

## Matushka Rus and the fight to seize the holy places

by Muriel Mirak

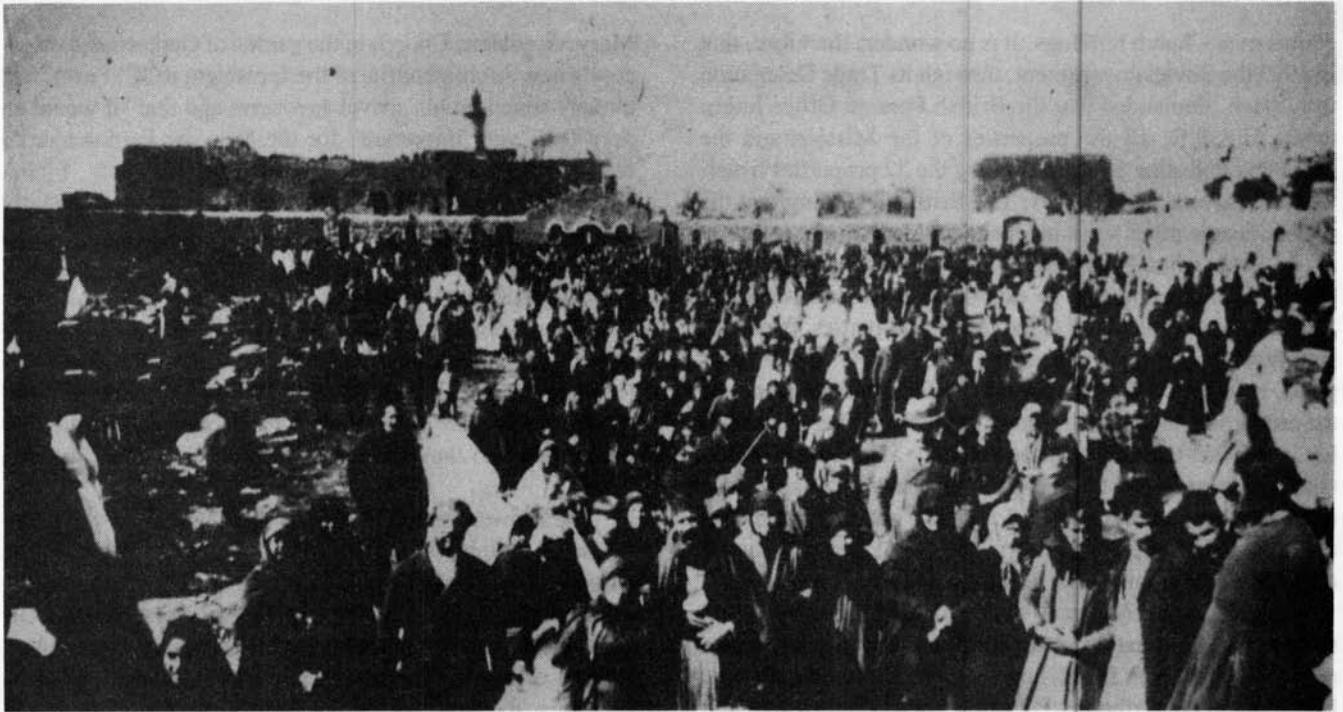
At the celebrations held in Moscow this summer, to commemorate the millennium of the alleged Christianization of Russia, the Church hierarchy, together with Gorbachov's political apparatus, made no secret of their intentions to exalt the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) as the hegemonic force within orthodoxy. From that vantage point, they further plan to make a bid for leadership over Christendom as a whole. During the Moscow celebrations, the ROC, in fact, announced it would convoke a Synod of Orthodoxy, something which, by historical right, is the prerogative of the Greek Orthodox Church. Not surprisingly, the Greeks boycotted the millennial festivities.

Then, in August, news broke in an Italian Catholic daily (*L'Avvenire*) that a secret arrangement was being worked out by Max Kampelman (of the Geneva arms reduction talks delegation) and the Soviets, whereby both superpowers would present a joint fait accompli, by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This would be done by building embassies in the city, then "opening" them more or less simultaneously. Michael Dukakis is said to have organized Democratic Party support for passage of an amendment, presented by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), providing funds for the United States' building project.

A further aspect of the Jerusalem deal, according to *Avvenire*, lies in the Russian-Israeli arrangement embedded therein. Russia would re-establish diplomatic ties with Israel, in return for the right to repossess Church properties in historic "Palestine."

Foreign Minister Peres, who started the rapprochement with the Soviets almost two years ago, and current Prime Minister Shamir, who received the ROC's Metropolitan Filaret in July, think they are engaging in "clever diplomacy." Instead, they are playing with fire, of the sort that could engulf the entire region in the flames of religious warfare.

The larger picture, of which the Soviet-Israeli rapprochement is but one piece, features, from Moscow's standpoint, an overhaul of the religious status quo in the Holy Land. Its control over the Holy Places, especially in Jerusalem, would effectively crown the hegemony which it has declared in its millennial celebra-



*Russian "pilgrims" in Jerusalem, ca. 1898. The massive influx of such travelers to the Holy Land, which peaked with 11,000 in 1900, was key to the Russian plans for political domination.*

tions. The Greek Orthodox Church, historically the first, would be pushed into second place. The Vatican's minority position in Jerusalem would be further undermined within Christianity as a whole, in that the Protestant fundamentalist sects organized around the "Temple Mount" project to raze the Al Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's principal shrines, would build up an imposing presence in Jerusalem, in tandem with their Israeli fundamentalist counterparts. The Holy Land—which should be an international site of ecumenism—would become the world capital of irrationalist cults, poised to set off religious strife leading to "Armageddon."

### **Jews in exchange for churches**

The game began last August, when an Israeli Foreign Ministry delegation met with two Soviet consular officials in Helsinki to probe the possibility of re-establishing diplomatic relations, which the Soviets had cut in 1967. The Soviet delegates requested permission to visit Israel to inspect their property, to which the Israeli acquiesced, on condition that they be permitted to visit the U.S.S.R. to inspect their property. When asked what their "property" in the U.S.S.R. consisted of, they replied, "The Soviet Jews." At that point, the negotiations broke down.

In the renewed contacts recently, Peres has upped the ante, demanding the Soviets release 30,000 Jews. The Soviets, while officially denying that any agreement has been reached, are keeping the bait of the possible emigres dangling. On the other hand, it has been confirmed that a Soviet delegation will visit Israel soon to inspect its property.

### **Who owns what in Israel**

Just what "property" do the Soviets claim to have in Israel? This is a complicated, yet fascinating question. Particularly in the nineteenth century, the ROC set up the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, acquiring extensive property including religious sites of inordinate material and spiritual value. Simultaneously, during the last century, the Orthodox Palestine Society, a government proxy organization, bought up land and holy sites. In accordance with Ottoman law, all such purchases were recorded in the Russian government's name.

