

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE RUSSIAN **AUTOCRACY**

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FOREWORD

This book contains thirty-three essays on the subject of the Russian Orthodox Autocracy. The essays are arranged in roughly chronological order, covering the period from the founding of the Russian Autocracy by St. Vladimir in 988 to its temporary demise with the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917. The book was felt to be necessary because at the moment there exists very little literature in the English language on the subject of the Russian Autocracy from an Orthodox Christian point of view. Its aim is, with the help of God, to increase the understanding of a central concept in the Russian people's understanding of themselves and their history. A secondary purpose of the book is to make somewhat better known to English-speaking readers the works of some of the best writers on the Orthodox Autocracy, such as Archpriest Lev Lebedev, Ivan Solonevich, C.P. Pobedonostsev, L.A. Tikhomirov, M.V. Zyzykin, I.A. Ilyin, St. John Maximovich and Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us!

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1. THE RISE OF THE RUSSIAN AUTOCRACY

In 860 a new nation which St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, called “Ros” (Ρως)¹ appeared in the waters surrounding Constantinople and ravaged the suburbs. These invaders came from Russia, but were probably Scandinavian Vikings by race (the Finns call the Swedes “Rossi”, and the Estonians “Rootsi”, to this day). Through the grace of the Mother of God the invaders were defeated², and in the treaty which followed the ceasefire the Russians agreed to accept Christianity. A large number of Kievan merchants were catechized and baptized in the suburb of St. Mamas.

Later, St. Photius sent a group of missionaries with a Bishop Michael at its head to catechize and baptize in Kiev itself (he may also have sent St. Methodius). Michael began to preach the word of God among the pagans, and at their demand worked a miracle: he ordered a fire to be kindled and placed in it a book of the Gospels, which remained unharmed.³ Many were then converted, including Prince Askold of Kiev, who was baptized with the name Nicholas and opened diplomatic relations with Constantinople in 867.⁴

And so St. Photius was able to write to the other Eastern Patriarchs, that “the formerly terrible people, the so-called Ros... are even now abandoning their heathen faith and are converting to Christianity, receiving bishops and pastors from us, as well as all Christian customs... The zeal of faith has burned them to such a degree that they have received a Bishop and shepherd and have accepted the Christian religion with great eagerness and care.”⁵

The Appeal to Riurik

Two years after the defeat of 860, the Slavs of the northern city of Novgorod made an unprecedented change in the form of their political organization, inviting the Scandinavian Vikings under Rurik to rule over them: “Our land is great and abundant, but there is no order in it – come and rule over us.” As N.M. Karamzin writes: “The citizens perhaps remembered how useful and peaceful the rule of the Normans had been: their need for good order and quiet made them forget their national pride, and the Slavs, ‘convinced,’ as tradition relates, ‘by the advice of the Novgorod elder

¹ The word Ρως appears in Ezekiel 38.2, as part of the coalition of powers called “God and Magog” coming against Israel “from the extreme parts of the north” in the last times. Several interpreters identified Ρως with Russia. See Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, *Sobranie Pisem* (Collected Letters), Moscow, 2000, p. 840.

² The feast of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God was instituted to commemorate the City’s miraculous deliverance (October 1).

³ Archimandrite Nikon (Ivanov), Protopriest Nicholas (Likhomanov), *Zhitia russkikh svyatykh* (Lives of the Russian Saints), Tutaev, 2000, vol. 1, 15/28 July, pp. 817-818.

⁴ According to tradition, Princes Askold and Dir were later martyred. See Archpriest Lev Lebedev, “Pervoe Kreschenie Rusi i Muchenicheskij Podvig Pervogo Russkogo Gosudaria-Khristianina Oskol’ da-Nikolaia Kievskogo” (“The First Baptism of Rus’ and the Martyric Feat of the First Russian Christian Ruler, Askold-Nicholas of Kiev”), http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr12/R13_22.htm. There is a tradition that, even earlier than Askold, early in the ninth century, a Russian prince called Bravlin received Holy Baptism. after witnessing miracles at the tomb of St. Stephen of Sourozh in the Crimea. See the *Menaion* for St. Stephen on December 15.

⁵ St. Photius, in *Patrologia Graeca* 102, 736-737.

Gostomysl,' demanded rulers from the Varyangians."⁶

As I. Solonevich notes, this appeal was similar to that of the British Christians to the Saxons Hengist and Horsa.⁷ However, the results were very different. Whereas in Britain the invitation led to a long series of wars between the Britons and Saxons and the eventual conquest of most of England by the pagans, in Russia it led, without bloodshed, to the foundation of a strong and stable State, in which the Germanic element was quickly swallowed up by the Slavic. Thus by inviting the Vikings to rule over them, the Russian Slavs triumphed at one stroke over egoism and self-will in both the individual and the national spheres.

As New Hieromartyr Andronicus of Perm wrote: "At a time when, in the other peoples of Europe, the power of the princes and kings was subduing the peoples to themselves, appearing as external conquerors of the disobedient, but weak, - we, on the other hand, ourselves created our own power and ourselves placed the princes, the prototypes of our tsars, over ourselves. That is how it was when Riurik and his brothers were recognized by Ilmen lake. We placed them to rule over ourselves at a time when we had only just begun to be conscious of ourselves as a people, and when our statehood was just beginning to come into being."⁸

But why was it necessary for the Russians to invite foreigners to rule over them? Because, according to General F. Vinberg, of a special trait of the Russian national character, "the complete inability of our people to display the statist instincts of creativity and constructiveness on the soil of social self-activity, without the initiative and influence of the central, national power of the Autocratic Order..."⁹ As Russian history was to show, the Russians prospered when a powerful Orthodox Christian Autocracy was put in place over them, and perished when it was taken away from them...

[Vladimir the Saint](#)

Although it took many centuries for the Russian Autocracy to establish itself over its external and internal rivals, and effect the transformation of Russia into Holy Russia, "the real state life of Rus'," writes St. John Maximovich, "begins with Vladimir the Saint. The princes who were before him were not so much ruler-lords as conquerors, for whom the establishment of good order in their country was less important than subduing the rich country to themselves and forcing it to pay some tribute. Even Svyatoslav preferred to live in Bulgaria, which he had conquered, and not in his own capital. It was Christianity, which was brought into Russia first by Olga, who had great influence on her eldest grandsons Yaropolk and Oleg, and then finally by St. Vladimir the Beautiful Sun, who baptized Rus', that laid the firm foundations of Statehood.

"Christianity bound together by a common culture the princely race, which was, they say, of Norman extraction, and the numerous Slavic and other races which

⁶ Karamzin, *Predania Vekov* (The Traditions of the Ages), Moscow: Pravda, 1989, p. 65.

⁷ I. Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk: Luchi Sophii, 1998, p. 214.

⁸ St. Andronicus, *O Tserkvoi, Rossii* (On the Church and Russia), Fryazino, 1997, p. 132.

⁹ Vinberg, *Krestnij Put'* (The Way of the Cross), Munich, 1920, St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 310.

constituted the population of ancient Rus'. It taught the princes to look on themselves as defenders of the weak and oppressed and servants of the righteousness of God. It taught the people to see in them not simply leaders and war-commanders, but as people to whom power had been given by God Himself."¹⁰

It was St. Vladimir's grandmother, St. Olga, who in 957 initiated the Christianization of her country by being baptized in Constantinople. Her godfather was the Byzantine Emperor himself.¹¹ However, she did not succeed in converting her son Svyatoslav, and towards the end of her reign a pagan reaction set in, which intensified under Svyatoslav and in the early years of Vladimir's rule. Like Moses, St. Vladimir was expelled from his homeland in his youth. But in 980 he returned and conquered Kiev. After a period of fierce idolatry, during which he put to death the first martyrs of Russia, Theodore and John, he repented and led his people out of the Egypt of idolatry and through the Red Sea of baptism in the Dniepr on August 1, 988, and thence into the inheritance of the promised land, the new Israel of "Holy Russia", which had been all but evangelized by his death in 1015.

In view of this, the usual epithet of "new Constantine" granted to the kings of new Orthodox nations was more than usually appropriately applied to St. Vladimir, as Metropolitan Hilarion applied it in his famous *Sermon on the Law and Grace* in about 1050. Indeed, Russia was not only an offshoot of Christian Rome, like Bulgaria or Georgia. Through her racial and dynastic links with Western Europe (especially the Britanno-Scandinavian north-west), Russia became the heir of what was left of the Old, Orthodox Rome of the West, regenerating the ideal of the Symphony of Powers just as it was being destroyed in the West by the heretical Papacy. This was symbolized especially by the marriage between Great-Prince Vladimir Monomakh and Gytha, daughter of the last Orthodox king of England, Harold II, who was killed by the Catholics at Hastings in 1066. Moreover, by her filial faithfulness to Byzantium, as well as through the marriage of Great-Prince Ivan III to Sophia Palaeologus in the fifteenth century, Russia became the heir of the Second or New Rome of Constantinople.¹²

Thus Vladimir was not a "new Constantine" in the conventional sense attached to all founders of new Christian dynasties in the early Middle Ages. His kingdom evolved from being a part of the New Rome into being its reincarnation or heir. In fact, it was the Third Rome in embryonic form¹³...

G. Podskalsky writes: "Although Hilarion compared Vladimir with Constantine the Great and recognized his sovereignty over Kievan Rus', he ascribed the title of 'Emperor' neither to him nor to his successor. The collector (or editor) of the *Izbornik* of 1076 everywhere exchanged the term βασιλευς ('emperor') for 'prince' or 'kahan', so as thereby to adapt the Byzantine texts to Russian conditions, while the term

¹⁰ St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origins of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, p. 3.

¹¹ However, according to D. Rybakov, St. Olga received Holy Baptism at the end of 944 in Kiev, possibly together with her husband, Great Prince Igor. See *Vestnik I.P.Ts.* (Messenger of the True Orthodox Church), № 2 (12), April-June, 1998, p. 43).

¹² This marital bond with Byzantium was first created by Vladimir himself, when he married the purple-born princess Anna, sister of Emperor Basil II.

¹³ Vladimir minted coins showing himself in imperial attire (Vladimir Volkoff, *Vladimir the Russian Viking*, Bath: Honeyglen, 1984, p. 256.

βασιλευς, 'tsar', was kept only when it referred to God. The idea of the 'transfer of the empire' (*translatio imperii*), which captivated the Bulgarian tsar Simeon and Charlemagne in relation to the Frankish empire, was foreign to pre-Mongol Rus'. The Byzantine supremacy in the hierarchy of States was also strengthened by the emperors' practice of adopting the role of sponsor at the baptism of newly converted kings or princes."¹⁴

Thus the Emperor became the sponsor at the baptisms of Tsar Boris-Michael of Bulgaria and Princess Olga of Kiev. Such sponsorship, according to Richard Fletcher, "indicated secular lordship as well. The experience of baptism could thus become a token of submission. Exported to the west we can see the idea at work in the baptismal sponsorship of Widukind by Charlemagne in 785, or of Harald Klak by Louis the Pious in 826, or of the Viking leader Guthrum by Alfred of Wessex in 878."¹⁵

The inferiority of the other Orthodox rulers to the Byzantine Emperor was indicated in various ways: by differences in titles (the Russian princes were called *αρχοντες*), and by the fact that only the emperors were anointed at their enthronement. Fr. Timothy Alferov writes: "The Russian Great Princes and the Serbian, Georgian and Bulgarian rulers were defenders of the Church only in their territories. They were also raised to the principedom with the blessing of the Church, but by a different rite (*o ezhe blagosloviti knyazyia*), which included the crowning of the prince, but contained no anointing."¹⁶ If the Frankish and Bulgarian rulers had been accorded the title of basileus, this was only under duress and was withdrawn as soon as politically expedient. And even much later, in 1561, when the pre-eminence of Russia in the Orthodox world could not be denied, the Ecumenical Patriarch Joasaph II accorded the Ivan the Terrible the title Basileus only because he was thought to descend from a Byzantine princess – Anna, the wife of St. Vladimir. For the Greeks believed that there could be no Third Rome after the Second...

However, not everyone agreed with this viewpoint. According to Podskalsky, a Greek Metropolitan of Kiev, Nicephorus I, "without hesitation called both the emperor and the prince equally likenesses of the Divine archetype. This meant that he rejected the Byzantine idea of the single and undivided imperial power, which was inherent only in the Basileus of the Romans and which in this capacity reflected the Divine order of the world. The conception of the emperor as 'the image of God' (*imago Dei*, *εικων θεου*) became well-known in Kiev thanks to the *Mirror of Princes* composed in 527 by Deacon Agapetus for Justinian. Extracts from it, in which the discussion was about the duty of subjects to submit to the visible deputy (prince) of the invisible ruler of the world (God), were included in the *Izbornik* of 1076."¹⁷

¹⁴ Podskalsky, *Khristianstvo i Bogoslovskaiia literatura v Kievskoj Rusi (988-1237 gg.)* (Christianity and Theological Literature in Kievan Rus' (988-1037), St. Petersburg, 1996, p. 68.

¹⁵ Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 278.

¹⁶ Alferov and Alferov, *O Tserkvi, pravoslavnom Tsarstve i poslednem vremeni* (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Time), Moscow: "Russkaia Idea", p. 18.

¹⁷ Podskalsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68. "Yet it was a quite exceptional case," writes G. Fedotov, "when the author of the panegyric of Prince Andrew of Vladimir dared to apply to him the famous definition of Chrysostom-Agapit, so popular in later Moscow: 'Caesar by his earthly nature is similar to any man, but by the power of his dignity he is similar to God alone' (*The Russian Religious Mind*, Harvard University Press, 1966, vol. I, p. 398).

Church and State in Kievan Rus'

St. Vladimir's great work of unifying and evangelizing Russia was continued by his son Yaroslav and his great-grandson Vladimir Monomakh. Protected and led by the Autocracy, the Church prospered. And in its turn the Autocracy was strengthened and sanctified by its union with the Church. It is sometimes stated that the Church was always enslaved to the State in Russia from the time that St. Vladimir supposedly forced his people into the waters of baptism at the point of a spear. This is not true: the very rapid spread of Orthodox Christianity in Russia from the time of St. Vladimir, and the fact that it remained firmly entrenched until at least the Russian revolution, producing very many saints, can only be explained as being the result of the voluntary and joyful reception of the faith by the people. And if the State took the lead in this, as in every other major aspect of Russian life, this in no way entailed that the Church was enslaved to the Great Princes and Tsars.

From the beginning Church and State were exceptionally close in Kievan Rus'. This was the result, in part, of the fact that it was the Great Princes who introduced the faith into Russia, whereas in Byzantium St. Constantine came to power when the Church was already three hundred years old and well-established.¹⁸

St. Vladimir threatened those who threatened the independence of the Church as follows: "If anyone breaks my rule, whether he be my son or a servant, or anyone of my race or one of the boyars, and interferes in the ecclesiastical affairs of the metropolitan, which I gave into the hands of the metropolitan, and of the Church, and of the bishops in all the cities in accordance with the canons, he will be judged and punished. If anyone tries to seize the judgement of the Church, he will be deprived of the name of Christian, and may all such be cursed by the Holy Fathers."¹⁹

Yaroslav the Wise strengthened this tendency in "The Church Statute of Kiev".

"In this document," writes Podskalsky, "we observe the symphony already developing between the Russian princes and the Church: 'I, Grand Prince Yaroslav, son of Vladimir, in accordance with the wish of my father, have conferred with Metropolitan Hilarion and have prepared [this] Church Statute because I believe that there are matters that belong neither to [the exclusive] jurisdiction of the prince nor to that of the boyars. I have granted this jurisdiction, as embodied in the present rules of the Church Statute, to the metropolitan and the bishops.' An examination of these rules reveals that their nature is primarily concerning morality as determined by Church law, for example, 'If the godfather should have illicit relations with the mother [of his godchild], the bishop shall receive one grivna of gold and at his discretion he shall also impose [an appropriate] penance.' Sometimes the line between Church and State is blurred, as in the following statute: 'If a husband should force his wife into prostitution, this is a religious crime. The prince [however] shall administer justice in this case in accordance with the ancient customs and traditions.' Occasionally the decision is shared: 'The bishop shall receive 100 grivnas as the fine from whoever sets a dwelling, or a barn, or anything else afire. The prince shall the jurisdiction 'in this

¹⁸ Alferov, "Teokratia ili Ierokratia".

¹⁹ St. Vladimir, in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Russkaia Ideologia* (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 83-84.

matter in accordance with ancient custom and traditions].’ As we see from the above statutes, the State both acknowledged and deferred to the Church from the beginning of Russian history. This relationship between the Prince and (in this case) the Metropolitan was one of mutual respect and cooperation. The State had its older traditions but incorporated a Christian worldview into its legal system and invited the Church to take part in the judicial side of Russian life when it deemed it appropriate.”²⁰

As an example of the closeness of Church and State in Kievan Rus’, we may cite an incident from Novgorod in 1078, as described by Bishop Dionysius (Alferov): “A certain sorcerer by demonic power wrought many signs and wonders, collected a huge crowd of people whom he had deceived and went with them to destroy the church of Holy Wisdom. The Bishop of Novgorod with a cross in his hands stood in front of the church and called the Christians to help him. But only very few hastened to his side. Only the Prince of Novgorod, Gleb Svyatoslavich, did not fear. He went alone to meet the armed mob and in the sight of all struck with his sword the servant of satan who had proudly prophesied to the people that he would be enthroned that day. After this the crowd dispersed. It is evident that in such a situation no ordinary good fellow could take the place in the defense of the Church of the Christian Autocrat, who had received from her a blessing on his service and who was protected by the power of God through her prayers.”²¹

The relationship between Church and State in Kievan Rus’ is described by Podskalsky as follows:

“The relations between the sovereign and his subjects were based on principles drawn from Old and New Testament texts. This, for example, is how the chronicler views princely virtue: ‘If there are righteous princes on the earth, then many sins are forgiven to the earth, but if they are evil and cunning, then God brings more evil on the earth, insofar as its head is of the earth’. The Novgorod Bishop Luke the Jew looks at the matter differently: ‘Fear God, honour the prince, you are slaves first of God, and also of the lord (that is, the prince – G.P.). The logical consequence of both utterances is, in principle, the right to resist the authorities, although the existence of this right and the practical possibilities of applying it were just not formulated sufficiently clearly in Rus’. On the contrary, the Church willingly resorted to helping the State in its struggle with the remnants of paganism and the reappearance of heresies, and also in the missionary absorption of new territories. In the first place this was a work of the monks, whose ranks at the beginning were filled up with many from the land-owning nobility and the social élite of society. But the metropolitans, who were all practically without exception Greeks, tried, on their part, to direct the efforts of the Russian princes to ward off the attacks of the nomads on the East Roman empire, without, however, overstepping the bounds of loyalty to the princely power....”²²

“The princes in their turn gradually gave the Church juridical privileges, steady income and possessions in land... Crimes in the sphere of family relations, which were

²⁰ Archimandrite Luke, “Nationalism, Russia, and the Restoration of the Patriarchate”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 51, № 6, November-December, 2001, pp. 26-27.

²¹ Alferov and Alferov, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²² Podskalsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

subject to punishment from the point of view of Christian morality, entered into the administration of the Church already in the 11th century. The jurisdiction of the prince's power was limited by the immunity of the clergy and the members of their families, and also of the monks and the 'church people', that is, people under the special protection of the Church (the poor, the sick, strangers, etc.). However, sometimes representatives of the clergy were still brought before the prince's court... "Just as the princes took part in the administration of Church affairs, so the episcopate strove to influence the princes' politics. Such cooperation between Church and State reached its zenith during the rule of Vladimir Monomakh [1113-1125]. But, according to the words of Hilarion, already Vladimir I had taken part in councils, discussing with the Church leadership ways and means of strengthening faith amidst the newly converted. In the future such cooperation gradually broadened in proportion as the place of the Greek hierarchs was taken by bishops of Russian extraction, while the princes thereby received the possibility of exerting greater influence on the choice of candidates and their consecration. The chronicler tells us of a whole series of bishops who recommended themselves by carrying out complicated diplomatic missions. The triumphant conclusion of treaties by the princes was accompanied by oaths and kissing of the cross. The monks of the Kiev Caves monastery more than once took up a critical position in relation to the prince. Thus, for example, in 1073 Abbot Theodosius refused to join the princely civil war on the side of Svyatoslav, who had then seized the princely throne, and did not even fear sharply to point out to the prince the lawlessness of his actions, as well as his exiling his brother Izyaslav. Only the lofty authority of the monastery leader and the pleas of the brethren saved him from persecution, and after the laying of the foundations of a new monastery church complete reconciliation was achieved. If the monks thereby kept an inner distance in relation to politics, the episcopate was forced sometimes to enter into it, although it did not take an immediate part in the counsels of the princes...

"In general, in the course of the civil wars of the 11th-12th centuries, the Church acquired a new moral authority in the eyes both of the princes and the people, while the State, for its part, received from the Church a confirmation of its divine purpose for the sake of the common good. From the Slavonic translation of the *Nomocanon* in 14 chapters Kievan Rus' drew the ideal formula for the relations between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities going back to Justinian's Sixth Novella.... The emperor was bound to concern himself with the teaching of the faith, with respect for the clergy and with the observation of the canons. It was precisely this postulate that was laid by Metropolitan Hilarion at the base of his reasonings on agreement between the Church and the State..

"And so, in all the manifestations of theological and church-political thought, in art, in Divine services and in literary works of various genres, already in the 11th century one and the same national tendency was revealed, a leaning towards a State Church... The strength of the Church consisted in the fact that it worthily presented itself in a non-standard situation which it was impossible to master without the aid of earlier conceptual models and models of behaviour transferred to the new situation; while the strength of the State consisted in an understanding of the far-reaching commonality of its interests with the interests of the Church, by virtue of which it was necessary to give the Church necessary aid in the fulfillment of her mission. In spite of, or even thanks to the fact that not one of these two powers was able to boast of

complete independence from the other, the sphere of their external activity and internal freedom was as great as it would ever be later."²³

Kievan Rus' represented a rare balance of freedom and obedience in State life. Obedience was owed to the powers that be; but if they obtained their power in an unlawful manner, the Church felt at liberty to withdraw her support. Thus St. Theodosius of the Kiev Caves (+1074) for a time stopped commemorating Prince Sviatoslav of Kiev because he had usurped the throne of his brother Iziaslav.²⁴

Fedotov writes: "Kievan chroniclers are very outspoken about the vices and flaws of their princes; they obviously felt no restraint imposed by princely dignity upon the freedom of their judgement. All they can afford to do, in order to alleviate the guilt of a prince, is to attribute his deficiency to the influence of bad counselors. Bad counselors, mostly 'young ones' (compare Isaiah 3.1-4), are the root of all political evils. The youth of the prince himself is often considered as a great misfortune and a sign of God's wrath against the country.

