brother of the same name, Aleksii, whom we must now call Aleksii I.

The patriarch as such, regardless of his personal qualities and defects, has a certain charisma as the first hierarch and prelate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The notorious report by Furov, deputy of the CRA, to members of the Central Committee, puts Metropolitan Aleksii in the first group of hierarchs

who in word and deed display not only loyalty but patriotism towards socialist society, strictly observing the law on cults and encouraging the parish clergy and laity to do so. They know that it is not in the interests of our state to enhance the role of religion and the church in our society and are not active in spreading the influence of

Orthodoxy among the population.

Let us not give way to false temptation and assign overriding importance to this document: it comes from a murky source and as such should hardly be trusted. Let us note one fact which in our opinion is not without significance. Paradoxically, the events of recent years in the period of *perestroika* and particularly after the millennium celebrations, lead one to the not unjustifiable conclusion that the Soviet state is showing a clear interest in enhancing the role of religion and the church in our society, in an attempt to find a way out of a crisis situation — one could liken this of course to the image of a drowning man clutching at a straw.

There is much bitter truth in the account written about Metropolitan Aleksii by Father Georgi Edelstein (*Russkaya Mysl'*, 8 June 1990), but it is unjust in our opinion to state that 'he co-operated with the godless authorities for decades in persecuting believers and the Church'.

Fr Georgi is absolutely right about one thing, however, and that is that the election was conducted in a hurry. It should have waited at least until the traditional forty day period of mourning was over. It is no coincidence that in the Orthodox

tradition of remembrance of the dead the forty days is considered to be of spiritual significance.

It seems now, however, that it is not now appropriate to mention the 'passport' speeches and declarations, which, alas, Metropolitan Aleksii could not avoid making, for example praising the Brezhnev constitution or the General Secretary himself. (We refer curious readers to his interview with state radio on 26 February 1977 and similar texts, for example, *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* Nos. 5 and 10, 1977, No. 4, 1983.)

As far as the reports which members of the Holy Synod wrote (and no doubt still write) for the Council for Religious Affairs are concerned, that is a practice which, alas, is not unique to the Soviet period, but which was common in the period of Orthodox autocracy. . .

Metropolitan Aleksii stands out because of his energy, his readiness to review his values, his ability to change and move in step with the times.

New accents appeared in a lecture entitled 'The Peace Making Activity of the Russian Orthodox Church in a Renewed Society', delivered at the Bishops' Council held at the Danilov Monastery in October 1989. In this interesting analytical lecture Metropolitan Aleksii looked at aspects of both the external activity of the Russian Orthodox Church (which had a clearly expressed political content) and internal tasks. He made the sad, if somewhat tardy, admission that 'the peace which was said to reign in the family of Soviet peoples, was guaranteed rather by external forces of restraint' i.e. that by moral perfection and spiritual life (*JMP* No. 1, 1990). Moreover, Aleksii, acknowledging the seriousness of the current situation, added,

All of our society is in a state of tension and in such an atmosphere it only takes a spark for barely

concealed hostilities, distrust and misconceptions to manifest themselves as open hatred.

We should note the particular contribution made by Metropolitan Aleksii to the work of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), of which body he was president from 1984-86 (since 1987 he has been chairman of the council and Advisory Committee of GEC). Long before *perestroika*, before the advent of so-called 'new thinking' and the now divergent phrases about the building of a common European home, Metropolitan Aleksii's speech and actions were along these lines: he called for co-operation and understanding 'in our common home, which for us is the continent of Europe'. ('In the Power of the Holy Spirit — Service to the World' Speech in October 1979, *JMP* No. 1, 1980.)

The openness of Metropolitan Aleksii's theological approach and his obvious ability to have a creative and dynamic approach to modern Christianity is also impressive. In particular his acceptance of the idea of the 'liturgy after the Liturgy', that is the idea of liturgy outwith the church, is noteworthy; Metropolitan Aleksii devotes a whole section of the above-mentioned speech to this theme, in which he states the following:

In our times Our Saviour's command to serve our neighbour (Luke 10:36-37) acquires yet another dimension unknown before the 20th century, and that is the global, human dimension. In the wide range of Christian service 'the liturgy after the Liturgy' should find its expression in our private and public efforts directed towards moral renewal . . . with the benefit of open, unprejudiced information.