When, after the 1917 revolution, the Soviet state separated formally from the ROC and nationalized its properties inside Russia, the Church beyond the national borders underwent a transformation. In 1920, Patriarch Tikhon issued a decree, together with the Holy Synod and the Supreme Church Council, granting "temporary autonomy" to the extra-territorial ROC. In the following year, that external Church declared itself the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). This entity took over the Jerusalem Mission, and was duly recognized by the British administration in Palestine. That the Church, both inside Russia and without, was never really divorced from the Russian state, became official in 1923, when the same Tikhon declared the regime no longer to be the enemy. In the 1930s, Stalin completed the formal reintegration of the ROC by granting its clergy civil rights and, in 1943, by authorizing the election of a Patriarch. Thus, by as early as 1923, the Church had been reintegrated into the state apparatus, and that apparatus wanted to secure its

claims over Church holdings. It is no wonder, therefore, that in 1923 the Soviet government, through its Trade Delegation in London, demanded that the British Foreign Office return to the U.S.S.R. all the properties of the Mission and the Orthodox Palestine Society. Among the 32 properties listed, 24 were revered Holy Places. The British, claiming that the two Russian entities were independent of the State, refused.

In 1948, when Israel gained official statehood, the Soviets were among the first to establish diplomatic relations. They demanded the return of the Church properties, this time, significantly, openly in the name of the ROC! Israel complied, recognized the ROC/Moscow Patriarchate, declared the properties “abandoned,” and handed them over. The hitch lay in the fact that much of the property Moscow wanted to take over was in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, then under Jordanian control. The Jordanian government recognized the ROCOR on its territory, and that “external” Church continued to administer the holdings.

In 1967, with the Israeli occupation of these Jordanian territories, the situation changed again. The Soviets broke relations with Israel. Israel, however, recognized the Russian Mission and the Orthodox Palestine Society, allowing them to administer their holdings, and bought back from the Russians the lands and buildings it had delivered in 1948. It therefore gained juridical possession of some properties and exerted sovereignty over the others. In 1971, Archimandrite Anthony Grabbe of the ROCOR took the Israelis to court and won a demand that all those properties, formally owned by the Mission, which had been handed over to the Soviets in 1948, be returned to the Mission.

Such is the situation currently: Virtually all of the ROC and ROCOR properties, along with those technically belonging to the Mission and the Palestine Society, are within the borders which Israel drew in the 1967 war, mainly in East Jerusalem and the West Bank cities (like Bethlehem). It is their formal status that Moscow seeks to renegotiate. Patriarch Pimen brought the question up during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1972, in talks with Israel’s Minister of Religious Affairs. Now it has become the concern of the imminent delegation. And with renegotiation, Moscow intends to bring the ROCOR back into the fold of the ROC, this time officially. When asked whether Moscow’s aim were to retake the ROCOR in time for the 1988 millennium, the new Archimandrite of the ROC/MP in Jerusalem, Pavel replied, “Yes, that would be very fine.”

Such is the situation currently . . . in talks with Israel’s Minister of Religious Affairs. Now it has become the concern of the Soviet delegation which has been in Israel for nine months. Although the ROCOR has received assurances from the Israeli government that none of its properties will be subject of bilateral negotiations, the recent trip by Metropolitan Filaret pointed precisely in that direction. After holding his own millennial celebrations there, Filaret broke all precedent, and met with leaders of the ROCOR, at the latter’s St.

Mary Magdalene Church in the garden of Gethsemane. Moscow’s new Archimandrite of the Jerusalem ROC, Pavel, had already stated on his arrival two years ago that “it would be very fine, very important” for the Moscow Patriarchate to reassert control over the wayward ROCOR. Now, Filaret entered the “exile” church’s quarters, and announced proudly that he was seeking “harmony” with the ROCOR.

### **The Jerusalem crusade**

When dealing with the intricacies of the Israeli-Russian property dispute during the last 40 years, one tends to overlook a much more fundamental and telling question: How did the Russians gain a foothold in the Holy Land in the first place? Why do they have so many churches and holy sites there?

The answer, supported by massive historical documentation, is simple. Since the 1439 Council of Florence, the Russian Church has been on a rampage to break the union, re-establish “Orthodoxy,” then proceed to take over the Orthodox camp, and, from that position, destroy the Western Church of Rome. Through this operation, which has taken centuries, the ROC would install itself in Jerusalem, in the words of Patriarch Pimen, “the Holy Church of Jerusalem—the Mother of all Churches” (*Journal of the Patriarchate*).

For imperialist Russia, Jerusalem is the “Mother Church.” In the context of the Russian policy to establish its capital as the “Third Rome,” Jerusalem is viewed as the religious shrine of the new empire.

### **The Council of Florence**

The Russian claim to Palestine was first shaped in the wake of the historic Council of Florence, where a humanist current of the Western Church had succeeded in forging a principled Union with the Churches of the Orient on the basis of the *Filioque* doctrine. It was in reaction to this historical achievement that Russia inaugurated its drive in Palestine.

The wrecking operation against the Union proceeded along two lines, the religious and the military. Within the religious realm, the Metropolitan of Kiev, who had endorsed the Union with conviction, was rebuked and ostracized on his return to Moscow in 1441. The Grand Prince Vassily ordered him arrested and put in a monastery under charges of heresy, and only with luck was he able to flee to the papal court in Siena, where he took up his work with the Unionists. Meanwhile, the other Eastern Churches which had entered the Union were persuaded to denounce it. Just a few years after the Council, in 1443 the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch (the three Patriarchates following the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople in importance) met in Jerusalem to condemn the Union. They were soon followed by all the Churches of the Byzantine rite: Tribizond, the Serbs, the Wallachians and the Georgians. This left the Greek Church dangerously isolated, and, after the death of John VIII Paleologue in 1448, tremendously weakened. The anti-Union forces, led

by Demetrius and Lukas Notaras, under the influence of the wretched Scholarius (Gennadios), moved hard and fast to pressure the new emperor, Constantine (1448-1453), to capitulate and force the Greek Church to dissociate from the Union.

### **The fall of Constantinople**

Simultaneously, the anti-Union forces were regrouping militarily, to take by force what they could not convert by persuasion. The Turks were the battering-ram which the anti-Unionist elites of Venice and Genoa prepared to throw against the Greeks.

On Dec. 12, 1452, as the basileus in Hagia Sophia, flanked by Cardinal Isidor and the Patriarch Gregory Mammias, solemnly pronounced the Union of the Greek Church with the Roman Church of Cusa, the Turkish troops were already encircling the city. They bombarded the city for six weeks, aided by the Venetian and Genoese communities in Constantinople, which rallied to the war cry of Lukas Notaras: "Better to see the turban of the Turks reign in Constantinople than the mitre of the Latins." This was an attitude which was to be embraced throughout the centuries continuing to the present, as the Orthodox repeatedly would ally with the Muslims, Druze, and other tribes, against the common enemy of Roman Catholicism.