"Good and bad princes alike are sent by God as a reward or punishment to the people. 'If a country is right before God, He ordains in it a just Caesar or prince, loving law and justice, and he installs governors and judges administering justice.' But 'woe to the city where the prince is young, and likes to drink wine at the sound of the gusli with young counselors... Such are given by God for our sins' (Lavr. 1015).

"If a bad prince is sent by God and his tyranny has a penitential significance this seems to exclude revolt against the tyrant as a legitimate political action. This conclusion would be quite correct in the spirit of the Byzantine and even early Christian ethics; it was indeed the doctrine of Anastasius Sinaitas in the seventh century and it was repeated by some Russian moralists as well. And yet the import of this doctrine of obedience was greatly exaggerated by the modern historians who often viewed the early Russian ways of life from the viewpoint of Muscovy. The Kievan chronicler may consider a revolt of the citizens against their prince as an act of God's will, punishing the prince in his turn (Lavr. 1068)... The chastising providence of God, in the political sphere, is double-faced; occasionally, it can use to its own ends even a popular revolution.

"There was, however, one thing before which ancient Russia, unlike Byzantium, stopped with horror: the murder of a prince. Regicide in Byzantium was so common that it seems a part of the political system, a necessary corrective to autocracy. In Russia,... a revolt, although it was sometimes justified if it ended in the overthrow of a prince, was never pardoned if it resulted in his murder..."²⁵

Thus the very first saints canonized in Kievan Rus' were Princes Boris and Gleb, the sons of St. Vladimir, who were killed by their evil brother Sviatopolk. And it was the fratricide of the Kievan princes that was to destroy the State...

²³ Podskalsky, op. cit., pp. 63, 64-65, 66-67, 71.

²⁴ Nestor, *A life of St. Theodosius*.

²⁵ Fedotov, op. cit., pp. 398-400.

Nevertheless, it remains true that a far greater proportion of rulers died peacefully in their beds in Russia than in Byzantium.

The Breakup of Kievan Rus'

The unity of Kievan Rus' under St. Vladimir and his immediate successors was an extraordinary achievement in view of the country's lack of natural frontiers, constant invasions of barbarians and multinational character. However, as G. Podskalsky writes, on the death of Yaroslav the Wise in 1054, according to his will, "the rule of the Kievan princes was replaced by a federation of independent princedoms linked between themselves only by the hierarchy of princely thrones and the constant redistribution of princedoms within the princely clan (according to the principle of seniority) that flowed from that. These new traits of State construction were fraught with constant political tension, and forced the Church to step forward in a new for her role of preserver and defender of State unity."²⁶

From the beginning of the twelfth century the State began to weaken from both within and without. The basic reason was the internecine warfare of the princes who, though belonging to the same family, fought each other for princedoms. For the Russian custom – introduced, according to Ivan Solonevich, from feudal Hungary, Poland and, in part, Germany²⁷ – was that the Great Prince of Kiev would divide up his realm into principalities and give each of his sons one part. This opened the gates to fratricidal strife. It was not until the fourteenth century that Muscovite Russia, under the influence of St. Sergius of Radonezh, introduced the law of primogeniture...

However, Solonevich considers the civil wars of the Kievan princes to be insufficient to explain why none of them succeeded in creating a lasting and powerful empire. "For the question inevitably arises: why did Kiev and those with her not cope with situation, and why did Moscow and those with her cope? Neither does the idea that the Moscow princes were talented, or the Kievan ones untalented, contribute to our understanding: was Yaroslav, who, though called 'the Wise', divided the Kievan land between his sons, stupider than, for example, Daniel Alexandrovich, who ascended the throne at the age of ten, or Michael Fyodorovich, who ascended the throne at the age of sixteen? Under these princes the Muscovite land was not divided. Would it not be more correct to seek for the reasons for success and failure in some deeper or much broader phenomena than princely childbirths, and more constant causes than the talent or lack of it of some tens of princes who shone on the Kievan or Muscovite thrones?

"The most obvious reason for the failure of the pre-Muscovite rulers was the 'civil wars' in the Novgorodian or Kievan *veches* [assemblies or parliaments], independently of whether they were decided by the armed combat of princes on the field of battle or by the battle of parties. If we take the main lines of development of Novgorod and Kiev, Galich and Vilna, on the one hand, and Moscow, on the other, then it will become sufficiently obvious: both Novgorod and Kiev, and Galich and Vilna created a purely aristocratic order for themselves. And in Novgorod, and partly also in Kiev, the

²⁶ Podskalsky, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

²⁷ Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, p. 153.

princes, that is, the representatives of the monarchical principle in the country, were simply hirelings, whom the *veche* sometimes invited and sometime expelled as seemed fit to them. In Galich the princely power was completely eaten up by the boyars. In the Lithuanian-Russian State the aristocracy was just waiting for the moment to establish their freedoms before the face of the representative of one-man rule. They succeeded in this – at the price of the existence of the State. ‘In Kiev in the 11th century the administration of the city and district was concentrated in the hands of the military elders’ (Klyuchevsky). ‘The *veches* in Kiev and Novgorod, which appeared according to the chronicler already at the beginning of the 11th century, from the time of the struggle between Yaroslav and Svyatopolk in 1015, began, from the end of the century, to make louder and louder noises, making themselves felt everywhere and interfering in the relations between the princes. The princes had to take account of this force, enter into deals with it, conclude political agreements with the cities. ‘The prince, sitting in Kiev, had to strengthen the senior throne under him by compacts with the Kievan *veche*. The princes were not fully empowered sovereigns of the land, but only their military-political rulers.’

“Not so long ago Russian social thought looked on Kiev Rus’, and in particular Novgorod, as, very unfortunately, unsuccessful attempts to establish a democratic order in Rus’. The coarse hand of eastern despotism crushed these attempts: ‘the *veche* is not to exist, the bell is not to exist, and Novgorod is to exist under the complete control of the Muscovite princes’... Now opinions of this democracy have changed somewhat. Neither in Kiev nor in Novgorod was there any democracy. There was a feudal-mercantile aristocracy (in Vilna it was a feudal-landowning aristocracy). And it was this, and by no means ‘the people’, that tried by all means to limit and bind the princely power. And not, of course, in the name of ‘the people’, but in its own class interests. One can say: both in Galich, and in Novgorod, and in Vilna, and in Kiev the aristocracy – whether land-owning or mercantile – swallowed up the supreme power. But one can also put it another way: neither in Galich, nor in Novgorod, nor in Vilna, nor in Kiev did the popular masses succeed in creating their own power. And for that reason the lower classes attached themselves to that power which the Muscovite lower classes had succeeded in creating: ‘we want to be under the Muscovite Tsar, the Orthodox Tsar’.”²⁸

²⁸ Solonevich, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-267. As G.G. Litavrin writes: “(The Great Prince) was not the only one amidst others, like the Byzantine Emperor, - he was only the first among equals” (quoted in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 177). The American professor Richard Pipes agrees that the prince was not the supreme authority: “If in Novgorod the prince resembled an elected chief executive, the Great Prince of Lithuanian Rus’ was not unlike a constitutional king.” (*Russia under the Old Regime*, London: Penguin Books, second edition, 1995, p. 38).

However, G. P. Fedotov believed that in Novgorod, at any rate, there was real ‘people’s power’: “Was Novgorod a republic? Yes, at least for three and a half centuries of its history, from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. The fact that a prince held authority in Novgorod should not deceive us...”

“Supreme authority in the Novgorod republic belonged, of course, to the *veche*, or the assembly of all free citizens. The *veche* elected the entire administration, not excluding the archbishop, and had the power to check on it and judge it. This was a direct, not a representative, democracy, like the republics of the ancient world. Only those who participated in the public meetings could exercise their political rights. An immense territory was administered by the inhabitants of this single city. This was the weak spot in the republican systems of both Athens and Rome; the agora and the forum could not rule empires...”

“The archbishop stood above parties and expressed the unity of the republic. To make him really independent, his name was drawn by lot from those of the candidates elected by the *veche*. The three

Archpriest Lev Lebedev is in essential agreement with this verdict: "What a misfortune is democracy, whether it be of the *veche* or of the boyars! And what madness! Never was the people (or even the best part of it) the source of power and law, nor can it be. In democracy everyone wants to 'drag' things in their direction, as a result of which they 'break up' the Russian Land, as the chronicler puts it... The fall of great Kiev was accomplished to a significant degree under the influence of the *veche*. Often it either summoned princes that it liked, driving out the lawful ones, or, on the contrary, invited the latter and drove out the others, thereby 'helping' the princes 'to break up' Great Kievan Rus', which had been gathered together by the great labours of St. Vladimir, Yaroslav the Wise and Vladimir Monomakh."²⁹

Autocracy restored: St. Andrew of Bogolyubovo

The first major attempt by a Russian ruler to halt the decline of Kievan Rus' by imposing a more disciplined, centralized and truly autocratic power began in 1155, when Prince Andrew, son of Great Prince George Dolgoruky of Kiev, left the small southern principality of Vyshgorod to settle in Rostov-Suzdal, one of the smaller principalities situated in the dense forests of the Volga-Oka triangle.

Here, far from the fratricidal politics of the south, as N.M. Karamzin writes, "the people had not yet exhibited a mutinous spirit, they did not judge and change their sovereigns, but fervently obeyed them and fought bravely for them".³⁰ It was therefore the perfect base for Andrew, who, "having not only a good heart, but also an excellent mind, clearly saw the reasons for the woes of the State and wanted to save at least his own land from them: that is, he removed the unfortunate system of appanages and ruled on his own, giving cities neither to his brothers nor to his sons".³¹

"Here in the north," writes M.V. Zyzykin, "the princes felt themselves to be the owners of the territory, which they could dispose of according to their discretion. And recognizing themselves to be creators and builders of that which was being formed more than was the case in the south, they could no longer be reconciled with the character of the temporary ownership of thrones that had brought them to unending transfers of their princedoms, and which gave the impression of some kind of queue, albeit a disordered queue. Now the prince does not leave his appanage, even if he obtains a great princedom. 'This is mine, for it has been brought into being by me' – that was the consciousness of the prince in the north. If earlier, in the south, there had

lots on the altar in the Cathedral of St. Sophia symbolized the divine will for the fate of the city-state. In the political symbolism of Great Novgorod its sovereign, the bearer of authority, was St. Sophia herself..." (*The Russian Religious Mind*, Harvard University Press, 1966, volume II, pp. 188-190, 191).

²⁹ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 13.

³⁰ N.M. Karamzin, *Predania Vekov* (The Traditions of the Ages), Moscow, 1989, p. 207. Lebedev sees in this trait the influence of the Finnish element of the population. For the Finns, according to Tacitus, "did not fear people, and were not frightened of enemies, but attained that which is difficult to attain – they wanted nothing"! So when the Russians emigrated to these areas from the south and absorbed the Finnish population, they "also wanted nothing in their earthly life". Only, since they were Orthodox Christians, these Russians "wanted life in the Heavenly Kingdom, which is why sedentary Rus' strove to construct her earthly Fatherland in the image of the Heavenly, eternal Fatherland!" (*op. cit.*, pp. 12, 15).

³¹ Karamzin, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

still been some idea of a collective ownership by the Riurik family, now a more complete isolation of the princely lines took place... Together with the concept of property, that appeared in the north as a result of the personal activity and personal political creativity of the princes in the building up of society, there came to an end not only the transfer of princes from throne to throne, but also a change took place in the order of inheritance as the concept of private civil right was introduced into it. Earlier, in order that a prince should obtain the transfer of a throne in favour of the candidate he desired, he had to come to an agreement with the desired heir, with those relatives whom he was bypassing, with his boyars, and finally, with the veche of the city, and, last of all, his desire was often not fulfilled after his death, even if the promise to fulfill it was accompanied by kissing the cross. But now the prince, as the owner, could divide his principedom and leave it in his will, according to his discretion, to his sons, his wife, his daughters and distant relatives – sometimes as their property, and sometimes for lifetime use. His private right as a property-owner became the basis for his rights as a ruler...”³²

This new political order introduced above all Prince Andrew received support from the heavenly realm, as Archpriest Lev explains: “In Vyshgorod at that time, in 1154-55, there was a holy icon of the Mother of God which had been brought not long before from Constantinople. This was a special holy thing! It was one of the icons created by the Evangelist Luke, which he painted having before his eyes the Most Holy Theotokos herself. He painted this icon on part of a plank from a table that had belonged to the Holy Family in Nazareth. Kiev, however, did not value this holy thing in a fitting manner. But meanwhile it worked miracles. It was often found in Vyshgorod, having departed from its place [in Kiev]. In 1155 it again moved, as it were showing that it did not want to remain there [in Kiev]. This time Prince Andrew was a witness of the event. He fell to his knees in prayer before the icon. And the Most Pure Mother of God told him what he should do. That night, secretly, without asking his father, Andrew of Bogoliubovo took the icon of our Lady and some priests of Vyshgorod and their families, and went away to the North... Again on the instructions of the All-Pure One he did not take it to Rostov, but left it in Vladimir. From that time this great icon began to be called the Vladimir icon. In accordance with God’s providence (for otherwise it is impossible to explain it), the father was not angry with his son. Prince Andrew remained in Vladimir, and built next to it the village of Bogoliubovo in which he constructed his palace. In 1157 Yury Dolgoruky [his father] died. His son did not go to live in Kiev. Moreover, he began to petition in Constantinople for the founding of a metropolitan see in Vladimir, that is, a see having the same ecclesiastical significance as that of Kiev. [However,] he was blessed to have only a bishopric. But then Bishop Theophanes of Vladimir was murdered in a bestial manner in Kiev at the command of the new Metropolitan, Constantine II, who had been dispatched there from Constantinople. In reply to this evil act, and also because of the other injustices of the Kievans, Prince Andrew sent an army there, taking the Polovtsians as his allies. In 1169 Kiev was terribly burned down and looted. The churches were also looted.

“The Great Prince, who already bore the title ‘of Kiev’, moved the centre of Rus’ to Vladimir, to the North. Here, in Vladimir-Suzdalian Rus’, he erected about 30

³² Zyzykin, *Tsarskaia Vlast’* (Royal Power), Sophia, 1924; <http://www.russiatalk.org/cdhistory/zyzykin.htm>, pp. 11-12.

churches, among them the noted Dormition cathedral in Vladimir, and the first church in honour of the new feast of the Protecting Veil of the Theotokos – the wonderful ‘Pokrov on the Nerl’. The ‘Golden Gates’ of Vladimir are also his creation. Thus, not accidentally, but consciously, a new capital of Rus’ was being constructed in the image of the former. Prince Andrew himself put his hand to the writing of a service to the feast of the Protecting Veil, which did not exist in the Greek Church, so that it became the first purely Russian national feast.³³ It is also thought that he participated in the composition of the service to the All-Merciful Saviour and the All-Holy Theotokos on August 1/14 in commemoration of the victory over the Volga Bulgars, when the Vladimir icon and the icon of the Saviour gave out heavenly rays that were visible to all. The Byzantine Emperor Manuel had the same vision in the same year and day during his battle with the Saracens, as Andrew and Manuel learned from letters they wrote to each other. Prince Andrew also composed a prayer that was attached to the ‘Instruction’ of Vladimir Monomakh. Andrew loved God and people, and they loved him, not in vain giving him the nickname ‘Godloving’ [Bogoliubskij]. To the end of his days he had a special veneration for the passion-bearer Prince Boris, and always had his cap and sword by him.

“But, as in the life of a people, so in the earthly life of a man, not everything is unambiguous. Here they live partly according to Christ, but partly still according to the old Adam. Andrew, for all his love for God, could ‘become spiteful’, as was already said, against Kiev. He also ‘became spiteful’ in 1170 against willful Novgorod. And he sent a powerful army there. But none other than the Mother of God Herself now began to become the Opponent of Prince Andrew, through her icon of the Sign defending the Novgorodians and bringing about a stinging defeat for the Suzdalian armies. However, Bogoliubsky later brought Novgorod into obedience by ‘peaceful’ means – by cutting off the movement of bread to it from the Volga region and Ryazan.

“Having moved to the North, Prince Andrew himself hardly waged war at all. Here he was the builder of a state. And not everything was in order in the land. He was an opponent of paganism in everything, including such manifestations of it as the veneration of the military war-band and the ancient *veche*, which was especially strong in Rostov. He did not want to obey the old war-band nobles of his father. A plot was hatched among them. Prince Andrew wanted to be and become autonomous, an Autocrat, relying on the new Vladimir, and in general on the new people who were settling the new Rus’. For old Rostov was a stronghold of resistance not only to Prince Andrew personally. Here, as far back as the Baptism of Rus’, there had been strong opposition to the Christian faith, and there had been a rebellion of the sorcerers. Then they had expelled the bishops, not allowing them to preach, so that the holy Hierarch Leontius had had to begin teaching the people outside the city with teaching the children. Then, in the 12th century, through the efforts of many saints, Orthodoxy shone out there also. But something from paganism, and above all self-will and pride, still remained. And these are always the sources of every kind of disturbance. Therefore, while wanting to crush them, Prince Andrew of Bogolyubovo did not at all want to become a tyrant and disregard the rule of the Russian princes of ruling ‘together with the land’, having its voice as an advisor. That is how he ruled – but as

³³ In spite of the fact that it commemorated the miraculous deliverance of Constantinople by the Mother of God from the then still pagan Russians in 862! See footnote 2 (V.M.)

an Autocrat, and not as a plaything in the hands of the powerful boyars, or of the people's veche!...

"In 1174, in Bogolyubovo, Prince Andrew was killed in a terrible way by plotters. Before this one of them had stolen the sword of Prince Boris from his bedroom. Thus did the first Autocrat of Great Russia end his life in a martyric fashion, and the commemoration of his death is celebrated on the very day, July 4/17, when the last Autocrat of Great Russia, his Majesty Nicholas Alexandrovich, was killed together with the whole of his Holy Family!..."³⁴

Andrew's achievement, according to V. Georgievsky, was to change "the principles on which ancient Kievan Rus' had lived before him, proclaiming the idea of the autocracy as the basis of the political life of the Russian people. Orthodoxy and autocracy - these corner-stones of the great building of the Russian State - were first indicated to the Russian people by Andrew Bogolyubsky as the foundation for the attainment of State might and popular prosperity. Bogolyubsky's later successors, the Great Princes of Moscow who founded the great Muscovite State which then grew into a mighty empire, only developed and realized Bogolyubsky's ideas in their own political activity."³⁵

Andrew's achievements were consolidated by his brother, Vsevolod III, who was, as John Fennell writes, "one of the shrewdest and more farsighted of all the descendants of Vladimir I, [and] was widely acknowledged among his fellow-rulers. 'All lands trembled at his name and his fame spread throughout the whole country,' wrote his chronicler, who... probably represented the views of most of his contemporaries. All Suzdalia owed him allegiance of some kind or other; the great city-state of Novgorod with its vast subject lands to the west, north and north-east had, for the first eight years of the thirteenth century, only his sons as its rulers; Kiev's eastern neighbour, Southern Pereyaslavl', was firmly under his control; and the princes of Murom and Ryazan' to the south were little more than his vassals."³⁶

Then, in 1211, writes G.G. Litavrin, Vsevolod "obtained from a congress of the boyars, cities, villages, merchants, nobles, abbots, priests and 'all the people' a recognition of his son Yury's hereditary rights to the Vladimir-Suzdal throne, which at that time held the seniority in Rus'. L.V. Cherepnin considers this date critical in the history of Old Russian Statehood: there began the change from the system of princedoms headed by a given Prince at a given moment, to a centralised, hereditary Monarchy. The bearer of the seniority, the Great Prince of Rus', became the true

³⁴ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18. There was another link between Andrew and the Tsar-Martyr: in both murders Jews took part. Thus A.I. Solzhenitsyn writes: "There was at least one Jew among the confidants of Andrew Bogoliubsky in Vladimir. 'Among those close to Andrew was a certain Ephraim Moizich, whose patronymic, Moizich or Moiseevich, points to his Jewish origin', and he, in the words of the chronicler, was among the plotters by whom Andrew was killed. But there is also a record that under Andrew Bogoliubsky 'there came from the Volga provinces many Bulgars and Jews and accepted baptism', and after the murder of Andrew his son George fled to Dagestan to the Jewish prince" (*Dvesti let vmeste* (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, p. 17.

³⁵ Georgievsky, *Soyatoj Blagovernij Velikij Knyaz' Andrej Bogolyubskij* (Holy Right-Believing Great Prince Andrew of Bogoliubovo), St. Petersburg, 1900, Moscow: "Preobrazhenie", 1999, p. 4.

³⁶ Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia 1200-1304*, Harlow: Longmans, 1983, p. 1.

Autocrat of the whole of the Russian land.”³⁷

Vsevolod’s rule, according to Kliuchevsky, “was in many respects the continuation of the external and internal activity of Andrew of Bogolyubovo. Like his elder brother, Vsevolod forced people to recognise him as Great Prince of the whole of the Russian land, and like him again, he did not go to Kiev to sit on the throne of his father and grandfather. He rules the south of Russia from the banks of the distant Klyazma. Vsevolod’s political pressure was felt in the most distant southwestern borders of the Russian land. The Galician Prince Vladimir, the son of Yaroslav Osmomys, who won back his father’s throne with Polish help, hastened to strengthen his position on it, under the protection of his distant uncle, Vsevolod of Suzdal. He sent him the message: ‘Father and Lord, keep Galicia under me, and I, who belong to you and God, will always remain in your will together with the whole of Galicia.’”³⁸

However, on the death of Vsevolod in 1212 disturbances again broke out between the princes of Russia. Novgorod separated from Vladimir, and the brothers and nephews of the Great Prince held sway in different cities of the land of Vladimir-Suzdal. As a result, “because of our sins”, as the chronicler put it, “God sent upon us the pagans”, that is the Tatars...

