

Soviet Church hails 'Slavonic Millennium'

by Luba George

The Russian Orthodox Church, in the latest issue of its *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* (No. 3, 1986), has proclaimed it the "Mission" of the Russian Empire to rule the world for the next millenium. The proclamation reads like a Slavic version of the "1,000 Year Reich" prophesy of *Mein Kampf*:

"The First Christian Millennium was Greek [Byzantine], the Second Roman-German, and the Third shall be Slavonic. Today, this is coming to pass, and we must accept this great destiny of ours."

The proclamation came in an article commemorating the 40th anniversary of the 1946 Lvov Church Council, where the Russian Orthodox Church, backed by Josef Stalin, outlawed and dissolved the Ukrainian Catholic (Uniate) Church—affiliated with the Vatican since the Union of Brest-Litovsk in 1596. Stalin's secret police murdered or imprisoned every Uniate bishop and most of the Church's priests. Of the bishops jailed, only one, the later Cardinal Slipyi, survived the Soviet concentration camps.

The roots of the Uniate Church go back to the 1439 Council of Florence, which forged the unification, albeit temporary, of the Western and Eastern Churches on the basis of the Eastern Orthodox Church accepting the *Filioque* doctrine. That doctrine, the basis of Western-Augustinian civilization, insists that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son, thereby asserting that God is present in every human being as the divine spark of Reason, representing individual Man's capacity to become God-like. Every individual has access to the Divine Reason of the Holy Spirit. To religions which serve Eastern-style Empires, the *Filioque* doctrine, representing the principle of individual human creativity, is anathema.

The Archbishop of Kiev (the Ukraine) at the time, Isidor, a Greek, played a central role in forcing the Eastern Church to accept the *Filioque*. Isidor, upon his return, was persecuted and arrested by the Muscovite authorities and the Russian Orthodox Church, who, after denouncing the Council of Florence, established the Muscovite Russian Orthodox Church as autocephalous in 1448. The Russian Orthodox Church from its inception, propagated the mystical doctrine of "Moscow, the Third Rome," according to which Moscow would

preside over a Third and Final Roman Empire.

The latest issue of the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, in conjunction with proclaiming this objective, reissued a declaration of war against Pope John Paul II.

The same article which proclaims the arrival of the "Slavonic Millennium" quotes from a letter of Dec. 12, 1980 by Moscow Patriarch Pimen to Pope John Paul II, which warned the Pontiff in no uncertain terms to "lay off" the issue of the Ukrainian Uniate Church, and accede to Stalin's 1946 re-drawing of the European East-West religious map, or else. The Pimen letter was Moscow's response to the Pope's con-voking of a Synod of Ukrainian Catholic Bishops at the Vatican from Nov. 25 to Dec. 1, 1980. The Synod, with the Pope's blessing, had declared "null and void" Stalin's 1946 Lvov Synod dissolving the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

The Patriarchate's journal, in conveying the ultimatum, slyly omitted the most extreme passages of that document in the excerpts it printed, but, the very re-stating of the Dec. 12, 1980 Pimen letter, as embodying present Russian Church policy toward the Pope, confirms that all pretenses concerning Moscow's relations with the Pope's faction at the Vatican have been dropped.

Pimen's declaration

We reprint here the crucial passages of Pimen's December 1980 document, addressed to Pope John Paul II—a primary source document of major historical importance:

"Your Holiness, we have received word of the news of the 'Synod of Ukrainian Catholic Bishops' which occurred recently with your blessing in the Vatican. . . . With deep regret and bitterness, I must conclude that the declarations by the Synod can *extinguish, in the literal sense of the word*, all the lofty rapprochement between our two Churches, which has been the result of our joint efforts during and after Vatican Council II. This declaration [by the Ukrainian Catholic Bishops] creates a *very dangerous tension* between the Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Church. . . . In light of the *annihilating consequences* which it can have for the relations between our two sister churches, one can only characterize this tension as tragic. . . .

"The content and spirit of this declaration have nothing to do with the spirit of ecumenical brotherliness. . . . Beyond that, it launches an attempt to revise and fragment the present structure of the Russian Orthodox Church. . . .

"I'm writing to your Holiness because I hope it can give us the possibility to find a way out of the *dangerous situation into which our mutual relations have plunged*. . . .

. . . Your Holiness, I consider it well my duty to inform you that as a result of this Synod declaration, a deep reaction is growing in the Russian Orthodox Church against the Church whose leader you are. . . ."

Exactly five months after that letter was issued, on May 13, 1981, shots which nearly killed John Paul II rang out in St. Peter's Square.