The fall of Constantinople was not, therefore, the "fall of the Byzantine empire"; it was the defeat of the Union to which the Greek Church had adhered. After the fall, the Greek Church became a puppet of the Ottoman Sublime Porte; Mohammed II filled the Patriarchal throne (vacated by Gregory Mammias who had fled to Rome) with none other than the treacherous Gennadios, the leader of the anti-Unionists. Enthroning his new puppet, the Sultan offered Gennadios the voile and the high red hat, ceremonial vestments, a gilded silver cross, a horse and pieces of gold. He arranged for the new Patriarch to be accompanied to the Holy Apostles Church (the new seat of the Patriarch, since the Hagia Sophia had been turned into a mosque) by his court dignitaries. Although half the churches were turned into mosques, the rest were left free for worship, and the places and persons of the Greek Orthodox Church were inviolable. The clergy was even accorded tax-exempt status.

The Sultan's aim, which was to be pursued in Ottoman church policy for at least 350 years, was to make the Patriarch into a satrap, responsible for keeping the peace among all those within his purview. Thus, by imperial decree, he accorded Gennadios power over all the Christians in the empire, which meant the Orthodox as well as the Nestorians and the Monophysites. Later, the community was divided in two, with Gennadios controlling the Orthodox (Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Albanians, Wallachians, Moldavians, Ruthenes, Croats, Karamanians, Syro-Lebanese, and Arabs) and the Armenian Archbishop Hovaghim controlling the Monophysites and Nestorians (including Armenians, Syrians, Copts,

Ethiopians and Chaldeans). This system, known as the "millet" system, divided church communities into "millets" or "nations," and still exists in essence in the Muslim world today. The Sultan demanded his share of loot from the Patriarchs and from their monasteries in Athos and Mt. Sinai, and the latter exacted payment from their impoverished flocks. The Greek Orthodox also depended on substantial funds from the Russians.

The Ottomans extended their empire by conquering Syria and Palestine in 1516. After taking Egypt in 1517, the Sultan Selim I (1512-20) gave special privileges to the Patriarch of Alexandria. Constantinople exerted control over the Patriarchate of Antioch and placed Greek, rather than Arab, candidates in place as bishops of Syria and Lebanon. In Jerusalem, the Constantinople Patriarch held sway through the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre. It is said by Greek writers that, right after the fall of Constantinople, the Jerusalem Patriarch traveled to Constantinople, to request Greek Orthodox Church prerogatives in the Holy Places, which indeed were granted through the Greek-controlled Brotherhood in the religious center, the Holy Sepulchre.

Thus the Orthodox, organized in four Patriarchates (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem—in that order), were all firmly within the grip of the Sultan. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople was the head of the "Roum Orthodox" millet, "Roum" meaning Greek. As for the Christian churches and communities spread throughout the Holy Land still faithful to Rome, they found themselves divested of any power.

### **The birth of the fifth patriarchate**

In Moscow, the Russian ruling class looked on with a mixture of satisfaction and greed at what transpired in Constantinople after the fall. Rejoicing at the Turks' military and political victory and hailing it as a "divine punishment" against the Greek Church, whose leaders had committed the sin of uniting with Rome in the Florence-Ferrara councils, they reacted to the definitive fall of the "second Rome" with joy, but hastened to establish themselves as the "third Rome."

Ivan III (1462-1505) was the first to adopt the paraphernalia of the would-be emperor of the empire-to-be. Marrying the niece of the last emperor Sophie Paleologue in 1472, Ivan III adopted the symbol of the two-headed eagle of Byzantium, with St. George and the dragon. This "new Constantine," as he was called by the Metropolitan Zosima, drew architects to Moscow to build cathedrals, and officially named himself "czar" (from Caesar, emperor). As Zosima declared in 1492, "Two Romes have fallen, the third Rome will be Moscow and there will be no fourth."

The problem remained to assert this self-proclaimed authority outside of Moscow as well, to force the Ottoman-controlled Orthodox Churches, as well as Europe's national monarchs, to accept the primacy of Moscow.

Ivan IV "the Terrible" (1533-84) took significant steps in

this direction, by having himself officially crowned Czar by the Metropolitan Makary (1543-64), and by launching an ambitious canonization project which swelled the ranks of official saints. An important part of Ivan IV's policy to take over Orthodoxy involved handsome bribes. During his reign, priests, bishops and even patriarchs traveled the long way from the Ottoman Empire to Moscow in search of financial aid, which was rumored to flow bountifully.

It was during one such visit, by an emissary of the Constantinople Patriarch to Moscow, that the Metropolitan Makary demanded he convoke a synod, to confirm Ivan's claim as Czar. The next step was to force the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs to elevate the Russian Metropolitan to the authority of Patriarch. Boris Godunov (Ivan's son-in-law) officially made the proposal to the Patriarch of Antioch, Joachim, during his visit to Moscow in 1586. When Joachim hesitated, Boris opened the coffers of the state. Prelates flowed in from all over the Orthodox world, among them, the Ecumenical Patriarch himself, Jeremy Tranos, in July of 1586. Tranos tried to argue that such a momentous event as the elevation of a Patriarch would require the ruling of a synod of Greek prelates, but Boris would not take no for an answer. With threats and promises, Boris insisted that his guests would not leave Moscow until Tranos had fulfilled this request. Thus, on Jan. 21, 1589, Tranos officially consecrated the Metropolitan Job as Patriarch of Moscow. Significantly, as he created the Moscovite Patriarchate, Tranos cited the words of Philotheus of Pskov declaring the third Rome! One year later, back in Constantinople, Tranos had succeeded in establishing Moscow as the fifth Patriarchate.

From this new position within Orthodoxy, the Russian Church began its drive to move up the ladder in the hierarchy, until it would replace the Greek Church and the Constantinople Patriarch as the hegemonic figure for the Orthodox. In this process, the Moscovite Patriarchate came to assume inordinate power, as the primary instrument of Russian imperial policy.

It is known that Peter the Great, aware of the danger the Church represented for his Westernizing campaign, did all possible to stem its growing power. Crucial to this was destroying the Patriarchate as an institution, and placing the Church under top-down political control of the Czar. After Peter's death, however, it re-emerged, in the form of the Procurator of the Synod, and eventually, after centuries, was reestablished as the Patriarchate.

### **Russia, protector of all Orthodox**

The Procurator of the Synod was the imperial tool, wielded throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to gain recognition of the Russian Church's "right" to protect all orthodox believers in the Holy Land.

The first explicit statement of its right to a protectorate came in the wake of Catherine the Great's military campaign against Turkey, which led to the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca in 1774. The relevant passage of the treaty, on which Russia

was to base its claims in Palestine and Syria, read as follows in article 7:

The Sublime Porte promises constant protection to the Christian religion and to the churches of this religion. It permits the Imperial court of Russia on all occasions to make representations to the Porte, both in favor of the Church constructed in Constantinople, and in favor of those it serves, and it promises to give attention to these observations, as coming from a respected personage, and belonging to a Power which is near and sincerely friendly. (Nouradounghian, G. i. p. 323).