However, as Nicholas Riasanovsky points out, “the Mongol invasion and other wars and disasters of the time also contributed to the growth of princely authority, for they shattered the established economic and social order and left it to the prince to rebuild and reorganize devastated territory.”³⁹ So the survival of autocracy was assured...

[St. Alexander Nevsky](#)

The fall of Constantinople in 1204 to the Roman Catholic crusaders was an acid test of the depth of the filial feelings of the other Orthodox kingdoms towards the leader of the Orthodox world, the New Rome of Constantinople, which now went into exile in Nicaea. The Serbs and Bulgarians passed the test, after a certain wavering between Rome and Constantinople, as did Georgia under St. Tamara. Russia, too, remained faithful – the conquest of most of the Russian lands by the Mongols in the 1220s had at least this advantage: that it cut them off from the attentions of papist missionaries.

The only Russian principality not destroyed by the Mongols was Novgorod. This was because Great-Prince Alexander Nevsky decided to pay tribute to the Mongols in the East in order to concentrate all his forces in a successful war against what he considered to be their more dangerous enemies in the West – the papist Swedes and the quasi-monastic Teutonic Knights and “Knights of God”. These orders played a critical part in the crusades in both the Mediterranean and the Baltic, and were answerable only to the Pope. Their wealth – and violence – was legendary. As the Knights said in 1309: “The sword is our pope”.⁴⁰ But in 1240 St. Alexander defeated

³⁷ Litavrin, quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1993, pp. 177-178.

³⁸ Kliuchevsky, quoted in Solonevich, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

³⁹ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 93.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 502.

the Swedes on the Neva. And on April 5, 1242, he crushed the “Knights of God” on the ice of Lake Chudov in present-day Estonia.

Having failed with the stick, the Pope now tried the carrot. In 1248 he sent “the two cleverest” of his cardinals to Alexander, in order that he might “forsake the false way of corruption which leads to the damnation of eternal death... and recognize the Roman church as mother and obey its pope.” But Alexander refused, saying that Holy Tradition, the constant teaching of the Church from the beginning, had been passed down to the Orthodox alone.⁴¹

Then, in accordance with his principle: “Not in might, but in truth, is God”, he made the historic decision to submit to the Mongols, who might subdue the Russians politically but would not harm their Orthodox faith, rather than to the Pope, who would destroy both their statehood and their faith.

However, there was strong opposition to his policy. Thus one of his brothers, Andrew, having adopted the opposite course of standing up to the Tatars, was routed and had to flee to Catholic Sweden. And the other brother, Yaroslav, placed himself at the head of the anti-Alexander party in Novgorod, which led to an armed confrontation between the two sides in 1255. The tax imposed by the Tatars was very burdensome; and even in Vladimir-Suzdal there were uprisings. The Tatars responded harshly, forcing the Russians to fight in their armies... Alexander’s last major act was to journey to the Khan to plead for mercy... He died on his return home, exhausted by his efforts, having taken the schema as Monk Alexis. “My children,” said Metropolitan Cyril, know that the sun of the land of Suzdal has now set! For nevermore shall such a prince be found in the land...”

The Church had supported Alexander not only because it believed that what was Caesar’s had to be given to Caesar (the Tatars): there were also substantial benefits for the Church itself. For under the Tatars, as John Fennell writes, “its lands and possessions were secure and the clergy was immune from taxation and conscription. Religious toleration had been Mongol policy ever since the time of Chinghis Khan, and the khans of the Golden Horde, whether pagan or Moslem, always showed consideration and even generosity to the churches in the lands under their sway,”⁴² considering that God would look favourably on them if they honoured His priests.

[St. Peter of Moscow](#)

A new phase in the history of Russia began in 1299, when Metropolitan Maximus of Kiev, whose title now included the phrase “of all Russia”, moved the seat of the Russian metropolitanate from the devastated ruins of Kiev in the South to Vladimir-Suzdal in the North. In this way the Church followed where the State, in the person of St. Andrew of Bogolyubovo, had led in the previous century. This indicated that, in the eyes of the Church, the political leadership of Russia had to come from the north, from the area that we shall now call “Great Russia”, as opposed to “Little Russia”

⁴¹ Ya.K. Begunov, A.P. Kirpichnikov, *Knyaz' Aleksandr Nevsky i ego epokha* (Prince Alexander Nevsky and his Age), St. Petersburg, 1995, p. 200.

⁴² Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia 1200-1304*, Harlow: Longmans, 1983, p. 121.

centred on Kiev or “White Russia”, which was increasingly coming under the dominion of the pagan rulers of Lithuania.

On the death of Maximus, Grand-Prince Yury of Galicia petitioned Patriarch Athanasius I of Constantinople to consecrate a “metropolitan of Galicia”. This move was potentially very dangerous for the unity of the Russian lands. For once the Russian territories under Lithuanian rule had their own metropolitan, they might be tempted to break with Great Russia ecclesiastically as well as politically; and this in turn would certainly expose Little Russia to the danger of absorption into Roman Catholicism, which threatened from Poland and the Baltic German lands...⁴³

It appears that the patriarchate recognized its mistake, because when Maximus died and Grand Prince Yury put forward a Galician abbot, Peter, for the metropolitanate of Galicia, the patriarchate appointed him “metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia” instead, rejecting the candidate put forward by the great prince of Vladimir, Michael of Tver. Beginning with St. Peter, the metropolitans firmly maintained their rights to rule over the whole of the Russian flock, having for this the support of the Tatars in the same way that the ecumenical patriarch would later have the support of the Turks. St. Peter moved the seat of Church government again, from Vladimir to Moscow – that is, to the town whose princes, more than any others, followed the “Alexandrian” pro-Tatar and anti-Catholic policy, and which was neither too far east to be under the shadow of the Tatars nor too far west to be under the shadow of the Lithuanians.⁴⁴ And the Tatar Khan in a *gramota* of 1315 gave to the prince of Moscow the same privileges in the State that he had already given to the metropolitan in the Church.

St. Peter advised Great Prince Ivan Danilovich of Moscow to build a stone church dedicated to the Dormition, which became the first church of Russia. “If, my son, you obey me, and build the church of the Most Pure Mother of God, and give me rest in your city, God will bless you and make you higher than all the other princes, and will extend this city more than all other cities. And your race will possess this place to the ages.”⁴⁵ In 1326 St. Peter moved his see to Moscow, and died in December of the same year. As he had prophesied, a process of political and economic centralization around Moscow now began. The first step in this process consisted in the replacing of Tver by Moscow as the most favoured principality in the eyes of the Mongols.

[St. Alexis of Moscow](#)

Now the Mongols liked to appoint one of the Russian princes as their chief tax-collector for the Russian dominions. In exchange for providing the Horde with regular

⁴³ That this was a real threat already in the fourteenth century, and even in some parts of Great Russia, is illustrated by an incident that took place in Novgorod, which was traditionally, because of its foreign merchant colony, less anti-Catholic than other parts of Great Russia. “On one occasion at the end of the fourteenth century, the city, in bargaining with the patriarch of Constantinople for privileges for its archbishop, threatened to go to Rome as a final argument. This threat was not serious and did not fail to elicit a severe rebuke from the patriarch, but, up to the time of the loss of their independence, the Novgorodians saw no objection against a political alliance with the Catholic kings of Lithuanian Poland” (Fedotov, *op. cit.*, p. 336).

⁴⁴ A.E. Presniakov, “Na puti k edinoderzhaviu” (“On the Path to One-Man Rule”), *Rodina* (Homeland), № 11, 2003, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁵ St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, p. 9.

income, this prince was given the Great Princely title, was protected from Mongol raids and had the opportunity of making considerable gains for himself from the other tribute-paying princes. At the time of St. Peter's death, the prince of Tver had the "yarlik" of tax-collector and Great Prince. Almost immediately, however, in 1327, the citizens of Tver rose up against the khan and killed a high-level deputation from the Mongol capital of Sarai sent to oversee the collection of tribute. After some hesitation, the prince of Tver sided with the rebels - which gave Prince Ivan of Moscow his chance. He set off for Sarai and returned at the head of a Mongol-Russian force which devastated Tver. In reward for this service, the khan bestowed the title of Grand Prince on Ivan together with the responsibility of farming all the taxes due to the khan from the whole of Russia.

In 1345 Great-Prince Olgerd ascended the throne of Lithuania. He was a pagan; but, as Papadakis writes, he "would extend his domains over Russian territories from the Baltic to the Black seas, including the prestigious city of Kiev. His avowed goal was to free Russia from the Mongol rule and assume the legacy of the ancient Kievan princes. To reach that goal he was ready to embrace Orthodox Christianity, which was already the religion of his two successive wives (who were Russian princesses), of all his numerous children, and of the vast majority of his subjects. However, it was not Olgerd but "the Church [that] was actually holding the trump card: the real center of the country had to be the metropolitan's residence, since that prelate controlled the only administrative structure covering Moscow, Novgorod, Kiev, Vilna (the Lithuanian capital) and distant Galicia. He was, in addition, a representative of Byzantium and a religious official respected by the Tatar khans."⁴⁶

It was at about this time, in 1347, that Olgerd's supposed conversion to Orthodoxy was not genuine: three young Orthodox, Anthony, John and Eustathius, were martyred by him in Vilna for refusing to accept paganism. It then suddenly became clear to all those with eyes to see that the interests of Orthodoxy lay with Moscow rather than Lithuania. And at the same time the issue of the metropolitanate again became of political importance.

In 1353, Metropolitan Theognostus of Kiev, a Greek, had "personally arranged his succession in the person of a Russian, Alexis, whom he had consecrated as bishop of Vladimir... In 1352 the Lithuanian grand-prince strongly demanded from the patriarchate that the seat of the metropolitanate be returned to Kiev, and even sent his candidate, Theodoret, to Constantinople for consecration. Facing a rebuke, he took the unusual step of having Theodoret ordained by the Bulgarian patriarch of Trnovo. Understandably, Theodoret was labelled a schismatic in Constantinople and in Moscow..."⁴⁷

The Ecumenical Patriarch, St. Philotheus, wanted to preserve the unity of the Russian metropolitanate and resist the divisive plans of Olgerd. So in 1354 he consecrated Bishop Alexis as metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia. Alexis was a holy man who in 1357 had healed the influential widow of khan Uzbek, Taidul, and consequently had great authority with the Golden Horde. Almost immediately, however, a political and ecclesiastical coup took place in the capital. John VI

⁴⁶ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

⁴⁷ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

Cantacuzenos was forced to abdicate, and “with Genoese assistance,” as Colin Wells writes, “John V Paleologos resumed the throne as sole emperor. Cantacuzenos’ patriarch, Philotheos, was deposed, and the new government installed his rival, Callistos.

“The new Genoese-controlled government in Constantinople now swung towards Olgerd, the powerful grand prince of Lithuania, as a counter to Moscow. Callistos offered Olgerd his own ‘metropolitan of the Lithuanians’, for which position the Lithuanian ruler nominated a Russian from Tver named Roman [he had by this time dropped Theodoret]. The patriarchal archives record Byzantine impressions of Olgerd’s motive: ‘to find a means, with Roman’s help, of ruling Great Russia’, as the northeastern provinces were now called. Since he already ruled ‘Little Russia’, including Kiev, it was clear that Olgerd was making a bid to take over all of Russia.

“In keeping with Olgerd’s ambitions, Roman soon began styling himself metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, moving his residency to Kiev and ignoring Callistos’ injunctions that he respect the claims of Alexis, the rightful metropolitan, whom Philotheos had installed before Cantacuzenos’ resignation, and who resided in Moscow. But Roman died in 1362, and Callistos – perhaps under Cantacuzenos’ renewed influence behind the scenes – reunified the Russian metropolitanate under Alexis.

“Olgerd wasn’t about to give up so easily. Over the next decade and a half until his death in 1377, the energetic Lithuanian grand prince challenged Moscow for control of Russia. That struggle was a major watershed in Eastern European history. It reached its peak in his unsuccessful siege of Moscow in 1368, which was repelled by Moscow’s grand prince Dimitri II, not yet the victor of the Don. Olgerd’s campaign continued even after that defeat. It turned Alexis and the metropolitanate into political footballs...”⁴⁸ Thus in 1369 Great Prince Dimitri, having consolidated his position within Great Russia, sent an army against Lithuanian-controlled Smolensk and Briansk. “At the same time Metropolitan Alexis excommunicated from the Church those princes who had entered into union with the Lithuanian pagans against the Christian prince of Moscow.”⁴⁹

By this time, Philotheos had resumed control of the patriarchate on the death of Callistos in 1363 – and resumed also his support of St. Alexis. Olgerd hit back by complaining to Philotheos that Alexis never visited his flock in Lithuania, and asked him to grant a second metropolitan for all the lands which he and his allies controlled. He was supported by a threat coming from King Casimir of Poland, as Papadakis writes, “forcibly to convert the Galicians to Roman Catholicism. Faced with an emergency situation, Philotheos reestablished a separate [but *temporary*] metropolitanate in Galicia (1371), and called on Alexis to exercise more even-handedness towards Olgerd and his Orthodox subjects. [In particular, he was to visit them more often.] In 1375, he also consecrated a man of his immediate entourage, the learned Bulgarian monk Cyprian, as metropolitan in Lithuania. He made sure, however, that this consecration would not lead to a lasting division of the metropolitanate: Cyprian received the right to succeed Alexis. Upon his arrival in Kiev

⁴⁸ Wells, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-258.

⁴⁹ Boris Floria, “Tochka raspada” (“The Point of Dissolution”), *Rodina* (Homeland), N 11, 2003, p. 29

in 1376, he restored order and the prestige of the metropolitanate in territories controlled by Lithuania."⁵⁰

At the same time, Great Prince Dimitri was bringing Tver, which previously had been in the Lithuanian sphere of influence, in vassalage to himself, and Prince Sviatoslav of Smolensk broke with Olgerd and entered into union with Dimitri. With the change in political orientation in these lands, Metropolitan Alexis was able to appoint new bishops for Smolensk and Briansk. As Lithuania began to be threatened by the Catholic Teutonic knights from the Baltic, Prince Dimitri took the title "Great Prince of all Russia" when signing a treaty with Novgorod; and it looked as if the reunification of the Russian lands under Moscow was about to begin....

At about this time the Metropolitan of Lithuania Cyprian urged a union between Orthodox Muscovy and Lithuania against the Tatars. However, this policy was not favoured by the Muscovite Great-Prince. And so when Cyprian hastened to Moscow on the death of St. Alexis in 1378 he was imprisoned and then expelled from Moscow, which led to a prolonged struggle to fill the vacant metropolitan's throne...

Encouraged by another coup in Constantinople, Dimtri sent his candidate for the metropolitanate, Mityai, to the City. But Cyprian had got there before him – and another coup changed the situation again in Cyprian's favour. Besides, as Mityai came within sight of the City he dropped dead...

But in 1380 the pendulum swung again. The new patriarch, Neilos, could not resist the pressure of Dimitri, and decided on a compromise. A man called Pimen was consecrated metropolitan of Kiev and Great Russia, while Cyprian was given Lithuania and Little Russia.

[St. Sergius of Radonezh](#)

It was at this time that one of the greatest saints of this or any other age, Sergius of Radonezh, assumed the spiritual leadership of the Russian Church. In 1380, a Tatar usurper, Mamai, invaded Muscovy. He was claiming unpaid tribute, and was supported by Genoa, Ryazan – and Lithuania under Olgerd's son Jagiello. St. Sergius blessed the Great-Prince to fight only when all other measures had failed⁵¹: "You, my lord prince, must care and strongly stand for your subjects, and lay down your life for them, and shed your blood in the image of Christ Himself, Who shed His blood for us. But first, O lord, go to them with righteousness and obedience, as you are bound to submit to the khan of the Horde in accordance with your position. You know, Basil the Great tried to assuage the impious Julian with gifts, and the Lord looked on Basil's humility and overthrew the impious Julian. And the Scripture teaches us that such enemies want glory and honour from us, we give it to them; and if they want silver and gold, we give it to them; but for the name of Christ, the Orthodox faith, we must

⁵⁰ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 339

⁵¹ The following account, though accepted before the revolution, has been rejected more recently by scholars who argue that St. Sergius could not have blessed the Great-Prince, who had been excommunicated by St. Cyprian, Metropolitan of Moscow. See Oleg Morozov, "Novie Russkie Sviatie", *Portal-Credo.Ru*, February 5, 2016. However, in lieu of a definitive consensus among the historians, I have chosen to keep the following account in this work, especially in view of its important didactic content.

lay down our lives and shed our blood. And you, lord, give them honour, and gold, and silver, and God will not allow them to overcome us: seeing your humility, He will exalt you and thrust down their unending pride.”

“I have already done that,” replied the Great Prince: “but my enemy is exalted still more.”

“If so,” said the God-pleaser, “then final destruction awaits him, while you, Great Prince, can expect help, mercy and glory from the Lord. Let us hope on the Lord and the Most Pure Mother of God, that They will not abandon you”. And he added: “You will conquer your enemies.”⁵²

Fortified by the blessing of the saint, Great-Prince Demetrius defeated the enemy at the great battle of Kulikovo Polje, at which over 100,000 Russian warriors gave their lives for the Orthodox faith and their Russian homeland. Some have seen in this, the first victory of the Russians over the Tatars, a sign that the Russians had changed the policy of submission to the Tartars that they had inherited from St. Alexander Nevsky, and that St. Sergius actively blessed a policy of rebellion against those whom previous princes and metropolitans had seen as their lawful sovereigns. However, as we have seen, the saint advised submission in the first place, and war only if the Tatar could not be bought off. Moreover, it needs to be borne in mind that Mamai was himself a rebel against the Horde, so that in resisting him the Russians were in no way rebelling against their lawful sovereigns. In any case, two years later the lawful khan came and sacked Moscow; so there was not, and could not be, any radical change in policy. It was not until a century later, in 1480, that the Muscovites refused to pay any further tribute to the khans. The real significance of Kulikovo Polje lies in the fact that a union of princes had defeated an external foe under the leadership of the Orthodox Church, thereby holding out the promise that the spiritual unity of the Russian lands, which had never been lost, could be complemented by that political unity which had been lost two hundred years before.

To seal this spiritual unity, Metropolitan Cyprian returned in triumph to Moscow in the spring of 1381. “A chronicler relates that he was greeted with great rejoicing among the people. He resumed his active promotion of ecclesiastical unity, conspicuously ministering to the Orthodox in Lithuanian-controlled ‘Little Russia’ (which included Kiev).

“But he also made it clear that this unity now cohered around Moscow, exalting it as the divinely favored center of Orthodoxy in Russia. His *Life of Peter*, written at this time, pointedly celebrates his illustrious predecessor, the metropolitan who had first taken up residence in Moscow. Dimitri and his dynasty benefited immensely from such influential propaganda. The *Life of Peter* glorifies them as the legitimate heirs of Kievan rule, specially anointed to hold sway over the lands of the Orthodox Russians...”⁵³

⁵² Archimandrite Nikon, *Zhitie i Pobedy Prepodobnago i Bogonosnago Otsa Nashego Sergia, Igumena Radonezhskago* (The Life and Victories of our Holy and God-bearing Father Sergius, Abbot of Radonezh), Sergiev Posad, 1898, p. 149

⁵³ Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

As it turned out, in spite of the pan-Russian vision of such leaders as Metropolitan Cyprian and St. Sergius, political union with Lithuania was not achieved: although, in 1383, the Lithuanian Great Prince Jagiello signed a treaty with Moscow and agreed to convert to Orthodoxy, he quickly changed his mind and instead, in 1386, converted to Catholicism, which led to the union of Lithuania with Catholic Poland and the increasing identification of Russian Orthodoxy and Russian Orthodox statehood with Muscovite Great Russia alone. Nevertheless, although only Great Russia remained faithful to the ecumenical vision of Orthodoxy, that vision, drawing strength from the Palamite renewal of monasticism taking place in Constantinople and the Balkan lands, helped produce that flowering of monasticism, iconography and missionary activity that makes the Age of St. Sergius such a glorious one in the annals of Russian history. The northern forests were covered with new monasteries founded by the disciples of St. Sergius (over 100 of whom were canonized). And icon-painters such as Andrei Rublev glorified the newly-built churches with their wonderful works.

Moreover, it was at this time that, under the influence of St. Sergius, Great-Prince Dimitri ordered his children to observe a new order of inheritance, whereby his eldest son was to inherit the Great Princedom, not allowing any quarrels or claims from the other children. Once again, St. Sergius was entrusted with guarding this most important decree, which served to strengthen the institution of one-man, autocratic rule in Russia.⁵⁴ For, as St. John Maximovich writes, “under Dimitri Ivanovich the significance of the Great Prince grew mightily. The most powerful appanages of the Great Prince – Tver and Ryazan – were forced to conclude agreements with him in which they recognised themselves to be his younger brothers... Basil Dimitrievich continued the work of his father. He joined some appanages to Moscow, and with the remaining appanage princes he concluded agreements to the effect that they had to submit to him and not seek the Great Princedom.”⁵⁵

Although Dimitri again quarreled with St. Cyprian and replaced him with Pimen, on the deaths of both Dimitri and Pimen in 1388, Cyprian reentered Moscow again in 1390 as the unchallenged metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia...

The Russians’ defeat of the Mongols at Kulikovo Polje in 1380 and the Serbs’ defeat by the Ottomans at Kosovo Polje in 1389, represent the opposite poles of Orthodox fortunes in the Middle Ages. The first marked the beginning of the rise of the last of the Orthodox autocracies, while the second marked the beginning of the end of Orthodox autocracy in its original Mediterranean homeland.

