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On the Cancellation of the June 1997 Meeting of the Pope of Rome
and the Patriarch of Moscow

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THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH: FORWARD INTO THE PAST?:

On the Cancellation of the June 1997 Meeting of the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Moscow

Ralph Della Cava

SUMMARY

This Report explores the 10 June 1997 decision of the Holy Synod, the powerful interim governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church, to cancel an historic meeting scheduled for later that month between the Pope of Rome and Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia; it also examines the differing explanations offered for that decision and the background to the continuing misunderstandings between the two confessions.

June, 1997 may go down on record as the month and year when the Russian Orthodox Church, claimant of the loyalty of upwards of some 100 million nominal believers in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus alone, took two decisive steps forward -- back into its past!

That past, marked by both an abiding suspicion of other world faiths and a territorially-based ecclesiastical monopoly buttressed by, if not subordinate to, state power, would now seem -- after seven tempering years of religious liberty -- to be in the throes of a full-fledged return.

The first step in this apparent about-face was the Russian Church's last-minute cancellation on the tenth of June of what would have been an historic encounter outside Vienna-- the first since the founding of Christianity among the Slavs a millennium ago -- between a Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and a Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, Pope John Paul II, as Patriarch of the West, a title conferred on his predecessors by a once undivided Christianity, would have in effect met Patriarch Aleksiy II, his Russian Orthodox confrere, on the virtually common ground of ecclesiastical co-equality.

The second step backwards was inarguably the tacit acceptance by the Moscow Patriarchate (over which Aleksiy II presides) of a bill that it has long sought and had for better than three years helped fashion. Approved by a 337 to 5 vote of the Duma on the eighteenth of June, the measure could not only severely limit freedom of conscience and religion throughout Russia, but also invest Orthodoxy with privileges denied all other faiths.

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At issue in the remarks which follow is not how both these steps will play themselves out in the coming days and months. Indeed, it is possible to imagine scenarios of quite opposite extremes. The optimistic one posits that the two aging and ailing patriarchs will find it within their failing powers to reschedule the long-sought meeting sometime in the near future. Each has affirmed his

But, a pessimistic scenario is equally conceivable -- and at this moment anticipated by several well-placed observers in Moscow. On the one side, moderate leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) may prove unable to beat back mounting offensives by ultra-nationalist clerics who denounce any act of ecumenism a heresy and a meeting of the Patriarch with a "Polish" pope an outrage against Russian patriotism. On the other, they may also prove unwilling -- should the proposed restrictions become law -- to stand up for the rights of other confessions. In fact, in the recent past, they have repeatedly and publicly labeled several religious bodies as destructive "sects" and "cults" and just as frequently condemned them for unfairly "proselytizing" on Russian soil, considered an exclusively "Orthodox domain."

Which of these alternatives or what mix of the two emerges will become clearer over the coming weeks and months. For now it may be useful to explore the dramatically changing circumstances that have lead to the present state of affairs. In this text, only the issue of the Pope's and Patriarch's meeting is dealt with. A separate essay will take up the circumstances behind the "new law" curtailing religious liberty.

Of the two issues, the encounter of pope and patriarch stands the better chance of being salvaged. Both sides have eagerly sought to meet for over two years.

During the papal visit to Hungary in September 1996, and apparently at the Vatican's initiative, a meeting of the two religious leaders was scheduled at the celebrated Benedictine monastery in Pannonhalma, the founding of which -- fittingly and symbolically -- antedates the Great Schism of 1054. But, at the last minute the Patriarch is reported to have begged off as pressures from among ultra-nationalist clerics within the ROC were upped excessively.

Then in November 1996 -- according to well-placed sources -- it was the Russians who eagerly proposed that both sides try again. The occasion would be the Second European Ecumenical Assembly held in Graz, Austria between 23 and 29 June under the sponsorship of Europe's Christian churches. Initially, it was suggested that not only the patriarchs of Moscow and Rome convene, but also that of Armenia as well as the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople-Istanbul. The latter is regarded throughout the entire Orthodox world as the "first among equals" and has been historically...
accorded the power, attributed to no other authority, to shape the consensus that either grants or confirms autonomy and autocephaly (degrees of independence) to local and national churches.

Since early 1996, the Russians have been at odds with Constantinople over the latter’s reconfirmation of the original autonomy of the Orthodox Church of Estonia. With the Soviet occupation of the Baltics in 1940, the Estonian Church had involuntarily fallen under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. With national independence in 1990, however, politicians no less than churchmen contended for a return to pre-war ecclesiastical liberties.