Russia's claim to protection over the Orthodox was further strengthened in the course of the Greek war of independence from 1821 to 1830. The Russian secret police supported the Odessa-based League of Friends (1814), made up of anti-Turkish Greeks. After the bloodbath that lasted years, taking the lives of the Greek clerical hierarchy (which led the independence drive) and massacring the remaining intellectual elite, the Turks acknowledged Greek independence. Mother Russia then stepped in to pick up the pieces: Since the Greeks, who for centuries had collaborated with the Sublime Porte as loyal satraps, had now made themselves synonymous with treachery and insurrection, the predominant role the Greek Orthodox Church had played as custodian of the Orthodox community was discredited, and the Russians were quick to capitalize on it.

But Moscow was not unopposed in its ambitions. As Russian Foreign Minister Nesselrode perceived, the French, whose claims to protect the Latin Christians in the Holy Land went back to 1535, were themselves engaged in a consistent push to outweigh the Orthodox and Russian presence. As Nesselrode put it, "We want to avoid general European interference in the Christian East and the collective protection of Christians. We believe that the protestations of brotherly love from the other European powers have ulterior motives and therefore we cannot cooperate with them." (Soob. 22 p. 21)

Nesselrode, therefore, was wary of plunging into an all-out siege against the Ottoman Empire, for fear that Russia would not be able to determine the post-dismemberment situation. He opted for a policy of keeping Turkey weak and manipulable. Meanwhile, to gain better insight into how Russian expansionist aims could be pursued in the weakened Ottoman empire without risking losing the game to Europe, the Russian Synod sent an envoy to Palestine.

The upshot of the 1838 reconnaissance mission of the Holy Synod to Palestine was that the Czar should provide special protection over the Orthodox Holy Places, and that, to fulfill that aim, a Russian Mission should be established in Jerusalem. Russia had already set up consular representatives in Aleppo, Latakia, Beirut, Sidon, and Jaffa in the 1830s. In 1839, after considering the implications of their



Mohammed II (left), after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, fills the patriarchal throne with the treacherous Gennadios, who had labored to force the Greek Church to break with the Council of Florence. From Moscow, the Russian ruling class looked on these events with a mixture of satisfaction and greed.

envoy's findings, they transferred their Jaffa consulate to Beirut, and named it the Russian Consulate of Syria and Palestine. Their Consul Vasili projected such a high profile that the Europeans were immediately suspicious. As the British Consul Young wrote in a letter to Palmerston in April 1840:

The Russian Consul from Beirut has been up at the Easter ceremonies. His presence gave a character to the Greek and Armenian ceremonies. He appeared in his uniform and was attended by the Russian pilgrims, many of them old soldiers in their regimentals. . . . *The pilgrims from Russia have been heard to speak openly of the period when this country will be under the Russian government.* (emphasis added)

And four years later, the same British Consul wrote, "Jerusalem is now become the central point of interest to France and Russia. . . . It is no doubt the object of Russia to subjugate the primitive churches of these countries."

Russia felt pressed to act quickly, for the influence of France was being felt throughout the area. Beginning in 1840, the Catholic converts were on the rise, and the French, by setting up schools and educating the population, were making significant inroads among the Catholics, Maronites, and Lebanese, over whom they held a religious protectorate.

### Porfiry Uspensky

Until this point, Russia had exercised its prerogatives in the Ottoman Empire through Great Power politics, from a distance. Their actual presence in the area, was limited to consular offices. After 1840, they shifted tactics, and began to use Church personalities to build up an on-the-ground

presence.

It began in 1841, when the Procurator Protasov proposed sending a Russian Orthodox Archimandrite, accompanied by a couple of monks, to Jerusalem to build a school and monastery for Greek and Russian nationals. Nesselrode accepted the proposal and recommended that Archimandrite Porfiry be sent as an agent, to contact the Arab clergy and lay the basis for a more effective Russian intervention.

Porfiry, born Konstantin Aleksandrovich Uspensky, had studied at the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy and taught at Odessa. Described as a rash "eccentric of peculiar propensities," Porfiry was the first Russian Church leader to penetrate Palestine. That his mission was not purely spiritual, was made clear in the briefing he received from the Foreign Ministry's Asiatic Department before departing:

Perform faithfully the duties of a pilgrim. Do not surround yourself with any mystery but do not on any account reveal you have been sent by the government. Try to gain the trust and love of the eastern Clergy . . . and try to discover their real demands, and the aims, successes and spirit of the Catholics, Armenians and Protestants. Do not commit yourself in any way. Your main task is to collect information. (Porfiry, Diary)

Porfiry performed the task of an intelligence agent, contacting every important church representative in the region, including the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Constantinople, Antioch, and the local priests throughout Palestine and Syria. When in Beirut, he already noted in his diary that the Orthodox Church was in terrible decay and, attributing the fault to the Greek hierarchy, pledged to expose it: "I am an

axe lying at the roots of a rotten tree.” His aim was to lobby for the advancement of the Arabs against the Greeks.

When, in 1844, the frocked Russian agent reported back to Titov of the Foreign Ministry, through Constantinople, he stressed the conflict which certainly did exist between the corrupt, lax Greek hierarchy and the illiterate, poor Arab clergy. The other point he drove home to the government authorities was that the French were making inroads, particularly among the Uniates, and that the Anglicans were also on the move. Porfiry’s concrete proposal was that a Russian Mission be established in Jerusalem. After a year’s sojourn in the monasteries of Sinai and Athos, the intelligence centers of the Church, Porfiry reached St. Petersburg in October 1845. Once there, he added that he thought an Arab, not a Greek, should be elected the next Patriarch of Antioch.

From Porfiry’s reports, it is clear that Russian strategy would be shaped around promoting the Arabs against the Greeks, on condition that the Arab Orthodox obey Russia. Furthermore, Russia would seek to break the several Orthodox Churches away from the Greeks, foster their autocephaly, and then bring them into the Russian fold. This latter policy would be applied not only to those Orthodox once controlled under the Constantinople Patriarch, but also the so-called Monophysites, as will be seen in an account of Porfiry’s activities in the Holy Land.

Key to fulfilling such desires, was an institutionalized religious presence in the Holy Land. With Nesselrode’s support, Porfiry’s proposal for a mission was accepted by the Czar, and Porfiry himself was chosen to head the small delegation to break ground.

### **Porfiry and the non-Chalcedonian churches**

Simultaneous to his efforts to exert Russian hegemony within Orthodoxy, Porfiry was busily engaged in co-opting the non-Chalcedonian Churches as well, to bring the Armenians, the Copts, and the Ethiopians into union with Russia. Such a reunion would not only allow Russia to extend its territorial sway into Egypt and Africa, but also consolidate its control over the crucial Holy Places, in which the non-Chalcedonian Churches had exercised certain traditional rights.