⁵⁴ Archimandrite Nikon, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁵⁵ St. John Maximovich, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

2. THE AUTOCRACY, THE JUDAIZERS AND THE NON-POSSESSORS

Russia had known no serious outbreak of heresy since her baptism by St. Vladimir. However, towards the end of the fourteenth century there appeared the heresy of the Judaizers, when "the whole Russian Church," as Nechvolodov writes, "had at her head a Judaizer, and the immediate entourage of the sovereign... were also Judaizers."⁵⁶

The roots of the heresy, writes a publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, "go deeper than is usually imagined. The part played by national elements in the heresy, which exploded like epidemics onto medieval Europe, has not yet been sufficiently clarified. The acts of the inquisition demonstrate that most of the sects were Judeo-Christian in character with a more or less pronounced Manichaean colouring. The flourishing of the Albigensian heresy in France has been directly linked by historians with the rise of Jewish influence in that country. The heresy of the Templars, 'the knights of the Temple', who were condemned in 1314, was linked with esoterical Judaism and blasphemy against Christ...

"Judaizers were also known in the Orthodox East. In Salonica in the first third of the 14th century 'there existed a heretical Judaizing society in the heart of the Greek population' which had an influence on 'the Bulgarian Judaizers of the 40s and 50s of the same century'. In 1354 a debate took place in Gallipoli between the famous theologian and hierarch of the Eastern Church Gregory Palamas, on the one hand, and the Turks and the Chionians, i.e the Judaizers, on the other. In 1360 a council meeting in Trnovo, the then capital of the Bulgarian patriarchate, condemned both the opponents of Hesychasm (the Barlaamites) and those who philosophise from the Jewish heresies.

"The successes of the heresy in Russia could be attributed to the same cause as its success in France in the 14th century. Jews streamed into the young state of the Ottomans from the whole of Western Europe. Thereafter they were able to penetrate without hindrance into the Genoan colonies of the Crimea and the Azov sea, and into the region of what had been Khazaria, where the Jewish sect of the Karaites had a large influence; for they had many adherents in the Crimea and Lithuania and were closely linked with Palestine. As the inscriptions on the Jewish cemetery of Chuft-Kale show, colonies of Karaites existed in the Crimea from the 2nd to the 18th centuries. The Karaites were brought to Lithuania by Prince Vitovt, the hero of the battle of Grunwald (1410) and great-grandfather of Ivan III Vasilievich. From there they spread throughout Western Russia.

"... One has to admit that the beginning of the polemic between the Orthodox and the heretics was made, not in Byzantium, but in Russia. Besides, the polemic began... in the time of Metropolitan Peter (+1326), the founder of the Muscovite ecclesiastical centre. In the life of St. Peter it is mentioned among his other exploits for the good of the Russian Church that he 'overcame the heretic Seit in debate and anathematised him.' The hypothesis concerning the Karaite origin of the 'Judaizers' allows us to see in Seit a Karaite preacher.

⁵⁶ Nechvolodov, A. *L'Empereur Nicolas II et les Juifs* (The Emperor Nicholas II and the Jews), Paris, 1924, p. 183.

"... The heresy did not disappear but smouldered under a facade of church life in certain circles of the Orthodox urban population, and the Russian church, under the leadership of her hierarchs, raised herself to an unceasing battle with the false teachings. The landmarks of this battle were: Metropolitan Peter's victory over Seit in debate (between 1312 and 1326), the unmasking and condemnation of the strigolniki in Novgorod in the time of Metropolitan Alexis (1370s), the overcoming of this heresy in the time of Metropolitan Photius (+1431), and of the heresy of the Judaizers - in the time of Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod (+1505) and St. Joseph of Volotsk (+1515).

"From the time of the holy Prince Vladimir, the Baptizer of Rus', who rejected the solicitations of the Khazar Rabbis, wrote St. Joseph of Volotsk, 'the great Russian land has for 500 years remained in the Orthodox Faith, until the enemy of salvation, the devil, introduced the foul Jew to Great Novgorod. On St. Michael's day, 1470, there arrived from Kiev in the suite of Prince Michael Olelkovich, who had been invited by the veche [the Novgorodian parliament], 'the Jew Scharia' and 'Zachariah, prince of Taman. Later the Lithuanian Rabbis Joseph Smoilo Skaryavei and Moses Khanush also arrived.

"The heresy began to spread quickly. However, 'in the strict sense of the word this was not merely heresy, but complete apostasy from the Christian faith and the acceptance of the Jewish faith. Using the weaknesses of certain clerics, Scharia and his assistants began to instil distrust of the Church hierarchy into the faint-hearted, inclining them to rebellion against spiritual authority, tempting them with 'self-rule', the personal choice of each person in the spheres of faith and salvation, inciting the deceived to renounce their Mother-Church, blaspheme against the holy icons and reject veneration of the saints - the foundations of popular morality - and, finally, to a complete denial of the saving Sacraments and dogmas of Orthodoxy concerning the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. So they went so far as to conduct a Jewish war against God and the substitution of Christ the Saviour by the false messiah and antichrist.

"The false teaching spread in secret. Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod first heard about the heresy in 1487; four members of a secret society, while abusing each other in a drunken frenzy, revealed the existence of the heresy in front of some Orthodox. The zealous archpastor quickly conducted an investigation and with sorrow became convinced that not only Novgorod, but also the very capital of Russian Orthodoxy, Moscow, was threatened. In September 1487 he sent Metropolitan Gerontius in Moscow the records of the whole investigation in the original. Igumen Joseph (Sanin) of the Dormition monastery of Volotsk, who had an unassailable reputation in Russian society at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries, also spoke out against the heresy.

"But the battle with the heresy turned out to be no simple matter, for the heretics had enlisted the support of powerful people in Moscow. Great Prince Ivan III, who had been deceived by the Judaizers, invited them to Moscow, and made the two leading heretics protopriests - one in the Dormition, and the other in the Archangels cathedrals in the Kremlin. Some of those close to the Tsar, such as Theodore Kurytsyn, who headed the government, and whose brother became the heretics' leader, were co-opted into the heresy. The Great Prince's bride, Helen Voloshanka, was converted to Judaism. In 1483 a correspondence between Ivan III and the heresiarch Scharia himself

was established through diplomatic channels between Moscow and Bakhchisarai. Finally, the heretic Zosimus was raised to the see of the great hierarchs of Moscow Peter, Alexis and Jonah."⁵⁷

Eventually, the Great Prince returned to the truth, and at Councils convened by him in 1503 and 1505 the heresy was crushed, although remnants of it continued to appear for some time...

*

The immediate result of the Judaizing heresy was a major increase in the Great Prince's power and in the Church's reliance on the State. For churchmen now saw in the monarchical power the major bulwark against heresy, more important even than the metropolitanate, which, for the second time in little more than fifty years (the first time was at the council of Florence in 1439) had betrayed Orthodoxy.⁵⁸ Thus Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod wrote to Bishop Niphon of Suzdal: "You go to the Metropolitan and ask him to intercede with his majesty the Great Prince, that he cleanse the Church of God from heresy". Again, St. Joseph of Volokolamsk, who had played the major part in crushing the heresy, wrote: "The Tsar is by nature like all men, but in power he is similar to the Supreme God. And just as God wishes to save all people, so the Tsar must preserve everything that is subject to his power from all harm, both spiritual and bodily".⁵⁹

According to St. Joseph, as M.V. Zyzykin interprets him, the defence of the truth "is placed on the tsar alone, for in his eyes it is in the monarchical power that the will of God is reflected; he is God's deputy. The tsar is not only the servant of God, chosen by God and placed by Him on his throne, but he is also the representative of God, immeasurably exalted above [ordinary] people: he is like them only in accordance with his human nature, but in his power he is like God. From the point of view of the aim, the manifestations of monarchical power are analogous to those of Divine power. Just as the All-Highest wishes that all men be saved, so the tsar must keep those entrusted to his care from spiritual and bodily harm. For his fulfilment and non-fulfilment of his duty the tsar is responsible only before God. His power cannot be placed beside any other power on earth. And Joseph applies the words of Chrysostom to the tsars: 'Hear, O kings and princes, your dominion is given you from God, you are the servants of God; it is for this reason that He placed you as pastor and guard over His people to protect His flock unharmed from wolves...' The tsar must revenge Christ on the heretics, otherwise he will have to give an account at the terrible judgement. He must send them to prison or tortures and submit them to death. Heretical agreements are for Joseph worse than robbery and theft, than murder or fornication or adultery. Those who pretended to repent of their Judaism after the Council of 1490 deceived many, and the tsar was responsible for that before God. The spread and fall of heresy is the

⁵⁷ *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'* (The Russian Orthodox Church), Publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, 1988, pp. 25-26.

⁵⁸ However, the tsar, too, had not been without blame. Once he summoned St. Joseph and said to him: Forgive me, Father. I knew about the Novgorodian heretics, but thought that they were mainly occupied in astrology." "Is it for me to forgive you?" asked the saint. "No, father, please, forgive me!" said the tsar (Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 50). (V.M.)

⁵⁹ St. Joseph, *Prosvetitel'* (The Enlightener), Word 16.

cause of the fall and destruction of a great kingdom; it is analogous to state disturbances and coups. 'The great kingdoms of the Armenians, Ethiopians and Romans, who fell away from the Catholic and Apostolic Church and from the Orthodox Christian faith perished evilly because of the negligence of the Orthodox kings and hierarchs of those times, and these kings and hierarchs will be condemned at the terrible judgement of Christ for this negligence.' In 1511 Joseph persuaded Basil III to apply his power against the heretics in the same way that he had previously spoken with the father against the Novgorod Judaizers, so that they should not destroy the whole of Orthodox Christianity. It was on the soil of the struggle with heresy that the duty of the Russian Great Prince to defend the faith was revealed. If in Byzantium the kings' encroachment on the teaching authority of the Church stands to the fore, in Rus' we encounter first of all the striving to ascribe to the tsar Archpastoral rights in the realisation of Christianity in life.

"Joseph gave a very broad interpretation to the range of the tsar's rights, extending them to all spheres of life, to everything ecclesiastical and monastic. He did not think twice about bringing Archbishop Serapion of Novgorod to trial before the tsar for banning him for leaving his jurisdiction, although the tsar had permitted it.⁶⁰ For Joseph the tsar's power was unlimited already by virtue of its origin alone. For him the tsar was not only the head of the state, but also the supreme protector of the Church. He had, besides, a leadership role in relation to all ecclesiastical institutions; not one side of ecclesiastical life was exempt from it; the circle of his concerns included Church rites and Church discipline, and the whole ecclesiastical-juridical order. The tsar establishes the rules of ecclesiastical order and entrusts to bishops and nobles the task of seeing to their fulfilment, threatening the disobedient with hierarchical bans and punishments. One can have resort to the tsar's court, according to Joseph, against all ecclesiastics and monastics. This theory would have been the exact restoration of ancient caesaropapism in Russian colours if Joseph had not limited the king in principle by the observance of the Church canons. In this exaltation of the tsar we see a reflection of the Byzantine theory of the 14th century, which, while recognising the priority of the canon over the law, nevertheless exalted the emperor to the first place even in Church affairs."⁶¹

St. Joseph was far from ascribing absolute power to the tsar, as is evident from the following: "The holy apostles speak as follows about kings and hierarchs who do not care for, and worry about, their subjects: a dishonourable king who does not care for

⁶⁰ At the very moment that Joseph passed into eternal life, Serapion stood up and said to those around him: "Our brother Joseph has died. May God forgive him: such things happen even with righteous people" (*Moskovskij Paterik* (The Moscow Patericon), Moscow: "Stolitsa", 1991, p. 46). (V.M.)

⁶¹ Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon* (Patriarch Nikon), Warsaw, 1931, part I, pp. 153-154. Hieromonk Ioann (Kologrivov) writes: "Although Joseph considered the power of the Church to be higher than that of the sovereign in theory, in practice he extended the latter over the Church also. For him the Tsar was the head both of the State and of the Church – the supreme preserver and defender of the faith and the Church. The sovereign's concern for the Church was revealed particularly in the fact that he was always "Christ's avenger on the heretics. Lack of zeal for the good of the Church constituted, in the eyes of Joseph, one of the most serious crimes the sovereign could be guilty of, and it brought the wrath of God upon the whole country. In the single person of the sovereign Joseph thereby united both spiritual and secular power. He, and not Peter the Great, must be considered to be the founder of "State Orthodoxy" in Russia. A little later Ivan the Terrible, basing himself on the teaching of the abbot of Volokolamsk, acquired the opportunity to declare that the Tsar was "called to save the souls of his subjects". (*Ocherki po Istorii Russkoj Sviatosti* (Sketches on the History of Russian Sanctity), Brussels, 1961, p. 204).

his subjects is not a king, but a torturer; while an evil bishop who does not care for his flock is not a pastor, but a wolf.”⁶²

However, his theory of Church-State relations lays great responsibility on the tsar as the representative of God on earth, and less emphasis on the bishop’s duty to reprove an erring tsar.

An attempt to restore the balance was made at the Council of 1503, in which the debate on the Judaizers led naturally to the problem of the monasteries’ landed estates; for one of the reasons for the popularity of the heretics was the perceived justice of their criticisms of monasticism, and in particular of the wealth of the monasteries. St. Joseph defended this wealth, claiming that it was necessary in order to support the poor and the Great Prince and the education of the clergy – and there can be no doubt that the role of the monasteries in these matters was very important. However, Monk-Prince Bassian and St. Nilus of Sora, preached the monastic ideal of non-possessiveness. The Josephites’ or “Possessors’” views prevailed at the Council; but the argument has continued to this day...

“The Non-Possessors,” writes Sir Steven Runciman, “derived their tradition from Mount Athos, not from the Athos of rich monasteries with wide mainland estates and with splendid churches and refectories and well-stocked libraries, but from the sterner Athos of the ascetes and eremites, of the Hesychasts and Arsenites. Their spiritual ancestor was Gregory of Sinai, who had left the Holy Mountain because it was too sociable, preferring to live a life of greater solitude in the Balkan hills. Gregory’s leading pupil had been the Bulgarian Euthymius, an erudite scholar who had become the last Patriarch of Trnovo, but who had used his authority to enforce poverty and asceticism on the Bulgarian Church. After the Turks occupied Bulgaria many of his disciples migrated to Russia, bringing with them not only a knowledge of Greek mystical and hesychastic literature but also a close connection between the ascetic elements on Mount Athos and the Russian Church. The tradition that they introduced was akin to that of the Arsenites of Byzantium and the old tradition which had always opposed state control. Its first great exponent in Russia was Nil, Abbot of Sor...”⁶³

St. Nilus and his disciples wanted the dissolution of the vast land holdings not only because they contradicted the monastic vows, but also because this would liberate the clergy, as Zyzykin writes, “from dependence on the secular government and would raise the Hierarchy to the position of being the completely independent religious-moral power of the people, before which the despotic tendencies of the tsars would bow.”⁶⁴

The debate between the Possessors and Non-Possessors was therefore also a debate about the relationship between the Church and the State; and insofar as the Non-Possessors favoured greater independence for the Church, they also argued that the Church, and not the State, should punish the Judaizer heretics – which would mean less severe sentences for them in accordance with the Orthodox tradition of non-

⁶² St. Joseph, *Prosvetitel'* (The Enlightener), Word 16.

⁶³ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

⁶⁴ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 151.

violence in the treatment of heretics. They failed in their aim.⁶⁵ But their stand was remembered in subsequent generations...

The Non-Possessors showed a quite different attitude to the tsar's power. "They drew attention to the conditions under which the tsar's will in the administration of the kingdom could be considered as the expression of the will of God. They drew attention not only to the necessity of counsellors to make up the inevitable deficiencies of limited human nature, but also to the necessity of 'spiritual correctness'. Thus Prince Bassian did not exalt the personality of the tsar like Joseph. He did not compare the tsar to God, he did not liken him to the Highest King, but dwelt on the faults inherent in the bearers of royal power which caused misfortunes to the State."⁶⁶

The boldness of St. Nilus and Monk Bassian in relation to the secular powers was firmly in the tradition, not only of the fourth-century Fathers, but also of the early Trans-Volga monks, such as St. Cyril of Beloozersk. Thus in 1427 St. Cyril wrote to Prince Andrew of Mozhaisk that he "should abstain from drunkenness and give alms according to your means; for, my lord, you are unable to fast and are lax in praying, and thus, alms, in their place, will make up for your deficiency". He even gave political advice to Grand Prince Basil I: "We have heard, my lord great prince, that there is trouble between you and your friends, the princes of Suzdal. You, my lord, insist on your right and they on theirs; for this reason great bloodshed is inflicted on Christians. But consider closely, my lord, what are their rightful claims against you, and then humbly make concessions; and insofar as you are right toward them for that stand firm, my lord, as justice says. And if they begin to ask pardon, my lord, you should, my lord, grant them what they deserve, for I have heard, my lord, that until today they have been oppressed by you and that is, my lord, why they went to war. And you, my lord, for God's sake show your love and grace that they should not perish in error amid the Tatar realms and should not die there. For, my lord, no kingdom or principality, nor any other power can rescue us from God's impartial judgement."⁶⁷

After the death of St. Nilus in 1508, the tradition of the Non-Possessors was revived in Russia by an Athonite monk - St. Maximus the Greek. (There was, however, one important difference between St. Maximus and the Non-Possessors: St. Maximus had been in favour of the execution of the Judaizers, whereas the Non-Possessors had been against.) He was sent, writes Runciman, "by the Patriarch Theoleptus I to Russia in response to Vassily III's request for a skilled librarian. Maximus, whose original name was Michael Trivolis, had been born in Epirus, at Arta, in 1480. During his travels through France and Italy in search of education he had arrived in Florence when it was under the influence of Savonarola, whom he greatly admired and in whose memory

⁶⁵ Perhaps not coincidentally, the triumph of the Possessors coincided with a growth of violence against monks. Sergius Bolshakoff writes that "with the growth of monastic wealth, the attitude of the peasants towards the monks changes. The monks are now considered exploiters and hated as slave-owners. The appearance of a hermit often suggested the possible foundation of a new monastery with the reduction to serfdom of the neighboring peasants. St. Adrian of Andrushov was murdered in 1549 by peasants suspicious of his intentions. Likewise Adrian of Poshekhon was murdered in 1550, Agapetus Markushevsky in 1572, Simon Volomsky in 1613 and Job Ushelsky in 1628, all of them for the same reason. Others, like St. Nilus Stolbensky, Arsenius Komelsky and Diodore Yuriegorsky barely escaped violent death." (*Russian Mystics*, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980, p. 54)

⁶⁶ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 158.

⁶⁷ St Cyril, quoted in Fedotov, *The Russian Mind*, Harvard University Press, volume II, 1966, pp. 168, 255.

he joined the Dominican Order. But he was not happy in Renaissance Italy. After a short time he returned to Greece and settled on Athos, where he occupied himself principally with the libraries of the Holy Mountain. When he came to Russia the Tsar employed him not only to build up libraries for the Russian Church but also to translate Greek religious works into Slavonic."⁶⁸

St. Maximus "complained that among the pastors of his time there was 'no Samuel', 'a Priest of the Most High who stood up boldly in opposition to the criminal Saul', that there were 'no zealots like Elijah and Elisha who were not ashamed in the face of the most lawlessly violent kings of Samaria; there is no Ambrose the wonderful, the Hierarch of God, who did not fear the loftiness of the kingdom of Theodosius the Great; no Basil the Great, whose most wise teachings caused the persecutor Valens to fear; no Great John of the golden tongue, who reproached the money-loving usurer Empress Eudocia'. In accordance with Byzantine conceptions, Maximus the Greek looked on the priesthood and the kingdom as the two greatest gifts given by the most High Divine Goodness to man, as two powers on whose agreement in action depended the happiness of mankind. Among the duties laid upon the representatives of the Church, he mentioned that they must by their most wise advice and stratagems of every kind... always correct the royal sceptres for the better, so that they should be alien to any fawning before secular power and should exert a restraining, moderating influence upon it. Maximus spoke of the superiority of the spiritual power over the secular..."⁶⁹

St. Maximus was in favour as long as Metropolitan Barlaam, a follower of St. Nilus of Sora, was in power. But when Barlaam was uncanonically removed by the Great Prince Basil III and replaced by Metropolitan Daniel, a disciple of St. Joseph of Volotsk, his woes began... For a while the Great Prince continued to protect him, even when he rebuked the vices of the nobility, the clergy and the people and supported the position of the non-possessors against the metropolitan. However, his enemies found the excuse they were looking for when the Grand Prince, with the blessing of Metropolitan Daniel, put away his wife Solomonia for her barrenness and married Elena Glinskaya (Solomonia was forcibly tonsured in Suzdal and was later canonised under her monastic name of Sophia). St. Maximus immediately rebuked the Great Prince. He wrote him an extensive work: *Instructive chapters for right-believing rulers*, which began as follows: "O most devout Tsar, he is honoured as a true ruler who seeks to establish the life of his subjects in righteousness and justice, and endeavours always to overcome the lusts and dumb passions of his soul. For he who is overcome by them is not the living image of the Heavenly Master, but only an anthropomorphic likeness of dumb nature."⁷⁰

The saint was to suffer many years in prison because of his boldness. But he had admirers and supporters both within and outside Russia. Thus Patriarch Mark of Jerusalem, wrote prophetically to the Great Prince: "If you do this wicked thing, you will have an evil son. Your estate will become prey to terrors and tears. Rivers of blood

⁶⁸ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

⁶⁹ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 152.

⁷⁰ "Our Father among the Saints Maxim the Greek", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XIII, № 1, January-February, 1991, p. 11.

will flow; the heads of the mighty will fall; your cities will be devoured by flames.”⁷¹ The prophecy was fulfilled with exactitude in the reign of his son, Ivan IV, better known as “the Terrible” ...

After his release from prison St. Maximus continued his bold preaching. Thus he refused to bless a pilgrimage of Tsar Ivan, saying that he should look after the widows and orphans of those killed at Kazan instead. And he threatened that if he did not, his newborn son Demetrius would die. Ivan ignored his advice, and Demetrius died...

