

Chapter Four

May 2015.

Moscow, Russian Federation.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of the Mother of God was headquartered in a prominent Moscow landmark along Malina Gruzinskaya street. The Church (now Cathedral) of the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin Mary was a treasure of late pre-revolutionary architecture, having been built between 1901 and 1911, and having been consecrated in December 1911 as the Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.²⁵ The striking design was said to have been inspired by Westminster Abbey in London, but with a distinctly Russian flair.

By the end of the Nineteenth Century there were thirty thousand Catholics in Moscow, and the two Catholic churches that had been built previously, the Church of Saint Louis des Français and the Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, lacked sufficient capacity for all the faithful. The funds to construct the new Church of the Immaculate Conception came from Poles living throughout the Russian empire, as well as from Catholics of various nationalities living abroad. The design of the church was developed by a parishioner at the Church of Saint Louis, Tomasz Bogdanowicz-Dworięcki, who was a renowned Moscow architect and a professor at the Moscow School of Arts, Sculpture, and Architecture.

After the 1917 Bolshevik revolution the new church was permitted to function until 1939, when it was confiscated by the Communist government. The altar and pipe organ were stolen, the façade was defaced, and wooden decks were built inside to permit profane use of the space. The church suffered some damage from bombing in World War II, and at some point the spire was destroyed. Sadly, the building no longer resembled a Catholic church.

Then in 1989, Catholics in Moscow began to petition for the return of this property to its rightful owner, the Catholic Church. Over a series of years, following the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, the city gradually vacated the property. By the end of the Twentieth Century, through the prayers and dedicated hard work of parishioners, and with funds from the generosity of donors all over the world, the church had been restored to its former beauty. In December 1999 the church was reconsecrated by a Cardinal from the Vatican, and was destined to become the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The cathedral has become a center of Western musical culture in Moscow, and contains one of the largest pipe organs in Russia. The organ had been erected by the Kuhn firm in 1955 in Basel, Switzerland, in a Reformed Cathedral. The Kuhn organ was made a gift to the Moscow cathedral when a new organ was planned in the Basel Cathedral. Dismantling of the organ in Basel, by the German organ firm of Gerhard

²⁵ See cathedral web page, with pictures and history, at <http://www.artbene.ru/aboutcathedraleng>, verified January 12, 2011. If interested, note the link to the cathedral's pipe organ web page.

Schmidt, was begun in 2002. The entire organ of seventy-four ranks, four manuals, and five thousand five hundred sixty-three pipes was moved to Moscow, except for a few enormous thirty-two-foot *Principalbass* pipes which were retained in the new organ in Basel. Installation of the organ in Moscow was completed by the end of 2004, and it was dedicated on January 16, 2005 in a solemn Holy Mass celebrated by Moscow's Catholic Archbishop. On that same day, the First International Festival of Christian Music, "The Music of World Cathedrals", was launched, and the organ was played by organists from many of the most famous churches in the world. Today, while the cathedral remains an active center of Roman Catholic worship, it has become an important center of Western musical culture for the city of Moscow. More than fifty concerts take place annually at the cathedral, attended by more than thirty thousand people.²⁶

It was in this very cathedral, early on Monday, May 11, 2015, and on this very Kuhn organ, that Katarina Fyodovsky could be found practicing furiously beginning at four o'clock in the morning. Her husband, George Peterson, an American psychiatrist, and their eighteen-year-old daughter Mariya, were still fast asleep in their suite at the Hilton Moscow Leningradskaya. As a native Russian (now an American citizen) who was renowned throughout the West as a concert organist in constant demand, Katarina had been invited back to Moscow this year as a faculty recitalist, a member of the jury, and a master class instructor for the Ninth Annual *Soli Deo Gloria* International Festival-Contest of Young Organists. Sponsored by De Boni Arte (The Art of Goodness) Charitable Foundation and based at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, the festival was intended to promote competition among young Russian composers.

Katarina, who for several years now had served as Chairman of the Department of Organ at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, and Dance in Ann Arbor, was proud to become part of the only organ competition in Russia and sought to promote the spiritual aspects of sacred music. The contestants would be drawn from students of organ departments and graduates of Russian music institutes and conservatories. The contestants would perform masterpieces of sacred organ music, and also present their compositions for organ and/or choir, based on liturgical texts. The juries included prominent organists and composers from the leading music schools of Europe. Jury members would give their own public recitals, and also teach master classes for the contestants. Winners of the competition awards would be invited to give solo recitals in Russian and European concert halls, and to have recordings of their performances

²⁶ The sad reality throughout much of Europe is that declining church attendance has made the maintenance of historic church buildings impossible without the revenue generated by public concerts. Many historic landmark church buildings – including Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, and even Vatican City itself – are no longer entirely controlled by the Catholic Church, but have been signed over to the United Nations' UNESCO World Heritage Sites program. There is every reason to be concerned about the potential for disrespect of the Blessed Sacrament when such churches are filled with secular-minded concert-goers. Here the story reflects not the ideal, but the contemporary reality. It would be expected that, in a Catholic Confessional State, this use of church buildings for secular events would be swiftly corrected.

issued, thus helping to launch their professional careers.

Katarina Fyodovsky had grown up in the Soviet Union, and had emigrated to the West in her late teens as soon as her outstanding musical talent gained her special opportunities to travel abroad. In Soviet Russia, she had been barred from any religious training, but in the West she had been drawn to Roman Catholicism through its great treasury of music. She had met her future husband in Oklahoma City, and later on they had relocated to Detroit. Katarina was almost six feet tall, trim, redhead, blue-eyed, and ravishingly beautiful even in middle age. Not a few said she reminded them of a Russian version of the late American movie star Katherine Hepburn. Lost in concentration as her hands and feet flew across the organ keyboards, Katarina was surprised to hear a sonorous male voice suddenly speak to her in the choir loft.

“Good morning, Professor Fyodovsky,” smiled the Most Revered Nicholas Bogmolov, D.D., the Catholic Archbishop of Moscow. “I have the early Russian Mass this morning, at six. When I came into the cathedral, I was so struck by your music that I felt I must come up to pay my respects to you.”

“Your Excellency, I am honored,” she blushed.

Archbishop Bogmolov was a big Russian man, about age sixty, with black hair and full beard streaked with gray. He stood six feet tall, and had a booming bass voice and an ample girth. He was “big-boned” but not obese, and had the weather-beaten visage of a man whose life has been hard. But he had the smile of a kindly grandfather.

“Is your husband with you this trip . . . George, I believe?”

“Oh yes, and our daughter Mariya is with us too. She’s just eighteen, and this is her first trip to Russia. They plan to join me later for the eight o’clock morning Mass, and then we’ll go out somewhere in the neighborhood for breakfast. This is my final free day before the organ competition gets underway.”

“Ah, yes, the eight o’clock Mass . . . but did you realize that would be the Tridentine Mass, the ‘Old Latin Mass?’”

“Oh yes, George and I always prefer that, when we can find it. Mariya also prefers it.”

“It has surprised me to note that the younger people do seem to be so easily drawn to tradition. Here the Tridentine Mass is usually celebrated by Father Vladimir, one of our young, recently ordained priests. Nowadays, they all study the old rite in their training at Mary Queen of Apostles Seminary in Saint Petersburg. They don’t need to have my permission any longer, of course. Whichever form of the Roman Rite Mass they say is now entirely up to the individual priest.”

“Your Excellency, we have been hoping to close the music festival next week with a solemn high Tridentine Mass, with small orchestra and chorus. Is there any chance you would consider celebrating the Mass for us?”

She smiled at him with a warm, pleading smile, the countenance of a

young daughter pleading with her beloved father for a very special favor. Her eyes twinkled with amusement, knowing she was putting him on the spot.

“I suppose ... it would be a good way to put the great music of the Western tradition ... into its historical perspective ... for the students ... before they return to their various schools across Russia. Yes, Professor Fyodovsky ... Yes, I will do it ... Mind you, it may raise some curial eyebrows in Rome. But then, I don't have to ask Rome's permission any longer either. And anyway, how could I say 'No' to such a famous and talented daughter of Russia, who has come all the way across the ocean to encourage our young sacred music students? They need to experience the old Tridentine Mass of the Roman Rite, for which all this great music was written!”

“Thank you! Thank you, Your Excellency! We are thinking of doing Mozart's 'Coronation Mass in C.' There are plenty of talented singers and string players here in the city, who can be ready within a few days' notice. And the De Boni Arte Foundation is able to cover the expenses for the orchestra. So we don't think it will be any problem.”

“Yes, the real problem is whether you have an Archbishop who can get himself ready so soon ... But we have to do it! I'll simply make it my Master of Ceremonies' problem,” he smiled. “I've been too easy on him lately.”

“Your Excellency, George and I have been hoping for a conversation with you about developments in Russia. Might we host you for dinner, as our guest, one evening this week?”

“Consider it done. I can't pass up an opportunity to share perspective and hope with one of Russia's most famous daughters. Let's plan on Thursday.”

The Archbishop took his leave to prepare for Mass. Katarina switched off the organ, and gathered her music in preparation for descending from the organ loft. She concealed her Organmaster suede-soled shoes beneath a chair, and hesitated at the balcony rail to look down the long nave of the church, just as the morning sun, in glorious red and yellow hues, shone suddenly through the cathedral windows and bathed the statue of Mary, to the left of the sanctuary, in beams of golden light. From such a vast distance, Katarina could not see any detail; but she felt suddenly touched by an insight, as if the Blessed Mother of God Herself were infusing a kind of foreknowledge into her soul. In that moment, Katarina was given to understand that she had been brought to Russia for an even more important mission than the propagation of the greatest music of Western civilization. This talented daughter of Holy Mother Russia had been brought home to help set in motion a series of events that would transform the future of Russia and the world. Through these brilliant sunbeams on this Monday morning in May, Mary seemed to be promising that a new dawn was going to come: first in Russia, and then in all the world.

