

# Chapter 5

## THE SECRETARY OF STATE TARGETS FATHER GRUNER

As of 1989 only one major Fatima apostolate stood firm in opposition to the Party Line: the Fatima Center in Canada, headed by Father Nicholas Gruner, whose eyewitness account of the turning point for the Blue Army we have already noted. Ordained in Avellino, Italy in 1976, but given permission by his bishop to reside in Canada, Father Gruner built a Fatima apostolate that was among the world's largest and most influential by the time the Party Line had been handed down from within the Vatican apparatus. The Fatima Center's flagship publication, *The Fatima Crusader* magazine, had been instrumental in debunking the computer-generated notes attributed to Sister Lucy, including the patently bogus Noelker letter, to the consternation of Father Fox and the Blue Army, which had been promoting the Party Line and the "letters from Lucy" as the end of the story of Russia's consecration.

By 1989 Father Gruner's bishop in Italy was receiving what the bishop called "worried signals from the Vatican Secretary of State"<sup>117</sup> concerning Father Gruner's activities in opposition to the Party Line, especially his promotion of the Consecration of Russia, which was perceived to be at odds with Cardinal Casaroli's *Ostpolitik*. By 1994 Fr. Gruner was encountering fierce opposition to his work from within the Vatican bureaucratic apparatus controlled by Secretary of State Sodano. This is the same bureaucracy that has hosted Vatican dinners with Mikhail Gorbachev,<sup>118</sup> supported the godless, pro-abortion International Criminal Court to the dismay of pro-life activists around the world,<sup>119</sup> and explicitly renounced any effort to

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<sup>117</sup> Letter from the Bishop of Avellino to Father Gruner, dated May 29, 1989.

<sup>118</sup> News of June 27, 2000 press conference. "Gorbachev Helps Introduce Casaroli Memoirs", *Catholic World News*, June 27, 2000. See also photograph published in *Catholic Family News*, January 2001, p. 13 showing Gorbachev at the Vatican delivering a lecture to the Pope and world politicians during the "Jubilee of Politicians".

<sup>119</sup> "Vatican Supports International Criminal Court With Symbolic Donation: Pro-lifers Around the Globe Dismayed," *Life Special Report*, July 5, 2002: "Pro-lifers around the globe were dismayed Monday at the Vatican's welcoming of the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Archbishop Renato Martino, the Vatican's representative at the United Nations issued a statement in support of the ICC and noted that the Vatican had contributed a symbolic donation of \$3,000 [30 pieces of silver, adjusted for inflation—c.a.f.] to the ICC trust fund set up by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan."

make converts among the Russian Orthodox.<sup>120</sup>

Recognizing that Father Gruner had every right under Church law to advocate his views on the Fatima message, the Sodano apparatus devised what it thought was a foolproof plan to silence this inconvenient priest by indirection. In 1994 Father Gruner's recently appointed Italian bishop in Avellino was pressured to order him to leave Canada and "return" to Avellino, Italy, where he had been ordained back in 1976, unless he found a new bishop to incardinate him.<sup>121</sup> Sodano's apparatus then took steps to prevent any other bishop in the world from incardinating Father Gruner, even employing papal nuncios—ambassadorial representatives of the Vatican city-state attached to the Secretariat of State—for the task of dissuading bishops from incardinating Father Gruner. At the end of this devious process, the plan was to announce (through the Bishop of Avellino) that since Father Gruner had "failed" to be incardinated by another bishop, he must return to Avellino within 30 days (abandoning his entire life's work) or he would be "suspended" for "disobedience."<sup>122</sup> But Sodano did not foresee at least two developments.

First, despite all efforts to block it, the Archbishop of Hyderabad agreed to incardinate Father Gruner. The Archbishop issued a formal decree of incardination declaring that "evil forces have conspired to destroy your [Father Gruner's] work of love" and that "bureaucratic forces cannot stifle God's work."<sup>123</sup> In subsequent canonical proceedings, the Sodano apparatus (speaking this time through the Congregation for the Clergy) arbitrarily asserted that the incardination in Hyderabad was "*tamquam non extans*"—"as if non-existent"—and that Father Gruner must still return to Avellino or be "suspended" for "disobedience" since he had "failed" to be incardinated elsewhere. The Archbishop of Hyderabad, rejecting this arbitrary claim, strongly reaffirmed his decree of incardination with a new decree, after examining all the pertinent documents and finding no defect in the incardination.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>120</sup> See, Vatican-negotiated *Balamand Statement* (1993), which declares that because of "radically altered perspectives and thus attitudes" engendered by Vatican II, the Catholic Church will train new priests "to pave the way for future relations between the two Churches, passing beyond *the outdated ecclesiology of return to the Catholic Church.*" See also, Francis Alban and Christopher A. Ferrara, *Fatima Priest*, Chapter 13, "The Balamand Connection", Fourth Edition (Pound Ridge, New York: Good Counsel Publications, 2000), pp. 188-194.