Moscow vehemently opposed this, but later formally relented once a face-saving, middle-term solution was reached. Its relations with Constantinople, however, have remained embittered. But, might not, then, the meeting of patriarchs in Graz -- where, under the theme of "Reconciliation - Gift of God and Source of New Life," some ten thousand faithful from hundreds of confessions were expected to gather -- have been envisioned by the Russians as a chance to mend their differences?

On 30 May, 1997, Bartholomeos I, the Ecumenical Patriarch, had evidently concluded it had not. From Istanbul, he announced his decision to "postpone" -- in effect, cancel -- his expected participation in both the Assembly and the official state visit to Austria. He further charged that contrary to its expressed purpose the Assembly was being turned into a "confrontation" between church leaders and that he did "not wish to participate in a tug of war pitting supremacies against one another." 9

Sources close to the Patriarch alleged that the cancellation came in the wake of "attempts by the Vatican and the Moscow Patriarchate to exploit the congress," while subsequent press coverage suggests that at some point between November 1996 and late May 1997, Bartholomeos I and the Armenian church leader -- originally proposed by the Russians as participants -- had been somehow dealt out of any "pan-patriarchal" encounter. By early June, the venue also had shifted from Graz to Vienna, and still again to an ancient Cistercian monastery in Heiligenkreuz, some 20 kilometers southwest of Vienna. 10 Only then -- on or about 8 June -- did officials of the Russian Orthodox Church go on record that the future encounter, were it to occur, would be strictly between the Pope and the Moscow Patriarch. 11

Both sides have long put great store in a meeting of just the two. Since Vatican Council II (1962-1965) Rome has eagerly sought to promote the cause of Christian Unity, while it is an open secret around the Vatican that since his election to the See of Peter in 1978, the Holy Father has hoped not only one day to make the first pastoral visit of a Roman Pontiff to Russia, but also to preside over celebrations of the Third Christian Millennium at which the Moscow Patriarch’s presence is considered indispensable.

Indeed, some circles in Rome believe the Holy Father has made unnecessary concessions. Driven by a "calling" to put an end to the "scandal" of Christian division, he has in effect pledged to
the Russians -- in a series of encyclicals and official documents -- to respect Orthodoxy's ascendance on Russian soil, to prohibit his own clergy from proselytizing, and -- to the dismay of Ukraine's Greek Catholics, liturgically Byzantine, but in union with the Holy See -- to find forms of "union" with the Orthodox that would prescind from submission to papal authority (whose infallibility is in no way recognized by world Orthodoxy) as had been required in the past.13

Not a few critics believe the papacy has gone too far. Yet. shortly after Heiligenkreuz was canceled, it might be said the Holy Father went even further. In his Sunday homily at St. Peter's on 22 June, he declared that "reconciliation must involve everyone ... all the people of Europe ... from the Atlantic to the Urals, from East to West." Then, in an obvious allusion to rescheduling his meeting with Aleksiy II, he underscored the "urgency" to overcome "still open problems and sometimes unexpected upsets ..."14

For his part, Aleksiy II is no less intent in promoting the unity of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" Church (a definition, incidentally, held in common by Orthodox and Catholics). He said as much in his 1994 Christmas address on Vatican Radio and has reiterated that view subsequently. Moreover, in the aftermath of his canceled meeting with the Pope, he wrote the Holy Father, insisting on "continuing the dialogue underway," and expressing the wish (according to the papal press secretary) "that this meeting will be able to take place."15

For Russian Orthodoxy such a meeting has broad significance. In at least three arenas Moscow would have much to gain from it. First of all, it would likely establish direct access to Rome at the highest echelon, and would do so by entirely sidestepping Constantinople. For, although the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been reduced in modern times in both numbers and resources, it has nonetheless successfully retained its historic ascendance over the Orthodox world and does so in part by serving as its principal "broker" and interlocutor between its faithful and Christians of other confessions.

In fact, Constantinople was not only among the first to champion Orthodox membership in the World Council of Churches, now under broad attack by Orthodox conservatives, but in 1967 under the late Patriarch, His All Holiness, Athenagoras I, it also opened up a dialogue with the popes of Rome that has continued to this day.

