

riarch, and the assembly of Georgian Orthodox hierarchs nominated him as Bishop of Shemokmedy and appointed him Vicar to His Holiness.

On 1 September 1967, he was appointed Bishop of Sukhumi and All Abkhazia, and in 1967 he was elevated to the dignity of Metropolitan.

While Rector of the theological seminary in Mtskheta he organized the training and education of the clergy for the Holy Georgian Church. In 1972 he left this appointment at his own request.

During all these years he took part in much inter-church activity with the blessing of the Patriarch of Georgia, participating in many forums for the strengthening of world peace. With this aim he visited Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland,

Greece, Yugoslavia, India, Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia, USA, Hungary and West Berlin as a delegate of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

After the death of His Holiness and Beatitude David V, Catholicos and Patriarch of Georgia, on 9 November 1977, he was appointed Patriarchal *Locum Tenens* of the Georgian Orthodox Church by a decision of the Holy Synod.

The XII Council of the Georgian Orthodox Church, held in Tbilisi on 23 December 1977, in the Sion Patriarchal Cathedral, unanimously elected him as His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia.

On 25 December 1977, in Svetitskhoveli Patriarchal Cathedral in Mtskheta – the ancient capital of Georgia – the ceremony of enthronization was held.

Georgian Patriarch Enthroned

After the election of the new Georgian Patriarch on 23 December 1977, Ilya II was enthroned two days later during an impressive service at the Svetitskhoveli Patriarchal Cathedral in Mtskheta. The following document, issued by the Patriarch's secretary, describes these events.

On 18 December 1977 forty days had passed since the Holy decease of His Holiness and Beatitude David V, Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia. On 23 December 1977 the XII Council of the Georgian Orthodox Church elected its new Catholicos and Patriarch. [...] On the morning of 23 December 1977, His Holiness Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia and other guests were received by His Eminence Metropolitan Ilya, the Patriarchal *Locum Tenens*, in the Sion Patriarchal Cathedral. They were met at the entrance of the cathedral by Bishop Grigori of Alaverdi and four priests. His Holiness Patriarch Pimen and other guests then proceeded to the altar where they were welcomed by the Patriarchal *Locum Tenens* and other hierarchs of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Bowing to the Holy Throne, His Holiness Patriarch Pimen prayed ardently to St Nina, who is equal to the apostles, the enlightener of Georgia [. . .] Following His Holiness, the other guests prayed and kissed the Holy

Cross of St Nina. Then the Patriarchal *Locum Tenens*, Metropolitan Ilya, invited His Holiness Patriarch Pimen and other hierarchs to take their seats in Presidium. The other members of the XII Council also took their seats.

At 12 a.m. a solemn *moleben* (service of intercession) began, conducted by Bishop Grigori of Alaverdi, four servers and two archdeacons. The Sion Patriarchal Cathedral resounded with the thrice-repeated cry to God, "Glory be to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee," followed by the humble, thrice-repeated prayer to the Virgin Mary, "Most Blessed and Glorious Lady, Mary ever-Virgin and Mother of God, have mercy upon us". The Holy Gospel according to St Matthew (Chap. 7:7) was then read. In this passage our Lord promises to send His blessing on all zealous people who ask for His grace: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you". Once again the thrice-repeated cry to God thundered out in everlasting gratitude, followed by the prayer to the Virgin Mary.

After the *moleben* had ended everyone waited in excitement for the opening of the XII Council. The Patriarchal *Locum Tenens*, His Eminence Metropolitan Ilya of Sukhumi and All Abkhazia, declared the XII Council of the Georgian Orthodox Church open and

delivered a brief opening speech. Then the Father Superior of the Sion Patriarchal Cathedral, Proto-priest Pakhomy Oboladze, was given the floor. He announced that the membership of the secretariat, editorial, mandate and accounting commissions had been unanimously approved. The chairman of the mandate commission, Proto-priest Georgi Moseshvili, announced the number of delegates to the XII Council. The report on "Internal and External activities of the Georgian Orthodox Church" was then delivered by Archimandrite Nikolai Makharadze. Following this His Holiness Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia conveyed his greetings to the XII Council and its chairman, the Patriarchal *Locum Tenens* Metropolitan Ilya, on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church. Now the most exciting moment had come. On behalf of the Holy Synod, Bishop Grigori of Alaverdi nominated His Eminence Metropolitan Ilya of Sukhumi and All Abkhazia, the Patriarchal *Locum Tenens*, for election as the new Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia.

Then came the voting. [. . .] Each member of the XII Council placed his ballot-paper in the ballot-box. The count began while the choir of the Sion Patriarchal Cathedral sang the Gloria majestically. Then came the historic moment: after counting the votes, the chairman of the accounting commission, Archpriest Ioan Ananiashvili, announced that Metropolitan Ilya, Patriarchal *Locum Tenens*, had been unanimously elected Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia. [. . .]

