



General Secretary of the World Council of Churches arrives in Moscow

The General Secretary of the World Council of Church Dr. Olaf Fykse Tveit began his official visit to Moscow on 27 June 2010. He is accompanied by the WCC deputy general secretary Jorge Lemopoulos (Patriarchate of Constantinople), and Prof. Dr. Dagmar Heller of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey. The guests were met at the airport by the deputy chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations hegumen Philipp (Ryabykh), DECR acting secretary for inter-Christian relations Rev. Dimitry Sizonenko, and a DECR staff member Rev. Alexander Vasyutin.

The guests proceeded to the Butovo Shooting Range, a place where thousands of people were killed, many of whom were later glorified as saints. Archpriest Kirill Kaleda, a grandson of the holy martyr Vladimir Ambartsumov and rector of the Church of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia shown the Butovo Memorial to the guests, its memorial churches, and personal things and documents of some new martyrs. The guests were also accompanied by a cleric of the church Rev. Artemiy Tsekh and the director of the "Butovo" Scientific and Educational Centre I. Garkavy. Dr. Tveit signed the guest book sharing his impressions of his visit to the Russian Golgotha.

The parish of the Resurrection of Christ gave a lunch in honour of the guests from the WCC. Hegumen Philipp greeted them on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and wished them fruitful stay in Moscow. He noted the meaning of the exploit of the new martyrs for the life of the Russian Church at present, saying: 'It is not fortuitous that we invited you to visit the Butovo Memorial at the very beginning of your visit to the Moscow Patriarchate, as an objective of your visit is to be introduced to the modern life of the Russian Church. We wanted to show you the fount that nourishes the revival of Christian life in the countries that have survived persecution in the terrible years of state atheism. The Moscow Patriarchate bases its present ministry not on administrative levers and earthly power, but on the authority of sacrificial ministry to Christ and people shown by the new martyrs of Russia by their life and death. We hope that the voice of a confessing Church will remain an authoritative and meaningful one for other Christians.'

The WCC delegation will stay in Moscow till June 30. Meetings with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, Metropolitan Hilarion, and representatives of the Russian state authorities are planned. The WCC General Secretary and his companions will be introduced to the social ministry of the Russian Orthodox Church. They intend to meet with representatives of the non-Orthodox churches, which cooperate in the Christian Interconfessional Consultative Committee of the CIS and Baltic countries. After Dr. Tveit's visit to Moscow, a meeting of the WCC Standing Committee on Consensus and Cooperation will begin,

lasting to July 4.

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