In the cool, dark quiet of an upper-floor hotel suite at the towering

landmark Hilton Moscow Leningradskaya, an electric alarm clock suddenly blared gratingly. To George Peterson, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry at Wayne State University in Detroit, it seemed to be the middle of the night. After momentarily feeling irritated at this outrage – his late-teenage daughter Mariya’s idea of a prank, no doubt – he remembered he was halfway around the globe, in Moscow, and this was the morning he was going to meet his beloved wife and best friend, Katarina, for breakfast. How did she do it, he wondered – getting up in the middle of the night in unfamiliar cities, to go practicing on famous instruments when all was quiet and she would not be disturbed? Unlike surgeons, psychiatrists weren’t really required to get up very much in the middle of the night – not once they made it past medical school and residency training – and George liked it that way.

He struggled out of bed to reach the screaming box on the desk, where he had moved it to force himself to have to get up. Even though Katarina had laughed that he was wrong, George had insisted that these 220-volt Russian alarm clocks had to be at least twice as loud as the 120-volt clocks back home. He stretched, pulled on his luxurious Hilton robe, threw open the lightproof drapery, and was suddenly awed by the golden glow of the city of Moscow in the magical light of the morning sunrise. In such a moment, the vast metropolis appeared to be a place of peace and security, no longer the surging cauldron of cruelty and godlessness which could describe any contemporary cosmopolitan city.

Would the world ever change, he wondered? Would the civility and decency and devotion of former Christendom, of which his Ukrainian grandparents had often reminisced, ever be seen again on this planet? As the sunlight seemed to intensify, from the early golden glow to the beginnings of a brilliant cloudless day, George had a sense in his soul that perhaps there would yet be a new sunrise of justice and Faith over this modern Russia, and maybe even over all the world.

George Peterson had grown up in a Detroit suburb in a Ukrainian/Russian ethnic neighborhood, where everyone he knew worked in the automobile factories. His parents had come from Ukraine and had brought both sets of grandparents with them, so George had grown up speaking Russian at home and English in school. George stood six feet two inches, and was trim, muscular, and boyishly handsome even as gray hairs began to crown his temples. His black hair had never receded in front at all, and his strong chin, dark pupils, and light yet almost swarthy skin had always attracted women, of whom he had always been terrified – until he met Katarina. Despite looking like a natural playboy, his heart was as boyish and pure as his good looks, and he had waited for the one love of his life, even though he had been a stubbornly agnostic scientist until Katarina converted him.

George knelt by his bed to begin his morning offering, the prayers and meditation by which he would dedicate this day to God. Before long, in the other bedroom of the suite, another loud electric clarion sounded. But it

was abruptly silenced, almost immediately. Mariya Fyodovsky Peterson, age eighteen, had accompanied her parents. This was Mariya's first trip to Russia, her mother's native land and her father's ancestral home, as his Ukrainian forefathers had once lived within the great Russian empire. Mariya, George mused, was by nature an early riser, and had probably been lying awake waiting for the alarm to sound. She would jump up, cheerful even before coffee, complete her ablutions and a few calisthenics and her morning offering, and be ready in twenty minutes.

Mariya Peterson had inherited her mother's red hair and blue eyes, and her handsome father's facial features. Tall like both of her parents, she stood five feet ten inches. Mariya was physically disciplined, trim, and in excellent aerobic condition. She moved with the gracefulness of a ballerina, and when she smiled her perfectly straight teeth – natural, not the product of orthodontics – gleamed like diamonds. Like her father, she had a strong chin and the exceptional facial symmetry characteristic of models and movie stars. Her elegant long neck and well-proportioned figure had enticed professors in the university art department to ask her to pose for painting and sculpture classes, a flattering offer which her Catholic modesty had caused her to decline.

Mariya had just completed her junior year at Wayne State University, where she planned a major in organ performance with a minor in piano. She had lived on the edge of campus in her parents' condominium all throughout high school, and had been homeschooled using a traditional Roman Catholic curriculum provided and proctored by Our Lady of Victory Home School, graduating with high honors at age fifteen. But she was a uniquely well-rounded young woman: throughout her high school years she had participated in the Detroit suburbs' Home School Athletic League, competing in tennis, track, and swimming. She had also studied piano and organ privately.

After her graduation, Mariya had attended the Detroit Home School Senior Prom aboard a riverboat that departed from the Detroit Renaissance Center dock. Mark Szczypiorski had been her date, in a group of some thirty young people from the Cova parish. She and Mark had grown up together in the parish, and had been best friends for as long as she could remember. Now they were both students at Wayne State, and often they would go running together, and then sit and talk for hours. Though she dearly loved him as a brother and talented fellow artist (and could easily love him romantically if she decided it were right for them), she prayed that he might truly discern whether he had a vocation to the priesthood. She knew that he considered it often, though his wild side (which often delighted and amused her) rebelled against it, and she did not want to encourage any premature romantic attachment.

Mariya had also participated in the Wednesday homeschool enrichment program at the Cova, where her parents were active parishioners and Latin Mass Choir members. The academic year just ending had been Mariya's first year as the rehearsal accompanist and organist for the Latin Mass

choir at the Cova, a very demanding job under the renowned conductor and composer, Father Kiril Romanov, who was also their pastor. She had succeeded Mark in this role, as he became increasingly busy building organs with Vladimir Romanov. She was secretly grateful for a brief break from the hard work at the university and at the Cova, and was excited to explore Moscow as a tourist for one more day before the *Soli Deo Gloria* Festival would begin. Ever her talented mother's protégé, Mariya was going to be performing her own organ composition in the young people's competition.

Sometimes Mariya lamented being an only child. Her mother had experienced an unusual medical complication during Mariya's birth, and an emergency hysterectomy had been required to stop the hemorrhaging. George and Katarina had pondered adopting other children, but after prayer and spiritual direction had concluded that their personal vocations lay in ministering to others through their professional work. They had both adjusted their professional work schedules so that they could actively participate in homeschooling Mariya. At the Cova parish it had been easy to develop a co-op plan with other homeschooling families who also needed flexibility in scheduling, and both George and Katarina had enjoyed serving as formal tutors in the homeschool enrichment program at the Cova. George had lectured in science and math, and Katarina had offered private lessons in piano, organ, and voice, and had conducted the homeschool choir. They both loved thus helping to educate and mentor many other children, and continued to tutor even though Mariya had graduated from high school three years previously.

On this Monday, Mariya was joining her parents – whose company she increasingly enjoyed as she matured – for morning Mass followed by breakfast at a café in the historic landmark GUM²⁷ shopping center, built in the 1890's and fronting on Red Square.²⁸ They would then take a guided tour of the Kremlin churches and palaces. After the eight o'clock Tridentine Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, a subway ride through Moscow's elegant Metro underground took George, Katarina, and Mariya to a Metro station decorated like a palace, with chandeliers, statues, mosaics, and stained-glass windows. An escalator brought them to street level in Red Square, and soon they were seated in a pleasant café in the GUM.

Mariya was only beginning to understand that to explore the history of Russia anytime prior to 1917 meant to explore the history of a profoundly Christian empire. Outside the Kremlin fortress wall, just southeast of the GUM, was the imposing Saint Basil's Cathedral, perhaps the world's most widely recognized Russian building. As they ate, she was fascinated to note the stark contrast between Lenin's Tomb and the series of fortress

²⁷ GUM is an acronym for Russian words which translate as "Main Department Store."

²⁸ In Russian, the word for "red" also means "beautiful." The central city square in Moscow was named for its beauty long before the communists adopted red as a political symbol.

towers and golden church domes arising behind it. In the mausoleum lay the atheistic Communist state's impudent mockery of the miracle of incorrupt saints. In hundreds of cases, the bodies of exceptionally saintly men and women had been noted to remain incorrupt for many years, even centuries, and some still lay in state in glass cases beneath side altars in churches. But Lenin's corpse (or, some said, now only a wax effigy) had been embalmed and artificially preserved, like a museum piece, in this monstrous mausoleum that resembled a pagan temple from ancient Babylon.

Mariya reviewed the names of the towers in the Kremlin fortress wall: the most prominent tower was called the Savior Tower, and another tower was named for the Annunciation. After breakfast, during the family's guided tour inside the Kremlin, Mariya discovered a cathedral square on which fronted three churches: Annunciation Cathedral, the Cathedral of the Archangel, and Assumption Cathedral. Reflecting the old empire's devotion to the Blessed Mother was another smaller church, The Church of the Deposition of the Virgin's Robe. Mariya was also enchanted by the opulence of the Grand Kremlin Palaces. Here, Mariya perceived, the royal courts of the Russian empire had lived in magnificent beauty, high culture, and an atmosphere of Orthodox religion protected and supported by the state.

After the day's tour through the Kremlin, Mariya struggled, realizing (as she never had before) the incongruity of such a profoundly Christian empire having suffered a regicidal revolution – engineered by foreign infiltrators led by Lenin, and having brought the Russian people into economic slavery and cruel spiritual oppression under an atheistic Communist government. Now, she noted, Russia was said to be “free,” but only in the sense of Western democracies: free to pursue business and profit, to believe anything, everything, or nothing; free to promote a declining population through contraception and abortion; free to have free speech including rampant pornography; and free to sell the favors of elected lawmakers to the highest contributors to reelection campaign war-chests. True freedom, Mariya knew, was freedom to do what one ought, not what one might want. That meant freedom to know, love, and serve God in this world, so as to be happy with Him in the next. It meant to love one's neighbor as oneself, for the love of God. And that true freedom, best realized in this imperfect world by living under the benevolent protections of a Christian Confessional State, was no more to be found in the modern Russian Federation than in any modern Western secular democracy.

