

Unofficial translation

Statement made by H.E.Andrei V.KOZYREV,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation,  
at the event hosted by the Appeal of Conscience Foundation

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I would like to thank the President of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation for the invitation to this unordinary event. Rabbi Schneier is known as an indefatigable champion of judaism and, at the same time, of tolerance and rapprochement of religions on a common human basis.

Honorable Mr. Talbott,

Dear Mr. Zarb,

Distinguished colleagues, present here,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is profoundly symbolic that precisely under the auspices of the Appeal of Conscience the ceremony of presenting the Foundation's awards to His Holiness Aleksy II, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, and to Mr.Bolduc is taking place here, in New York, during the session of the UN General Assembly.

Known for its spiritual value, our people - heir to the legacy of the great culture - learned to the fullest extent from its tragic experience how fatal may be the consequences of seclusion, xenophobia and totalitarianism in all their manifestations. The self-isolation from the surrounding world was described as a great sin in the writings of Father Pavel Florensky, who perished in Soviet GULAG in the Solovetskie islands.

Nothing is more distant from the ideals of the orthodox church than to expose the icon and the cross at the side of the red flag near the "white house" in Moscow. Ironically enough, this happens after all these repressions by which the soviet system had subdued the church for seventy years!

Democracy and religious freedom are inseparable. There, where democracy is trampled upon, the faith and spiritual values will inevitably suffer.

We support the policy of the church towards the openness to the outside world and the development of extensive international relations. Together with the Russian Orthodox Church which is, undoubtedly, playing a particular role, we encourage all religious denominations and all cultural traditions without which the "unity in diversity" represented by the Russian Federation would be unthinkable.

For real patriots of Russia, any manifestation of chauvinism is as intolerable as the russophobia, the hatred towards Tatars, Gypsies, Asians, Caucasians or the antisemitism. This is dictated by common human ethics and, moreover, by the imperative need to preserve the unity of the country where more than one hundred nations and ethnic groups live.

Russian-American relations are undergoing the deepest transformation. For the first time in the twentieth century, we become partners on the basis of our common dedication to democratic values, rather than out of need or for the sake of protection from outside threat. The Appeal of Conscience which for many years supported Russian democratic movement has also assisted to make this turn. I am certain that in a new situation your Foundation will make its own unique contribution to the development of relations between the USA and Russia and help bring in the spirit of faith in the unity of basic aspirations of our peoples.