V.M. Lourié dates the beginning of the fall of the Russian Church into “Sergianism”, that is, captivity to the State, to the time of Metropolitan Daniel and Great Prince Basil: “Still earlier they should have excommunicated – not even Ivan IV, but his father Basil III for his adulterous ‘marriage’, which gave Russia Ivan the Terrible. Then we wouldn’t have had Peter I. That’s what they did in such cases in Byzantium...”⁷²

However, it should be noted that St. Maximus never broke communion with Daniel, and was restored to favour under his successor, Metropolitan Macarius. Moreover, as we shall see in more detail later, caesaropapism was by no means the rule in the Russian Church even in the reign of Ivan the Terrible. This episode must therefore be considered unfortunate, but not “the beginning of the end” ...

⁷¹ Francis Carr, *Ivan the Terrible*, London: David & Charles, 1981, pp. 61-62.

⁷² Lourié, “Sergianstvo: parasinagoga, pereshedshaia v raskol” (“Sergianism: a parasynagogue turning into a schism”), <http://web.referent.ru/nvc/forum/0/co/BC415C9E/179>.

3. THE THIRD ROME AND THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY TSARS

Great Prince Ivan III and the *Translatio Imperii*

The Byzantine empire, the Second or New Rome of Constantinople, fell in 1453. But Rome was seen as eternal and invincible – and not only in the minds of pagan Romans. “It is interesting to note,” writes Alexander Dvorkin, “how long the peoples did not want to part with the myth of the Empire, to become the centre of which became the dream of practically every European state both in the East and in the West, from Bulgaria to Castile. In the course of the 13th-14th centuries the canonists of many countries independently of each other developed the principle of the *translatio imperii* (translation of the empire). The process touched Russia a little later – in the 15th century, in the form of the theory of the Third Rome, which Moscow became...”⁷³

The idea of the universal empire survived into the modern period because it was *necessary*. In the middle of the fifteenth century, as compared with a thousand years earlier, or even five hundred years earlier, Orthodoxy was in much greater danger of fragmentation from centrifugal forces of a quasi-nationalist kind. Moreover, the quasi-universal empires of Islam in the East and the Papacy in the West were preparing to divide up the Orthodox lands between them. The Orthodox as a whole had to learn the lesson that the Serbian Prince Lazar had taught his people: *Samo Slogo Srbina Spasava*, “Only Unity Saves the Serbs”. And while that unity had to be religious and spiritual first of all, it also needed the support of *political* unity.

It was not only the political outlook that was threatening in 1453: if the empire was no more, what would become of the Church? Did not the prophecies link the fall of Rome with the coming of the Antichrist? But perhaps the empire was not yet dead... There were two possibilities here. One was that the Ottoman empire could be construed as a continuation of Rome. After all, there had been pagans and heretics and persecutors of the Church on the throne, so why not a Muslim? Or perhaps Rome was to be translated elsewhere, as St. Constantine had once translated the capital of his empire from Old Rome to the New Rome of Constantinople.

Unlikely as it may sound, some Greeks embraced the idea of Istanbul being Rome, and the Sultan – the Roman emperor. Thus in 1466 the Cretan historian George Trapezuntios said to the conqueror of Constantinople, Mehmet II: “Nobody doubts that you are the Roman emperor. He who is the lawful ruler in the capital of the empire and in Constantinople is the emperor, while Constantinople is the capital of the Roman empire. And he who remains as emperor of the Romans is also the emperor of the whole world.”⁷⁴

Certainly, the Ottoman sultans were powerful enough to claim the title. “Their empire did not have the great eastward sweep of the Abbasid Caliphate, but it had succeeded in spreading Islam into hitherto Christian territory – not only the old Byzantine realms on either side of the Black Sea Straits, but also Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary. Belgrade had fallen to the Ottomans in 1521, Buda in 1541. Ottoman naval

⁷³ Dvorkin, *Ocherki po istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi*, Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, p. 716.

⁷⁴ Trapezuntios, quoted in Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Prince of Princes: The Life of Potemkin*, London: Phoenix Press, 2001, p. 215.

power had also brought Rhodes to its knees (1522). Vienna might have survived (as did Malta) but, having also extended Ottoman rule from Baghdad to Basra, from Van in the Caucasus to Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea, and along the Barbary coast from Algiers to Tripoli, Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-66) could... claim: 'I am the Sultan of Sultans, the Sovereign of Sovereigns, the distributor of crowns to the monarchs of the globe, the shadow of God upon Earth...'... A law-maker and a gifted poet, Suleiman combined religious power, political power and economic power (including the setting of prices)."⁷⁵

However, it was precisely his combination of all political and religious power - the definition of despotism - that prevented the Sultan from being a true Autocrat or *Basileus*. As for the other vital criterion - Christianity - there could be no deception here: the Ottoman Sultans made no pretence at being Orthodox (which even the heretical Byzantine emperors did), and they had no genuine "symphony of powers" with the Orthodox Church (even if they treated it better than some of the emperors). Therefore at most they could be considered analogous in authority to the pagan emperors of Old Rome, legitimate authorities to whom obedience was due (as long as, and to the degree that, they did not compel Christians to commit impiety), but no more.

So had the clock been turned back? Had the Christian Roman Empire returned to its pre-Christian, pre-Constantinian origins? No, the clock of Christian history never goes back. The world could never be the same again after Constantine and the Christian empire of New Rome, which had so profoundly changed the consciousness of all the peoples of Europe. So if the Antichrist had not yet come, there was only one alternative: the one, true empire had indeed been translated somewhere - but not unlawfully, to some heretical capital such as Aachen or Old Rome, but lawfully, to some Orthodox nation capable of bringing forth the fruits of the Kingdom.

What could that nation be? It had to be one that was independent of the Ottomans, or that could re-establish its independence. The last remaining Free Greeks showed little sign of being able to do this. The last Byzantine outpost of Morea in the Peloponnese fell in 1461, and in the same year the Comnenian "empire" of Trebizond on the south coast of the Black Sea also fell, after a siege of forty-two days.⁷⁶ Georgia, Serbia and Bulgaria were already under the Muslim yoke.

Another possibility was Romania, which then comprised the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. Prince Vlad "the Impaler" of Wallachia conducted a courageous rearguard action against the Ottomans north of the Danube.⁷⁷ Stronger still was the resistance of the northern Romanian principality of Moldavia, under its great Prince Stephen (1457-1504). But in spite of her name it was not Romania that was destined to be the Third Rome. In time the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia came under the power of the Turkish Sultans and Greek Phanariots. The honour and the cross of being the protector and restorer of the fortunes of the Orthodox Christian commonwealth fell to a nation far to the north - Russia...

⁷⁵ Niall Ferguson, *Civilization*, London: Penguin, 2012, pp. 52, 53.

⁷⁶ Neal Ascherson, *Black Sea*, London: Vintage, 1996, pp. 180-181.

⁷⁷ M.J. Trow, *Vlad the Impaler: In Search of the Real Dracula*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003.

The idea that the Orthodox Empire could be translated to the forests of the north was a bold one. St. Constantine's moving the capital of the empire from Old Rome to New Rome had also been bold - but that step, though radical and fraught with enormous consequences, had not involved going beyond the bounds of the existing empire, and had been undertaken by the legitimate emperor himself. The Serbs and Bulgarians had each in their time sought to capture New Rome and make it the capital of a Slavic-Greek kingdom - but this, again, had not involved moving the empire itself, as opposed to changing its dominant nation. The Frankish idea of the *translatio imperii* from New Rome to Aachen had involved both changing the dominant nation and taking the capital beyond the bounds of the existing empire - and had been rejected by the Greeks as heretical, largely on the grounds that it involved setting up a second, rival empire, where there could only be one true one.

Let us remind ourselves of the eschatological idea on which the idea of the *translatio imperii* rested. According to this, Rome in its various successions and incarnations will exist to the end of the world - or at least, to the time of the Antichrist. As Michael Nazarov writes: "This conviction is often reflected in the patristic tradition (it was shared by Saints: Hippolytus of Rome, John Chrysostom, Blessed Theodoret, Blessed Jerome, Cyril of Jerusalem and others). On this basis Elder Philotheus wrote: 'the Roman [*Romejskoe*] kingdom is indestructible, for the Lord was enrolled into the Roman [*Rimskuiu*] power' (that is, he was enrolled among the inhabitants at the census in the time of the Emperor Augustus). Here Philotheus distinguishes between the indestructible 'Roman kingdom', whose successor was now Rus', and Roman power, which had gone into the past."⁷⁸

In fact the only real candidate for the role of leadership in the Orthodox world was Muscovite Russia. (There were other Russian principalities, but after its conquest of Novgorod in 1487 Moscow had no real rivals.) Only the Russians could be that "third God-chosen people" of the prophecy.⁷⁹ Only they were able to re-express the Christian ideal of the symphony of powers on a stronger, more popular base - as a symphony, in effect, of three powers - Church, State and People - rather than two. For the Russians had the advantage over the Romans and the Greeks that they were converted to the faith as a single people, with their existing social organisation intact, and not, as in Rome, as an amalgam of different peoples whose indigenous social structures had already been smashed by the pagan imperial power. Thus whereas in Rome, as Lev Tikhomirov writes, "the Christians did not constitute a social body", and "their only organisation was the Church"⁸⁰, in the sense that it was not whole peoples or classes but individuals from many different peoples and classes that joined the Church, in Russia the whole of the richly layered and variegated, but at the same time socially and politically coherent society came to the Church at one time and was baptized together. Moreover, Russia remained a nation-state with a predominantly Russian or

⁷⁸ Nazarov, *Taina Rossii*, Moscow, 1999, p. 538.

⁷⁹ An 8th or 9th century Greek prophecy found in St. Sabbas' monastery in Jerusalem, declares: "The sceptre of the Orthodox kingdom will fall from the weakening hands of the Byzantine emperors, *since they will not have proved able to achieve the symphony of Church and State*. Therefore the Lord in His Providence will send a third God-chosen people to take the place of the chosen, but spiritually decrepit people of the Greeks." (Archbishop Seraphim, "Sud'by Rossii", *Pravoslavnij Vestnik*, N 87, January-February, 1996, pp. 6-7; translated in Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church*, English Orthodox Trust, 1996)

⁸⁰ Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'*, St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 164.

Russian-Ukrainian-Belorussian population throughout its extraordinary expansion from the core principality of Muscovy, whose territory in 1462 was 24,000 square kilometres, to the multi-national empire of Petersburg Russia, whose territory in 1914 was 13.5 million square kilometres...⁸¹

Now the Russians retained their loyalty to the Byzantine Church and Empire until the very last moment – that is, until both emperor and patriarch betrayed the Orthodox faith at the Council of Florence in 1438-39. Even after this betrayal, the Russians did not immediately break their canonical dependence on the patriarch. And even after the election of St. Jonah to the metropolitanate of Kiev by a Council of Russian bishops without the blessing of the patriarch, Great Prince Basil III's letter to the patriarch shows great restraint and humility, speaking only of a "disagreement" between the two Churches. He stressed that St. Jonah had received the metropolitanate without asking the blessing of the patriarch, but in accordance with the canons, and only out of extreme necessity. The patriarch's blessing would again be asked once they were assured that he adhered to "the ancient piety".

With the exception of the Romanian principalities and the weak kingdom of Georgia, the Russian Great Prince was now the only independent Orthodox ruler. Moreover, since he was supported by an independent Church (even if that independence, in Greek eyes, was not canonical), he had a better claim than any other to inherit the throne of the Roman Emperors and therefore call himself "Tsar" (from "Caesar", the equivalent of the Greek "Basileus"). The title had been floated already before the fall of Constantinople. Thus in 1447-48 Simeon of Suzdal had called Great Prince Basil Vasilievich "faithful and Christ-loving and truly Orthodox... White Tsar".⁸² And St. Jonah wrote to Prince Alexander of Kiev that Basil was imitating his "ancestors" – the holy Emperor Constantine and the Great-Prince Vladimir.⁸³

The Russian Great Princes' claim was further strengthened by the marriage of Ivan III to the last surviving heir of the Palaeologan line, Sophia, in 1472. It was on this basis that the Venetian Senate accorded Ivan the imperial title.⁸⁴ Ivan himself indicated that in marrying Sophia he had united Muscovite Russia with Byzantium by uniting two coats of arms – the two-headed eagle of Byzantium with the image of St. George piercing the dragon with his spear. From now on the two-headed eagle became the Russian coat of arms with the image of St. George in the centre of it, as it were in its breast.⁸⁵

In 1492 Metropolitan Zosimus of Moscow wrote: "The Emperor Constantine built a New Rome, Tsarigrad; but the sovereign and autocrat (*samoderzhets*) of All the Russias, Ivan Vassilievich, the new Constantine, has laid the foundation for a new city of Constantine, Moscow."⁸⁶ Then, in 1498 Ivan had himself crowned by Metropolitan

⁸¹ Dominic Lieven, *Empire*, London: John Murray, 2000, pp. 262, 278.

⁸² Simeon of Suzdal, in Fomin S. & Fomina T., *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem*, Moscow, 1994, p. 242.

⁸³ Fr. John Meyendorff, "Was there an Encounter between East and West at Florence?", *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p. 108.

⁸⁴ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-110.

⁸⁵ Archpriest Lev Lebedev, *Velikorossia*, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 44.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Sir Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 323. Ya.S. Lourié writes: "The idea of 'Moscow – the new city of Constantine' was put forward by Zosimus, who was linked with the heretical movement [of the Judaizers] at the end of the 15th century;

Simon as “Tsar, Grand Prince and Autocrat of All the Russias”. “In the coronation ceremony, which was a rough copy of the Byzantine, the metropolitan charged the Tsar ‘to care for all souls and for all Orthodox Christendom’. The title of Tsar had now become the official title and brought with it the implication that the Russian monarch was, before God, the head of the Orthodox, that is, of the true Christian world.”⁸⁷

However, there were problems associated with the assumption of this title at this time – that is, in the fifteenth century. First, there were other Russian princes with claims to be “the new Constantine”, “the saviour of Orthodoxy” – “for instance,” writes Fr. John Meyendorff, “the prince Boris of Tver, who had also sent a representative to the council [of Florence] and now, after rejecting the Latin faith, was said by one polemicist to deserve an imperial diadem. Furthermore, in Novgorod, under Archbishop Gennadius (1484-1509), there appeared a curious Russian variation on the Donation of Constantine, the Legend of the White Cowl. According to the Legend, the white cowl (klobuk; Gr. επικαλιμαυκον) was donated by Constantine the Great to pope Sylvester following his baptism; the last Orthodox pope, foreseeing Rome’s fall into heresy, sent the cowl for safe-keeping to patriarch Philotheus of Constantinople, who eventually (also foreseeing the betrayal of Florence), sent the precious relic to the archbishop of Novgorod. Thus, not only Moscow, but also Tver and Novgorod, were somehow claiming to be the heirs of ‘Rome’, the center of the true Christian faith...”⁸⁸

This problem would resolve itself as Moscow gradually absorbed the other Russian princedoms. More serious, however, was a second problem associated with the fact that the Muscovite Russian Church was now not the only Russian Church. In 1451 the uniate Patriarch Gregory Mammas of Constantinople had fled to Rome, where he consecrated Gregory Bolgarin as metropolitan of Kiev in opposition to St. Jonah. This was justified by the Latins not only on the grounds that there was no communion between themselves and the Orthodox of Muscovy, - the Pope had called St. Jonah “the schismatic monk Jonah, son of iniquity”, - but also because a large part of the Russian population was now living within the domain of King Casimir of Poland-Lithuania, who was a Roman Catholic. Thus the fall of the Greek Church into uniatism led directly to a schism in the Orthodox Russian Church, which had the consequence that the Russian Great Prince could not count on the obedience even of all the Russian people – hardly a strong position from which to be proclaimed emperor of all the Orthodox Christians!

Thirdly, and still more fundamentally, after the death of St. Jonah (who still retained the title of metropolitan of Kiev) in 1461, the Muscovite metropolia was officially declared schismatic by Constantinople. The Muscovites’ old excuse for not returning into obedience to Constantinople – the latter’s departure from “the ancient piety” of Orthodoxy into uniatism, - no longer held water since the enthronement of St.

Zosimus boldly referred the New Testament prophecy, ‘the first shall be last, and the last first’ to the Greeks and the Russians...” (“Perepiska Groznogo s Kurbskim v Obschestvennoj Mysli Drevnej Rusi”, in Ya.S. Lourié and Yu.D. Rykov, *Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andreem Kurbskim*, Moscow: “Nauka”, 1993, p. 230).

⁸⁷ Runciman, *op. cit.*, pp. 323-324.

⁸⁸ Meyendorff, “Was There Ever a ‘Third Rome’? Remarks on the Byzantine Legacy in Russia”, in *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

Gennadius Scholarius, a disciple of St. Mark of Ephesus, to the see of the former imperial City. Moreover, in 1466 Gregory Bolgarin also returned to Orthodoxy, whereupon he was recognized as the sole canonical Russian metropolitan by Constantinople. This created a major problem, because in the consciousness of the Russian people the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch was required for such a major step as the assumption of the role of Orthodox emperor by the Russian Great Prince – which was out of the question so long as the Russians were in schism from the Greeks... However, the Muscovites felt, with some reason, that it made no sense to subject their own free Russian Church living under a free, Orthodox and increasingly powerful sovereign to a metropolitan living under a hostile Roman Catholic king and a patriarch living under a hostile Muslim sultan!

The schism between Constantinople and Moscow continued well into the sixteenth century...

Lack of recognition by the Second Rome was not the only obstacle that the Russian Great Princes had to overcome before they could truly call themselves the rulers of the Third Rome. They had to reunite, first, all the Russian lands under their own dominion, and then, if possible, all the lands of the Orthodox East. This point can be better appreciated if it is remembered that when the Emperor Constantine transferred the capital of the empire from Old Rome to the New Rome of Constantinople, he was already the undisputed ruler of the whole of the Roman Empire, in which the great majority of Orthodox Christians lived. Ivan III, by contrast, ruled none of the traditional territories of the Roman empire, and not even “the mother of Russian cities”, Kiev.

The gathering of all the Russian lands into a single national kingdom involved three major stages: (i) the uniting of the free Russian principedoms under Moscow, (ii) the final liberation of the Eastern and Southern Russian lands from the Tatar-Mongol-Turkish yoke, and (iii) the liberation of the Western Russian lands from the Catholic yoke of Poland-Lithuania.

Tsar Ivan the Terrible and the Ecumenical Patriarchate

Significant progress towards the gathering of the Russian lands was made in the reign of Ivan IV, “the Terrible” through his conquest of the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates. Moreover, the schism between the Greek and Russian Churches was healed. As for the Ecumenical Patriarch recognizing Moscow’s claim to be the Third Rome, this came closer had to wait for fulfillment until the reign of Ivan’s son, Theodore Ivanovich.

The theme of Moscow the Third Rome became steadily more important throughout the sixteenth century. Thus in the reign of Basil III, Ivan’s father, Elder Philotheus of Pskov expressed the idea in its full splendour: “I would like to say a few words about the existing Orthodox empire of our most illustrious, exalted ruler. He is the only emperor on all the earth over the Christians, the governor of the holy, divine throne of the holy, ecumenical, apostolic Church which in place of the Churches of Rome and Constantinople is in the city of Moscow, protected by God, in the holy and glorious Dormition church of the most pure Mother of God. It alone shines over the whole earth more radiantly than the sun. For know well, those who love Christ and those who love

God, that all Christian empires will perish and give way to the one kingdom of our ruler, in accord with the books of the prophet [Daniel 7.14], which is the Russian empire. For two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and there will never be a fourth..."⁸⁹

Again, in 1540 Elder Philotheus wrote to Tsar Ivan, who was not yet of age, that the "woman clothed with the sun" of Revelation chapter 12 was the Church, which fled from the Old Rome to the New Rome of Constantinople, and thence, after the fall of Constantinople, to the third Rome "in the new, great Russia". And the master of the third Rome, in both its political and ecclesiastical spheres, was the tsar: "Alone on earth the Orthodox, great Russian tsar steers the Church of Christ as Noah in the ark was saved from the flood, and he establishes the Orthodox faith."

This rhetoric was all very fine, but in the minds of the highly religious Russians, not to mention the Greeks, it meant nothing if the Russian tsar not in communion with the first see of Orthodoxy, Constantinople. Nor was it only the simple people who felt this incongruity. St. Maximus the Greek and Metropolitan Joasaph of Moscow (1539-42), non-possessors both, tried unsuccessfully to bridge the gap between Moscow and Constantinople. For their pains they were cast into prison and then house arrest, dying in the same year (1555/56). However, the Ecumenical Patriarch thought up a cunning stratagem that after some years achieved the desired effect...⁹⁰

In June of that year, a Council of over 50 bishops enthroned the new patriarch, Dionysius II, and sent an epistle to the tsar announcing the fact. In the same epistle they did two things that were meant to be seen together. On the one hand, an appeal was made to release St. Maximus the Greek, who had been imprisoned, at least in part, because he accepted Constantinople's ecclesial claims. And on the other, the tsar himself was addressed as "tsar and great prince". And this even before Ivan was formally anointed and crowned with the Cap of Monomakh by Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow on January 16, 1547! In diplomatic language the Ecumenical Patriarch was saying: we are willing to recognize you as tsar, if you return the Muscovite Church into submission to us. And as a sign of your good intent, release St. Maximus...⁹¹

Now the word "tsar" in Russian was roughly equivalent to the word "basileus" in Greek, but it was not equivalent to "emperor of the Romans". It was a term that had been accorded, grudgingly, to both Charlemagne and the tsar of Bulgaria, as indicating that they were independent and lawful Christian sovereigns; but it fell short of according its bearer the dignity of the ruler and protector of all Orthodox Christians. But in his crowning by Metropolitan Macarius, the tsar's genealogy had been read, going back (supposedly) to the Emperor Augustus, which implied that he was the successor of the Roman emperors.

The patriarch did not respond to this hint, however. Nor was it really plausible to do so insofar as the Ecumenical Patriarch was meant to be in "symphony" with the

⁸⁹ Philotheus, *Letter against the Astronomers and the Latins*, quoted in Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999.

⁹⁰ V.M. Lourié, "Prekraschenie moskovskogo tserkovnogo raskola 1467-1560 godov: final istorii v dokumantakh", on whose account I rely heavily in this section.