George and Katarina cautioned Mariya that such an assessment might be typical for a homeschooled scholar trained to think for herself and to analyze everything from the timeless perspective of the Catholic Church; but that most people, conditioned and accustomed to offer unquestioning devotion to the modern secular state religion called ‘democracy,’ would probably be offended. But Mariya understood this all too well, having learned what it takes to survive and prosper in a modern state university. She well understood the need to be wise as a serpent, yet innocent as a

dove.²⁹

The next three days seemed like a whirlwind to Katarina and Mariya, as the *Soli Deo Gloria* organ festival kept them occupied and stimulated in mind and heart. George attended some of the concerts and recitals, but also enjoyed some hours of peace to explore the fine museums of Moscow. By Thursday afternoon, both George and Katarina took a few hours of rest to prepare for their evening dinner-date with the Archbishop. Privacy was needed, and the hotel had agreed to serve dinner in their hotel suite, which included a comfortable living room with a dining table. The service would be as elegant as in the Janus Restaurant off of the hotel lobby, but the press and paparazzi would likely take no notice of the Archbishop's private evening with two Americans. Mariya would be gone on an outing for organ competition contestants, and so there would be ample time to learn about the state of the Catholic Church in Russia in 2015.

By six o'clock, all was ready, and the suite doorbell rang. His Excellency Archbishop Bogmolov arrived, accompanied to the door by his driver and bodyguard, who departed once they saw he was secure in the Peterson's suite. They sat together in the living room, facing a window overlooking the Moscow skyline glittering in the afternoon sun. A collection of soothing Russian classical works, stored on Katarina's iPod, supplied just the right atmosphere for relaxing conversation. George offered a round of drinks from the wet bar, explaining that they planned to have dinner delivered in about half an hour. The Archbishop selected a White Russian, but Katarina and George opted for a Russian Sunrise. Once properly fortified with spirits, they settled into a much-anticipated exchange of insights about the state of the Church in the Russian Federation and abroad.

"Your Excellency," began Katarina, "it is so good of you to devote an evening to visit with us. George and I both come from a Russian heritage, and pray often for the Church in Russia."

"You are too kind," asserted the Archbishop. "I want to ask your opinion about something. I am troubled by the mounting tensions between the Russian government and the government of the United States. In Russia, the Catholic Church tends to be viewed as an intruder, constantly under suspicion, as if every soul we serve has somehow been poached from the Orthodox Church. And every time there is a rise in tensions with the West, the restrictions on our missionary activity seem to be increased."

"But the Cathedral here in Moscow is thriving," countered George. "That doesn't seem like you are very restricted."

"Oh, anything 'cultural' is welcome in Russia nowadays, especially in Moscow. We host about fifty concerts per year at the cathedral, organized by the charitable foundation De Boni Arte, and that does elevate our image in the minds of ordinary Russians, most of whom identify themselves as Orthodox even though they don't practice that Faith. Anything we could

²⁹ Matthew 10:16, DRV.

characterize as ‘social services’ is also welcome. Many Orthodox persons will come by the cathedral seeking help for food or living expenses, and we gladly help them when we can. But openly preaching that people need to be in union with Rome, and subject to the Pope, would be viewed as illegal proselytizing. So any time an individual Russian citizen decides to convert to Catholicism, sparks fly – let me tell you! I get a call from some bureaucrat in the office of the Orthodox Metropolitan, accusing me of stealing sheep!”³⁰

“Why, are your numbers growing?” asked George.

“Not much. We don’t know the exact numbers of Catholics in Russia, but estimates all fall in the range of a few hundred thousand.”

“So, Russia does not have real freedom of religion, as in America?” asked Katarina.

“Russia is officially an Orthodox state,” explained the Archbishop. “It is not exactly a confessional state, but it does seek to help and protect what it views as the one true religion – Orthodoxy – against incursions by what it views as false or foreign religions. In terms of Christianity, the Russian Orthodox Church is accepted, and the Catholic Church is viewed as foreign and fallen into some never precisely defined error.”

“Well, Russia behaves somewhat like Catholic Confessional States did in the days of Christendom,” noted Katarina. “Except that the Orthodox Church is in schism from Rome.”

“Yes, and that adds to the overall tensions between Russia and the modern West, where complete religious freedom is generally viewed as a basic human right.”

“As Americans who place great importance in our Russian heritage,” said George, “Katarina and I naturally feel sad to see the mounting tensions between our nations. To listen to the news given out at home, one would think Russia was an aggressor trying to take away the freedom of neighboring states.”

“Really it is the exact opposite,” said the Archbishop. “The American government has for decades been seeking to establish a permanent military presence in central Asia, under the guise of peacekeeping through NATO. The Russians think the West’s real motivation is to gain control of the incredible natural resources – vast coal deposits; natural gas; uranium, antimony, and gold mines; routes for critical international highways; and rights to air force bases – especially in Kyrgyzstan.”

“A place most Americans don’t even know exists,” ventured George.

“Probably right. Little Kyrgyzstan, half bordering on China and half bordering on three other ‘Stans’, is part of a critical region, sandwiched between China and Russia, that has been emerging as a major geopolitical pivot. It is situated right at the center of the world’s most strategic landmass, Central Asia. Control of the region is naturally coveted by Russia and China, as it is analogous to Mexico and Canada relative to the United States. But unfortunately, the region is now also coveted by

³⁰ Lucas, *The New Cold War*, pages 119-120. See Bibliography.

the world's most aggressively expansionist military empire, the United States.”

“Such a statement would shock the American people,” George observed. “They don’t stop to think how they would feel if Russia was seeking to install military bases and political control in Canada and Mexico. They are told by the American press that Russia keeps interfering as the United States seeks to promote peace in troubled central Asia.”

“Indeed,” replied the Archbishop. “But they probably are not informed about what is really going on over here. Throughout central Asia, beginning in Afghanistan, and until recently even in Kyrgyzstan, the United States has tried to manipulate the installation of puppet rulers who will not directly oppose United States interests. Usually such rulers are bought by ‘economic aid’ that will enrich the ruler and his family and friends through corrupt business practices tied to the local government. Russians believe that the United States will typically supply arms to both sides in a potential conflict – such as both the Taliban and the ‘legitimate’ government in Afghanistan – in order to keep conflicts roiling and thereby justifying continued United States military occupation, euphemistically called ‘peace-keeping missions’, of course.”

“Americans don’t like to see their nation as an aggressor,” noted George. “They like to think of their nation as the ‘savior of the world’ spreading the blessings of peace and freedom to every corner of the globe.”

“Would that it were so,” said the Archbishop. “But I think you two understand that no nation which is not officially guided by the teachings of Christ can spread any true peace. Contemporary Russia is not guided by the Orthodox Church any more than the United States is guided by the Catholic Church. President Polzin and Prime Minister Mikhailov are actively seeking to turn back the NATO encirclement that was attempted by the United States a decade ago with engineered revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and then Kyrgyzstan. They believe that central Asia is a natural sphere of interest for Russia and China, and that the United States should simply mind its own business on the far shores of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.”

“Many of us Americans also believe we would be better off to follow the advice of our founding fathers, and avoid foreign entanglements as much as possible,” said George. “But big-money interests seem to have other ideas.”

“The Catholic Church suffers here in Russia, of course, because we are identified with the West. Since the great schism a thousand years ago, the Orthodox have permitted themselves to become very nationalistic, viewing the Pope as a foreign power wanting to intrude where he has no business. Before the Russian revolution, the Orthodox Church in each nation was under the control of the monarch – a practice known as ‘caesaropapism.’ In Russia nowadays, we no longer have a Tsar officially acknowledged as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, but the President still holds *de facto* power over the Church. The Church has no external authority

to which it may appeal for justice against inappropriate governmental interference. Only in the West is there such a power, which should be above all nations: the papacy.”

“Well,” said Katarina, “since the changes which followed Vatican II, it has seemed to me that the power of the Pope has been vastly diminished, both within and outside of the Church. Sometimes I think that Our Lady of Fatima must have been foreseeing all this back in 1917 when She spoke to the little shepherd children.”

“Be careful, my daughter,” cautioned the Archbishop. “In 2000 the Vatican issued a document formally suggesting that the events of Fatima are now a thing of the past. It is the call to conversion and penance, for every Christian, which remains relevant. In today’s world we have to work through modern political channels to try to mend the schism between East and West. Russia is not going to suddenly become Roman Catholic following some ‘magical’ consecration ceremony.”

Katarina sat in silence for a moment, debating whether to risk sharing her heart and convictions with this high-ranking prelate. Remembering the glorious sunrise she had witnessed in the cathedral on Monday morning at the end of her practice session, she decided the truth must be spoken, whether in season or out of season.³¹

“George and I have a dear friend back in Detroit, named Father Nicholas Gottschalk,” she began. “His organization, known as the Fatima Herald, seeks to proclaim the full truth about Fatima.”

The Archbishop frowned, and shifted nervously in his seat. Just then the doorbell rang, signaling the delivery of dinner. A bit of a break from the intense conversation gave the preprandial cocktails just enough extra time to work. Soon the Archbishop offered thanks for the meal, and all three sat at the suite’s dining room table, ready to begin salads and then the main course.

“So,” began the Archbishop, “you have quite an interest in this Fatima business?”

“Well, when the Holy Father visited Fatima back in 2010, he said in his homily that one would be deceived if he thinks the prophetic mission of Fatima is concluded. And he emphasized that the greatest persecution of the Pope and of the Church comes not from outside the Church, but from inside, from the sins of those in the Church.”

“Most people immediately think of the sexual abuse scandals when they hear of sins in the Church,” said the Archbishop.