Porfiry’s diary provides the frankest testimony to Russia’s ambitions. He wrote, “Russia from eternity has been ordained to illumine Asia and to unite all Slavs. There will be a union of all Slav races with Armenia, Syria, Arabia and Ethiopia and they will all praise God in Hagia Sophia.” (*Uspenski Kniga*. iii p. 588). The idea for this reunion went back to “the time when he was the Rector of the Theological Seminary in Odessa.” (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, p. 57) Once in the Holy Land, he met with the Armenian Bishop Nerses (later the Supreme Catholicos of All Armenians, from 1843-57), as well as with other leaders of the Armenian Church. He used documents which he had unearthed at the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos, concern-

ing twelfth century attempts to unite the Armenians and the Orthodox, to further his cause. In 1848, he met in Constantinople with the Armenian Patriarch Gregory, and informed him of his finds on Mount Athos. The relevant documents, he said, showed that the Armenian Patriarch Nerses of Echmiadzin had agreed to accept orthodoxy in the 12th century. Porfiry further informed him that the accounts had been translated into Russian and published in 1847. Porfiry expounded on his theological studies, which allegedly showed that the only reason the Armenians had split from the Orthodox was that their Church representatives had been prevented (by the Persians) from attending the Third Ecumenical Council (which condemned Nestorianism) and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. Despite their absence, Porfiry maintained, the Armenians had no principled theological distinction from the Orthodox. Any conceptual distinctions in the view of the Godhead and Christ could be attributed to “faulty translations.”

Porfiry visited Cairo in 1860 and met with the Armenian Bishop Gabriel. As he records in his diary:

The Armenian bishop in reply to my question as to the number of his flock in Cairo (1,200) and Alexandria (much less) mentioned that the Copts and Armenians in Egypt had joined hands to stand firmly against the attacks of the Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Porfiry seized upon this comment, to lay his cards on the table:

“And amicably renew union with us,” I put in, “for we do not consider you heretics.” Here, by the way, I told him that I had published a book in which I explain that the Armenians and Copts confess the same Faith as we do and that they are our brothers in the Lord. (*JMP*, p.60)

Porfiry reported to his interlocutor that, due to his publishing efforts, the Holy Synod and the entire ROC had recognized the Copts as “brothers.” He deepened his contacts with the Copts in Cairo in the following years, indefatigably researching its history to “prove” that there were no significant doctrinal differences which could justify its separation from Orthodoxy. By 1853, he had succeeded in having a “bosom friend” of his elected as Patriarch of that Church, and in 1860, recorded in his diary, “It is time to see the Coptic Patriarch Cyril and begin talks with him on a covert or overt reunion of the Orthodox Church with him and all his flock.” (*Ibid.*, p. 62). Unfortunately for Porfiry, his friend Cyril died before the reunion could take place. Furthermore, the Russian diplomatic corps in the region, in his view, did not grasp the importance of religion and its influence on politics:

If one should ask any of our diplomats, whether chief or subordinate, in St. Petersburg, Constantino-

ple, Beirut or Cairo, about these principles, faith, and doctrines; about the political weight of Nestorians, Jacobites, Copts, Yazidis, Kurds, Ansaries, Druzes, he would most likely waste his questions. (*Ibid.*, p. 64)

And, precisely due to this ignorance on the part of the politicians, the Copts in Egypt were alienated from the Russians. Porfiry complained bitterly of what had been lost:

To what has this error led? The head of the Copts in Egypt with five million Christians in Abyssinia and Shoa, would have come to the bosom of the Russian Church, but he was repulsed from her in Cairo as an infectious, uninvestigated, unknown and incomprehensible ulcer. (*Ibid.*, p. 64)

Porfiry's efforts continued undaunted, and broadened to include study of the history and liturgy of the Ethiopian Church. During his frequent visits to Athos and Sinai, he sought proof, in documents and icons of the identity between the Ethiopian Church and the Russian. He even proposed that the Sinai Monastery be used as "a cloister for establishing a school for preachers, who could revive Orthodoxy in Egypt, Abyssinia and further on. . . ." He published several tracts laying the basis for rapprochement with the Ethiopians, and was extremely sensitive to what he termed "the aspiration for autocephaly . . . dawning in the Ethiopian Church."

## The Crimean War

Although the chronicle of Porfiry's "ecumenical" efforts may read innocently enough, the outbreak of the Crimean War dramatizes the great power conflict that was maturing as a result of this relatively small-scale Russian intervention. As if to confirm Porfiry's thesis that religion was the key factor in the politics of the region, the real background to the Crimean War documents that it all arose, initially, out of strife over control of the Holy Places.

In 1847, the silver star, which had been placed to designate the spot in the Grotto of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, where Christ was born, disappeared, along with the Latin inscription identifying it. The Latins, supported by the French, accused the Greek Orthodox of having removed it. The French demanded that the Sultan assign them exclusive rights to the Church of the Nativity and to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as well. The Sultan issued a firman reasserting the joint possession of the keys to the Church (on the part of the Greeks, the Armenians, and the Latins), but the Jerusalem governor refused to read the firman. Each foreign power demanded supremacy. Russia seized the occasion to put forth its demand for special rights over the Holy Places, as well as to reassert its right to a protectorate over the Orthodox throughout the Ottoman Empire. Although the Turkish authorities placed a new star in the Grotto, the conflict was far from solved. Russia demanded special privileges for the

damage done, and when the Sultan refused, the Russians invaded the Danubian province, opening war against Turkey. Thus began the Crimean War.

To the entire religious community in the Holy Land, it was clear that Russia saw the war as a kind of crusade, aimed at taking the Holy Places; Russian soldiers, marching through Armenia, were overheard to be asking directions, "Which way to Jerusalem?" and the Jerusalem population did not hide its fear that the Russians were coming. Russian apologists were explicit on this point:

Russia's name has been made known throughout every country by her statesmen and politicians. It is quite different in Palestine *which is our native land and in which we do not recognize ourselves as foreigners*. The Participation of Russia in the affairs of Palestine and the Christian East has not been the result of temporary and transient political factors but from the beginning has been an affair of the people, *who instinctively and enthusiastically claimed the Holy Land as their own just as much as Holy Russia.*" (M.P. Solovyov. Soob. 5.p.286)

Russia did not win the concessions it demanded in the Treaty of Paris (1856); nor did it relinquish its pretensions to hegemony. The policy thrust remained unaltered, but the form changed. The end of the Crimean War coincided with a change in the Russian leadership; after Czar Nicholas I's death, Alexander II took power in 1855 and, a year later, Gorchakov replaced Nesselrode at the Foreign Ministry. At the same time, Protasov died and Count A.P.Tolstoy replaced him as Procurator of the Holy Synod.

This new guard, in the wake of their Crimean failure, plotted a new strategy for taking Palestine and Syria. What emerged was a two-track policy, one religious and the other secular.