One of the most important recent public pronouncements of Metropolitan Aleksii was his speech at the second session of the Congress of

People's Deputies on 22 December 1989, in which he talked about the tasks confronting the church in the cause of the spiritual renewal of society, the development of charitable activity, in the battle against the growing rate of child criminality and against crime in general, including the moral education given by priests to criminals in Soviet prisons and labour camps.

However, this speech left an unpleasant impression when the Metropolitan went on to the question of the position of the Uniates, particularly as he called upon:

the leadership of the law enforcement authorities, the leadership of the Ukrainian republic . . . to take immediate action to put a stop to illegal activity.

Such a form of expression is unfortunately unavoidable while the whole question of the independence of church from state has not been fully resolved.

Let us try to look at the newly elected patriarch from a different angle — that of ruling archbishop.

Facts show that over the past few years Metropolitan Aleksii's church activities have sharply increased. In 1988 Metropolitan Aleksii ordained 23 monks and deacons, he consecrated the Chapel of the Blessed Xenia (in the Smolensky cemetery in Petrograd), the Nikolsky side-chapel of the Church of Michael the Archangel in Oranienbaum (Lomonosov), a church in the village of Murin dedicated to the martyr Ekaterina (the ceremony was shown on the television programme 'Monitor') and got the dining room in the Leningrad Theological Academy restored.

One event of immense spiritual significance was the transfer of the holy relics of the great prince Alexander Nevsky to the Russian Orthodox Church on 3 June 1989. These relics were formerly housed in the state Museum of Religion and Athe-

ism and are now in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in the Alexander Nevsky Monastery. Metropolitan Aleksii made considerable efforts to ensure that the relics of the holy defender of the Russian soil and patron saint of St Petersburg — Petrograd were returned in the proper manner, accompanied by the ringing of bells in all the churches in Petrograd. Together with Archbishops Prokol and Lev, Metropolitan Aleksii took the ark containing the holy relics and made the sign of the cross with them over Petrograd and then towards the four corners of the world. The relics of Alexander Nevsky are indeed holy things belonging to the nation as a whole.

It seems appropriate here to express the hope that Patriarch Aleksii II will bring his influence to bear in restoring the old name to the city on the Neva — if only to mark the 250th anniversary of the St Petersburg diocese which falls in 1992. It is only with the dismantling of the personality cult associated with Lenin that true *perestroika*, the true spiritual renaissance of Russia, will begin.

Unlike Patriarch Sergi, who, generally speaking, was more inclined to denominationalism, Metropolitan Aleksii displays a positive attitude towards questions of Christian unity, understanding it to be of prime importance in attesting to the truth of Scripture. . .

By underlining the supranational character of Christianity, Metropolitan Aleksii made the correct observation that nationalism emerges in those places where national consciousness has become divorced from the Christian understanding of nationhood. Critical observations about the inadmissibility of calling people 'to seek out the bearers of ill-will' when an unenlightened individual is ready to blame an entire people even though only a few individuals actually took part in tragic events

would be an effective hidden polemic against *Pamyat'*. But here, for perfectly understandable reasons, Metropolitan Aleksii speaks in measured and careful tones, resorting to euphemism; he is similarly reticent when he talks about the primacy of universal human values over group values, avoiding calling them class values. But he was the first permanent member of the Holy Synod to state unambiguously that Christian morality had nothing in common with primitive anti-semitism (interview in *Moscow News*, 1987).

Patriarch Aleksii II is comparatively young at 61 years of age. His 60th birthday was celebrated in the Alexander Nevsky Monastery on 23 February 1989.

In conclusion I would hope that the newly elected patriarch will be a constant and faithful man of prayer and active in the campaign for the return and revival of all the monas-

teries and churches on Russian soil, that he will work for a law on freedom of conscience worthy of the grandeur of the Russian Orthodox Church and perhaps for the reparation of all past deliberate and involuntary sins — that he will secure the abolition of that terrible yoke, the Council for Religious Affairs, which still weighs heavily on the Russian Orthodox Church.

One of the most important tasks before the Patriarch is the canonisation of the new Russian martyrs and reconciliation and unity with the Russian Church Abroad. All of this will come to pass!

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*All documents translated
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