“But what if those scandals are only the tip of the iceberg?” asked Katarina. “What if Fatima warned, as many now believe, of a great apostasy from the Faith, beginning at the top? What if it warned of an evil council that would come after 1960? What if the warning that many nations would be annihilated has already happened figuratively: the spiritual decimation of much of former Catholic Christendom. In Europe the Faith has largely died out. In the Americas it is slowly dying. People in the Americas still

³¹ II Timothy 4:2.

believe an easy, protestantized version of Catholicism, but not the hard truths about striving to save one's soul through prayer, penance, obedience and sacrifice. They no longer believe in any real danger of going to hell. And most of them no longer believe it matters whether they are Catholic or Protestant.”

“Much of what you say is arguably true, Katarina. But I and most of my brother bishops no longer think that a dramatic public ‘consecration of Russia’ by the Pope and all the bishops is appropriate to modern circumstances. Many would be offended. The Popes have made various other consecrations, as best as they could, approximating what was requested at Fatima. And now Russia is becoming as free as the Western democracies, and has once again become officially Orthodox, so it seems to me that she has in fact converted.”

“But, Your Excellency, Russia is no more a Christian Confessional State than other secular democratic nations. Her population is fast declining because the birth rate is well below the minimum replacement rate. Not only is contraception widely used, but the majority of Russian women still have multiple abortions. There are almost no limits on the production of pornography, and homosexual groups are becoming politically organized. Finally, the Catholic Church is still persecuted by the Russian Orthodox Church, using the Russian government as its strong arm. How can you call this conversion?”

“Conversion takes time, Katarina. All I know is that, with all the other trouble facing me, I can't get involved in any controversy over Fatima. I have to stick to the Vatican party line on that.”

Katarina realized continuing a discussion about Fatima would not be fruitful in this situation. She pondered wistfully how Father Gottschalk in Detroit often spoke about the “Vatican party line,” likening it to the Communist party line that once ruled Russia. There was a certain official position, designed to support a particular political agenda, and one would be ostracized for pointing out facts which contradicted the party line. The more documentation and proof one could offer against the party line, the more severe and ruthless would be the opposition.

“In Western countries, we have seen a vast liquidation of Church property to pay off claims of those who say they were sexually abused by priests,” began the Archbishop, artfully steering the conversation away from Fatima and back to a politically acceptable topic of discussion. “The Orthodox watch all this in amazement, asking how an institution devoted to serving humanity, such as the Catholic Church, could be held accountable for the sins of a small percentage of individual priests. Those historic church properties were acquired and built through the financial sacrifices of countless innocent Church members, who intended their gifts to serve many future generations. If some members of the Church were wrongly victimized by individual priests, how does it bring justice to steal donated property generally used for the benefit of many other Church members? And anyway, how can money make whole a profound spiritual wound

such as sexual abuse?”

“Given the fact that statistics have clearly shown that the sexual abuse of minors is actually more common among Protestant clergy and public school teachers than among Catholic priests, one does get the sense of a direct attack specifically on the Catholic Church,” said George.

“People like to say that if priests could marry, they would not abuse children,” said the Archbishop.

“Available psychiatric literature and studies make clear that is absolutely false,” said George, now assuming his role as Professor of Psychiatry. “The real problem seems to be a political conspiracy among academic and media elites to refuse to openly discuss the truth: that the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church is overwhelmingly a crisis of homosexuals in the priesthood. The vast majority of reported cases have involved not pedophilia but homosexual ephebophilia.”

“It’s true you don’t read about those terms in the press,” said the Archbishop. “May I ask you to elaborate on their meaning and significance?”

“Well,” said George, “pedophilia refers to an abnormal sexual attraction to pre-pubescent children. The term says nothing about the preferred gender of the victims. The prefix ‘ephebo’ refers to adolescents, again not specifying gender. In the Nineteenth Century, for instance, ‘ephebephrenia’ was a term used for schizophrenia that emerged early, during adolescence. What we actually see in the vast majority of sexual abuse cases in the Church is ‘ephebophilia’, abnormal sexual attraction to sexually mature or maturing adolescents; and almost always, it is ‘homosexual ephebophilia.’ This means that the perpetrators are a group of adult men suffering from a disorder of sexual attraction. First, it is disordered because same-sex attraction is objectively disordered, according to the Church. Second, it is disordered because it involves sexual attraction to persons who are not yet adults, or who are young adults in positions of vulnerability relative to their more powerful superiors. American law may state that after age eighteen one is an adult and can consent to sex, but morally and psychologically, adolescence often extends into the mid-twenties, so the reported cases of abuse of young seminarians are essentially the same as the cases involving abuse of junior and senior high school students.”

“Well, that is a much more precise analysis than the news media would give,” said the Archbishop. “Really the Catholic Church always taught that men suffering from same-sex attraction had an objective disorder and were not to be considered as candidates for Holy Orders. Prior to the 1950’s, ‘unmanly’ candidates or those noted to give in to ‘particular friendships’ were rooted out of seminaries.”

“It is now clear that bad science long ago bamboozled many churchmen on such matters,” said George. “For example, we now know that Kinsey’s 1949 book *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* was based on unscientific methods using criminal and deviant populations. Some of his data could not possibly have been obtained without systematic child

abuse. Margaret Mead's work on native sexual practices in Samoa was similarly unscientific, and bordered on fantasy.³² But such bad science, enabled by liberal big money, helped spark a revolution in psychological thinking about sex. In retrospect, it seems likely that many prelates felt they were being up to date and compassionate by quietly permitting some homosexuals into the priesthood."

"As years went by, many such unfit men rose to high positions in the Church, and then began to protect their own," acknowledged the Archbishop.³³ "Some conservatives in the Church have called them the 'Lavender Mafia.' In Russia we have been blessed to have nothing but manly men in the small ranks of our priests. Of course, it takes great courage to be a Catholic priest in Russia. One has to be a real man, ready to face probable persecution, so that affects the caliber of our applicants, I suppose."

"Your Excellency," said George, "I want to offer a personal psychological assessment that may seem shocking. Back in the days before Vatican II the Church was fervently missionary – it openly preached 'one true Church outside of which there is no salvation' – and only males could enter the sanctuary during the liturgy and only the consecrated hands of a priest could handle the Blessed Sacrament. In those days many manly men were attracted to the priesthood.³⁴ But now that the Faith has been dumbed down to become simply a 'nice' religion, taking care to offend no one by standing for almost nothing – except universal social work – men of a less militaristic and more effeminate bent have increasingly found a home in the priesthood."

"I cannot possibly go on record responding to such a comment. It is grossly incorrect, politically."

Suddenly Katarina's cell phone buzzed, indicating she had just received an urgent text message.

"George, Mariya is texting me. It's marked 'Urgent'... it says 'Crisis at Presidential hunting compound in Dubna. Check Channel 5 breaking news. We are all okay, plan to be back by midnight. Love, Mariya.'"

George suggested they all move to the living room to see what the news might be. He switched on Channel Five.

"Good evening to those of you just joining us," said the Russian talking head. "Tonight at the private hunting compound near Dubna, a secure official retreat operated by the Russian Federation government, a terrorist attack took place threatening the lives of President Polzin and Prime Minister Mikhailov. Sources close to the scene report that two civilian American consultants, guests at the compound, were also targeted. The attack occurred as dignitaries were exiting the main building

³² Wiker, Benjamin, *Ten Books that Screwed Up the World; and Five Others That Didn't Help*. See Bibliography.

³³ Rose, Michael, *Goodbye, Good Men*. See Bibliography. See also Father Rueda, *The Homosexual Network*.

³⁴ McLucas, Fr. James, "The Emasculation of the Priesthood," *Latin Mass Magazine*, Spring 1998.

following a state dinner. FSB secret service agents were able to apprehend all four assailants. The most recent word is that two are dead and two are wounded but in stable condition and expected to be able to cooperate with federal authorities. The President and Prime Minister are shaken but safe. President Polzin was grazed by a bullet on his left ear, a superficial wound which is expected to heal rapidly without any complication. The government has so far declined to provide any identification of, or information about, the two American guests, except to say that they are also stunned but unharmed. However, civilian sources, who insist upon remaining anonymous, have given their names as Kathleen Houston Matches and Patrick O'Malley. Kathleen Matches is known for her radical economic ideas, seeking to restore financial power and control to the common man, from the ground up, through local neighborhood cooperation. Patrick O'Malley is generally considered to be a proponent of a return to a gold-backed currency. Why they are visiting with the leaders of the Russian nation is open to speculation, but both are connected with radical right wing gun rights groups in the United States and are said to be avid wild game hunters. Stay with us on Channel Five all evening for updates as information becomes available."

George muted the sound. The Archbishop was completing a brief text message on his phone.

"The President and Prime Minister are nearly killed while associating with American visitors, and here I am with Americans too!" quipped the Archbishop. "Do you know anything about these people?"

"We don't know them, but we have read some of their financial columns. On the internet, mind you. The mainstream press won't publish them."

"All the same, my good friends, I must take my leave. I have just called for my driver. With a national crisis unfolding, it's best if I am back at the diocesan headquarters at the cathedral. Please accept my profound thanks for your kind hospitality."

As the Archbishop arose, George and Katarina fell to their knees.

"Your Excellency," said George, "will you bless us before you go?"

The Archbishop stopped, smiled warmly, and lifted his right hand to make the sign of the cross over them, as he spoke the ancient and venerable words of blessing.

After the Archbishop had left, George and Katarina un-muted the television.

"An update on the Presidential hunting compound crisis. Authorities now reveal that Kathleen Matches, the civilian American consultant, was briefly abducted from an FSB vehicle when being transported three days ago from the Russian White House to the Moscow Hilton Leningradskaya. Her assailants, all masked, pretended they were going to torture her, but she now believes they must have scanned her fingerprints in the process, and used those bio-identifiers to break through the state-of-the-art security at the hunting compound. Kathleen Matches had been deeply concerned about the fate of the young Russian officer who drove her FSB vehicle.