⁹¹ Lourié, op. cit.

Roman emperor as his secular partner, whereas his real secular “partner” was not Ivan the Terrible, but the Ottoman Sultan! Nevertheless, the limited recognition that the tsar was being offered constituted an important step forward in the Russian tsars’ campaign for recognition in the Orthodox world, and would be something that the tsar would not want to reject out of hand.

The next step in the tsarist campaign was the *Stoglav* council of 1551, whose decisions were framed in the form of 100 answers to questions posed to the Russian tsar. In general, the council was concerned with uprooting corruption in various aspects of church life. Its Russocentric, even nationalist character was emphasized by its decision to the effect that, in all cases where Russian Church ritual differed from Greek, the Russian version was correct. “This unilateral decision,” writes Sir Steven Runciman, “shocked many of the Orthodox. The monks of Athos protested and the Russian monks there regarded the decisions of the synod as invalid.”⁹²

It is in the context of this Russocentrism that we must understand the Council’s citation of Canon 9 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which ascribed to the Ecumenical Patriarch the final say in judging internal church quarrels, and of the Emperor Justinian’s *Novella 6* on the “symphony” between Church and State. As Lourié has argued, these citations in no way implied that the Russian Church was not fully autocephalous. The implication was rather that while the Ecumenical Patriarch was accorded all the power granted him by the holy canons, his “partner”, with whom he should remain in harmony, was the Russian tsar...⁹³

The following few years (1552-1556) witnessed Ivan’s great victories over the Tatars of Kazan and Astrakhan, when the State began to spread from Europe into Asia, and change from a racially fairly homogeneous state into a multi-national empire, “the Third Rome”. The famous cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed – originally dedicated to the Protecting Veil of the Virgin – was built to celebrate the conquest of Kazan.

In 1909, Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) pointed out that the conquest of Kazan “was great precisely because with it there began the gradual ascendancy of Christianity over Islam, which had already subjected the Eastern Churches and before that time had not yet been subdued by the Muscovite kingdom. Having now destroyed the wasps’ nest of the Tatar God-fighting tribe, our forefathers understood that this event defined with all clarity the great calling of the Russian land gradually to unite at the foot of the Cross of Christ all the eastern peoples and all the eastern cultures under the leadership of the White Tsar. The great ascetics of piety Gurias, Barsonuphius and Herman were immediately sent to Kazan together with church valuables. There they built churches and monasteries and by the light of their inspired teaching and angelic holiness drew crowds upon crowds of various foreigners to holy baptism. The Russians understood that now – not in separate rivulets, but in a single broad wave – the life and faith of the Trans-Volgan region and Siberia would pour into the sea of the Church, and that the work of St. Stephen of Perm and the preachers of God in the first centuries that were like him would continue without hindrance. And then our ancestors decided, on the one hand, to cast off from themselves every shadow of exaltation in the glorious victory and conquest, and to ascribe all this to Divine

⁹² Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

⁹³ Lourié, *op. cit.*

Providence, and on the other hand to seal their radiant hope that Moscow, which was then ready to proclaim itself the Third and last Rome, would have to become the mediator of the coming universal and free union of people in the glorification of the Divine Redeemer. The tsar and people carried out their decision by building a beautiful cathedral on Red square, which has justly been recognized as the eighth wonder of the world. The pious inspiration of the Russian masters exceeded all expectation and amazed the beholders. Before them stands a church building whose parts represent a complete diversity, from the ground to the higher crosses, but which as a whole constitutes a wonderful unity – a single elegant wreath – a wreath to the glory of Christ that shone forth in the victory of the Russians over the Hagarenes [Muslims]. Many cupolas crown this church: there is a Mauritanian cupola, an Indian cupola, there are Byzantine elements, there are Chinese elements, while in the middle above them all there rises a Russian cupola uniting the whole building.

“The thought behind this work of genius is clear: Holy Rus’ must unite all the eastern peoples and be their leader to heaven. This thought is a task recognized by our ancestors and given by God to our people; it has long become a leading principle of their state administration, both inwardly and outwardly: the reigns of the last Ruriks and the first Romanovs were marked by the grace-filled enlightenment of the Muslims and pagans of the North and East, the support of the ancient Christians of the East and South and the defense of the Russian Christians of the West, oppressed by heretics. Rus’ expanded and became stronger and broader, like the wings of an eagle; in the eyes of her sons the Russian cross on [the cathedral of] Basil the Blessed shone ever more brightly; her impious enemies in the South and West trembled; the hands of the enslaved Christians – the Greeks, the Serbs and the Arabs - were raised imploringly to her; at various times Moscow saw within her walls all four eastern patriarchs and heard the liturgy in her churches in many languages...”⁹⁴

With his prestige greatly enhanced by his victories over the Muslims, in 1557 the tsar sent Archimandrite Theodorit to Constantinople with the purpose of receiving the patriarch’s blessing to crown him with the full ceremonial accorded to the Byzantine emperors. The reply was not everything that the tsar was hoping for: the patriarch’s blessing was obtained – but only on the tsar’s earlier crowning by Metropolitan Macarius. This constituted, however, only a *de facto* rather than a *de jure* recognition; it could not be otherwise, since Macarius was still formally a schismatic in the Greeks’ eyes.

In 1561 the tsar finally received a fuller, less ambiguous response to his request in the form of an account of a conciliar decision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate dating to December, 1560. But the conciliar decision’s reasoning was unexpectedly roundabout, even devious. First, there was no mention of Ivan’s descent from Augustus, but only from Anna, the Byzantine princess who married St. Vladimir the Saint. In other words, Ivan’s pretensions to be “emperor of the Romans” were rejected: he was the lawful “God-crowned” ruler or emperor only of Russia...

Secondly, Ivan was said by the Council to have sought to be crowned by the

⁹⁴ Khrapovitsky, in Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky), *Zhizneopisanie Blazhennejshago Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago* (Biography of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), New York, 1971, volume 1, pp. 14-15.

patriarch because his crowning by Macarius “has no validity, since not only does a Metropolitan not have the right to crown, but not even every Patriarch, but only the two Patriarchs: the Roman and Constantinopolitan”. In fact, Ivan had made no request for a repetition of the rite. But the patriarch then proposed a way out of the impasse: he said that he himself, in the conciliar decision of December, 1560, had joined his own hand to the crowning carried out by Macarius in 1547, thereby making it valid “in hindsight”, as it were. And that is why he called Ivan’s coronation “God-crowned” in spite of its invalidity!

Another important feature of the conciliar decision was that Macarius was called “metropolitan of Moscow and the whole of Great Russia”, a much more precise designation than the previous “metropolitan of Russia”, implying that Macarius was a fully canonical metropolitan having a territorial jurisdiction distinct from that of the metropolitan of Kiev.

Moreover, in another (non-conciliar) *gramota*, the patriarch suggested that while it might be rational to carry out a second crowning of Ivan by the patriarch insofar as the first one was invalid, it would be “useful and salutary” to consider this as already done, insofar as Metropolitan Macarius was the “catholic patriarchal exarch” able to carry out all hierarchical acts without hindrance, and the coronation he performed in 1547 was mystically carried out also by the patriarch... “And so,” concludes Lourié, “the abolition of the Muscovite autocephaly was achieved, while no recognition of the Moscow tsar as emperor of the Romans was given in exchange. The Moscow authorities could not dispute this, since the rejection of the autocephaly was now bound up with the recognition of the tsar’s coronation.”⁹⁵

The second half of Ivan’s reign was in complete contrast to the first: military success in the east was followed by military failure in the west; thousands of Russians were slaughtered with horrific cruelty by Ivan’s *oprichnina*; he killed even his own son and the head of the Russian Church, St. Philip.

However, the ideal of Moscow the Third Rome, though discredited (and future mockers would frequently cite the example of Ivan the Terrible), did not die...

[Tsar Theodore Ivanovich and the Moscow Patriarchate](#)

“After the horrors of the reign of Ivan IV,” writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, “a complete contrast is represented by the soft, kind rule of his son, Theodore Ivanovich. In Russia there suddenly came as it were complete silence... However, the silence of the reign of Theodore Ivanovich was external and deceptive; it could more accurately be called merely a lull before a new storm. For that which had taken place during the *oprichnina* could not simply disappear: it was bound to have the most terrible consequences.”⁹⁶

But this lull contained some very important events. One was the crowning of Theodore according to the full Byzantine rite, followed by his communion in both kinds in the altar. This further enhanced the status of the Russian State, which now, as

⁹⁵ Lourié, *op. cit.*

⁹⁶ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

in the reign of Ivan the Terrible, was closely linked to the status of the Moscow metropolia...

As A.P. Dobroklonsky writes, "the Moscow metropolitan see stood very tall. Its riches and the riches of the Moscow State stimulated the Eastern Patriarchs - not excluding the Patriarch of Constantinople himself - to appeal to it for alms. The boundaries of the Moscow metropolitanate were broader than the restricted boundaries of any of the Eastern Patriarchates (if we exclude from the Constantinopolitan the Russian metropolitan see, which was part of it); the court of the Moscow metropolitan was just as great as that of the sovereign. The Moscow metropolitan was freer in the manifestation of his ecclesiastical rights than the Patriarchs of the East, who were restricted at every step. Under the protection of the Orthodox sovereigns the metropolitan see in Moscow stood more firmly and securely than the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, which had become a plaything in the hands of the sultan or vizier. The power of the Moscow metropolitan was in reality not a whit less than that of the patriarchate: he ruled the bishops, called himself their 'father, pastor, comforter and head, under the power and in the will of whom they are the Vladykas of the whole Russian land'. Already in the 15th century, with the agreement of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch, he had been elected in Rus' without the knowledge or blessing of the Patriarch; the Russian metropolia had already ceased hierarchical relations with the patriarchal see. If there remained any dependence of the Moscow metropolitan on the patriarch, it was only nominal, since the Russian metropolia was still counted as belonging to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate..."⁹⁷

Not only was the Moscow metropolia a *de facto* patriarchate already: its exaltation would simultaneously raise the status of the Russian Autocracy, whose prosperity was vital for the survival, not only of Russian Orthodoxy, but of Greek, Balkan, Middle Eastern and Georgian Orthodoxy, too. And so in 1586 talks began with Patriarch Joachim of Antioch, who had arrived in Moscow. He promised to discuss the question of the status of the Russian Church with his fellow patriarchs. In 1588, the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II (Trallas) came to Moscow on an alms-raising trip.⁹⁸ Then he went on an important tour of the beleaguered Orthodox in the Western Russian lands, ordaining bishops and blessing the lay brotherhoods.

It was the desperate situation of the Orthodox in Western Russia, persecuted as they were by the Poles, that made the exaltation of the Muscovite see particularly timely. In 1582 the Pope had introduced the Gregorian calendar, whose aims included dividing the Orthodox liturgically; and in 1596 the Orthodox hierarchs in the region signed the unia of Brest-Litovsk with the Roman Catholics. It was now obvious that Divine Providence had singled out the Church and State in Muscovy, rather than that in Poland-Lithuania, as the centre and stronghold of Russian Orthodoxy as a whole, and this needed to be emphasised in the eyes of all the Orthodox.

Patriarch Jeremiah understood this; and in January, 1589 he and Tsar Ivan Fyodorovich presided over a "Holy Synod of the Great Russian Empire and of the

⁹⁷ Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi*, Moscow, 2001, pp. 280-281.

⁹⁸ See A.V. Kartashev, *Ocherki po Istorii Russkoj Tserkvi*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1959, pp. 10-46, Vladimir Rusak, *Istoria Rossijskoj Tserkvi*, 1988, pp. 152-156, Dobroklonsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-285; and the life of St. Job, first patriarch of Moscow, in *Moskovskij Paterik*, Moscow: Stolitsa, 1991, pp. 110-113.

Greek Empire” which sanctioned the creation of an autocephalous Russian patriarchate, a decision published in a *gramota* by the tsar in May of the same year. The act was confirmed in a highly unusual and even, strictly speaking, uncanonical manner: the new Russian patriarch, Job, was given a second (or even a third) consecration by Patriarch Jeremiah.⁹⁹

The decision was confirmed by two Pan-Orthodox Councils in Constantinople in 1590 and 1593. In the later Council the Russian Church was assigned the fifth place among the patriarchates, and the Pope’s introduction of the Gregorian calendar was anathematized.

As Dan Mureşan has argued, these two last acts were closely linked. Up to this period, Rome, though in heresy, was considered still belong to the pentarchy of patriarchs, without whose combined presence no Ecumenical Council could be convened. But the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1582 had so appalled the Orthodox that the pretense of a pentarchy including Rome was finally abandoned. So the Council of 1590 was called “ecumenical”, although it was convened without Rome, and the Russian Church took the place of Rome, thereby recreating the pentarchy to reflect present realities.

In agreeing to the tsar’s request for a patriarchate of Moscow, Patriarch Jeremiah showed that he understood that in having a Patriarch at his side, the status of the Tsar, too, would be exalted: “In truth, pious tsar, the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and this thought is from God, and will be realised by you. For the Old Rome fell to the Apollinarian heresy, and the Second Rome, Constantinople, is in the possession of the grandsons of the Hagarenes, the godless Turks: but your great Russian kingdom, the Third Rome, has exceeded all in piety. And all the pious kingdoms have been gathered into your kingdom, and you alone under the heavens are named the Christian tsar throughout the inhabited earth for all Christians.”¹⁰⁰

The Patriarch’s language here is very reminiscent of that of the famous prophecy of Elder Philotheus of Pskov in 1511. In particular, the Patriarch follows the elder in ascribing the fall of Old Rome to “the Apollinarian heresy”. Now the Apollinarian heresy rarely, if ever, figures in lists of the western heresies. And yet the patriarch here

⁹⁹ Mureşan, “Rome hérétique? Sur les décisions des conciles de Moscou et de Constantinople (1589, 1590 et 1593”, [file:///localhost/Users/anthonymoss/Documents/Rome%20he%CC%81re%CC%81tique%20%20%20Sur%20les%20de%CC%81cisions%20des%20conciles%20de%20Moscou%20et%20de%20Constantinople%20\(1589,%201590%20et%201593\).html](file:///localhost/Users/anthonymoss/Documents/Rome%20he%CC%81re%CC%81tique%20%20%20Sur%20les%20de%CC%81cisions%20des%20conciles%20de%20Moscou%20et%20de%20Constantinople%20(1589,%201590%20et%201593).html).

V.M. Lourié writes: “The case of the raising to the patriarchy of Job, who was already Metropolitan of Moscow by that time, was strangely dual. The first Episcopal consecration was carried out on Job already in 1581, when he became Bishop of Kolomna, and the second in 1587, when he was raised to the rank of Metropolitan of Moscow. Now, with his raising to the rank of Patriarch of Moscow, a third Episcopal ordination was carried out on him (Uspensky, 1998).” This uncanonical custom appears to have originated with Patriarch Philotheus of Constantinople, when he transferred St. Alexis from Vladimir to Moscow (<http://hgr.livejournal.com/1099886.html>, June 1, 2006).

¹⁰⁰ Zzyzkyin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part I, p. 156. This thought was echoed by the patriarch of Alexandria, who wrote to the “most Orthodox” tsar in 1592: “The four patriarchates of the Orthodox speak of your rule as that of another, new Constantine the Great... and say that if there were no help from your rule, then Orthodoxy would be in extreme danger.” (van den Bercken, *op. cit.*, p. 160).

indicates that it is the heresy as a result of which the First Rome fell. Some have understood it to mean the Latin practice of using unleavened bread in the Eucharist.

In order to understand why the patriarch should have spoken of Apollinarianism as the heresy of the West, we need to look for some matching in form, if not in substance, between the Apollinarian and papist heresies. Now Apollinarius taught that in Christ only the body and the soul were human, but His mind was Divine. In other words, Christ did not have a human mind like ours, but this was replaced, according to the Apollinarian schema, by the Divine Logos. A parallel with Papism immediately suggests itself: just as the Divine Logos replaces the human mind in the heretical Apollinarian Christology, so a quasi-Divine, infallible Pope replaces the fully human, and therefore at all times fallible episcopate in the heretical papist ecclesiology. The root heresy of the West therefore consists in the unlawful exaltation of the mind of the Pope over the other minds of the Church, both clerical and lay, and its quasi-deification to a level equal to that of Christ Himself. From this root heresy proceed all the heresies of the West.

Thus the Filioque with its implicit demotion of the Holy Spirit to a level below that of the Father and the Son becomes necessary insofar as the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth Who constantly leads the Church into all truth has now become unnecessary - the Divine Mind of the Pope is quite capable of fulfilling His function. Similarly, the epiclesis, the invocation of the Holy Spirit on the Holy Gifts during the Divine Liturgy, is also unnecessary - if Christ, the Great High Priest, sanctified the Holy Gifts by His word alone, then His Divine Vicar on earth is surely able to do the same without invoking any other Divinity, especially a merely subordinate one such as the Holy Spirit.

The exaltation of the Russian Church and State to patriarchal and "Third Rome" status respectively shows that, not only in her own eyes, but in the eyes of the whole Orthodox world, Russia was now the chief bastion of the Truth of Christ against the heresies of the West. Russia had been born as a Christian state just as the West was falling away from grace into papism in the eleventh century. Now, in the sixteenth century, as Western papism received a bastard child in the Protestant Reformation, and a second wind in the Counter-Reformation, Russia was ready to take up leadership of the struggle against both heresies as a fully mature Orthodox nation.

However, as we have seen, the Eastern Patriarchs, while confirming the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate, made it only the fifth in seniority, after the four Greek patriarchates. This meant that the relationship between Church and State in the Third Rome still did not quite correspond to that between Church and State in the Second Rome. For whereas in the latter the Emperor's partner was the first see in Orthodoxy (at least after the fall of the papacy), the Emperor's partner in the Third Rome was only number five in the list of patriarchs. Nevertheless, this was probably in accordance with Divine Providence; for in the decades that immediately followed the prestige of the "Third Rome" was severely dented when the Poles briefly conquered Moscow during the "Time of Troubles", necessitating the continued supervision of the Western and Southern Russian Orthodox by Constantinople. And by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Russian patriarchate was abolished by Peter the Great and replaced by a "Holy Governing Synod"... On the other hand, the

elevation of the head of the Russian Church to the rank of patriarch was to prove beneficial now, in the early seventeenth century, when the Autocracy in Russia had been shaken to its foundations and the patriarchs had taken the place of the tsars as the leaders of the Russian nation. We witness a similar phenomenon in 1917, when the restoration of the Russian patriarchate to some degree compensated for the fall of the tsardom. In both cases, the patriarchate both filled the gap left by the fall of the state (up to a point), and kept alive the ideals of true Orthodox statehood, waiting for the time when it could restore political power into the hands of the anointed tsars.

4. IVAN THE TERRIBLE: SAINT OR SINNER?

In the Moscow Patriarchate today there is a movement to canonize Tsar Ivan the Terrible. Many are puzzled and alarmed by this complete reversal of the generally accepted picture of the famous tsar. Let us look at some of the relevant facts.

Early Years

The circumstances of Ivan's birth were not auspicious. His father, Great Prince Basil III, put away his lawful wife Solomonia because of her barrenness, and with the blessing of Metropolitan Daniel of Moscow (whose predecessor, Barlaam, had been unlawfully removed from his see) married Helen Glinskaya. (Solomonia was forcibly tonsured in Suzdal and was later canonised under her monastic name of Sophia.) The famous monk St. Maximus the Greek immediately rebuked the Great Prince. He wrote him an extensive work: *Instructive chapters for Right-Believing Rulers*, which began: "O most devout Tsar, he is honoured as a true ruler who seeks to establish the life of his subjects in righteousness and justice, and endeavours always to overcome the lusts and dumb passions of his soul. For he who is overcome by them is not the living image of the Heavenly Master, but only an anthropomorphic likeness of dumb nature."¹⁰¹

Also, Patriarch Mark of Jerusalem, wrote prophetically to the Great Prince: "If you do this wicked thing, you will have an evil son. Your estate will become prey to terrors and tears. Rivers of blood will flow; the heads of the mighty will fall; your cities will be devoured by flames."¹⁰² The prophecy was fulfilled with exactitude in the reign of his son, Ivan IV, better known as "the Terrible"...

Ivan's childhood was very troubled. As Nicholas Riasanovsky writes, he "was only three years old in 1533 when his father, Basil III, died, leaving the government of Russia to his wife... and the boyar дума. The new regent acted in a haughty and arbitrary manner, disregarding the boyars and relying first on her uncle, the experienced Prince Michael Glinsky, and after his death on her lover, the youthful Prince Telepnev-Obolensky. In 1538 she died suddenly, possibly of poison. Boyar rule - if this phrase can be used to characterize the strife and misrule which ensued - followed her demise...

"All evidence suggests that Ivan IV was a sensitive, intelligent, and precocious boy. He learned to read early and read everything that he could find, especially Muscovite Church literature. He became of necessity painfully aware of the struggle and intrigues around him and also of the ambivalence of his own position. The same boyars who formally paid obeisance to him as autocrat and treated him with utmost respect on ceremonial occasions, neglected, insulted, and injured him in private life. In fact, they deprived him at will of his favourite servants and companions and ran the palace, as well as Russia, as they pleased. Bitterness and cruelty, expressed, for instance, in his torture of animals, became fundamental traits of the young ruler's character."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ "Our Father among the Saints Maxim the Greek", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XIII, № 1, January-February, 1991, p. 11.

¹⁰² Francis Carr, *Ivan the Terrible*, London: David & Charles, 1981, pp. 61-62.

¹⁰³ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 143-144, 145.

In the opinion of some, Ivan's later cruelties can be explained, at least in part, by mental illness induced by the extreme insecurity of his upbringing...

The Orthodox Tsar

On January 16, 1547 Ivan was anointed and crowned with the Cap of Vladimir Monomakh by Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow.