Until late, the papacy has always accorded a measure of preeminence to its relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. For that very reason, an exclusive meeting between John Paul II and Aleksiy II can probably be viewed as a nuanced shift in Rome's priorities and its tacit acknowledgment of Moscow's potentially larger role over Constantinople's in the now multi-polar world of religious dialogue that has emerged in the post-Cold War era.

Indeed, Moscow's boast of 60 million nominal Orthodox believers in Russia, and better than 40 million more in neighboring Ukraine and Belarus, alone makes it the single largest Orthodox Church in the world. But, outside Russia that boast could be made empty. In those very same newly
independent countries, various nationalist forces, especially in Ukraine, openly deny -- as did the Estonians -- the Moscow Patriarchate's continuing claim of canonical authority over their distant Orthodox faithful.

The "Ukrainian" problem (one so multi-faceted and complex that it requires patient explanation here) -- and the chance to gain from Rome advantages for a Russian Orthodoxy that is now under fire across Russia's very borders -- was surely a second reason for the Heiligenkreuz meeting.

What precisely might Moscow have hoped to gain? First of all, a more strenuous "taming" by Rome of the five million-strong Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGKC). Established 400 years ago as a Byzantine rite in union with the See of Peter, it was "phoenix-like" reborn in the late eighties after having been legally "abolished" by Soviet authorities in 1946 and its properties and faithful "absorbed" by the Moscow Patriarchate. The post-Soviet era "battles" to repossess churches, monasteries and entire bodies of parishioners have still not been fully resolved, while both sides periodically claim that some of their respective communities still suffer from "oppression and persecution" -- perpetrated either by the faithful of the "other" confession or, as is often the case, powerful local political leaders partisan to one or another church.

In the mid-nineties, the UGKC -- historically centered in Western Ukraine (and whose members Russian Orthodox pejoratively call "Uniates") -- seems to have embarked on an undeclared "policy of expansion," situating new churches in the traditionally Orthodox Central and Eastern regions. (Whether that policy enjoys Rome's sanction appears a matter of considerable dispute).

Probably equally disconcerting to Moscow is the intent of the UGKC to elevate its presiding Cardinal and Metropolitan in Lwiw to the rank of Patriarch (a rank historically unprecedented for this rite) and move the would-be new see to Kyiw, the nation's capital. No less distressing has been the cordial relations Greek Catholics have maintained with the three nationalist Orthodox "currents" (which call themselves and are juridically incorporated in Ukraine as churches). Not only do the latter dissent canonically -- and patriotically, in their opinion -- from the authority of the Moscow Patriarchate, but -- in outright defiance of the Russian Orthodox Church of which it was once a part, one of them has also established its own "Kievan Patriarchate and of all Rus-Ukraine." 6

Thus, whatever discomfort the Greek Catholics may cause, it is this troika of Ukrainian Orthodox Churches -- numbering just under half of the country's approximately 40 million nominal Orthodox (and whose histories and current politics cannot be taken up here) -- which is the real threat to Moscow's future.

How so?

Suffice to recall here that during Soviet times, the Orthodox and Greek Catholics together (the latter then were "crypto-Orthodox"), mostly from Western Ukraine and amounting to between a fifth and a third of the country's population, had together provided better than a third of all the seminarians and clergy of the entire Russian Orthodox Church as well as a goodly portion -- as much
as a third -- of its annual revenues. In the major theological academies of Zagorsk and St. Petersburg, it was a standing joke that the "Ukrainians" had taken over the Russian Church.17

Of course, today, it is not the privation per se of these human and material resources from Moscow that is critical (indeed, the Russian Church has made miraculous progress in the last five years in creating a substantial and independent economic base for itself). But, rather it is their application since independence via these now self-sufficient confessions to the cause of unifying all of Ukrainian Orthodoxy in a single new Patriarchate -- under Kiev and not Moscow.

Indeed, Moscow's fear of just such a direction led it late (in 1992), reluctantly, and as a largely tactical measure to grant a modicum of "autonomy" to the current Russian Orthodox "Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine" and his thirty-three prelates. Technically, that step also holds out the promise of Kiev's one day gaining full autocephaly. But, because these churchmen remain tied to Moscow despite Ukraine's independence (and however much canonically "correct" this position is),18 many are not assuaged. Moreover, that the said Metropolitan sits officially on the Holy Synod, the important interim governing body of the Russian Church, as do his prelates at its biannual Bishops' Councils, makes their claim for being a fully "autonomous" Ukrainian Church all the more implausible to Ukrainian nationalists.