Tonight President Polzin revealed that he crawled to safety, just before their SUV exploded in flames, and managed to return to FSB headquarters to make a full report. The President commended him for his professionalism and courage, and announced his immediate promotion within the FSB. Stay tuned to Channel Five News for more updates.”

As George again muted the television, the suite doorbell rang. Through the peephole George could see a uniformed hotel staff member holding a silver tray containing an envelope. He opened the door, tipped the messenger, and noted that the envelope was richly embossed with a gold image of the Cathedral of Christ Our Savior. The imprinted return address in Russian indicated it was from the office of His Excellency Filaret III, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. Handwritten beneath the return address was “Reverend Father Rafael Popov.” In the center of the envelope was handwritten “To Professor Doctor George Peterson and Professor Doctor Katarina Fyodovsky Peterson, Moscow Hilton Leningradskaya.”

“George dear, what is it?” asked Katarina anxiously. “It looks ... ominous.”

“No, I think it will be friendly. It’s from some higher-up in the Russian Orthodox Church named Father Popov.”

They sat together on the couch, and George began to read:

Dear Professor Doctors:

My name is Father Rafael Popov. I am personal secretary to His Excellency Patriarch Filaret III of Moscow and all the Russias. He has asked me to meet with you to determine if you can assist him with a very important matter concerning the Catholic Church. I am in the bar off the hotel lobby. I will wait for one hour. Please join me if you can.

God be with you,
Father Rafael Popov

“Do you think it’s legitimate?” asked Katarina. The envelope was embossed with a gold image of the cathedral, and the note card bore a full color image of the official crest of the Metropolitan of Moscow. Someone at least had access to official stationery.

“I’ll go online and Google this guy and see if his name jives with the Cathedral staff,” said George.

After a few clicks, the name at least was verified. Another click or two and a news article from *The Moscow Times* appeared, complete with a photo of Metropolitan Filaret and his secretary, the Reverend Father Rafael Popov. A second article from *The Herald Tribune* showed the same two men in a different photo.

“Well, if we go to meet him downstairs, at least we’ll probably be able to tell if it’s really him,” said Katarina. “I feel a little nervous after hearing about the Presidential attack. And I hope our dear Mariya is safe out there at night in this huge metropolis.”

“Katarina,” said George, “you’re the one who taught me about trusting God, back when I was a dull agnostic shrink and you swept me off my feet with the spirituality of your music and your soul.”

“Why thank you, sweetheart,” she blushed. “Okay, let’s trust God and head downstairs.”

As George and Katarina stepped off the elevator, a long-haired, long-bearded figure dressed in a black cassock, with a prominent cross on a chain about his neck, arose from a distant chair, smiled at them, and moved across the lobby to greet them. He was about five and a half feet tall, with dark brown hair and brown eyes. His face was round, and neither handsome nor homely. He was perhaps ten pounds too heavy, and his teeth were noticeably irregular. But his smile was warm and genuine, as he looked up at his tall American new friends.

“Good evening, Professor Doctors. I am Father Popov. Thank you so much for respecting my invitation. The hotel has arranged for us to have drinks together in a little private room off the lobby bar. Please come with me.”

Soon they were seated at a small table, in comfortable upholstered chairs, beside a crackling fireplace. After a toast with shots of top-shelf vodka, Father Popov ordered a round of Russian Sunrise drinks. In Moscow these orange juice cocktails didn’t seem to be just for breakfast.

“Let me get right to the point, friends. I have come as an emissary from Filaret, the Orthodox Metropolitan Archbishop of Moscow. He would like to consult with you in private about the 1917 apparitions at Fatima. He is becoming convinced that these may hold the key to the salvation of our beloved Russian homeland. But of course most of the Orthodox world would be arrayed against him. He needs to find a trustworthy pair of messengers to go in secret to the Holy Father in Rome and beg in his name for the consecration of Russia. He cannot write or call the Pope or it would be intercepted both here and in Rome. Filaret had been wavering about this for several months, but tonight he had a call from President Polzin, after the attack at the hunting compound. The President feels it was a warning from Heaven regarding how much fury from hell will be unleashed if he attempts to launch a program of true social justice based on Christ’s teachings.”

George and Katarina sat silent for a moment, dumbfounded.

“But who are we, to be asked to undertake such an important mission?”

“You are a daughter of Russia, Katarina. And our research indicates you are of royal descent, so you are called to serve the people.”

“What!?”

“Your parents were fearful because of the Soviet programs to hunt down and eliminate those with past claims to royal positions in Russia. You were probably not informed, as a way of protecting you. But we have traced you back through three generations, on both sides, to a Grand Duke and Duchess.”

“I always said you were a lot like the fussy little girl in ‘The Princess and the Pea’, didn’t I?” George laughed.

Father Popov smiled knowingly, while Katarina scowled.

“You are not exactly of common descent either, George.”

“But I’m not really Russian. My grandparents came from Ukraine.”

“True, but in the days of your great grandparents Ukraine was part of the Russian empire. It was a situation just like your wife’s – relatives hiding your royal heritage to protect you from the anti-Christian Communist terrorists. Your great grandparents were also a Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of the Russian empire.”

Father Popov opened his briefcase, and handed them three reports, printed on official government stationery, and bearing the official seal of the Genealogical Institute of the Russian Federation: one for George, one for Katarina, and one for Mariya.

“But why is this even relevant?” persisted George.

“Because you are friends of Father Nicholas Gottschalk in Detroit.”

“You know about him? In Russia?”

“Of course. He is without doubt the world’s best-known Fatima advocate. Metropolitan Filaret would like to meet with you in a day or two. He will clear his schedule to accommodate you.”

“We would be profoundly honored,” said George.

“Indeed we would,” seconded Katarina. “Tomorrow noon I have to give an organ recital for the music festival, but after about two o’clock I could be free.”

“Thank you! Thank you so much!” said Father Popov. “We will send a driver to pick you up at the Catholic cathedral, tomorrow afternoon at two o’clock. You will meet with the Archbishop at half past two o’clock, and he will block out the rest of the afternoon for you. This matter is now his highest priority.”

Father Popov signaled the waiter for another round of vodka, and a parting toast was proposed.

“To Holy Mother Russia, Protectorate of Mary,” said George. “May she enjoy the special blessing of Our Lady of Fatima.”

Father Popov did not hesitate to drink to that toast.

“Under no previous Metropolitan of Moscow would any Orthodox priest – much less the Metropolitan’s personal secretary - have dared to drink to such a toast,” asserted Father Popov. “But times are changing. The whole world is facing potential disaster, and, short of divine intervention, the Metropolitan can see no hope, either for Russia or for the world.”

Father Popov bid goodnight to his American guests, signed the bill, and disappeared out the front door of the hotel into a waiting black sedan.

Back in their room, George and Katarina laughed in joyous wonder at what had transpired. Apparently they were going to be asked to help fulfill what Father Gottschalk had been working for his entire career: the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. If done according to Our Lady’s specific request, the consecration would bring the conversion of Russia, and a certain period of peace to the world. Moreover, they had been informed of their personal royal heritage, by a

source most probably unimpeachable. Based on what Father Popov had told them, their daughter Mariya was in fact a real Russian princess of full royal blood.

“What do you suppose Mariya will say when we tell her?” asked Katarina.

“She’ll say, ‘SHUT . . . UP!’ – just like the young girl in *The Princess Diaries* movie,” laughed George.

As it happened, Mariya arrived home to their hotel suite at ten o’clock that evening. She was upbeat about the students’ outing. They had visited two museums, and she had especially enjoyed the Kremlin Armory, where they had viewed the Romanov royal jewels: crown, scepter, and orb.

“Just imagine the elegance and excitement of real royalty,” she said. “We Americans never get to meet anyone royal.”

“I’m afraid that changed this evening, my dear,” smiled George. “What if we told you that the Russian Orthodox Metropolitan of Moscow informed us tonight that we are both full European royalty. Our parents and grandparents kept it a secret from us. The Metropolitan’s personal secretary met with us this very evening, in the hotel bar, to disclose this to us.”

“Dad, shut up!” she chuckled, playfully. “That’s really a ridiculous story! Whatever did you two have to drink down there?”

“No, it’s true, Mariya,” smiled Katarina, showing Mariya the three official reports. “I know it sounds like a silly prank, but you are actually a full Russian princess of royal blood. So if you ever married a royal prince, your children could inherit a throne.”

“I’ve never imagined marrying anyone except maybe Mark. Nobody back home even cares about royalty. I’m going to go call Mark right now and prove it!”

She shut her bedroom door behind her, but in less than a minute she opened the door and emerged, holding a tiny white rounded stone and scowling at her father. George admitted that he had placed the pea-sized stone in her bed as a test of her true royalty: only a real princess would complain about such a tiny annoyance. Scowling, she shut her bedroom door and called her best friend back in the states, where it was the lunch hour. Mark laughed, saying he had been right all along in thinking she seemed like a princess, but that it wouldn’t change anything between them. He’d still love her just the same. As she drifted off to sleep, Mariya felt just slightly unnerved. She hoped Mark was right. In America, being a princess was a completely private matter. It didn’t have to change anything at all.

The next day Katarina once again arose very early, to practice on the great Kuhn pipe organ at the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception before morning Masses would begin. Then at noon, she played a glorious recital for the *Soli Deo Gratia* organ festival. Standing ovations brought forth two encores. She and George had no time to collect their

thoughts before the car arrived to take them to meet Metropolitan Filaret at the Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Savior. From the underground garage at the new Cathedral complex, a private elevator took them directly to the offices of the Metropolitan. When the elevator doors opened, they were greeted immediately by a tall man of perhaps sixty-five years, attired in a black Russian Orthodox cassock, a golden pectoral cross, and on his head a white patriarch's mitre. He smiled warmly, and his extended arms signaled peace and welcome.

