



## **DECR vice-chairman: 'As a Russian citizen I am proud that my country has come out as a third party in the re-examination of the Lautsi versus Italy case in the European Court of Human Rights'**

On July 5, 2010, a Russian-Polish youth seminar on Russia and Poland Today and Tomorrow: The View of the Younger Generation took place at the Higher School of Economics (HSE). It was organized with the support of the Russian-Polish Public Forum and the Federal Agency for Youth.

In the beginning of the seminar, its participants were addressed by L. Drachevsky, cochair of the Russian-Polish Public Forum, Polish Ambassador to Russia Jezhe Bar and V. Shevelenko, executive director of the Business Council for Cooperation with Poland. A message of greetings from Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, was brought by DECR vice-chairman Hegumen Philip Riabykh.

Father Philip together with Rev. Leszek Adamowicz of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin chaired the section on New Europe and Traditional Values.

In his introductory remarks, Father Philip stressed that 'values are not some decorative attributes of a society. It is impossible to build a social system on the principle 'only business, nothing personal'. A human being as a spiritual creature cannot motivate his actions only by needs dictated by his body. A person needs a higher motivation going into eternity. The Christian Churches of our nations are precisely those who keep the fundamental values which can inspire a person for an active and creative work. Unfortunately, since the Enlightenment the potential of religion in Europe has been repeatedly challenged, while faith has been presented as a source of conflicts and aggression. For this reason our Churches today has a common mission of bearing witness to the positive role of Christianity in building new Europe'. Father Philip told the participants about the dialogue initiated by the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Poland to promote good-neighbourly relations between the Russian and Polish people and among the peoples of Eastern Europe as a whole.

Rev. Leszek Adamowicz in his remarks spoke about the values foundation of united Europe, saying in particular that Christianity helps to assert in a society such notions as personality, truth and freedom. These, he said, are the measure of life for all Europeans. Young representatives from various cities in Russia and Poland actively joined the discussion on values uniting the two nations today, identifying as such religious traditions, family, human rights and law-governed state.

Summing up the work of the section, Father Philip said, 'We had an important exchange of opinions about the significance of freedom for the people in Russia and Poland. Freedom is a gift of God and its mystery lies in the way it is realized. The most difficult thing is to apply one's freedom to the assertion of the good. Who can explain why St. Peter renounced Christ after vowing fidelity to Him? Was he really insincere in his commitment to the Lord? No, he was sincere but out of cowardice and fear betrayed his Master at a moment when he should have persisted in the truth to the end. Later St. Peter repented of his misdeed, and after the Resurrection he was commanded by Christ to strengthen his brothers in the faith. We know that when St. Peter found himself in a situation of choice once again, he chose faithfulness to the Lord and died for Him'.

Father Philip suggested that this situation from the Gospel should be seen as a key to the understanding of relations between today's Russia and Poland, saying, 'Our common task is not only to identify common values but also to find ways of realizing them together. As Russia and Poland have survived militant atheism, our countries have a clear understanding of the positive role that Christianity plays in a society. Together we can help build a powerful spiritual and cultural potential in Europe which shows to Western Europe the need to protect Christian heritage and to launch a new evangelization of its people. As a Russian citizen, I am proud that my country has come out as a third party in the re-examination of the Lautsi versus Italy case in the European Court of Human Rights. Who could have imagined that one day the Orthodox Russia would identify with the Catholic Italy? This points to a truly tectonic shift in the awareness of the Europeans. However, this action of Russia does not mean that she has abandoned her own Orthodox tradition, but has only shown Christian solidarity in the efforts to preserve common civilizational roots in face of militant secularism. Indeed, the demand to remove crucifixes from Italian schools reminds us, Russians and Poles, of the struggle with religion we have survived and of its sad consequences. We know that this struggle does not bring anything but spiritual and moral degradation. Unfortunately, Poland did not join us as a third party in these proceedings, like nine other European countries did, including Russia. I think it is because Poland has concentrated on her domestic affairs after the tragic event on April 10 in Smolensk. But I hope in the future Russia and Poland will be able to defend together Europe's Christian heritage and give a convincing example of how fundamental Christian values can remain in harmony with advanced development in economy and social life and with our societies' openness to people of other faiths and convictions'.

The final part of the seminar was devoted to a discussion on the role of the national mass media in forming the idea of each other.