The Foreign Ministry, in a report issued in 1857, identified the political problem in the Middle East to be the cause of Europe, not of Turkey. The aim therefore was to move in, not politically, but under the cover of the ROC; it was recommended to send a Bishop of the ROC to Jerusalem. As the report stated, "*Jerusalem is the center of the world and our mission must be there.*" (emphasis added)

The religious intervention, backed by the Czar, appointed Cyril Naumov (1823-66) to become the Russian Orthodox Bishop of Melitopol "in" Jerusalem (but not "of" Jerusalem, to avoid antagonizing the Greeks). Cyril was instructed by the Foreign Ministry and Synod to cultivate good relations with everyone and to arrange to have an Arab elected Bishop of Jerusalem.

As Cyril set out for his mission as the first Russian Bishop to the Arab world, the Grand Duke Constantine pursued his own, second, commercial track. Constantine's plan was to use the Russian Company of Steam Navigation and Trade, which had been founded in 1856; to take over the pilgrim



traffic to the Holy Land, which the French and Austrians had controlled up until that time. The Grand Duke sent his agent, the commercial envoy Mansurov, to Palestine in 1857, to assess the situation. Mansurov reported the situation to be critical, because of the French, as well as English, American, and Italian proselytizing, which was converting masses to the hated Catholic religion. Mansurov's proposal was to set up a non-governmental, "private" company to help pilgrims set up a consulate, hospitals, churches, hostels, and a mission, all in one compound. Mansurov explained, it was "necessary to introduce our intervention in the East in such a non-political manner as to disarm our opponents and abandon for the time being thoughts of political and religious propaganda." (Dmitrievski, p. 19) Porfiry supported the plan with enthusiasm: "Orthodoxy will triumph eventually. Constantinople will be ours. We must have . . . our representatives throughout the Arab East. We must have the shipping company, consuls and large amounts of money. All these are necessary to support and uplift Orthodoxy. Everything else is a half-measure." (*Diary*, December 1857)

The upshot of this discussion process was the Palestinian Committee, presided over by the Grand Duke Constantine himself, and directed by Mansurov. To finance the venture, the Church was mobilized in 1859, and by 1864 had collected one million rubles from the Russian church-going population, to buy up land. Mansurov bought mainly in Jerusalem: Outside the walls, he bought a piece of land for the mission complex; inside the walls, he purchased a plot next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and also bought land on the Mount of Olives. Thus, by 1863, the Russians could boast their own Mission house, hospital and hostel all together in one compound. This rendered them completely independent of the Greeks for the first time.

Once the Committee had established itself, the Russians began in earnest to extend hegemony over the region. The ideological arm they wielded was Panslavism; the main warrior, Count Ignatiev (1832-1908), who directed the Asiatic Department of the Foreign Ministry from 1861 to 1864.

Ignatiev's dream was to push Russian expansionism to include all of Palestine, and he was fanatically determined that Russia should take the strategically located and religiously important Constantinople, gateway to the Straits. Control over the Straits had whetted Russia's military appetite since at least the time of Catherine the Great. By the nineteenth century, the area stretching from the Dardenelles to the Sea of Marmora and through the Bosphorus, was the gateway for Russia's immense Ukrainian grain trade. A full 60 percent of Russia's outborne trade went through the Straits. Control over Constantinople meant control over the Straits, as Napoleon had already realized. (When told of the prospective Russian takeover, he had screamed, "Constantinople! Never! That means the empire of the world!")

Which is precisely what Ignatiev dreamed of. He was prepared to foment Arab upsurges against the Ottoman Em-

pire to further its crumbling, and posited the principle of decentralization or "local control" for Christian sects, against the centralizing thrust of the Catholic French. He also campaigned and intrigued to detach the Bulgarian Church, making it autocephalous, in keeping with Russian policy throughout the century.

The European powers were not pleased. Fully aware of what Russian designs for the region were, the French, who jealously fulfilled their role as protector of the Catholics in the Holy Land, made demonstrative actions. In 1869, the French Empress Eugenie visited Egypt, on the occasion of the opening of the Suez Canal, and demanded that the Porte grant concessions for the Christians loyal to Rome. Archbishop Antonin Kapustin, Ignatiev's agent in the Church, made clear that he opposed concessions to "the Catholics, that is the French." Franz Josef of the Austrian Empire and Prince Albert joined in the protest. But Ignatiev had the Sultan's ear, and succeeded in nullifying any and all promises that the Ottoman leader had made to the West European powers. "The Franciscans are receiving only the smallest part of what they wanted," he gloated, "and (the Austrian ambassador and even the French) are very disgruntled that I smelled out the secret affair before they succeeded in obtaining firmans for the Catholics and that I opened the eyes of the foolish Turks who were about to let a wolf into the sheepfold." (Letter, 4 March 1870, in Dmitrievski, *Ignatiev*, p. 72).

Ignatiev's agent Antonin, meanwhile, continued buying land. Using private funds, and utilizing Ottoman subjects as cover names for the land purchases (to outflank imperial bans on sales), he concentrated one million rubles' worth of land in Russian hands. Among the plots bought up were Bait Jala near Bethlehem (where schools were built for Arab girls), 'Ain Karim, the Byzantine Church of the Ascension, the bell tower on the Mount of Olives and a church in Jaffa.

Ignatiev's power over the Ottoman court was no secret; it was a diplomatic, political fact. In 1864, he himself assumed the post of Envoy at the Porte, a position he was to occupy until 1867, when he was to become the first Russian Ambassador to the Porte. In his years in Constantinople, he was to exert such overwhelming influence over the Sultan that the Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim was dubbed with the Russian-sounding nicknames "Mahmudov" and "Nedimov!"

## **The Russo-Turkish War of 1877**

Between 1875 and 1877, the Russians used their persuasion with the Sultan, pushing him to accept Constantinople as a free city, enjoying Russian protection, and forwarding the claim that the "Christian" states of European Turkey should be granted independence. Ignatiev was reportedly willing to cede Syria to France and Egypt to Britain. When the Sultan did not oblige, Russia declared war on Turkey in 1877. The Treaty of San Stefano foresaw a greater Bulgaria de facto under Russian control, which the European partners

balked at. They therefore convened the Congress of Berlin, a farcical repetition of the Congress of Vienna and worked out the terms of division of that part of the world. The result was that Montenegro, Serbia, and Romania gained independence. Russia gained control over Bessarabia and a part of the Caucasus (Armenian province), but Bulgaria, which Russia had coveted, was split up into bits and pieces.

The Berlin Congress settlement predictably infuriated the Panslavs of Ignatiev's camp, and Ignatiev himself, defeated, was dismissed. In the wake of the Russian debacle at the Congress of Berlin, the fate of the Palestine Committee and its successor organization, the Palestine Commission, were to undergo further mutations, as a shift in policy was effected in Russia.