"Welcome, Professor Doctors Peterson and Fyodovsky! Welcome, American Catholic friends! I am Filaret, Metropolitan Archbishop of Moscow."

"Your Excellency, we are honored by your welcome."

"I know that as Catholics, religious protocol forbids you to bow and ask my blessing, or to kiss my hand."

"May the day come when all that changes, when there is no longer any separation between our Churches," said Katarina graciously.

Metropolitan Filaret was a handsome man with blue eyes, a symmetrical face, and a noble brow. His hairline was obscured by his bishop's hat, but his dark hair flowed from the sides and joined his full, waist-length beard. His shoulders were broad and it was evident even through his robes that he was a muscular man still well-proportioned for his age. He stood just shy of six feet tall, and his bass voice was musical.

"Please, come into my office and be seated," said Filaret. "One of my assistants will bring us refreshments. Normally I would ring for Father Popov to join us, but unfortunately he is in the hospital today."

"But ... we just saw him last evening, and he appeared to be fine," said George.

"Yes, but apparently certain men in high places were displeased that he met with you. His car was run off the road shortly after he left your hotel, and he was beaten quite severely and left alongside the road, half naked, stripped of his religious icons, and with his priestly beard cut short."

"But why?" said Katarina. "He didn't do anything wrong."

"No, not from Heaven's perspective," said the Metropolitan. "But you must understand that the same dark forces that attacked the President and Prime Minister at the hunting compound last night would be enraged if there were any steps taken toward reconciliation between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches."

"Perhaps they think the Church is much weaker as long as it remains divided?" asked George. "Less able to challenge their hegemony through the money power?"

"Exactly. Now, I realize you two must have been surprised at this invitation, and we are meeting on very short notice precisely because I believe time is very short."

"You have called us here because of your interest in the message of Fatima?" asked Katarina.

"Yes, that's it. But first, let me lay out some background. I became

Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia three years ago. My public opposition to any doctrinal or liturgical changes in the Russian Orthodox Church won me the confidence of my brethren who elected me to the Russian Patriarchal throne. President Polzin and Prime Minister Mikhailov attended my enthronement ceremony during a Mass at this very Cathedral. The next day they hosted a banquet for all the Russian Orthodox bishops, in my honor, in the Grand Kremlin Palace. I spoke to Polzin and Mikhailov about my belief that the relations between the Church and the government should be like a symphony, making harmony for the joy and good of the people. Polzin said he agreed, but Mikhailov said it is no longer appropriate. But we compromised by saying it is more difficult in a modern democracy than was the case under a Christian monarch.”

“You are well respected by the Russian people, according to the news media,” noted George. “What is your current opinion about the Catholic Church?”

“In a world which has turned its back on God and His Christ, there is absolutely no excuse for the only two truly orthodox branches of Christianity to remain separated. While the world rushes headlong into hell, we continue to fight over contrived doctrinal differences that have no substance and only serve to justify our separation.”

“Would they still elect you if they heard that?” asked Katarina.

“I daresay they would not!” laughed Filaret. “But I believe there is a certain grace which comes with the office of a bishop, perhaps more so an Archbishop, and so it becomes possible to see things from a more eternal perspective. You understand that our Holy Orders are valid in the eyes of the Catholic Church, even though we are considered illicit. So our sacraments are valid, and in an emergency when no Catholic priest can be found, a Catholic may avail himself of our sacraments. And, if we are abroad and have no access to an Orthodox priest, we may receive Holy Communion in a Catholic Church providing we have been to confession. That is the teaching of our two Churches. And that is why you may believe there is real grace attached to my office.”

“I remember reading that you were publicly interested in ecumenical dialog with the Catholic Church. But when you were confronted by the Orthodox bishops, you seemingly recanted that interest and made clear there could be no doctrinal compromise with the Catholic Church. Was that just politics, Your Eminence?”

“Well, I could say ‘Yes,’ but that was what your Thomistic theologians would call a ‘mental reservation.’ I knew it was likely to be interpreted as meaning that the Orthodox Church would never change its interpretation of those few issues where doctrinal differences with the Catholic Church have been alleged.

“You know the arguments: you say the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son; we say we do not know about the procession from the Son. You say the Holy Mother of God was Immaculate from the moment of Her conception; we say that we do not know, but that She is

now All-Holy and All-Immaculate. You say that the Bishop of Rome has monarchical authority over all other bishops; we say that the occupant of Peter's throne is the first among equals, but that it is a collegial relationship between bishops.

"But what I really meant was that the Orthodox interpretations are the compromises, and that they have existed for a thousand years due to politics and not due to theology. I have some very revered companions in that stance: Saint John Chrysostom, whose liturgy we still celebrate; Patriarch Filaret I of Moscow, father of the Romanov dynasty; and our most respected modern Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Soloviev, who died a Roman Catholic while still considering himself to be truly Orthodox. He said it plainly: all these great men said it plainly: to be truly Orthodox is to be in union with the Vicar of Christ in Rome who occupies the Chair of Saint Peter."

"Wow! That's not what we expected to hear from you today!" exclaimed Katarina.

"Well, if you study history, it becomes plain that the Eastern Church has long been poisoned by nationalism and caesaropapism. In the early centuries the Byzantine emperors repeatedly sided with proponents of heresy and persecuted those who stood for true orthodoxy. Eventually, each emerging nation wanted to have its own national church, subject to the power of the monarch or emperor. A habit of suspicion developed toward the 'foreign power' in Rome. For a long time the Patriarch of Constantinople considered his city to be a 'second Rome.' After that See fell to the Turkish Muslims, Moscow began to call itself the 'third Rome.' The Romanov dynasty was founded by a Bishop, Filaret I of Moscow, who fathered the first Romanov Tsar. Unlike the West, where even kings were subject to the independent and superior authority of the Vicar of Christ, in the East, the church was subject to the monarch. I believe it was the very lack of an external religious authority that rendered Russia so vulnerable to the anti-Christian Bolshevik revolution."

"So you think all Christians should be subject to the Pope in Rome?" asked George.

"Well, it is obvious that that is exactly how Christ established His Church," said Filaret. "But national and denominational politics have made such a discussion impossible."

"Do you think that is changing?" asked George.

"Oh, absolutely. Look at the Church of England and its foreign branch, the Episcopal Church. After the Pope issued that masterstroke document allowing them to come back into union with Rome while retaining their own liturgy and customs, almost half their church members have become Anglican Use Catholics. The ones who had kept the traditional Anglican doctrines hardly had to change at all. As far as the modernists who wanted to change everything Christ taught – they wanted female and homosexual priests, easy divorce, contraception, and denial of the real presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine – well, the true Church is better off

if such rebellious people are formally outside, where they will not be able to mislead those inside. And just last year England was forced to repeal the law which forbade their monarch to be or to marry a Roman Catholic. With the English Queen now ninety, and her eldest son having abdicated in favor of his very popular son James, a crisis arose when James and his wife elected to become Anglican Use Catholics. The Archbishop of Canterbury resigned in protest, but the Queen said that you can no longer outlaw one religion while saying any other religion would be acceptable. So now it is expected that the next King of England will be Catholic. Imagine that!”

“So the Anglican Use option really has your interest, does it?” asked George.

“Oh, yes. It shows us what can potentially happen for true Orthodox believers, who are motivated by spiritual concerns and are not captives of mere human politics.”

“But are there any others in the Orthodox world who could talk like this?” asked George.

“There are a few. There are many more who are afraid to think this way, but who could quickly come to see it if they were set free from fear.”

“Do you think Russia will convert, like part of the Anglican Church did?” asked George.

“Not by human means. Think about it. England hasn’t converted either, just some of her people. Mainstream British culture remains as decadent as ever, like all modern democracies. Like Russia. No, for a whole nation to convert, there would have to be a miraculous intervention by Heaven. And that brings us to the issue of Fatima, and my reason for inviting you here tonight.”

“What has been the mainstream Orthodox opinion about Fatima?” asked George. “I would assume it would be negative.”

“Yes, quite so.³⁵ As soon as a Russian Orthodox believer hears about a prophecy, supposedly from the Mother of God, that Russia will one day convert – he says that is an insult, and obviously this cannot be from Heaven. After all, he says, it is the Catholics who need to convert to the one true Orthodox Faith preserved only in the East since the schism.”

“Isn’t that a bit illogical, since the Pope is Catholic and in the West, and the Orthodox have no Pope, no continuity with Peter?” asked George.

“Well, of course, it’s illogical. Jesus founded the Church on Peter the rock, and the Bible screams at us that Peter was appointed by Jesus to be the ultimate authority in the Church; but over the past millennium the Orthodox have grown accustomed to thinking that each national Church can be run by its own bishop and not have to be subject to any external authority. But in another way, Catholics also need to convert. They have lost their evangelical fervor, and no longer dare claim to be the one true Church founded by Christ, outside of which there is no salvation. We Orthodox have looked on in horror while you Catholics threw out

³⁵ See Catherine Pearson’s article, “Now Is the Time: Consecrating Russia Will Help, Not Harm, Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue”, *The Fatima Crusader*, Issue 91, February 2009.

the Mass of the ages and substituted a modern, fabricated liturgy that seems designed to hide as much distinctly Catholic doctrine as possible. The new Mass seems to reflect the idea that if you stand for very little doctrinally, then you will offend very few people. But as soon as you make religion inoffensive, you also make it irrelevant. Our Lord offended many people by speaking the hard truths. He said He came not to bring peace but a sword, to divide people and families. Because in the end, the only thing worth fighting for is religion, that is, truth. Nothing else matters, ultimately.

