Patriarch Kirill meets with Greek foreign minister Nikos Kotzias



On June 13, 2018, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with the minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Greece, Mr. Nikos Kotzias, at the patriarchal working residence in Chistyj Pereulok.

Participating in the meeting were also Mr. D. Paraskevopoulos, General Secretary of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr. T. Passas, director of the Greek Foreign Ministry diplomatic cabinet, Mr. A. Friganas, Greek ambassador to Russia; Mr. Mitrakos, councilor to the head of the Greek diplomatic department; and Mr. D. Yalamas, a Greek embassy interpreter.

From the Russian Orthodox Church there were Metropolitan Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow

Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR); Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; and Hierodeacon Grigoriy (Sokolov), a DECR officer and interpreter.

Welcoming Mr. Nikolaos Kotzias, Patriarch Kirill noted, 'Meeting with Greek officials or talking with non-official delegations from Greece, we are always aware that we meet with brothers in faith, representatives of a country with which Russia has special relations'.

'The history of our inter-state relations, just as relations between our peoples is characterized by very important events. Among the important pages in this history is our common struggle for the liberation of the Greek people from the foreign rule, just as the struggle for the liberation of Greece from fascism', His Holiness stressed.

There are many Russians living in the Greek Republic, he pointed out. 'When in that country, you often notice that Greeks use Russian in communication with guests from Russia and speaking it quite fluently at that', His Holiness shared pointing out that this fact is another testimony to special relations existing between the peoples of the two countries.

Both Greece and Russia take part in the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy, His Holiness stated. He mentioned that this organization will hold a meeting this June in Athens, and, with the Patriarchal blessing, it will be attended by the chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

'The church factor is very important in the relations between our nations, of course, as we belong to the Orthodox Church', His Holiness underscored, 'Very many Russians, who come to Greece for holidays or business, have an opportunity for worship in Greek churches, and this factor unites people in a special way. The fact that we are brothers in faith determines to a great extent the special attitude of our nations to each other'.

In his turn, the minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Greece noted that he had warm remembrances of the earlier meetings with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and common discussions on topical issues in the life of society and church-state relations.

'Our two nations are united by many things, but I believe that most important of these factors is emotional and spiritual peace', Mr. Kotzias said, 'we are nations deeply emotional and trustful of others, always seeing the good side of a person'.

'We have a common home – Orthodoxy, the minister stressed and re-affirmed that Local Orthodox

Church are united in particular by a common message to the world.

Speaking about the severe persecution experienced by the Russian Orthodox Church in the 20th century and the period of spiritual rebirth that followed it, Mr. Kotzias stated, ‘that is why we have a great feeling of respect for your Church’.

They also discussed a number of matters of mutual concern.

In the end of the meeting an exchange of souvenirs took place.

DECR Communication Service

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