<sup>121</sup> "Incardination" means the formal attachment of a secular (diocesan) priest to a particular diocese. It derives from the Latin word for "hinge."

<sup>122</sup> Letter from the Bishop of Avellino, May 16, 1996, Protocol #102/96.

<sup>123</sup> Archbishop of Hyderabad, November 4, 1995.

<sup>124</sup> Second decree of the Archbishop of Hyderabad, March 10, 1999: "Having reviewed the documents ... I am satisfied that my decree of 4 November 1995 incardinating Father Nicholas Gruner into the Archdiocese of Hyderabad is valid and effective

Second, since Father Gruner had been living in Canada with the permission of the Bishop of Avellino since 1978, under Italian law it was legally impossible for him to return to Italy even if the order to return were just and valid. The bishop had never taken any steps to obtain proper permissions for a foreign priest to enter an Italian diocese, including an entry visa supported by written commitments that the bishop provide financial support, medical coverage and pension—for a priest who had been absent, with his permission, for more than 16 years and had not received one penny of support from Avellino in all that time. The Bishop of Avellino ignored two written requests from Fr. Gruner for an explanation of how he could be expected to “return” to Avellino without any visa or guarantees of financial support as required by Italian immigration law.<sup>125</sup>

Neither the Bishop of Avellino nor the Apostolic Signatura (the Church’s highest canonical tribunal to which Father Gruner appealed) ever responded to Fr. Gruner’s notification that the Archbishop of Hyderabad considered Fr. Gruner to be incardinated in that archdiocese.<sup>126</sup> The Bishop of Avellino himself had expressed no real interest in Father Gruner’s “return” to Avellino, which would involve legal work and substantial expense for the lifetime support and maintenance of a foreign-born priest whose services the bishop had never needed. The bishop was but a pawn in a canonical chess game contrived by the Sodano apparatus. But the game had become moot after Father Gruner’s incardination in Hyderabad.

Nevertheless, one must take note of the sheer injustice of what Sodano had attempted in defense of his Party Line. In essence, Father Gruner had been punished for nothing. He had been declared “suspended” by the Bishop of Avellino—not by any Vatican official—for “failing” to be incardinated elsewhere, when in fact he had been incardinated elsewhere. Even more insulting to one’s sense of justice is that those who declared Fr. Gruner’s “failure” to be incardinated

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... After due discernment, I am convinced that I am acting correctly though I was partly misled by influential people. I strongly feel that the good work he is doing in spreading devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary should not be hampered ... through undue canonical or juridical pressures. May Jesus Christ be praised!”

<sup>125</sup> Father Gruner’s letters of October 7, 1999 and September 17, 2000 to the Bishop of Avellino. The bishop has never answered these requests and to this day has failed to take the necessary legal steps—which *only the bishop* can take—for Father Gruner’s “return” to Avellino under Italian immigration law. That the bishop has done nothing in this regard, even though Fr. Gruner has twice pointed out the bishop’s duty to act, demonstrates that the bishop hasn’t the least interest in Fr. Gruner’s “return,” but rather is only playing along with the canonical game contrived by Fr. Gruner’s adversaries in the Vatican apparatus.

<sup>126</sup> Father Gruner’s letter of August 16, 1999 to the Bishop of Avellino states: “I send to you with this letter a copy of the decree regarding my incardination dated 10 March 1999 in virtue of which I must consider myself, with all the effects, incardinated in the Archdiocese of Hyderabad ...”

were the very ones who had attempted to block his incardination anywhere in the world besides Avellino, and had then arbitrarily asserted that even the valid incardination in Hyderabad—which Fr. Gruner had obtained despite their interference—was “non-existent.”

Having failed in his bid to canonically imprison Father Gruner in Avellino, Italy for the rest of his life, Cardinal Sodano abandoned the effort. But the Party Line endured to be imposed from above and promoted below.



Bishop da Silva was entrusted with the Third Secret of Fatima which contained the words of Our Lady. Her words followed the “etc” in the phrase “In Portugal the dogma of the faith will always be preserved etc.” Sister Lucy put in the “etc” to hold the place for the rest of Our Lady’s words. The words of Our Lady were written down by Sister Lucy under obedience to Bishop da Silva, placed in an envelope and delivered to the bishop on June 17, 1944. Bishop da Silva took Sister Lucy’s envelope containing Our Lady’s words in the Third Secret and placed that envelope into a larger envelope, on which he wrote:

*Este envelope com o seu conteudo sera entregue a Sua Eminencia O Sr. Cardeal D. Manuel, Patriarca de Lisboa, depois da minha morte.*

*Leiria, 8 Dezembro de 1945*

*† Jose, Bispo de Leiria.*

***This envelope with its contents shall be entrusted to His Eminence, his Lordship Cardinal Don Manuel [Cerejeira], Patriarch of Lisbon, after my death.***

***Leiria, December 8, 1945***

***† Jose, Bishop of Leiria.***

**This photograph appeared in the January 3, 1949 edition of *Life* magazine. (See page 79.)**