“The modernist revolution in the Catholic Church after Vatican II has been repulsive to us Orthodox, for we have kept our ancient traditions. The fruits of your new Mass have been a massive decline in religious practice in the West, a widespread loss of belief in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Mysteries – what you call the Eucharist – and a growing laxity about morals, and loss of any real fear of losing one’s soul and going to hell for all eternity. We Orthodox have kept our ancient liturgy, and our ancient liturgical languages; but the practice of the Faith has also largely declined among us, and moral decadence is rampant in the East just as in the West. Because, I now believe, as goes the ‘Barque of Peter,’³⁶ the Roman Catholic Church, so goes the whole world. And the truth is that *both* East and West need to convert back to taking very seriously ‘the Faith once delivered to the saints.’”

“What you are saying is remarkable. So what is your understanding about Fatima, Your Excellency?” asked Katarina.

“Well, back in 2010 some groups of tradition-oriented Catholics offered to the Pope a spiritual bouquet of more than nineteen million Rosaries which had been offered for the intention of the Pope consecrating Russia as requested by Our Lady of Fatima. And they have added at least twelve million Rosaries every year since. Now we Orthodox have no tradition of the Rosary, but it is a prayer very much in the spirit of our deep devotion to the Mother of God. So far we do not see much evidence of how those millions of Rosaries may have impacted the Holy Father. But, I believe, they have impacted me, and my spiritual son, President Vasily Polzin, in a most profound manner. We have each experienced a kind of spiritual awakening – a vision in our souls, if you will – of what could be, and what must be, in order to save Russia and the world from self-destruction. And so Vasily and I have been moved to intensively study the whole story of Fatima, and here is what we have learned:

“Back in 1917, three illiterate young shepherd children in rural Portugal experienced a series of visitations by the Mother of God, on the thirteenth day of several consecutive months beginning in May. A distinct message from Heaven was infused into their souls, concerning future events in the Church and a call to penance and conversion of heart. The authenticity of the apparitions was conclusively proven by a so-called “miracle of the

³⁶ An ancient symbol for the Church, inspired by Luke 8:22-25, but also by the ‘Dream of the Two Columns’ reported by Saint Don Bosco.

sun,” which was witnessed by more than seventy thousand people, and was widely reported even by agnostic journalists who were present. It was the most public miracle in history.

“In the First Secret, the young shepherd children were shown a vision of hell, and told that in order to save souls, God wanted to spread in the world devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary’s Immaculate Heart.

“In the Second Secret, they were told that God wanted to bring great peace to the world by means of the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart, and through the practice of the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturday of each month. Our Lady said that She would return one day to ask for the consecration of Russia by the Holy Father and all the bishops of the world. She warned that, otherwise, Russia would continue to spread her errors throughout the world, causing many souls to be lost.

“There was also a Third Secret, which was not permitted to be revealed until much later. Two of the children, Jacinta and Francisco, died young; but the third, Lucy, became well educated, spent her life as a nun, and eventually wrote down the details of a vision they were given, and on a separate piece of paper the actual words of the Mother of God, explaining the vision. These two writings became known as the Third Secret, and Sister Lucy wrote on the two envelopes in which they were sealed that Our Lady had told her the secret was to be released in 1960, because then it would be more clear.

“On June 13, 1929, Mary appeared again to Sister Lucy, as She had promised, in her convent in Tuy, Spain, and announced that the time had come for the Holy Father, in union with all the bishops in the world, to consecrate Russia to Her Immaculate Heart. But the consecration was not done. Various Popes invented excuses why they could not comply with Heaven’s request. Consecrations by the pope alone, without all the bishops, or consecrations of the world not mentioning Russia specifically by name, were tried.

“In 1931, in Rianjo, Jesus complained to Sister Lucy that His ministers were delaying in carrying out His Mother’s request. He warned that, just as the Kings of France had delayed for a hundred years in carrying out His 1689 command that France be consecrated to His Sacred Heart, and so fell into misfortune exactly one hundred years later, in the French Revolution of 1789; so the Popes would suffer misfortune if they continued to delay carrying out the consecration of Russia requested by His Mother at Fatima in 1917 and again in 1929 at Tuy. One can speculate that Heaven’s hundred-year deadline for the consecration of Russia would thus be 2017, only two years from now; or, if based on the 1929 request, then at the latest the deadline would seem to be 2029, just fourteen years from now.

“The Third Secret was written down on two separate papers, after Sister Lucy’s bishop became concerned that she might die before it was revealed. She agreed to do so under obedience to her bishop, but then faced a tremendous spiritual battle for months before she was able to commit the Secret to handwriting. One of the handwritten papers described a vision of a bishop dressed in white, and this was released by

the Vatican back in 2000. But the actual words of the Blessed Virgin Mary, explaining the vision, were written on a separate paper, and there has been great controversy as powerful Vatican officials have sought to suppress and deny the existence of this text.

“Yet various others, who have read it, though sworn to secrecy, have each revealed a little bit. When we compile all the small hints given out over the decades, we can gather the following: the still-hidden words of Our Lady of Fatima,³⁷ written down by Sister Lucy, must indicate that after 1960 there would be a great apostasy in the Church, beginning at the top. Numerous clergy would fall away from their vocations, and drag many souls with them into hell. Various nations would be annihilated. Finally, the Secret apparently warned about the suicide of altering the Faith in the liturgy.

“So, we can conclude that we have most likely been living through the evil times that were predicted: denial of many timeless Catholic teachings, rampant sexual abuse scandals involving the clergy, massive loss of the Faith throughout most of former Christendom, and a modernized Mass (which was forced on all the faithful, rather than being offered as a new option). Religious orders were decimated, and religious indifferentism became widespread as the Church lost her fervor to evangelize and seek converts. ‘The errors of Russia’ probably refers in general to things typical of Communist and other post-Christian modern societies: official atheism or agnosticism; the replacement of Christian monarchs with secular humanist governments; the denial of the supernatural and the elevation of tentative scientific theories to the sacrosanct dogmas of a new secular religion; and the assertion of the rights of man at the expense of the rights of God.”

“Do you believe that the Vatican is still hiding the actual words of Our Lady, written down by Sister Lucy?” asked George.

“Yes. It’s the only explanation that makes sense to anyone who studies all the facts. And the motivation for keeping Her words hidden is obvious: they condemn the modernist revolution that decimated the Catholic Church following Vatican II.”

“That is the same conclusion promoted by our friend in Detroit, Father Nicholas Gottschalk,” noted George. “Which is why he has been persecuted for decades by powerful men in the Church hierarchy.”

“Truth is seldom welcome in this world,” noted Filaret. “Only those who undergo a conversion of heart can comfortably face the truth.”

“What would it actually mean, in practical terms, for Russia to be ‘converted’?” asked Katarina. “Converted in such a way that the whole world would *know* that it was a triumph of Mary’s Immaculate Heart.”

“It would have to mean sudden massive conversions of the vast majority of Russians, to embrace the Faith both in belief and in practice, and in union with the Pope. I believe the Orthodox would remain Orthodox, like the converted Anglicans, but they would become an ‘Orthodox Use Rite’ within the Catholic Church and would formally submit to the authority

³⁷ Ferrara, Christopher, *The Secret Still Hidden*. See Bibliography.

of the Pope. But a nation which has become devoutly Christian by overwhelming majority is going to demand a truly Christian government, and is going to demand that its laws be consistent with the teachings of Christ. This would require a total re-design of the economy, the money system, education, employment and wealth distribution, and form of government. Defense of human life from conception to natural death, and protection of the traditional family, would also be essential. Christian monarchy is the best form of government for a people who are truly Christian, as it acknowledges that Christ, not ‘the people’, is the Lawgiver. I believe a converted Russia would move rapidly to restore her Christian monarchy. And I believe that in time her prosperity, social justice, and true freedom would make her a shining city set on a hill, which other nations would then seek to emulate. Her conversion would gradually beget the conversion of other nations, until the whole world would begin to enjoy an unprecedented period of peace. The peace of Christ in the reign of Christ, with the whole world knowing that it was brought about through the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. That is the promise of Fatima as Vasily and I have come to understand it. And I believe we may live to see at least the beginning stages of its fulfillment.”

“Wow! That’s an exciting vision, Your Excellency. Let’s do it!” said George.

“Ah, but that’s the problem. It is not up to us. It is up to the Holy Father in Rome. Even when he finds out – through you two – that the Russian Orthodox Patriarch is pleading with him to do the consecration, he will continue to face enormous opposition within Vatican circles of power. The devil is not stupid; and we are no match for him. There is a reason why, ever since Mary returned to Sister Lucy in 1929, the popes have not been able to perform the consecration exactly as She requested. The devil knows all too well what will happen when the consecration takes place as requested, and all hell is bent on preventing it. The Holy Father will have to ‘wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness in high places.’³⁸ If you two agree to undertake my mission, you must understand that you also will be declaring war on hell itself.”

“Yes, Father Gottschalk has taught us well, and we understand exactly what you mean. Of course we will do what we can,” said Katarina, as George nodded agreement.

Filaret fumbled in his bookcase for a moment, and disclosed a wall safe hidden behind a panel of false books. He opened it and withdrew a small envelope, labeled simply “Nicholas.”

“Here is a document I have drafted for the Pope. It was done in secret consultation with President Polzin, who shares my views. We agreed on the wording just this morning, the day after the attempt on the President’s life up in Dubna. That disturbing event seems to have given us both a heightened sense of urgency. Prime Minister Mikhailov will have nothing to do with it, and may even prove to be somewhat of an adversary. We

³⁸ Ephesians 6:12.

anticipate that men in the Vatican opposed to the consecration will identify him as an ally within the Kremlin.”

