

## Mother Russia by Katherine Notley

### 'Third Rome' sets plans for new summit

*The Russian Orthodox Church is expanding its global operations in the post-Geneva atmosphere.*

The Soviet Communist Party daily *Pravda*, in an editorial published Dec. 3, announced the Kremlin's intention to start immediately to shape the outcome of the next U.S.-Soviet summit meeting in 1986. Referring to the superpower dialogue as "in itself a stabilizing factor," *Pravda* made clear that the Soviet Union will continue to delude the Western world with promises of "peace in our time," while gearing up its own war economy.

"With a new summit ahead," wrote *Pravda*, "what is particularly important is that conditions be created for a real termination of the arms race and that practical steps be started to reduce nuclear armories. . . . The unwillingness of the U.S. leadership to abandon the 'Star Wars' program prevented the Geneva meeting from reaching concrete accords on real disarmament. . . . It is necessary to refrain from everything that would undermine the Geneva accords so as not to complicate future agreements." The paper continued that the United States should not "erase the restrictions on the arms race" imposed by the ABM and SALT II treaties.

Alongside these pronouncements, the Kremlin has placed increased emphasis on the historical and political role of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in mobilizing the Soviet population to complete the accession of Moscow as a "Third and Final Rome," to coincide with the millenary celebrations of the Christianization of Russia in 1988. In a Dec. 3 feature, the Italian daily *Il Giornale* highlighted the space that the Soviet "cultural" journal *Literaturnaya Gazeta* has pro-

vided Russian Orthodox spokesmen. *Il Giornale* quoted from an interview that Metropolitan Aleksei of Kalinin gave to *LitGaz*—widely known as the unofficial mouthpiece of the KGB—"There is no doubt that the [Russian Orthodox] Church will have the ability to continue its patriotic role which was so beneficial during the Great Patriotic War, and to intensify its role in favor of peace." Metropolitan Aleksei's reference to the part played by his church in World War II could not be clearer: It was to the Russian Orthodox Church that Stalin turned for aid in his war mobilization following the collapse of the Hitler-Stalin Pact.

Beginning with the Soviet state project to restore the 700-year-old Danilov Monastery, *Il Giornale* notes that state-sponsored church restorations have been intensified as the 1988 celebrations approach.

Contrary to those in the West who point to ascendant religious activity as evidence of a "crumbling Soviet Empire," there is no distinction between the aim of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Soviet *Nomenklatura*: To crown Moscow capital of the Third and Final Roman Empire, as prophesied by Philotheus of Pskov following Moscow's break with Byzantium over the latter's 1439 adoption of the *Filioque* doctrine at the Council of Florence.

Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev, head of the ROC's Department of External Affairs and a leading spokesman for the "Third Rome" doctrine, has stepped up the church's efforts to boost the U.S. "peace movement" against President Reagan and the Strategic

Defense Initiative. Filaret recently dispatched Vladimir Veriga to reopen San Francisco's 50-year-old St. Nicholas Cathedral, which has been closed for the past year. Veriga was interviewed by UPI on Dec. 3, along with Bishop Clement, vicar of Patriarch of Moscow Pimen, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, whose statements against the SDI have included advertisements in the *New York Times* and other U.S. papers.

In their interview, Veriga and Clement proudly reported that the Soviet Union is experiencing a religious revival. "There are 50 million practicing Orthodox, 1,700 churches, about 50,000 priests, four seminaries, and two academies," said Veriga. Many high government officials are "practicing believers," said Clement. "Spiritually and materially, the Russian church is growing. There are now 80 dioceses, 86 bishops, 6 theological schools, 18 monasteries and convents under the Patriarch of Moscow. Another new development is that for the first time in all the history of the church, women have been accepted into theological studies at the Leningrad Theological School. Women cannot become priests, but they can obtain a Master's Degree in Theology."

Bishop Clement indicated that Veriga will be active in "ecumenical" and interfaith affairs from his post in California. "After the summit, I think our peoples will be more understanding of each other, and the nations will work together to keep peace in the world." In the 1930s, Bishop Clement explained, "The Orthodox Church in the United States had many problems. Many groups broke away from the Mother Church in Moscow." But, referring to the parishioners of St. Nicholas, he said, "There were many who continued to want to keep good relations with the Mother Church."