Three other factors seem to be working against Moscow's middle-run retention of influence over its Ukrainian Church. For one, popular support for the three noted Orthodox currents and their campaign for a fully independent Kievan-based Orthodoxy now embraces nearly half of Ukraine's Orthodox population, while their numbers -- in terms of worshippers, parishes and dioceses -- appear to grow each year.

For another, some other "autocephalous" (fully self-governing) churches and prominent Orthodox clergy abroad have expressed complete sympathy for Ukraine's cause, its implicit right to its own Patriarchate.19 In that context, Constantinople's ready defense of Estonia was widely interpreted as a step towards its eventual endorsement of Ukraine.20 (In that light, Moscow's temporary, but disproportionately "aggressive" break with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in early 1996 is made more comprehensible). For still another, the prospect of a Kievan Patriarchate enjoys broad support from among Ukraine's politicians -- across party lines and at every level of government. They have simply not yet reached a consensus on the tactics -- either at home or in diplomatic circles -- necessary to bring this about.

What specific action Moscow expects of Rome in regard to the Orthodox situation in Ukraine is hard to say. Surely, a major aim is to halt the further decline of Russian church influence there and in several bordering states (where in Soviet times it had enjoyed an effective monopoly).21 At the very least, a meeting of the Pope and Patriarch would finally allow Moscow -- on its own merits -- to have Rome's ear just as Constantinople has long had.
Moreover, such a meeting brings a third and last boon to Moscow: the occasion to reveal itself on the world stage as a "major player" in the religious politics and strivings of our times. That stage has so far escaped it, while few of the world's personalities can command it with the same success as does Pope John Paul II.  

The truth of the matter is that Orthodoxy in general and Russian Orthodoxy specifically have lain just "beyond the pale" of the global media. As to Aleksiy II, none of his important trips abroad (neither to Germany nor the United States) has yet "put him on the map," not even his recent and strenuous June 1997 pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In fact, press reports of his support of the Palestinians sounded more reminiscent of the Soviet Union's one-time anti-Israeli policy than of one of the visit's intended goals "back home," viz., to garner support from among Russia's twenty-two million nominal Moslems, who make up the country's second largest faith.  

Graz, or Vienna, or Heiligkreuzen -- any one of them would have been center stage.

If so much was riding on the meeting, why did the Russians cancel it? Why did they do so literally after all the major joint pronouncements were said to have already been -- in the opinion of observers close to the Vatican, but publicly denied by the Moscow Patriarchate -- "signed, sealed and delivered?" And finally, why did they do so on the night of the tenth of June -- at a supposedly unscheduled meeting of the Holy Synod that had been organized on the spot only hours earlier during the reception celebrating the sixth anniversary of Aleksiy II's "enthronization" as Patriarch?  

The Patriarchate's official press release put the blame on the Vatican whose representatives had "at the last minute ... removed passages from a planned joint declaration which were of crucial importance for the Russian Orthodox Church." It then enumerated a litany of grievances which have been substantially the same over the past couple of years and had certainly not altered in any significant way within the previous week or two after both sides had apparently firmly committed themselves to the meeting.  

What, then, really lies behind the cancellation? Answers other than official ones have simply been unavailable from either side. But one piece of speculation making the rounds of Moscow diplomatic and church circles can be summed up in one word: Ukraine!  

But, not exactly for the reasons cited in the press conference. Apparently, as the rumor has it, Ukraine's Orthodox ecclesiastics loyal to Moscow had actually lobbied hard against the meeting. In their minds, it would have only strengthened the hand of the "uniates" and their "friends" in the Orthodox "Kievan Patriarchate." Joining these Ukrainian "Moscovites" was probably the "anti-Polish," ultra-conservative faction of Russian prelates who have consistently labeled ecumenism a heresy and who played a key, but unsuccessful role at ROC's February 1997 biannual Bishops' Council to end ties to non-Orthodox Christians. Moreover, the lobbyists had mounted their campaign just two weeks or so after the Georgian Orthodox Church ended its membership in the World.
Council of Churches and anti-ecumenical forces in the Serbian Orthodox Church were gathering strength to do the same. 26

Those second-guessing this situation further speculate that neither Aleksiy II nor Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, a champion of ecumenism and since 1989 the experienced Director of the Patriarchate’s Department of External Church Relations, had anticipated the extent and depth of the opposition. Had they done so, the argument continues, they would never have led Rome on. When they perceived the danger -- indeed, at the eleventh hour -- they convened the impromptu session of the Holy Synod on whose shoulders, rather than on their own, the cancellation now rests. As a result, the Patriarch was free to address a personal letter to the Pope immediately thereafter reiterating his wish "that this meeting will be able to take place."