After the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881, came Alexander III, a convinced autocrat who held supremacy in the Holy Land to be of paramount importance. Like his predecessors, he had his eye on the Straits; in a letter to General Obruchev in 1885, he made clear his determination to prevail in Constantinople: "In my opinion," he wrote, "we ought to have one principal aim, the occupation of Constantinople, so that we may maintain ourselves once and for all at the Straits and know they will remain in our hands. That is in the interests of Russia and ought to be our aspiration." (*Krasny Arkhiv*, 46, p. 181)

Under Alexander III, a new impetus was given Russian pretensions in the region, and the religious question again provided the cover for a massive intervention. After Vassily Nikolaevich Khitrovo, a collaborator of Porfiry's, had returned from an 1871 trip to Palestine with the report that Orthodoxy was untended, he proposed the foundation of a lay society to protect and further the cause of Orthodoxy. His proposal was welcomed by the new Czar Alexander III, by Foreign Minister Nikolai Karlovich de Giers (1882-95) and by the key individual in the late nineteenth-century Panslavism drive, the racist Procurator Pobedonostsev (1880-1905).

What they hatched was to be called the Council of the Orthodox Palestine Society, a private body which was not responsible to the Foreign Ministry or to the Synod officially, but which enjoyed the official patronage of the Czar. Presiding over the new body was the Grand Duke Sergei. Significantly, the new Society stressed that it was not interested in "race" (i.e. Slavs per se) but in religion, and thus that it regarded the Arabs in Palestine as "Orthodox brothers." Its motto made clear its intentions: "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest" (Isaiah 62).

The Orthodox Palestine Society went far beyond any previous Czarist scheme for Palestinian hegemony in that it recruited top names of the Russian elite, while at the same time broadening its base as a mass organization in Russia among the faithful. Working together with the Russian Mission in Jerusalem and the Consulate in Palestine, it went through the motions of setting up schools, hospitals, hostels,

and providing conveniences for pilgrims as well as the local population. On its roster, it boasted the names of the Imperial family, Ignatiev, the ubiquitous Mansurov, Porfiry, Antonin, and Leonid. The fanatic racist Pobedonostsev served as its secretary from 1889 until his death. Membership rolls swelled among the masses in Russia, who were being filled with accounts of the Society's good works in the Holy Land. In 1885, the first branches were founded in the empire. By 1896, 20 branches had sprung up, and five years later, there were 43 groups, who would meet and read about the Holy Land. It is estimated that 5 million people in Russia were involved in this process, an estimate which is supported by the fact that these pious souls were donating 1,300 million rubles for the enterprise, no small sum for the time. By 1905, 5,000 million rubles were made available to the Society through Russian Orthodox Church offerings and a government loan. The new Society proved its strength when, in 1889, the old Palestine Commission was closed and taken over by the Palestine Society. The Society devoted significant resources to building up its physical presence in the area, and erected a number of churches in this period, including the Church of Gethsemane (in memory of Czarina Marya Alexandrovna), the Russki Dom near the Holy Sepulchre, and the Church of Alexander Nevsky. These moves, though apparently architectural, were eminently political, and the Greek Church, which opposed the channeling of funds through the Society, saw the construction efforts, particularly within the old city walls of Jerusalem near the Holy Sepulchre, as a move to take over that crucial site. The late nineteenth-century developments in building, under Alexander III and later Nicholas II, were accompanied by a massive influx of Russian "pilgrims" to the Holy Land, which peaked in 1900 with 11,000 arriving in Palestine.

This was the same period in which Pobedonostsev was promoting Zionism, deporting large numbers of Russian Jews to Palestine.

Late in the century, the Society was making an extraordinary push for domination, underlined by its assuming control over the Jerusalem Mission in 1896. The French, who were struggling to maintain their presence as an assurance for the Roman Catholic community, had no difficulty in identifying the Society's aims, though they were less successful in thwarting them. Writing in the publications of the Augustinians of the Assumption, M. Deplaisan wrote in the *Echos d'Orient*, "Supported by the consuls in Syria, by the ambassador in Constantinople, by the government in St. Petersburg, it [the Society] has established itself as an instrument of conquest put into action with a purely political aim, by the men of state who dress up in the robes of religious zeal!" (*Echos d'Orient*, iv, 1901, p. 205). The British were no less anxious at what they saw to be an ambitious drive by the Russians, among other things, to infuse the native Russian population with the crusader's zeal to protect the Holy Land.

## Zionism

The deal among the great powers to sort out power relations in the region, was struck through the secret diplomacy during the first World War break-up of the Ottoman Empire. The name of this game was Zionism.

Britain had supported the Zionist idea already in the mid-nineteenth century, when Palmerston envisaged a British protectorate for the Jews parallel to the Russians' protectorate over the Orthodox. By 1914, a Zionist grouping favoring the British annexation of Palestine and the creation of a Jewish state, had formed within the British elite, including Herbert Samuel and Lloyd George. As Asquith noted in his diary, March 13, 1915,

. . . the only other partisan of this proposal is Lloyd George, who I need not say does not care a damn about the Jews or their past or their future, but thinks it will be an outrage to let the Holy Places pass into the possession or under the protectorate of "agnostic, atheistic France."

Lloyd George had been won over to the Zionist cause by the Russian-born British citizen Weizmann, who worked under him at the Munitions Ministry and War Ministry, producing explosives for the British during the war. In 1925, Lloyd George was to comment, "Acetone converted me to Zionism." George, Samuel, Weizmann, and *Manchester Guardian* editor C.P. Scott had determined by November 1915, that if they could satisfy the French with Syria, then they could make a deal with the Russians who would prefer to have the Protestant British hold the Holy Places, rather than the Catholics. Poincaré, too, showed in a diary entry, that he realized Russia would never agree to a Roman Catholic protectorate over "Jerusalem, Galilee, the Jordan and Lake Tiberias." And they were right. The Russians wanted to keep the Vatican and their allies, the French, out, and were prepared to make a deal with the British in this direction, using the creation of a Jewish state.

The British clinched the Sykes-Picot Treaty in 1916, after consulting with the Russians, who agreed, on condition that the ROC and its establishments be given guarantees; specifically, they wanted an international regime to govern those parts of Palestine where the Orthodox institutions were located. The Russians, through Sazonov, voiced no objection to the idea of Jewish colonists.

That the Russians were an integral part of the British project for a Zionist state, is clear in the diplomacy of the anti-Semite-turned-Zionist, Mark Sykes. Like Lloyd George, for whom he worked in the War cabinet, Sykes embraced the notion that the Zionists could be used, not only to contain the Russians, but to thwart the Germans in post-1908 Turkey. He took this notion so far as to denounce the "Semitic anti-Zionists" as "undisguised pro-Turco-Germans . . . Rus-sophobe pro-Turks who have become pro-Germans and are

now definitely fixed in that camp." (Sledm., No. 59, July 29, 1917, cit. in Stein, p. 276). After producing the draft of the Sykes-Picot Treaty, Sykes traveled to Petrograd; although the actual nature of his talks there is not known, immediately after his return in April 1916, he presented some "new ideas" on Palestine: a French-British condominium and a Charter to the Zionists with English guarantees. Apparently this is what Sykes negotiated with the Russians.

