

was a much loved lecturer and conversationalist who enjoyed arguments over lunch in the seminary cafeteria and at late-evening sessions over Scotch and cigarettes at his own apartment. A blunt polemicist, he could be almost brutal with another's argument—so long as he had never met his adversary in person. Paul Tillich, for example, was among his closest colleagues at Union, even though Niebuhr dismissed the German theologian's metaphysics as mere "mysticism," while Tillich, in turn, complained that "Reinie" never really understood him.

Despite a series of strokes that sapped his energy and gradually paralyzed him over the past twenty years, Niebuhr continued to produce topical essays and receive friends at his Stockbridge home together with his wife, Ursula, a scholar in her own right who devoted much of her time to conserving her husband's energy. His last book, "Man's Nature and His Communities," disclosed a mellower Niebuhr who saw that despite the dangers of pride, man still needs a healthy self-regard. It was to be the final major revision of his endlessly changing dialectic with the world, though his topical essays continued to the end.

Russia's New Patriarch

The rituals were ancient and the setting was medieval, but the enthronement last week of a new Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia was fraught with unmistakably contemporary implications. Meeting for four days in Zagorsk, the ancient center of Russian Orthodoxy near Moscow, 70 of the church's highest prelates elected as their new leader Archbishop Pimen, who has been acting primate since the death of Patriarch Alexei fourteen months ago. The 60-year-old Pimen, known as a rather colorless and malleable man, is not expected to upset the delicate balance of church-state relations that Alexei handled with consummate political skill for 25 years. Even before he was elected, Pimen wired Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin his "profound gratitude for all that you do for the flourishing of our motherland . . ."

Ever since the Russian Revolution, the Russian Orthodox Church, which now embraces some 50 million faithful, has managed to survive—and in recent years, to thrive—by dint of a delicate accommodation with the atheistic Communist regime. The wily Alexei was frequently criticized for cooperating too willingly with the government, but he succeeded in greatly expanding internal church activity and even was able to re-establish contact with Western Christianity—notably, by joining the World Council of Churches in 1961. At the time of his death, in fact, the Russian church was making a strong bid for leadership of all 126 million of the world's Orthodox Christians, a primacy long and jealously guarded by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople. Such zealous internationalism had led many to be-



Pimen: 'Profound gratitude'

lieve that the most likely successor to Alexei was the burly and bearded Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad, the church's young and flamboyant "foreign minister."

Yet, despite his diplomatic talents, the 42-year-old Nikodim was conspicuously passed over by the church elders. They—and clearly the Soviet regime as well—preferred the white-bearded Pimen, who has held numerous high church posts and appears to be more interested in liturgical music (he was once choirmaster for the Moscow churches) than in complex church-state relations. Some years ago, Pimen publicly denied that persecution of the faithful existed in Russia. Now, as the Kremlin's apparent choice for the patriarchal throne, he is even less likely



Leggett: 'Unspoken agreement'

to agitate for greater autonomy and a larger church role within the U.S.S.R.

As for Nikodim, his position as the church's premier diplomat is not likely to be affected by Pimen's elevation. The church is almost certain to continue broadening its contacts with foreign religious bodies, because such connections provide the state with an effective platform for propaganda. Appropriately, Pimen's installment itself last week provided just such an occasion. With an audience of religious dignitaries assembled from around the world—including the WCC's head, Eugene Carson Blake, and a high emissary from the Vatican—the Russian church wasted little time in attacking "slandorous allegations of restrictions on freedom of conscience in the Soviet Union."

A Homosexual Minister?

His fellow Methodist ministers in Southwest Texas had known for the past five years that popular, energetic Gene Leggett, a 36-year-old divorced father of three, was a homosexual. But they had been content, as he put it, to live by "an unspoken agreement of 'you leave me alone and I'll leave you alone.'" Leggett, who has been a minister for ten years and recently a part-time actor with the Dallas Theater Center, found this arrangement "neither healthy nor Christian." Two months ago, in an open letter to friends and relatives, he had written: "I am a homosexual. This is not some new and frightening facet in my personality. I am still the same. Gene Leggett you have always known." And last week, in a daring and controversial move, he brought the disquieting issue of his sexual inclinations directly before the Southwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church meeting in San Antonio.

A parade of ministers spoke on the question of Leggett's fitness to continue in the pulpit, with some urging that the entire matter be ignored and others pressing for a church trial. "You are being asked," said Leggett in his own defense, "to vote on whether or not a homosexual is acceptable as a Methodist minister." Many of the delegates clearly did not want to make such a choice. To add to their discomfort, the conference was besieged by a group of homosexuals from the Gay Liberation Front who disrupted the ministers' meetings until they were given a chance to present their demands for sexual tolerance.

But the militant homosexuals' arguments came too late to help Leggett. By a vote of 144 to 117, the conference finally decided to suspend him from the ministry. "I have no bitterness toward the church," Leggett said after the vote. "I have told them I would be glad to help if they ever need me." But it seemed as though they never would. "The Gene Leggett case," said the conference's presiding bishop, O. Eugene Slater, "is closed."