“But the President and the Prime Minister are good friends, are they not?” asked George.

“Humanly speaking, yes. But remember that nothing divides men like the true religion. It’s the one thing that really matters, the one thing concerning which there can be no negotiation and no compromise.”

George and Katarina began to examine the document. They removed an inner envelope, on which was printed the following:

Date: Wednesday, May 13, 2015
 To: His Holiness Pope Nicholas VI, Vatican City
 From: Filaret III, Patriarch of Moscow & All Russia &
 Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church
 Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin, President of the
 Russian Federation
 Status: Eyes Only: Absolutely confidential
 Timing: Extremely urgent
 Topic: The Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate
 Heart of Mary

Inside the inner envelope was a two-page computer-printed letter, bearing original signatures of Patriarch Filaret and President Polzin:

Your Holiness:

Please accept this private communication, which we are delivering through trusted private hands directly to you personally. We know there are numerous powerful forces surrounding us and surrounding you, who would stop at nothing to prevent the fulfillment of this communication.

We have been moved by Heaven’s grace to understand and believe the message of Our Lady of Fatima, who requested through Sister Lucy in 1917, and specifically in 1929, that the Holy Father consecrate Russia to Her Immaculate Heart in a ceremony to be performed in union with all the Catholic bishops of the world. She promised that, when that is done, Russia will convert, and a period of peace will be granted to the world. For various reasons – not least being a desire to avoid offending the Russian Orthodox Church – the popes since 1929 have seen fit to delay fulfilling this specific request. As a result, Russia has not converted, and the errors of Russia continue to spread throughout the world. These errors include practical atheism, secular government, dishonest monetary and military policies (the end justifies the means), oppressive government regulation and taxes, social

engineering (survival of the fittest), attacks on Christian family life (contraception, abortion, euthanasia, easy divorce, legalized homosexuality and pre-marital cohabitation, secular government-controlled education, plunging real wages pushing many women into the workplace and children into daycare), and the enforced toleration of all religious traditions except orthodox Christianity, the only religion which is true.

The world is engaged in a great spiritual battle, and human efforts to reunite the Christian Churches through politics and dialog have not been fruitful. If anything, Catholic attempts at dialog have tended to compromise the one true Faith, until those outside the Church see even less reason to think about converting.

Heaven has given the means and the instructions for saving the world by first saving Russia. Jesus warned Sister Lucy in 1931 that, if His ministers (the Popes) should continue to delay in fulfilling Heaven's request for the consecration of Russia, then they will suffer misfortune like the Kings of France, who delayed for one hundred years in consecrating France to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We are now just two years away from the centennial of the apparition of Our Lady of Fatima, and just fourteen years away from the centennial of her 1929 request for the consecration of Russia to be performed.

Holy Father, we implore you, for the sake of Your Self, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, and all humanity: please do not delay any longer! Please consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in a public ceremony in union with all the Catholic bishops of the world. Please do so as soon as possible.

You may say the bishops will not obey you. Some, perhaps a good number, will no doubt refuse. This is Heaven's call for you to sit gloriously upon the Throne of Peter and to show forth the power of the Keys of the Kingdom, given to you alone by Christ: those Catholic bishops who refuse to obey you in performing the consecration will, by virtue of that disobedience, excommunicate themselves. You must so decree. Otherwise you cannot hope to fulfill Heaven's specific request.

We Orthodox bishops are powerless against the world, because we lack the leadership of the Vicar of Christ and we do not hold the Keys of the Kingdom. You are Peter. Just as the Blessed Apostle denied Christ three times, but then served Him faithfully even unto death, so you may have denied the relevance of the Third Secret of Fatima message in your youth and middle age. But now, in the fullness of your days, you will, please God, cooperate with Heaven's request, ignoring human criticism, and do the consecration to save the world by first saving Russia.

You may think that to perform such a consecration of Russia will offend the Russians. Holy Mother Russia was the first great Christian empire to fall under the darkness of atheistic Communism. Russia spent seventy years exporting her Communistic errors to all nations in the world: secular government (rejecting the kingship of Christ and the derivative blessings of Christian monarchy), freedom of religion (which in practice equates with atheism), bureaucratization (in place of subsidiary and local rule), scientism (first evolution and now global climate change as pseudo-scientific dogmas, broad genetic engineering through contraception, abortion, and euthanasia), acceptance of dishonest money (gold standard replaced by fiat currencies, designed to rob the common people through endless inflation) and usury (debt-based banking systems that must keep endlessly inflating to cover the infinite interest owed to the central banks), and ruthless nationalism (“survival of the fittest” as the true state religion.)

As a result of such evils, the Twentieth Century brought the most horrible sufferings which mankind has ever imposed upon itself, and the early Twenty-first Century has been marred by continuing senseless wars and a severe Global Financial Crisis threatening world peace and stability.

Through the message of Fatima, Heaven has offered to Russia a unique blessing: the opportunity to become the first modern nation to be restored to Christianity, to become once again a Christian Confessional State, and to lead the world, by example, back from the abyss of demonic disorientation and toward the glory of a restored Christendom and consequent world peace. How could any true Russian patriot, apprised of the facts, ever take offense at this?

For a short time the consecration of Russia might incur the wrath of mid-level Orthodox prelates, precisely those who do not understand the facts. But Filaret – the spiritual head of the Russian Orthodox Church which comprises ninety-five percent of the world’s Orthodox believers – will be with you. Filaret, assisted in prayer by President Polzin, will be joining with you in the act of consecration.

But we must do so in private, out of practical necessity. At the present time, the majority of men in high positions of power in the Russian state would believe it to be their patriotic duty to seek our immediate deaths if they read the contents of this letter. Once the miracle of Russia’s true national conversion unfolds, the wrath of the Orthodox will be turned into rejoicing.

As the Psalmist noted: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” [Psalm 30:5]

Please communicate through our trusted private messengers,

at your earliest convenience, what are your thoughts and intentions on this matter. Meanwhile, please know that we are fervently praying for you, and would ask that you also pray for us.

Yours in Christ Jesus Our Lord,

(original signature)
Patriarch Filaret III of Moscow

(original signature)
President Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin

“What do you think?” asked Filaret eagerly. “Can you take it to Rome for me and present it to the Holy Father?”

“We have no connections there,” said George. “The Holy Father doesn’t know us.”

“But I *do* have connections in Rome. As you know, the Moscow charitable foundation De Boni Arte sponsors young musicians, such as in the *Soli Deo Gloria* organ festival this week. The Holy Father is himself a talented musician, who could have been a concert pianist and composer except for his vocation to the priesthood. For his birthday, coming up in ten days, we are arranging for a contingent of young pianists from Russia to go to the Vatican to play and sing for Pope Nicholas. The Holy Father will reciprocate by playing, for the students, one of his favorite Russian works for piano.

“Your daughter Mariya will be one of the students, performing on piano. Her instructors at the festival are informing her today. And you, Professor Doctors Peterson and Fyodovsky, will go as the faculty chaperones for the group, and so naturally you will meet the Holy Father. Because you are a world-famous musician, Professor Fyodovsky, the Holy Father will grant you and your husband an informal private audience after the birthday concert.

“I have arranged this through my good friend, Father John Herald, an independent Catholic priest who reports directly to the Holy Father. He is based part time in America, I believe, where he tries to teach the true Catholic Faith, contrary to all the modernist ideas. In the past he was spiritual director to some famous saints in the making, including Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Padre Pio. Currently – but this is confidential, mind you – he is spiritual advisor to James, Prince of Wales, who is now an Anglican Use Catholic and the next King of England.”

“Yes, we know Father Herald,” said George. “He is often in residence at the Cova, our Catholic parish in Detroit.”

“How small the world seems to become, when one begins working with Heaven against the powers of hell,” commented Filaret.

“What will we tell the Holy Father when we meet him?” asked Katarina.

“He will want to talk with you about classical music, which is his

personal hobby and the means by which he finds a bit of much-needed relaxation. But you will present him with this document, and explain that I have personally asked you to deliver it directly into his hands. He will comprehend at once why the usual diplomatic channels could not be trusted.”

“Will he read it while we are present?”

“He may. Or he may place it in his pocket, and read it later. If he does, be sure to mention that you are from the same parish in Detroit as Father John Herald, and then the Holy Father will know how to find you discreetly if he needs you to serve as return messengers to me.”

“We are amazed to see history in the making today. May we have your permission to inform Father Gottschalk in private and in strict confidence about this development? So he can be praying for you and the Holy Father?”

“No, considering the attacks last night on our President, Prime Minister, and Father Popov, I think it best that we trust no one just yet. Father Gottschalk will be rewarded abundantly by Heaven for all he has done. His apostolate has provided most of the educational materials about Fatima upon which President Polzin and I have relied. Someday, I can speculate, he will be decorated as a hero of Russia.”

“Do you want us to take your letter tonight?” asked George.

“No, you will be going back to America, and then you will return here to Moscow to meet up with the music students for their flight to Rome on the Pope’s birthday. I will give you the letter at that time. Otherwise, the dark forces may seek to steal it from you.”

Filaret again signaled for his young assistant, who brought in another round of vodka for a parting toast. Knowing now that Filaret was already a spiritual Catholic, yet still solidly Orthodox, they knelt and received his blessing. As they rode back to their hotel in the Metropolitan’s car, Moscow seemed to them a different city.

Despite the sinister events of the previous day, it seemed to George and Katarina that they were now seeing into the future, seeing Moscow as still Orthodox and yet now the first bastion of Tradition to be reerected, the first fortress outpost of Christendom reborn. The light on the buildings seemed brighter and more intense, and the blue of the sky seemed like Our Lady’s protective mantle.