It was after this trip that Sykes threw himself into the Zionist campaign. The Chief Rabbi of the Sephardic congregations in England, Gaster, referred to Sykes's diplomacy in his diary (May 2, 1916):

[Sykes] had seen Sazanov and whom he has won over to Zionist problem. . . . After long wrangle got his French colleague, George Picot, to see the point of Jewish help. He first dead against. Then agreed condominium. I put the case clearly. Warned him against the French. . . . Wants me to influence the Daily Telegraph and then to work on America. I advise fait accompli. He answers to occupy Jerusalem—I, not by Jews, but by English soldiers. . . .

Despite Gaster's warning against France, it was already clear in Sykes's first writings on Zionism, dating from June 1916, that his primary concern was to stop German influence. Contemplating the possibility that Turkey might come out of the war firmly anchored to Germany, he writes that this would give Germany "an international pawn in Palestine, which gives her a hold at once over the Zionists, the Papacy and the Orthodox" (Sledmere papers, No. 14, June 20, 1916, cit. by Stein, p. 280). That "pawn" the British wanted.

By 1916 the stage was set. The Zionists working in Europe had been organizing British support for their design for a Jewish state. The British used the Zionist movement to forward their ambitions in Palestine, by supporting the idea of a Jewish state which they would control. The Russians, who had produced the Zionist movement in the end of the last century, were in full accord, as long as their interests in Orthodoxy were defended.

Thus, in December 1916, the British government went through the motions of a "crisis" which put a totally "Zionist" Round Table cabinet in: Lloyd George as prime minister, Balfour at the Foreign Office, assisted by Lord Cecil (who described himself as "a Zionist by passionate conviction"), and Milner in the War Cabinet. The concept of a British Protectorate in Palestine was then officially launched in the new cabinet's literary organ, "The Round Table," signaling policy agreement on the option.

The British invasion of Palestine in spring 1917, which Lloyd George liked to refer to as "the one really interesting part of the war," was the military vehicle through which the protectorate would be established. It was meticulously or-

chestrated. Sykes had told Weizmann that the Zionists “should be prepared . . . to have men on the spot, when the English entered Jerusalem, so as to take effective part in the administration of at least the Jewish section of the population” (Gaster’s Diary, January 30, 1917). The Zionists stationed there would then speak out in favor of a British protectorate, as Lloyd George instructed Weizmann to arrange in April. With exquisite timing, on the same day Allenby captured Beersheba, the War Cabinet approved the Balfour Declaration, which pledged British government support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

As for the other powers involved in the accord, they were duly informed of British intentions. As Lloyd George had said, “the French will have to accept our protectorate; we shall be there by conquest and shall remain.” Sykes simply told his colleague Picot to break the news to the French government that the Jews preferred a British protectorate to any joint French-British condominium. At the 1920 London conference, the French fought for some special consideration of the Holy Places, on the grounds that they “had been in the hands of the French since the fifteenth century” and that “the Vatican had always recognized that fact.” But Lloyd George refused, he said, “to create an empire within an empire.” The French, in other words, were out.

The Russians, following the outbreak of the British-instigated revolution, drifted out of the war and did not contest the British occupation of Palestine. Britain recognized the ROCOR shortly after it was formed in 1921. Inside Russia, after the revolution, the Zionists were released from the religious restrictions imposed under the czar.

As for the Roman Church, it was not pleased. Nachum Sokolow, Weizmann’s senior in the Zionist movement in London, traveled to Italy to try to garner Vatican support for the Jewish state contemplated in the Balfour Declaration. Although Msgr. Pacelli (later to become Pope Pius XII) said he did not object to British patronage, he made clear that the Zionists would have to steer clear of the Holy Places. The Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Gasparri stressed the importance of the Holy Places so much that Sokolow later reported, “I felt a chill in my bones.” The Vatican wanted to assure its position in the Holy Places, particularly in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and surroundings, Tiberias, and Jericho. When Sokolow met the Pope, Benedict XV, he assured him that the Zionists had no designs on the Holy Places, to which His Holiness replied with good wishes for the Jewish home. The Vatican’s hope was that, with the Russian revolution, the Orthodox in the Holy Land might be open to a reconciliation with Rome. When the Pope’s statement of good wishes was, however, presented at the next Zionist Congress, as “proof” that the Vatican was supporting Zionism, the Church answered, in no uncertain terms. In the publication *The Tablet* in 1919, the Vatican officially

registered its opposition, and followed this with a memo to the League of Nations in 1922 protesting the Balfour Declaration.

### **The ROC’s final bid for Palestine**

During the period of the British Mandate in Palestine until the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, the Russian Orthodox Church, formally reintegrated into the Soviet state, continued its drive for hegemony within Orthodoxy. Already, the election of the Patriarch, sanctioned by Stalin in 1943, had involved the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, delegates of those of Jerusalem and Constantinople, and the Catholicos of Georgia, who had formed the Council for the election.

The carve-up of Europe effected at war’s end was complemented by the re-alignment within Orthodoxy. The Syrian Church (Antioch) was fully within Moscow’s fold; other Orthodox Churches which defined themselves in relation not to Constantinople, but Moscow, included the Bulgarian autocephalous church, the Georgian, the Polish Orthodox, the Albanian, and the Romanian. The only major church which remained strong and outside Moscow’s control was the Greek Orthodox Church. It has been only through the good graces of Soviet-puppet Andreas Papandreu that the ROC has come closer to its goal of replacing the Greek Church especially in the Holy Land. Papandreu’s takeover of Church properties in Greece two years ago may presage his extending control over the GOC holdings in Jerusalem. The seizing of Greek lands has already led to a crisis in the GOC, which is contemplating renouncing its independence, to re-align with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. Once having given up its independence, it would have little power to counter ROC ambitions in the Holy Places now located in Israel.

To understand what is going on in the minds of the Russian leadership in the ongoing negotiations with Israel, one must reflect on the lessons of this sad history. And to grasp what concept will inform the approach of the ROC in its dealings with the Orthodox Church—and the Vatican—one has only to read what the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate (JMP)* wrote in a recent feature article dedicated to the infamous Porfiry:

And today when the Russian Orthodox Church is on the threshold of great jubilee—the millennium of the Baptism of Russ, one would like to express the hope that the ecumenical expectations of Bishop Porfiry Uspensky, though in another form, the one with a firm theological foundation, and with the inevitable difficulties that arise during a dialogue taken into consideration, will in time be crowned with a steady advancement to the blessed goal: That they may all be one (Jn. 17, 21). It can be stated with full conviction that the works of the scholarly hierarch of the 19th century may prove to be very useful for modern ecumenical dialogue. (*JMP*, 1985)