In view of the fearsome reputation Ivan has acquired, not without reason, it is worth reminding ourselves of the great achievements of the first half of his reign. He vastly increased the territory of the Muscovite kingdom, neutralizing the Tatar threat and bringing Kazan and the whole of the Volga under Orthodox control; he began the exploration and conquest of Siberia; he strengthened the army and local administration; he introduced the *Zemskie Sobory*, "Councils of the Land", in which he sought the advice of different classes of the people; he subdued the boyars who had nearly destroyed the monarchy in his childhood; he rejected Jesuit attempts to bring Russia into communion with Rome; he convened Church Councils that condemned heresies (e.g. the Arianism of Bashkin) and removed many abuses in ecclesiastical and monastic life. Even the Tsar's fiercest critic, Prince Andrew Kurbsky, had to admit that he had formerly been "radiant in Orthodoxy".

As Nicholas Riasanovsky writes, in 1551 Ivan "presented to the [*Stoglav*, "Hundred Chapters"] Church council his new legal code, the *Sudebnik* of 1550, and the local government reform, and received its approval. Both measures became law. The institution of a novel scheme of local government deserves special attention as one of the more daring attempts in Russian history to resolve this perennially difficult problem. The new system aimed at the elimination of corruption and oppression on the part of centrally appointed officials by means of popular participation in local affairs. Various localities had already received permission to elect their own judicial authorities to deal, drastically if need be, with crime. Now, in areas whose population guaranteed a certain amount of dues to the treasury, other locally elected officials replaced the centrally appointed governors. And even where the governors remained, the people could elect assessors to check closely on their activities and, indeed, impeach them when necessary..."¹⁰⁴

The only major mistake of this part of his reign was the decision of the *Stoglav* Council of 1551 that, in all cases where Russian Church ritual differed from Greek, the Russian version was correct. "This unilateral decision shocked many of the Orthodox. The monks of Athos protested and the Russian monks there regarded the decisions of the synod as invalid."¹⁰⁵

In retrospect, we can see that the nationalist attitude of the *Stoglav* council laid the foundations of the Old Ritualist schism in the next century...

Nevertheless, Ivan's respect for the Church prevented him from becoming, in the first half of his reign, an absolutist ruler in the sense that he admitted no power higher than his own. This is illustrated by his behaviour in the *Stoglav* Council, which was

¹⁰⁴ Riasanovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

¹⁰⁵ Sir Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 329.

conducted by the Tsar putting forward questions to which the hierarchy replied. The hierarchy was quite happy to support the tsar in extirpating certain abuses within the Church, but when the tsar raised the question of the sequestration of Church lands for the sake of the strengthening of the State, the hierarchs showed their independence and refused. The tsar sufficiently respected the independence of the hierarchy to yield to its will on this matter, and in general the sixteenth-century Councils were true images of *sobornost'*.

As Metropolitan Macarius (Bulgakov) writes: "At most of the Councils there were present, besides the hierarchs, the superiors of the monasteries - archimandrites, igumens, builders, also protopriests, priests, monks and the lower clergy generally. Often his Majesty himself was present, sometimes with his children, brothers and all the boyars... It goes without saying that the right to vote at the Councils belonged first of all to the metropolitan and the other hierarchs... But it was offered to other clergy present at the Councils to express their opinions. Their voice could even have a dominant significance at the Council, as, for example, the voice of St. Joseph of Volokolamsk at the Councils of 1503-1504... The conciliar decisions and decrees were signed only by the hierarchs, others - by lower clergy: archimandrites and igumens. And they were confirmed by the agreement of his Majesty..."¹⁰⁶

The tsar's *Zemskie Sobory*, or "Land Councils" all took place in the decade 1547-1556. This was also the decade of his great victories over the Tatars of Kazan and Astrakhan, when the State began to spread from Europe into Asia, and change from a racially fairly homogeneous state into a multi-national empire, "the Third Rome". The famous cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed - originally dedicated to the Protecting Veil of the Virgin - was built to celebrate the conquest of Kazan.

Ivan's Political Ideology

In Russia, unlike most West European countries, the Great Prince or Tsar was not seen as simply the most powerful member of the noble class, but as standing above all the classes, including the nobility. Therefore the lower classes as often as not looked to the Great Prince or Tsar to protect them from the nobility, and often intervened to raise him to power or protect him from attempted coups by the nobility. There are many examples of this in Russian history, from Andrew of Bogolyubovo to the Time of Troubles to the Decembrist conspiracy in 1825. Thus Pokrovsky wrote of the failed Decembrist conspiracy: "The autocracy was saved by the Russian peasant in a guard's uniform."¹⁰⁷ And in fact the tsars, when allowed to rule with truly autocratic authority, were much better for the peasants than the nobles, passing laws that surpassed contemporary European practice in their humaneness. Thus Solonevich points out that in Ivan's *Sudebnik*, "the administration did not have the right to arrest a man without presenting him to the representatives of the local self-government..., otherwise the latter on the demand of the relatives could free the arrested man and exact from the representative of the administration a corresponding fine 'for dishonour'. But guarantees of security for person and possessions were not restricted to the habeas

¹⁰⁶ Metropolitan Macarius, *Istoria Russkoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 1996, vol. 4, part 2, pp. 91, 93.

¹⁰⁷ Pokrovsky, quoted in Ivan Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, p. 331.

corpus act. Klyuchevsky writes about 'the old right of the ruled to complain to the highest authority against the lawless acts of the subject rulers'."¹⁰⁸

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that sixteenth-century Russia was in many ways a less free State than in the 11th or 14th centuries. The reason lay in the task imposed by Divine Providence on Russia of defending the last independent outpost of Orthodoxy in the world, which required, in view of the threat posed by Counter-Reformation Catholicism, an ever-increasing centralization and militarization of society, and therefore great sacrifices from all classes of the population.

This included the boyars, of course. Would they rebel against the tsar? Probably some wanted to. But the boyar class as a whole did not want to abolish the autocracy. For, as Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes, "Russia without the Tsar was inconceivable to it; the Tsar was even necessary to it (otherwise the princes would simply have fought against each other, as in the time of the appanage wars). The boyar opposition attained a relative independence, as it were autonomy, and, of course, it was not against ruling the Tsars, but this could never be fully realized because of the inevitable and constant quarrels within the princely boyar or court opposition itself, which consisted of various groupings around the most powerful families, which were doomed to an absence of unity because of the love of power and avarice of each of them. One can say that the princely-courtly opposition from time immemorial tried to weaken (and did weaken, did shake!) the Autocracy, while at the same time unfailingly wanting to preserve it! A shaky and inconsistent position..."¹⁰⁹

The freest class was the clergy. As we have seen, Ivan respected the Church, and did not in general try to impose his will on her. And yet he liked to emphasize that the Church had no business interfering in affairs of State, constantly bringing the argument round to the quasi-absolute power of the tsar – and the insubordination of the boyars: "Remember, when God delivered the Jews from slavery, did he place above them a priest or many rulers? No, he placed above them a single tsar – Moses, while the affairs of the priesthood he ordered should be conducted, not by him, but by his brother Aaron, forbidding Aaron to be occupied with worldly matters. But when Aaron occupied himself with worldly affairs, he drew the people away from God. Do you see that it is not fitting for priests to do the work of tsars! Also, when Dathan and Abiron wanted to seize power, remember how they were punished for this by their destruction, to which destruction they led many sons of Israel? You, boyars, are worthy of the same!"¹¹⁰

The lower classes – that is, the peasants, shopkeepers and artisans, who paid taxes and services to the tsar and his servitors – were increasingly chained to the land that they worked. For in the century 1550-1650, the tsars gradually enserfed them in order to prevent them from simply disappearing into the woods or fleeing to the steppes in the south. They were not technically slaves (slaves at any rate have the privilege of not paying taxes); but a combination of political and economic factors (e.g. peasant indebtedness to landlords, landlords' liability for collecting peasants' taxes, the enormous demand for manpower as the state's territory expanded) bonded them to

¹⁰⁸ Solonevich, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

¹⁰⁹ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 392.

¹¹⁰ Ivan IV, *Sochinenia* (Works), St. Petersburg: Azbuka, 2000, p. 49.

the land; and the hereditary nature of social status in Muscovite Russia meant that they had little hope of rising up the social ladder.

However, it was the boyars who lost most from the increasing power of the tsar. In medieval Russia, they had been theoretically free to join other princes; but by the 1550s there were no independent Russian princes – Orthodox ones, at any rate – outside Moscow.¹¹¹ Moreover, they now held their lands, or *votchiny*, on condition they served the Great Prince, otherwise they became theoretically forfeit. Now the boyars traditionally served in the army or the administration. But the administration, being historically simply an extension of the prince's private domain, was completely controlled by him. Moreover, his patrimony was greatly increased by his conquest of Novgorod in 1478, his appropriation of all the land of the local aristocratic and merchant elites, and, especially, by his conquest of the vast lands of the former Kazan and Astrakhan khanates in the 1550s and 1560s. This weakened the power of the boyars.

However, the boyars with their clannish rivalries and habits of freedom were still a potential problem. For Ivan, their independent power was incompatible with his conception of the Russian autocracy. As he wrote to the rebellious boyar, Prince Kurbsky in 1564: "What can one say of the godless peoples? There, you know, the kings do not have control of their kingdoms, but rule as is indicated to them by their subjects. But from the beginning it is the Russian autocrats who have controlled their own state, and not their boyars and grandees!"¹¹²

Ivan was not in the least swayed by the ideology of democracy, being, as he wrote, "humble Ioann, Tsar and Great Prince of All Russia, by God's will, and not by the multi-mutinous will of man..." On another occasion he wrote to King Sigismund Augustus of Poland, whose power was severely limited by his nobles, that the autocratic power of the Russian tsars was "not like your pitiful kingdom. For nobody gives orders to the great Sovereigns, while your *Pans* [nobles] tell you what they want".

Kurbsky defended the boyars on the grounds of their personal valour; they were "the best of the mighty ones of Israel". In reply, Ivan pointed out that personal qualities do not help if there are no correct "structures": "As a tree cannot flower if its roots dry up, so here: if there are no good structures in the kingdom, courage will not be revealed in war. But you, without paying attention to structures, are glorified only with courage." The idea that there can be more than one power in the land is Manichaeism, according to Ivan; for the Manichaeans taught that "Christ possesses only the heavens, while the earth is ruled independently by men, and the nether regions by the devil. But I believe that Christ possesses all: the heavens, the earth and the nether regions, and everything in the heavens, on the earth and in the nether regions subsists by His will, the counsel of the Father and the consent of the Holy Spirit." And since the tsar is

¹¹¹ One of the last to be absorbed by Moscow was Pskov, in 1509. The chronicler, mourning over his native city of Pskov, wrote that "the glory of the Pskovian land perished because of their self-will and refusal to submit to each other, for their evil slanders and evil ways, for shouting at *veches*. They were not able to rule their own homes, but wanted to rule the city". As Lebedev rightly remarks: "A good denunciation of democracy!" (op. cit., p. 61).

¹¹² Ivan IV, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

anointed of God, he rules in God's place, and can concede no part of what is in fact God's power to anyone else.

Although Ivan's criticism of democracy is penetrating, his own rule was closer to the despotism of the Tatar khans (whose yoke had been thrown off not that long ago) than to the symphony of powers between Church and State that was the Byzantine and Orthodox ideal. This distortion in thinking soon led to deviancy in action...

The Bloodthirsty Tyrant

Things began to go wrong from 1558, when Ivan began a campaign against the Livonian Knights that was to prove expensive and unsuccessful. Then, in 1560, his beloved first wife, Anastasia, died - killed, as he suspected and modern scientific research has confirmed¹¹³ - by the boyars. Now Ivan turned vengefully against the boyars... First, he designated the boyars' lands as *oprichnina*, that is, his personal realm, and founded the *oprichniki*, a kind of secret police body sworn to obey him alone. They entered the boyars' lands, killing, raping and pillaging at will and terrorizing and torturing thousands of people, and were rewarded with the expropriated lands of the men they had murdered.

The climax of the slaughter came with the unparalleled pogrom of the citizens of Novgorod in 1570. In recent years, supporters of the canonization of Ivan in Russia have tended to minimize the significance of this slaughter, and to justify it as a necessary measure to preserve the state against sedition. However, the foremost expert on the reign of Ivan, R.G. Skrynnikov, has cited data that decisively refutes this argument. His edition of the *Synodicon of Those Disgraced by Ivan the Terrible* reveals a list of thousands of names of those executed by Ivan, mainly in the period 1567-1570, that the tsar sent to the monasteries for commemoration. "All the lists of the period 1567- 1570 are inextricably linked with each other, since the court 'cases' of this period were parts of a single political process, the 'case' of the betrayal of the Staritskys, which lasted for several years, from 1567 to 1570. The 'case' was begun in the autumn of 1567 after the return of the Tsar from the Latvian expedition. In the course of it the boyars Fyodorov (1568) and Staritsky (1569) were executed, Novgorod was devastated (1570) and the leaders of the land offices in Moscow were killed (1570). 'The Staritsky Case' was the most important political trial in the reign of the Terrible one. The materials of this trial were preserved in the tsarist archives until the time of the composition of the *Synodicon* in relatively good order. On the basis of these materials the main part of the tsarist *Synodicon* was composed. This part comprises nine tenths of the whole volume of the *Synodicon*. In it are written about 3200 people disgraced by the tsar out of a combined total of about 3300 people...

"Among the victims of the Novgorod devastation, about one fifth (455 people) were called by their names in the tsarist *Synodicon*. In the main these were representatives of the higher classes: landowners and officials (250-260 people) and the members of their families (140 people). The people indicated in the *Synodicon* without names (1725)

¹¹³ In fact, modern science has established the astonishing fact that Tsar Ivan, his mother, Great Princess Helena, his first wife Tsaritsa Anastasia, his daughter Maria, his son Ivan and his other son Tsar Theodore were all poisoned (V. Manyagin, *Apologia Groznogo Tsaria* (An Apology for the Awesome Tsar), St. Petersburg, 2004, pp. 101-124).

were mainly from the lower classes.”¹¹⁴

These figures indicate that Ivan’s terror was by no means exclusively directed against the boyars. Moreover, the fact that such large numbers could not have been given a fair trial in the period indicated, and the extraordinary cruelty of the methods employed, show that this was not justified repression against a rebellion, but the manifestation of demonic psychopathology. By the end of his reign the boyars’ economic power had been in part destroyed, and a new class, the *dvoriane*, had taken their place. This term originally denoted domestic servitors, both freemen and slaves, who were employed by the appanage princes to administer their estates. Ivan now gave them titles previously reserved for the boyars, and lands in various parts of the country. However, these lands were *pomestia*, not *votchiny* – that is, they were not hereditary possessions and remained the legal property of the tsar, and could be taken back by him if he was dissatisfied with the servitors.

Ivan justified his cruelties against the boyars on scriptural grounds: “See and understand: he who resists the power resists God; and he who resists God is called an apostate, and that is the worst sin. You know, this is said of every power, even of a power acquired by blood and war. But remember what was said above, that we have not seized the throne from anyone. He who resists such a power resists God even more!”¹¹⁵

The tsar’s power, he said, does not come from the people, but from God, by succession from the first Russian autocrat, St. Vladimir. So he is answerable, not to the people, but to God. And the people, being “not godless”, recognizes this.

Kurbsky, however, said Ivan, by his rebellion against the tsar has rebelled against God and so “destroyed his soul”. But many simple people, submitting humbly to the tsar’s unjust decrees, and to the apostolic command: “Servants be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward” (I Peter 2.18), received the crown of life in an innocent death. There was no organized mass movement against his power in the Russian land. Even when he expressed a desire to resign his power, the people completely sincerely begged him to return.¹¹⁶

Although the tsar failed to justify his excessive cruelty, he was not completely wrong in his estimate of the people’s attitudes. For, in their understanding, Tsar Ivan may have been an evil man, but he was still a true authority. The fact that they revered and obeyed him as the anointed of God did not mean that they were not aware that many of his deeds were evil and inspired by the devil. But by obeying him in his capacity as the anointed of God, they believed that they were doing God’s will, while by patiently enduring his demonic assaults on them they believed that they received the forgiveness of their sins and thereby escaped the torments of hell, so far exceeding the worst torments that any earthly ruler could subject them to. As Heidenstein said: “They consider all those who depart from them in matters of the faith to be

¹¹⁴ Skrynnikov, *Tsarstvo Terrora* (The Kingdom of Terror), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 17, 104.

¹¹⁵ Ivan IV, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹¹⁶ See Peter Budzilovich, “O vozmozhnosti vosstanovleniia monarkhii v Rossii” (“On the Possibility of the Restoration of the Monarchy in Russia”), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1986, № 34, <http://www.russia.talk.com/monarchy.htm>.

barbarians... In accordance with the resolutions of their religion, they consider faithfulness to the sovereign to be as obligatory as faithfulness to God. They exalt with praises those who have fulfilled their vow to their prince to their last breath, and say that their souls, on parting from their bodies, immediately go to heaven."

For according to Orthodox teaching, even if a ruler is unjust or cruel, he must be obeyed as long as he provides that freedom from anarchy, that minimum of law and order, that is the definition of God-established political authority (Romans 13.1-6). Thus St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes: "Some rulers are given by God with a view to the improvement and benefit of their subjects and the preservation of justice; others are given with a view to producing fear, punishment and reproof; yet others are given with a view to displaying mockery, insult and pride – in each case in accordance with the deserts of the subjects."¹¹⁷ Again, St. Isidore of Pelusium writes that the evil ruler "has been allowed to spew out this evil, like Pharaoh, and, in such an instance, to carry out extreme punishment or to chastize those for whom great cruelty is required, as when the king of Babylon chastized the Jews."¹¹⁸

But there is line beyond which an evil ruler ceases to be a ruler and becomes an anti-ruler, and not to be obeyed. Thus the Jews were commanded by God through the Prophet Jeremiah to submit to the king of Babylon, evil though he was; whereas they were commanded through another prophet, Moses, to resist and flee from Pharaoh. For in the one case the authority, though evil, was still an authority, which it was beneficial to obey; whereas in the other case the authority was in fact an anti-authority, obedience to which would have taken the people further away from God.

The Orthodox tradition of obedience to legitimate authorities goes together with the tradition of protest against unrighteousness. And in this respect there was truth in Prince Kurbsky's lament over the state of Russia in Ivan's reign: "The authority which comes from God devises unprecedented pains of death for the virtuous. The clergy – we will not judge them, far be that from us, but bewail their wretchedness – are ashamed to bear witness to God before the tsar; rather they endorse the sin. They do not make themselves advocates of widows and orphans, the poor, the oppressed and the prisoners, but grab villages and churches and riches for themselves. Where is Elijah, who was concerned for the blood of Naboth and confronted the king? Where are the host of prophets who gave the unjust kings proof of their guilt? Who speaks now without being embarrassed by the words of Holy Scripture and gives his soul as a ransom for his brothers? I do not know one. Who will extinguish the fire that is blazing in our land? No-one. Really, our hope is still only with God..."¹¹⁹

[St. Philip of Moscow](#)

St. Philip was the one man who, together with the fools-for-Christ Basil the Blessed and Nicholas Salos, did oppose the unrighteousness of the tsar. His ideas about the nature of tsarist power did not differ substantially from those of his predecessors, and

¹¹⁷ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, v, 24, 3; translated in Maurice Wiles & Mark Santer, *Documents in Early Christian Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 226.

¹¹⁸ St. Isidore, *Letter 6*, quoted in *Selected Letters of Archbishop Theophan of Poltava*, Liberty, TN: St. John of Kronstadt Press, 1989, p. 36.

¹¹⁹ Kurbsky, letter to Monk Vassian of the Pskov Caves monastery; translated in Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, pp. 157-158.

especially St. Joseph of Volotsk. The tsar was complete master in his kingdom, and deserved the obedience of all, including churchmen, as long as he confessed the Orthodox faith. But he was bound by the ecclesiastical canons when acting in the ecclesiastical sphere.

However, it was not clear, according to this Josephite theory, to what extent the tsar was also bound in the personal, moral sphere and could rightly be rebuked by the metropolitan for personal sins. St. Philip was notable for his combination, as it were, of the theories of St. Joseph with the practice of Saints Nilus and Maximus, recognizing the supremacy of the tsar while rebuking him for his personal sins. For this boldness he was killed...

As a young man he was deeply struck on hearing the words of the Saviour: "No man can serve two masters", and resolved to become a monk.¹²⁰ Later, as metropolitan, at the height of the terror, he would put those words into practice, saying to the Tsar: "Sovereign, I cannot obey your command more than that of God."¹²¹

And again he said: "Ruling tsar, you have been vested by God with the highest rank, and for that reasons you should honour God above all. But the scepter of earthly power was given to so that you should foster justice among men and rule over them lawfully. By nature you are like every man, as by power you are like God. It is fitting for you, as a mortal, not to become arrogant, and as the image of God, not to become angry, for only he can justly be called a ruler who has control over himself and does not work for his shameful passions, but conquers them with the aid of his mind. Was it ever heard that the pious emperors disturbed their own dominion? Not only among your ancestors, but also among those of other races, nothing of the sort has ever been heard."¹²²

When the tsar angrily asked what business he had interfering in royal affairs, Philip replied: "By the grace of God, the election of the Holy Synod and your will, I am a pastor of the Church of Christ. You and I must care for the piety and peace of the Orthodox Christian kingdom."

And when the tsar ordered him to keep silence, Philip replied: "Silence is not fitting now; it would increase sin and destruction. If we carry out the will of men, what answer will we have on the day of Christ's Coming? The Lord said: 'Love one another. Greater love hath no man than that a man should lay down his life for his friends. If you abide in My love, you will be My disciples indeed.'"

And again he said: "Throughout the world, transgressors who ask for clemency find it with the authorities, but in Russia there is not even clemency for the innocent and the righteous... Fear the judgement of God, your Majesty. How many innocent people are suffering! We, sovereign, offer to God the bloodless Sacrifice, while behind the altar the innocent blood of Christians is flowing! Robberies and murders are being carried out in the name of the Tsar.... What is our faith for? I do not sorrow for those who, in

¹²⁰ "Sviatoj Filipp Mitropolit" ("The Holy Metropolitan Philip"), in *Troitsky Paterik* (Trinity Patericon), Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, 1896; reprinted in *Nadezhda*, 14, Frankfurt: Possev-Verlag, 1988, p. 66.