No one speaks of losers. Rather, the statements from both sides, but especially from Catholic quarters, reinforce the Patriarch’s hope. Perhaps, the common vision of pope and patriarch putting an end to the "scandal" of Christianity’s divisions and welcoming in the Third Christian Millennium in full solidarity may yet bring about the still unprecedented encounter. Nor can its historical significance be lost on both protagonists whose wills may yet win out over advancing age and failing health.

Time is short, but in the end it never fails to reveal on whose side it was.

END NOTES

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1. The decision was made by the Holy Synod at its meeting on 10 June 1997; the official document was published in Department of External Church Relations, Moscow Patriarchate, Informationny Byulleten’ (Moscow), 8:97 (17 June 1997), 1-3, and apparently announced the following day. News of it appeared in Bruno Bartoloni, “Patriarch Calls off Pope Summit,” The Moscow Tribune, 14 June 1997, 1.

2. The "New Law" as it was passed by the Duma is available in an English translation from the Keston News Service, Oxford, England at the following e-mail address: Keston.institute@keston.org

   The best and up-to-the minute reporting on the "new law" can be found in the articles filed by Larry Uzzell, the Keston News Service representative in Moscow, and which are also available on-line from the Keston Institute.

3. Aleksiy II expressed his hope of rescheduling their meeting in a letter to the Pope, cited in "Meeting of Patriarch, Pope Cancelled over Differences,” The Moscow Times, 14 June 1997, 3.; John Paul II reiterated his intention to meet in his Sunday homily at St. Peter’s on 22 June 1997, as reported by the BBC on the night of 22 June 1997 and by Reuters in a dispatch from Vatican City and summarized in "Pope Appeals for Christians to Reconcile," The Moscow Times, 24 June 1997, 4. See the discussion later in the text.
4. According to Larry Uzzell, "Final Passage of Law in Duma Restricting Religious Liberty, Keston News Service. 23 June 1997, "President Yeltsin, also as expected, has yet to reveal whether or not he will veto the bill. But a source at the US. Embassy in Moscow told Keston News Service that US. President Clinton personally raised the issue with Yeltsin during the weekend's economic summit meeting in Denver [on 21-22 June 1997]."

5. This has been expressed by Russian clerical ultra-nationalists and most recently spelled out by Serbians who are intent on exiting from the WCC (see note 26, below); the clearly pejorative reference to the "Polish" pope was reported on good authority to have been made recently by a well-placed Orthodox clergyman.

6. This exclusivity is elaborated by Orthodox ecclesiastics as "canonical territory," a concept rejected by most other faiths, but recognized in the breach by some.

Concerning sects and cults, see the directory published by the Missionary Department of the Moscow Patriarchate: Missionerskiy Otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata Russkoy Pravoslavnoy Tserkvi, Novye Religioznye Organizatsii Rossii Destruktivnogo i Okkyl'nogo Charaktera - Spravochnik (Belgorod, 1997). The preface contains important references to the "inapplicability" of the current guarantees of religious liberty and of the "American" and "European models" of church-state relations and religious freedoms.

7. The official sponsors were the Conference of European Churches (the CEC, the European regional body of the World Council of Churches) and the Council of European (Roman Catholic) Bishops' Conferences. The world press had given this event considerable attention; one starting point is John Thavis, "Vatican Working on Papal Meeting with Russian Orthodox Patriarch," Catholic News Service, 12 May 1997.

8. Based on a dispatch from Reuters, "Orthodox patriarchs may make historic meeting with Pope," 09 May 1997.

9. See "Bartholomeos cancels official visit to Austria," Athens News Agency Bulletin, (No 1200), 31 May 1997; he added, "The events in Graz aim at reconciliation between Christians and should not be used to promote personal interests.

10. Same as above.


12. See the Reuters dispatch out of Moscow, "Roman, Russian Churches Discuss Historic Meeting," 09 June 1997; "The Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church may meet Pope John Paul in Austria later this month in an unprecedented encounter between the two Christian leaders, a Russian church official said on Friday. "Talks are now being held between the Vatican and the Patriarchate in Moscow," said Timofei Zolotusky, an official in the Patriarchate's external relations department. "In all of history there has never been such a meeting," Zolotusky said. "Since talks are being held, it shows that both sides want it to happen."