His Holiness Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia was the first to cordially congratulate His Holiness Ilya II. Then with tears of joy all the members of the XII Council and many others who witnessed this historic event congratulated him.

That evening His Holiness Ilya II received the delegation of the Armenian Apostolic Church, headed by His Holiness Vazgen I, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All the Armenians. He was accompanied by Archbishop Komitas, Bishop Arseny, and Archimandrite Anany who had arrived from Yerevan.

On the evening of 24 December 1977, the newly-elected Catholicos and Patri-

arch of All Georgia celebrated vespers in the Sion Patriarchal Cathedral.

At last the long-awaited day of 25 December 1977 came when the Holy Georgian Church was no longer an orphan but had found its new Catholicos and Patriarch. From early morning a never-ending stream of pilgrims and worshippers went to the ancient Svetitskhoveli Patriarchal Cathedral in Mtskheta, the former capital of Georgia. [. . .] The cathedral was crowded with believers, pilgrims and the representatives of the State University, and other Institutes, as well as public figures. All these thousands of people soon warmed up this stone cathedral. Many thousands of others were eager to get into the cathedral so as to get closer to the place where His Holiness and Beatitude Ilya II would soon arrive. At last his car stopped at the gate of the Svetitskhoveli Patriarchal Cathedral. The newly-elected Catholicos and Patriarch strode firmly along the red carpet, which had been rolled out for him, up to the *amvon* [raised area in front of the iconostasis. *Ed.*]. As he solemnly entered the cathedral, all the people greeted him with spiritual rejoicing. He kissed the Holy Cross, was clothed with his robes and then approached the altar to the singing of "He is worthy" [= "Aksios".] Then the prayers were read, after which the new Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia entered the altar and worshipped before the Holy Altar [. . .]. Then he came out and stood on the *amvon* facing the people. At this point the Archpriest solemnly proclaimed him to be the new Patriarch, after which those officiating sang three times "Aksios" followed by the choir. Then the new Patriarch took an oath, after which a member of the Holy Synod, Bishop Grigori of Alaverdi, handed him the Patriarchal rod with the words: "Take this rod". The choir and those officiating sang "Aksios" three times. Patriarch Ilya II then blessed the people with his right hand and mounted the throne. The ceremony of vesting the Patriarch began as each garment was carried out separately through the Holy Doors by a server.

[*The Liturgy then began. The new Patriarch, taking off his mitre, knelt in prayer during the reading of the Epistle and Gospel.*]

At the end of this service the Patriarch rose and those officiating placed on him the Patriarchal *panagias**, the cross, and the golden crown. Then the newly-elected Catholicos and Patriarch solemnly entered the Altar†, censed the altar, the sanctuary, iconostasis, Patriarch Pimen, those officiating, the reader, the singers and the worshippers. The time for mounting the dais came: Bishops Grigori and Georgi installed the new Patriarch on the throne, repeating three times "Aksios, Aksios, Aksios".

[At the end of the Liturgy the new Patriarch and all those officiating stood in front of the iconostasis. The new Patriarch was then greeted by all the church leaders present.]

His Holiness Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia greeted His Holiness and Beatitude Ilya II on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church, and presented him with the Vladimir icon of the Mother

of God, the Patriarchal *panagia* and cross. Then His Holiness Vazgen I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All the Armenians, greeted him on behalf of the Armenian Apostolic Church and presented him with a cross on a marble stand. These greetings continued for a long time; people came running from every side of this ancient cathedral, and there was no end to the people's rejoicing. [. . .]

SECRETARY OF THE CATHOLICOS AND
Patriarch of All Georgia.

Tbilisi 1977

* A *panagia* represents the Virgin and Child. It hangs on a chain and is worn like a pectoral cross. *Ed.*

† The sanctuary, which is mostly hidden from the congregation by the iconostasis.—*Ed.*

SOVIET JEWISH AFFAIRS

A JOURNAL ON JEWISH PROBLEMS IN THE USSR
AND EASTERN EUROPE

Volume 8

Number 1

Spring 1978

ARTICLES

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by Daniel Fish

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by Jacob Hen-Tov

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by Tadeusz Szafar

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1 September 1977 - 28 February 1978

Published by

The Institute of Jewish Affairs Ltd.,
13/16 Jacob's Well Mews, George Street,
London, W1H 5PD

The Journal appears twice a year, in spring and autumn

Annual Subscription £4 or \$8.

(air mail surcharge £3 or \$5.50)

Single issues £2.25 (\$4.50), with additional charges for air mail