

Vatican by Augustinus

Why Moscow is attacking the Pope

The Vatican must be making headway in organizing Latin America for a new world economic order.

After a long subterranean war against the Roman Catholic Church, Metropolitan Filaret, the minuscule head of the holy synod of the Russian Orthodox Church for problems of unity of Christians and relations between churches, used the Italian Communist Party press organ to issue an openly threatening message against the Pope.

Filaret blasted the document of the Holy Office of Sept. 3, 1984 condemning the theories of "Liberation Theology": "We appreciate the efforts of those liberation theologians who are trying to make their Christian faith correspond to life." He added, "To whoever contests or criticizes this theological reflection, I would like to recall that the call to liberation is an original and continuous mission of the church. I could cite in this regard, Russian theologians and religious thinkers of the beginning of this century."

Filaret is probably referring to the Russian monks who gave their blessing to the Soviet revolution, for he contests the criticism of Marxism contained in the cited Vatican document: "It contains an unfounded and profoundly unjust judgment of the socialist social system, in whose building and development tens of millions of Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants have participated, united in a daily collaboration with their non-religious sisters and brothers. I would not like to be rude, but one cannot help noting the offensive character of this part of the document concerning Christians who live in the socialist countries."

Filaret adds: "One cannot avoid

reaching the conclusion that this [attack on Marxism] was done in an attempt to put Catholics on guard against choosing a socialist mode of development in the countries of the Latin American continent."

The Metropolitan imputes the cold relations between the Church of Rome and the Russian Church to John Paul II, weaving in, by contrast, praise for the pontificate of John XXIII and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences which was relaunched full-scale under that Pope. Writes Filaret: "Rapprochement is rather encouraged by the recent meeting of scientists organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, dedicated to the problem of stopping the arms race in space." That institution is notoriously the long arm of Moscow in the West to attack the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) of U.S. President Reagan.

This casts light on the prophetic scheme of the Russian Orthodox Church. It has to do with the upcoming millennium of the Byzantine Christianization of Russia in 1988, by which date the Soviet military regime hopes to have won hegemony over Europe and hence over the West. Filaret continues: "We are preparing to celebrate the millennium and we must point out that our needs are meeting comprehension from the Soviet government."

For the first time in the postwar period a high ranking exponent of the Russian Church is expressing in no uncertain terms the total concordance between the church and the Soviet political regime, not because he has sud-

denly been overcome by honesty, but for very different aims of blackmail and threat. The interview with the Metropolitan is accompanied by an article by Gian Luca Devoto of the international political studies center of the Communist Party, on so-called "Star Wars":

Devoto writes: "It is not at all unlikely that Reagan's program will fall apart at the end of 1989, when the first phase of research and development will come to an end, whose expected cost is \$26 billion. This could depend on a political rethinking or the disappointing results in cost-effectiveness terms, and also on possible agreements with the Soviet Union. In any case, it is certain that the outset of the 1990s will be decisive for whether or not the entire initiative is pursued." Devoto writes: "The European left should commit itself all the way and constructively in the fight against the SDI." The fact that the writer underlines the cost aspect as a possible cause of abandoning the SDI project indicates that not only the Kremlin, but its Western allies are counting on the austerity policies of the International Monetary Fund to prevent the development of these defensive systems.

This is the reason for the attack on the Vatican. The Soviets fear the Pope's interventions in Latin America supporting those governments' calls for a more just new world economic order, against the policies of the international financial institutions. The final document of the Assembly of the Latin American Bishops' Council, which recently concluded, affirms, "One must keep very much in consideration that the payment of the onerous foreign debt of our countries, according to ethical and moral principles, must not bring on conditions which imply hunger and excessive suffering by our people."