These documents are discussed in passing in a series of articles by Ralph Della Cava: "The Roman Catholic Church in Russia, The Latin Rite: A Five Year Assessment -- Towards a 'Native' Russian Church?," Harriman Review, 9:4 (Winter), 46-57, also in a Russian translation in Stranitsy (Moscow), 2:2 (Spring 1997), 230-251; "Religious Resource Networks: Roman Catholic Philanthropy in Central and East Europe" in Transnational Religion and Fading States, edited by Susan Rudolph and James Piscator for the Committee on International Peace and Security of the Social Science Research Council (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 173-211; and in the still unpublished "The Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement - Considerations on Continuing Relations (Spring 1997)," (Spring 1997), Pp. 23.


17. The role of Ukraine within the Moscow Patriarchate just prior to the dissolution of the USSR (1989-1990) is sensitively described by the American Greek Orthodox Deacon, Anthony Ugolnik. "Burdened with History - Soviet Churches & The Search for Authenticity," Commonweal (21 December 1990), 751-756.

18. Canonically, a church may not declare itself either autonomous or autocephalous. Rather, it can appeal to its "mother church" for such independence and then -- wait. The Ecumenical Patriarchate may intervene to hasten and sanction the results of the process. In the case of Filaret (Denisenko), the former Russian Orthodox Church's Metropolitan of Kiev, he had himself declared Patriarch of Kiev and all Rus-Ukraine -- after having lost out to Aleksiy II in the 1991 election to fill the post of Patriarch of Moscow!

For the Orthodox still loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate and headed by Metropolitan Vladimir, Filaret is a fraud and usurper. Indeed, at the ROC's Bishops' Council convened in Moscow in February 1997 he was formally excommunicated for "anti-church activities," criminally ignoring an earlier church decree of banishment, performing "consecrations without possessing the holy priesthood," for daring "to call himself 'patriarch of Kiev and Rus-Ukraine', while the ancient throne of Kiev is lawfully occupied by a canonical representative of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the rank of metropolitan" who is in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate; see Russian Orthodox Church's Act of Excommunication of the monk Filaret (Denisenko), issued on 23 February 1997.

19. An article by the Rev. Kallistos Ware in the British Orthodox journal, Sourozh, about which I have been told, but have not yet been able to verify, argued early and strongly in favor of the Moscow Patriarchate's full endorsement of autocephaly for a Kievan Patriarchate.


21. Elsewhere, this Pope's relationship to media, media's decisive role in promoting religions' own goals (despite the supposed bias against religious beliefs and the discourse of faith), and the supposedly "unlimited" world-wide power of media specifically rooted in the West to promote (inordinately, in the opinion of some) the historic faiths of the West have been widely discussed in several places. See, among others, Ralph Della Cava, "Vatican Policy, 1978-1991: An Updated Overview," Social Research, 59:1 (Spring 1992), pp. 169-199.


A fuller account can be found in the interview with the Moscow Patriarchate’s Chancellor, Archbishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, published as "Dialog Neobchodim, No Vstrecha Neymestna," in the NG-Religii supplement No. 6 (June 1997) of the weekly Hezavisimaya Gazeta, 26 June 1997, 3. In it, the Chancellor makes the Pope directly responsible for "overturning a series of previous conditions agreed upon by both sides concerning the preparation of the meeting." He went on to say that "the major problem ... touched on the draft of the final document from which -- at the very last minute -- Vatican representatives excised such issues as the Uniates and their position in Western Ukraine and all questions connected with the condemnation of proselytism." I have been unable to confirm the accounts of either side.

25. The two basic charges reported were: Catholic proselytism in Russia; and, "uniate" activities in Russia, Belarus and Western Ukraine; again, see the interview with the Moscow Patriarchate’s Chancellor, Archbishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, published as "Dialog Neobchodim, No Vstrecha Neymestna," in the NG-Religii supplement No. 6 (June 1997) of the weekly Hezavisimaya Gazeta, 26 June 1997, 3.

26. See Andrei Zolotov, "Georgian Orthodox Church to leave WCC and CEC," Ecumenical News Service, 26 May 1997; and Fr. Sava [sic], "Possible Withdrawal of the Serbian [Orthodox] Church from WCC, 21 June 1997: both available on-line from news@holy-trinity.org."