

Bush administration courts greens, kooks

by Mark Burdman

Senior figures of the Bush administration have formed a working alliance with a coalition of unwashed ecologists linked to the Russian Orthodox Church, the British Royal Family, and the monastical cult center of Mount Athos, located at the very tip of the northern Greek peninsula. To be consistent with Mt. Athos's aversion to such facets of modern life as soap, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater might soon be obliged to tell the press corps that baths have been banned in the White House, should matters proceed on their current course.

In late January, a personal envoy of World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund) head Prince Philip is visiting the White House. His mission is to enlist George Bush's personal participation in a May 16-20 series of events in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the North American Conference on Religion and Ecology. These events are to be the launching point for a 1990-2000 "Decade of the Religious Community in Ecology."

About 50 U.S. environmentalist organizations will be participating, with the main religious support coming from the Washington (Episcopal) Cathedral. According to a British ecology movement insider, they are to create 30 "bio-regional" ecology and religious groups throughout the United States.

Prince Philip is scheduled to give the keynote address at a Festival on Faith and Ecology at the Washington Cathedral on the morning of May 19, which takes place following three days of ecological discussions May 16-18. The chairman of the May 19 festival is William Reilly, Bush's appointed head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, who will speak following Prince Philip.

Over the past few years, Reilly has worked with Prince Philip's chief personal adviser on ecological affairs, Dr. Martin Palmer of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education, and Culture (ICOREC) in Manchester, England. Palmer was a leading conceptual architect of the 25th anniversary meeting of the World Wildlife Fund in Assisi, Italy, in autumn 1986. This meeting brought together spokesmen from the major world faiths and conservationist groups, into a new gnostic, anti-progress alliance. Palmer, whose ICOREC consultancy group is linked both to the WWF and the World Council of Churches in Geneva, has also sponsored work to rewrite prayers and liturgies at harvest time, to celebrate *taking land out of production*—in violation of the injunction

of Genesis that man "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the Earth, and subdue it." ICOREC also worked with the Church of England hierarchy, to put together a September 1989 Festival on Faith and the Environment, which was attacked by British Christian spokesmen for encouraging paganism, witchcraft, and the occult.

The Mt. Athos connection

One special project on which Reilly and Palmer have worked together, in collaboration with certain officials of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople, has been to undermine the "American System" commitment to scientific and technological progress. According to a well-informed source in the British ecology movement involved in this work, the Greek Orthodox are "important in helping us sort out the relation of religion to the environment. They have a far better sense of creation than we do in the West; they see our relation to nature as sacramental rather than managerial. It's the same with the Russian Orthodox Church, but the Constantinople Patriarchate has things better worked out." He said that "Reilly from within the Roman Catholic tradition, Palmer from within the Protestant tradition, have done a lot to make more people aware of the Orthodox view."

In October 1988, Reilly, representing the World Wildlife Fund-U.S., was a featured speaker at a symposium on the island of Patmos, sponsored by the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek government. There, it was decided to establish a Feast Day of Creation, to further environmentalist principles. This Feast Day is being held at the Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople in September.

Out of such efforts, the British ecology source went on, it has been decided that "Mount Athos will be declared an ecological site." In September 1990, "conservation agencies and officials of the Greek Orthodox Church will start a pilot project, on Mt. Athos, to study ecological means of farming." Beyond this, at the nunnery of Ormelia, which is the "sister nunnery linked to Mt. Athos," there has been a "pilot project" launched between the World Wildlife Fund and Mt. Athos, to study "ecological farming."

These projects bring the ecology movement back home to its real mother (even if no women are allowed on Mount Athos). Mount Athos is a center of mysticism, irrationalism, and, if various accounts are to be believed, what the British call "buggery."

And the Russian Orthodox Church

Palmer is among a group of Western ecologists who have been invited by the Russian Orthodox Church for a meeting in late 1990 to discuss a "land-use project involving ecological principles. . . . An enormous amount of land is now being returned to the Russian Orthodox Church, which has been so atrociously managed by the Soviet state, that they are very eager to start ecological land-use pilot projects," a source close to Palmer reports.