

Soviet religious plan: Vilnius for Jerusalem

One of the most important tasks of General Secretary Mikhail S. Gorbachov, in his new office as President of the Soviet Union, is to use the Russian Orthodox Church as a main instrument in both his domestic and foreign policy, a leading intelligence officer in Washington, D.C., who insists on anonymity, informed *EIR*.

A major part of this plan, according to this informant, is the intention to have the Vatican modify its interest in the Middle East, particularly on the Jerusalem question, in return for Soviet concessions to the Papacy in the Soviet bloc, particularly Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, and in Lithuania.

Cryptically stated, the informant said, the Gorbachov policy may be described as "an exchange of Jerusalem for Vilnius."

'Human Rights'

Gorbachov is known to plan the eventual rehabilitation of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the advocate of the revival of Russian power through the "reunion" of the Old Believers, the Moscow Patriarchate, and the Crown.

Because Solzhenitsyn's works include large sections describing the *gulag*, the infamous Stalin forced labor camps, there is considerable opposition to his return to Russia until most of these camps are abolished. Gorbachov anticipates that, in return for economic aid from the West, it will be necessary, in any case, to eliminate almost all of the remaining camps under the Helsinki agreements concerning human rights.

Gorbachov hopes to achieve this by the middle of 1990, in time for his accelerated initiative to influence developments in the European Economic Community and in the United States for closer economic and political ties following the further reduction of the U.S. military commitment to NATO.

In Gorbachov's plan, the head of the Soviet, that is, Russian state is to be regarded by the Orthodox Church as the Czars were revered before Peter the Great. The reemergence of the Moscow Patriarchate as co-equal with the Communist

Party in both domestic and foreign affairs is one of the cardinal principles of the Gorbachov reforms, the informant claimed.

In a secret agreement with the Russian Orthodox hierarchy, Gorbachov had asked the Russian Church to intensify its ties to the Vatican, holding out the prospect that improved Orthodox relations with Rome will result in larger freedom for the Catholic Church in Lithuania. Collaterally, with this development, the Catholic hierarchies in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland would be given greater freedoms.

Pressed by Gorbachov, in secret meetings in September and November with the Orthodox Patriarchate as part of his planned visit to the United Nations and his meeting with President Reagan and President-elect Bush, the Moscow Patriarchate undertook to launch its own program of meetings with Vatican officials.

The Russian Orthodox Church and the Vatican

At the end of 1988, just before the Gorbachov trip to the United Nations, three delegations of Russian Orthodox leaders traveled to Rome to meet with Pope John Paul II. The most notable was the meeting, on Dec. 1, 1988, between His Holiness and Archbishop Pitirim of Volokolamsk, concerning the supply by the Vatican of Bibles to the Orthodox Church.

A week earlier, during a visit of Nov. 24 by Archbishop Alexander of Dimitrov, an agreement was made to collaborate in the changes being made by the Orthodox Church in its educational program, including books on theology, in Orthodox seminaries for priests, theologians, and bishops.

The status of Jerusalem

Coincident with this activity of the Orthodox Church, the Soviet government has intensified its relations with both the Israeli government and the PLO regarding the status of Jerusalem.

In both instances, the Soviet Union has stressed that it does not consider binding that portion of U.N. Resolution 181 which called for an internationalized status for Jerusalem, making it similar in effect to the status of the United Nations in New York or the Vatican in Rome.

The Soviet Union has received an agreement from the U.S. delegation in Geneva that the United States would not insist on the internationalization of Jerusalem in return for the joint establishment by Washington and Moscow of embassies in Jerusalem.

Both the U.S. and Soviet governments have tentatively agreed that, as a consolation to the Vatican for its acquiescence in renouncing its position on Jerusalem, it would be important for the Soviets to make concessions to Rome in Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland.

The slogan both in Moscow and in Washington is, "Vilnius for Jerusalem."