



Holy Synod of Bishops
of the Serbian Orthodox Church

Number: _____
September 9, 2002
Belgrade

To Mister Ljubco Georgievski,
President of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia
Skopje

Subject: the partiality of the governmental agencies of the Republic of Macedonia in
relation the problems of the Orthodox Church in Macedonia

Mister President,

We address You on occasion the certain recent disturbing events in the Republic of Macedonia, related to the life and problems of the Orthodox Church in Your country.

You are familiar, of course, with the fact that the continuous discussions, negotiations and agreements on the surpassing of the church schism resulted in a mutual proposal by the two authorised church commissions, signed in Nis on May 17 this year, also, that this proposed or draft agreement for the surpassing of the schism (abbreviated and imprecisely referred to in the press as “the Nis Agreement”), accepted and approved by the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church at the end of May this year, was proclaimed by all the local Orthodox Churches as canonically correct and acceptable to all. You also know that the Synod of the uncanonical Macedonian Orthodox Church, at first, with most of the votes in favour, accepted it, and then, under the various influences and pressures, rejected it through an announcement to the public, without an official and conscientious answer to Our Assembly’s letter in which we announced that we accept and approve of the draft agreement. You, most probably, are not familiar with the rules of conduct in the official communications between church institutions and persons, but be certain that this behaviour of the uncanonical and unrecognised, in essence – why shy before the truth? – self-named, Synod towards the Assembly of an Orthodox Church, ranged sixth in the dyptichs of the orthodox ecumene, immediately after the ancient eastern Patriarchates and the Moscow Patriarchate, is an unprecedented incident in the previous history of the Church.

Being convinced in the absolutely unreliable and inconsistent church policy of the Synod from Skopje – if there is any such – on the grounds of our canonical authority, and before all, on the basis of our responsibility towards the unity of the Church and the spiritual good of all of its believers, We have sent an invitation to the bishops, clerics, monks, nuns and believing people who live in the Republic of Macedonia so that each of them should analyse his Christian conscience and decide whether they will still stay in the schism, whose leaders, intentionally or accidentally, work on its prolongation to infinity or they will join the liturgical and canonical communion with the Serbian Orthodox Church, and by this with the worldwide Orthodoxy. Our summons received a response only by His Eminence the Metropolitan of Veles and Povardar kyr John, and not only in his own name, but also in the name of his Eparchy. From the moment that we accepted His Eminence in communion and unity, he is – not only in our own eyes, but also in the eyes of all the local Orthodox Churches in the world – the only canonical and legal orthodox bishop on the grounds of the Republic of Macedonia.

After this reminder, we shift to the immediate purpose of our letter. After the announcement of his decision, His Eminence the Metropolitan John was exposed to a harassment and persecution unseen in the annals of the Church in our regions, even in the period of the most severe titoism or bolshevism , and without any basis in the ecclesiastical legislation or the constitutional law. He was forced out of his bishopric chair and the building of the Metropoly in Veles, and later from the monastery Saint George near Negotiono, on the river Vardar, thus, today he lives as an exile in a private apartment in his native city, Bitola. In the confusion of all of these mentioned events, the state organs, to be more precise the police, have never given safety and protection to the endangered metropolitan, the one to which is entitled any citizen in any given democratic country or at least the one enjoyed by the amnestied Albanian terrorists in Your country. On the contrary, the policemen cold-bloodedly observed the violence committed over the legal bishop of the Orthodox Church and a loyal citizen of his own country, or, they even participated in the violent acts side by side with the manipulated and crazed mob. We have precise information about all of this.

We remind You, on this occasion, of Your positions expressed in the conversation We had, during Your visit in Belgrade, which we accepted as proper and worthy of a statesman, as well as of Your initial neutral position and lack of involvement in the intra-church relations and arguments, manifested after the joining of the metropolitan John to the worldwide Orthodoxy. We protest, with bitterness and indignation, against the police and all other sorts of violence executed over him, and we very well know that he is not alone and that beside him are most of the truly believing orthodox people in Macedonia. We appeal to You to influence the governmental structures and agencies to level up above the attempt of the ideologically-political treatment of this painful problem and to allow the orthodox believers, not less the clerics and monks, at least the rights that they have in the tolerant-democratic countries with Muslim majority, - such as Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and other, - the right to choose their jurisdiction and ecclesiastically-legal status and similar. In basic terms, today nowhere in Europe, not even in the Republic of Macedonia can there be a “national” and “seditious” Church. And even less can the state arbitrate in the confusing issue about which ecclesiastical jurisdiction is “nationally correct”, and which is, the allegedly, “traitorous”. Regarding these issues, the history can prepare unexpected and unpleasant surprises.

Not as a means to effecting pressure, but simply because of the credibility and acting according to conscience, the copy of this letter will be delivered to all relevant international institutions, as well as to the international church and civil public.

We pray You, mister President, once more on this occasion receive Our best wishes.

+Archbishop of Pec,
Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci and
Patriarch of Serbia Pavle

Preident of the Holy Synod of Bishops