¹²¹ Van den Bercken, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

¹²² *Zhitia Russkikh Sviatykh* (Lives of the Russian Saints), Tataev, 2000, vol. 2, pp. 695, 696.

shedding their innocent blood, have been counted worthy of the lot of the saints; I suffer for your wretched soul: although you are honoured as the image of God, nevertheless, you are a man made of dust, and the Lord will require everything at your hands”.

However, even if the tsar had agreed that his victims were martyrs, he would not have considered this a reason for not obeying him. As he wrote to Kurbsky: “If you are just and pious, why do you not permit yourself to accept suffering from me, your stubborn master, and so inherit the crown of life?...”¹²³

Betrayed by his fellow-hierarchs at the false council of 1568, Philip was about to resign the metropolitanate, and said to the tsar: “It is better to die as an innocent martyr than to tolerate horrors and lawlessnesses silently in the rank of metropolitan. I leave you my metropolitan’s staff and mantia. But you all, hierarchs and servers of the altar, feed the flock of Christ faithfully; prepare to give your reply and fear the Heavenly King more than the earthly...”

The tsar refused to accept his resignation, and cast him into prison. After having escaped the appetite of a hungry bear that had been sent to devour him, on December 23, 1569 the holy metropolitan was suffocated to death by the tsar’s servant after his refusal to bless his expedition against Novgorod. Metropolitan Philip saved the honour of the Russian episcopate in Ivan’s reign as Metropolitan Arsenius of Rostov was to save it in the reign of Catherine the Great...

Bishop Dionysius’ Thesis

If Tsar Ivan had died in 1560, before the period of his terrible cruelties, he may well have gone down in history as one of the greatest of the Orthodox kings. His tragedy was that he lived so long...

Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) has written: “The reign of Ivan the Terrible is divided by historians, following his contemporaries, into two periods. The first period (1547-1560) is evaluated positively by everyone. After his coronation and acceptance of the title of Tsar, and after his repentance for his aimless youth by subjecting his life to the rules of Orthodoxy piety, Ioann IV appears as an exemplary Christian Sovereign.

“He convened the first *Zemskie Sobory* in the 1550s, kept counsel with the best men of the Russian Land, united the nation’s forces, improved the interior administration, economy, justice system and army. Together with Metropolitan Macarius he also presided at Church Councils, which introduced order into Church life. Under the influence of his spiritual father, Protopriest Sylvester, he repented deeply for the sins of his youth, and lived in the fear of God and in the Church, building a pious family together with his wife Anastasia Romanova. The enlivening of piety and the consolidation of the people also brought external successes to the Russian state in this period. By the good will of God the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan were crushed, and the Crimean khanate was pacified for the time being. The whole of the Volga region from Kazan to the Caspian and a part of the Northern Caucasus went to Moscow. Under the blows of the Russian armies the Livonian Order in the Baltic was

¹²³ Ivan IV, op. cit., p. 37.

crushed. A positive estimate of this period does not elicit disagreement among historians.

“The second period begins after the expulsion of his spiritual father, Protopriest Sylvester and close friends of the Tsar, who were united into the ‘Chosen Assembly’ (the Adashevs, Prince Kurbsky and others). This period finally becomes well established by 1564, with the proclamation of the *oprichnina*. After the *oprichnina*’s great terror (1564-1572), the system of government created in this period, albeit in a ‘weakly flowing regime’, continued right to the death of the Terrible one in March, 1584. The negative consequences of this period completely blot out the attainments of the first period. All historians also agree on this. Let us note the main results of this period:

“1. The liquidation of elementary justice and legality, mass repressions without trial or investigation of the suspects, and also of their relatives and house servants, of whole cities. The encouragement of denunciations created a whole system of mass terror and intimidation of people.

“2. The destruction of national unity through an artificial division of the country into two parts (the *zemshchina* and the *oprichnina*, then the system of ‘the Sovereign’s Court’) and the stirring up of enmity between them.

“3. The destruction of the popular economy by means of the *oprichnina*’s deprivations and the instilling of terror, the mass flight of people from Russia to Lithuania and to the borderlands. A great devastation of the central provinces of Russia, a sharp decline in the population (according to Skrynnikov’s data, from 8 to 5 million).

“4. Massive repressions against the servants of the Church who spoke out against the *oprichnina* or those suspected of it, beginning with the killing of Metropolitan Philip and individual bishops (of Novgorod and Tver), and continuing with the executions of prominent church-servers (St. Cornelius of Pechersk), and ending with the massive slaughter of the clergy in certain cities (Novgorod, Tver, Torzhok, Volochek) and the spoliation of the churches.

“5. As a consequence of the internal ravaging of the state – external defeats, both military and diplomatic: the complete loss of the conquests in Lithuania and the outlet to the Baltic sea, the loss of possessions in the Caucasus, international isolation, incapacity to defend even Moscow from the incursions of the Crimean Tatars.

“All historians agree that the Terrible one left Russia after his death in an extremely sorry state: an economically ruined and devastated country, with its population reduced by one-and-a-half times, frightened and demoralized. But this does not exhaust the woes caused to Russia by the Terrible one. Perhaps the most tragic consequences of his reign consisted in the fact that he to a great extent prepared the ground for the Time of Troubles, which exploded 17 years after his death and placed the Russian state on the edge of complete annihilation. This was expressed concretely in the following.

“1. A dynastic crisis – the destruction by the Terrible one of his closest relatives, the

representatives of the Moscow house of the Riuriks. First of all this concerned the assassination of his cousin, Prince Vladimir Andreevich Staritsky with his mother, wife and children, and also with almost all his servants and many people close to him (in 1569). This was not execution following an investigation and trial, but precisely the repression of innocent people (some were poisoned, others were suffocated with smoke), carried out only out of suspicion and arbitrariness. Then it is necessary to note the killing of his son Ivan, the heir to the throne....

“Thus Ivan the Terrible undoubtedly hewed down the dynasty with his own hands, destroying his son, grandson and cousin with all his house, and thereby prepared a dynastic crisis, which made itself sharply felt during the Time of Troubles.

“2. The oprichnina and the consequent politics of ‘the Sovereign’s Court’ greatly reduced the aristocracy and service class. Under the axe of repressions there fell the best people morally speaking, those who were honourable, principled and independent in their judgements and behaviour, who were distinguished by their abilities, and for that reason were seen as potentially dangerous. In their place intriguers, careerists and informants were promoted, unprincipled and dishonourable time-servers. It was the Terrible one who nourished such people in his nearest entourage, people like Boris Godunov, Basil Shuisky, Bogdan Belsky, Ivan Mstislavsky and other leaders in the Time of Troubles, who were sufficiently clever to indulge in behind-the-scenes intrigues and ‘under the carpet struggle’, but who absolutely did not want to serve God and the fatherland, and for that reason were incapable of uniting the national forces and earning the trust of the people.

“The moral rottenness of the boyars, their class and personal desires and their unscrupulousness are counted by historians as among the main causes of the Troubles. But the Moscow boyars had not always been like that. On the contrary, the Moscow boyars nourished by Kalita worked together with him to gather the Russian lands, perished in the ranks of the army of Demetrius Donskoj on Kulikovo polje, saved Basil the Dark in the troubles caused by Shemyaka, went on the expeditions of Ivan III and Basil III. It was the Terrible one who carried out a general purge in the ranks of the aristocracy, and the results of this purge could not fail to be felt in the Troubles.

“3. The Terrible one’s repressions against honourable servers of the Church, especially against Metropolitan Philip, weakened the Russian Church, drowned in its representatives the voice of truth and a moral evaluation of what was happening. After the holy hierarch Philip, none of the Moscow metropolitans dared to intercede for the persecuted. ‘Sucking up’ to unrighteousness on the part of the hierarchs of course lowered their authority in the eyes of the people, which gave the pretenders the opportunity to introduce their undermining propaganda more successfully in the people.

“We should note here that the defenders of the Terrible one deny his involvement in the killing of Metropolitan Philip in a rather naïve way: no written order, they say, has been discovered. Of course, the first hierarch of the Russian Church, who was beloved by the people for his righteous life, was not the kind of person whom even the Terrible tsar would dare to execute just like that on the square. But many of the Terrible one’s victims were destroyed by him by means of secret assassinations (as, for

example, the family of the same Vladimir Andreyevich). It is reliably known that the holy hierarch Philip reproved the Terrible one for his cruelties not only in private, but also, finally, in public, and that the latter began to look for false witnesses against him. By means of bribes, threats and deceit he succeeded in involving Abbot Paisius of Solovki (a disciple of St. Philip) and some of the hierarchs in this. Materials have been preserved relating to this 'Council of 1568, the most shameful in the history of the Russian Church' (in the expression of Professor Kartashev), which condemned its own chief hierarch. The majority of the bishops did not decide to support the slanderers, but they also feared to defend the holy hierarch – and simply kept silent. During the Liturgy the *oprichniki* on the tsar's orders seized the holy confessor, tore off his vestments, beat him up and took him away to prison. At the same time almost all the numerous relatives of St. Philip, the Kolychev boyars, were killed. They cast the amputated head of the hierarch's favourite nephew into his cell. A year later, the legendary Maliuta came to the imprisoned Philip in the Otroch monastery, and the holy hierarch just died suddenly in his arms – the contemporary lovers of the *oprichnina* force us to believe in this fairy-tale!

“Detailed material on this subject was collected in the book of Professor Fedotov, *The Holy Hierarch Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow*. Those descendants who lived nearest to those times also well remembered who was the main perpetrator of the death of St. Philip. For that reason Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich transferred the relics of the hieromartyr to Moscow, and wrote a penitent letter to him as if he were alive, asking forgiveness for the sin of his predecessor Ivan the Terrible (in imitation of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, who repented for the sin of his mother, the Empress Eudoxia, against St. John Chrysostom). Therefore the apologists of the Terrible one, in denying his guilt against St. Philip, simply reject the tradition of the whole Russian Church as established in documents.

“Besides St. Philip, on the orders of the Terrible during the devastation of Novgorod, one of those who envied and slandered St. Philip, Archbishop Pimen was killed. And if contemporary '*oprichniki*' consider it to the credit of the Terrible one that he dealt with the false witnesses in the affair of the holy hierarch, then let them remember that a timely 'clean-up' of witnesses and agents who have done their work is a common phenomenon in the course of large-scale repressions. Only it is not a work of God. The unknown author of *The Tale of the Devastation of Novgorod* tells us that on the orders of the Terrible one up to three hundred abbots, hieromonks, priests and deacons in Novgorod itself and its environs, monasteries and villages were killed. Several tens of Church servers were killed in each of the cities of Tver, Torzhok, Volokolamsk and other places. One can argue about the accuracy of the numbers of victims cited, but one cannot doubt that the clergy slaughtered during the reign of the Terrible one numbered at least in the tens, but more likely in the hundreds. There is every reason to speak about a persecution of the clergy and the Church on the part of the Terrible one. The holy hierarch Philip and St. Cornelius of Pskov-Pechersk are only the leaders of a whole host of hieromartyrs, passion-bearers and confessors of that time. It is those whose glorification it is worth thinking about!

“4. Finally, the Terrible one's epoch shook the moral supports of the simple people, and undermined its healthy consciousness of right. Open theft and reprisals without trial or investigation, carried out in the name of the Sovereign on any one who was

suspect, gave a very bad example, unleashing the base passions of envy, revenge and baseness. Participation in denunciations and cooperation in false witnesses involved very many in the sins of the *oprichnina*. Constant refined tortures and public executions taught people cruelty and inured them to compassion and mercy. Everyday animal fear for one's life, a striving to survive at any cost, albeit at the cost of righteousness and conscience, at the cost of the good of one's neighbours, turned those who survived into pitiful slaves, ready for any baseness. The enmity stirred up between the *zemschina* and the *oprichnina*, between 'the Sovereign's people' and 'the rebels', undermined the feeling of popular unity among Russian people, sowing resentment and mistrust. The incitement of hatred for the boyars, who were identified with traitors, kindled class war. Let us add to this that the reign of the Terrible one, having laid waste to the country, tore many people away from their roots, deprived them of their house and land and turned them into thieves, into what Marxist language would call 'declassified elements'. Robbed and embittered against the whole world, they were corrupted into robber bands and filled up the Cossack gangs on the border-lands of Russia. These were ready-made reserves for the armies of any pretenders and rebels.

"And so, if we compare all this with the Leninist teaching on the preparation of revolution, we see a striking resemblance. The Terrible one truly did everything in order that 'the uppers could not, and lowers would not' live in a human way. The ground for civil war and the great Trouble had thus been fully prepared..."¹²⁴

Conclusion

It has been argued that the victims of Ivan's rule prefigure the Christian victims of Lenin and Stalin, while the *oprichnina* looks forward to Stalin's Russia, the NKVD-KGB, dekulakization and the great terror of the 1930s. Indeed, it is tempting to see in Stalin's terror simply the application of Ivan the Terrible's methods on a grander scale, which theory is supported by the fact that Stalin called Ivan "my teacher", and instructed Eisenstein, in his film, *Ivan the Terrible*, to emphasize the moral that cruelty is sometimes necessary to protect the State from its internal enemies. There is no question about it: Ivan was no saint, but was rather a persecutor of the saints...

Michael Cherniavksy has pointed to the tension, and ultimate incompatibility, between two images of the kingship in the reign of Ivan the Terrible: that of the basileus and that of the khan – that is, of the Orthodox autocrat and of the pagan despot. "If the image of the basileus stood for the Orthodox and pious ruler, leading his Christian people towards salvation, then the image of the khan was perhaps preserved in the idea of the Russian ruler as the conqueror of Russia and of its people, responsible to no one. If the basileus signified the holy tsar, the 'most gentle' (*tishaishii*) tsar in spiritual union with his flock, then the khan, perhaps, stood for the absolutist secularised state, arbitrary through its separation from its subjects."¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Alferov, "Monarkhia i Khristianskoe Soznanie" ("The Monarchy and Christian Consciousness"), http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr10/R10_11.htm, pp. 8-13. See also Georgij Korobyn, "Traktovka lichnosti Ioanna Groznogo v knige mitr. Ioanna (Snycheva), 'Samoderzhavie Dukha'" (The Interpretation of the Personality of Ivan the Terrible in the Book of Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), 'The Autocracy of the Spirit'), http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page&pid=1389.

¹²⁵ Cherniavsky, "Khan or basileus: an aspect of Russian medieval political theory", *Journal of the History*

While Ivan was a true ruler according to Orthodox criteria, it must be admitted that his theory of government contained absolutist elements which were closer to the theories of Protestant Reformers such as Luther and contemporary Protestant monarchs such as Elizabeth I of England than to Orthodoxy.¹²⁶ In fact, the nineteenth-century Slavophile Ivan Kireyevsky went so far as to call him a heretic, and attributed to his heretical view of Church-State relations all the woes of the later part of his reign: "The terrible one acted in a restrictive manner because he was a heretic; this is proved... by his striving to place Byzantinism [i.e. the absolutist ideas of some Byzantines] in a position of equal dignity with Orthodoxy. From this there came the *oprichnina* as a striving towards state heresy and ecclesiastical power. And that this concept of the limits or, more correctly, the lack of limits of his power and of its lack of connection with the people was not Christian, but heretical is witnessed publicly to this day by the holy relics of Metropolitan Philip."¹²⁷

If there was indeed something of eastern absolutism as well as purely Orthodox autocracy in Ivan's rule, then this would explain, not only the cruelties of his own reign, but also why, only a few years after his death, Russia descended into civil war and the Time of Troubles. For eastern absolutism, unlike Orthodox autocracy, is a system that can command the fear and obedience, but not the love of the people, and is therefore unstable in essence. Hence the need to resist to it – but not out of considerations of democracy or the rights of man, but simply out of considerations of Christian love and justice. An Orthodox tsar has no authority higher than him in the secular sphere. And yet the Gospel is higher than everybody, and will judge everybody on the Day of Judgement; and in reminding Ivan of this both St. Philip and Kurbsky were doing both him and the State a true service...

Ivan rejected this service to his own detriment. Although he showed great skill in defending Orthodoxy before emissaries from the Vatican, at the very end of his life, he destroyed even his reputation as a defender of Orthodoxy by encroaching on Church lands and delving into astrology.¹²⁸ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, therefore, that Ivan the Terrible was indeed terrible in his impiety, and must be numbered among the evil tyrants and persecutors of the Church. Indeed, Lebedev calls the latter part of his reign "not a struggle with rebellion, but the affirmation of his permission to do everything. So we are concerned here not with the affirmation of the Orthodox Autocracy of the Russian Tsars, but with a prefiguring of the authority of the Antichrist..."¹²⁹

of Ideas, 10, No. 4, October-December, 1950, p. 476; quoted in Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹²⁶ See Hierodeacon James (Tislenko), "Nekotorie zamechania na knigu V.G. Manyagina 'Apologia Groznogo Tsaria'" (Some Remarks on the Book of V.G. Manyagin, 'An Apology for the Awesome Tsar'), *Pravoslavnaiia Moskva*, NN 13 -14 (295-296), July, 2003; in Manyagin, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-242.

¹²⁷ Kireyevsky, "Pis'mo k A.I. Koshelevu" ("Letter to A.I. Koshelev"), *Razum na puti k istine* (Reason on the Way to Truth), St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 107.

¹²⁸ Lebedev has even suggested that that the half-military, half-monastic nature of Ivan's *oprichnina* was modelled on the Templars, and that the terrible change in his appearance that took place after his return to Moscow from Alexandrov in 1564 was the result of "a terrible inner upheaval", his initiation into a satanic, masonic-like sect (*op. cit.*, p. 97).

¹²⁹ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

5. THE TIME OF TROUBLES

Tsar Theodore died in 1598. He left no children, and there was no member of the family of Riurik to take his place on the throne. Therefore the election rested on Boris Godunov, who had been the tsar's protector and aided him to ascend the throne. However, Boris Godunov had been a member of the dreaded *oprichnina* from his youth, and had married the daughter of the murderer of St. Philip of Moscow, Maliuta Skouratov. He therefore represented that part of Russian society that had profited from the cruelty and lawlessness of Ivan the Terrible. Moreover, though he was the first Russian tsar to be crowned and anointed by a full patriarch (on September 1, 1598), and there was no serious resistance to his ascending the throne, he acted from the beginning as if not quite sure of his position, or as if seeking some confirmation of his position from the lower ranks of society. This was perhaps because he was not a direct descendant of the Riurik dynasty (although he was the brother-in-law of Tsar Theodore), perhaps because (as the *Chronograph* of 1617 indicates) the dying Tsar Theodore had pointed to his mother's nephew, Theodore Nikitich Romanov, the future patriarch, as his successor, perhaps because he had some dark crime on his conscience...

In any case, Boris decided upon an unprecedented act. He interrupted the liturgy of the coronation, as Stephen Graham writes, "*to proclaim the equality of man*. It was a striking interruption of the ceremony. The Cathedral of the Assumption was packed with a mixed assembly such as never could have found place at the coronation of a tsar of the blood royal. There were many nobles there, but cheek by jowl with them merchants, shopkeepers, even beggars. Boris suddenly took the arm of the holy Patriarch in his and declaimed in a loud voice: 'Oh, holy father Patriarch Job, I call God to witness that during my reign there shall be neither poor man nor beggar in my realm, but I will share all with my fellows, even to the last rag that I wear.' And in sign he ran his fingers over the jewelled vestments that he wore. There was an unprecedented scene in the cathedral, almost a revolutionary tableau when the common people massed within the precincts broke the disciplined majesty of the scene to applaud the speaker."¹³⁰

How different was this democratism from the self-confidence of Ivan the Terrible, who, for all his sins, was as legitimate a tsar as any in Russian history: "I perform my kingly task and consider no man higher than myself." And again: "The Russian autocrats have from the beginning had possession of all the kingdoms, and not the boyars and grandees."¹³¹ And again, this time to the (elected) king of Poland: "We, humble Ivan, tsar and great prince of all Rus', by the will of God, and not by the stormy will of man..."¹³²

In fact, Ivan the Terrible's attitude to his own power, at any rate in the first part of his reign, was much closer to the attitude of the Russian people as a whole than was Boris Godunov's. For, as St. John Maximovich writes, "the Russian sovereigns were

¹³⁰ Graham, *Boris Godunov*, London: Ernest Benn, 1933, p. 116. Italics mine (V.M.).

¹³¹ Ivan IV, in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Russkaia Ideologia* (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg: Suvorina, 1992, p. 64.

¹³² Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *op. cit.*, p. 65.

never tsars by the will of the people, but always remained Autocrats by the Mercy of God. They were sovereigns in accordance with the dispensation of God, and not according to the 'multi-mutinous' will of man."¹³³

Sensing that Tsar Boris was not sure of his legitimacy, the people paid more heed to the rumours that he had murdered the Tsarevich Demetrius, the Terrible one's youngest son, in 1591. But then came news that a young man claiming to be Demetrius Ivanovich was marching at the head of a Polish army into Russia. If this man was truly Demetrius, then Boris was, of course, innocent of his murder. But paradoxically this only made his position more insecure; for in the eyes of the people the hereditary principle was higher than any other – an illegitimate but living son of Ivan the Terrible was more legitimate for them than Boris, even though he was an intelligent and experienced ruler, the right-hand man of two previous tsars, and fully supported by the Patriarch, who anathematized the false Demetrius and all those who followed him. Support for Boris collapsed, and in 1605 he died, after which Demetrius, who had promised the Pope to convert Russia to Catholicism, swept to power in Moscow.

How was such sedition against their tsar possible in a people that had patiently put up with Ivan the Terrible and refused to rebel him even when he persecuted them so cruelly?

Ivan Solonevich points to the importance that the Russian people attached to the legitimacy of their tsars, in sharp contrast to the apparent lack of concern for legitimacy which he claims to find among the Byzantines. "Thus in Byzantium out of 109 reigning emperors 74 ascended onto the throne by means of regicide. This apparently disturbed no one. In Russia in the 14th century Prince Demetrius Shemyaka tried to act on the Byzantine model and overthrow Great Prince Basil Vasilyevich – and suffered a complete defeat. The Church cursed Shemyaka, the boyars turned away from him, the masses did not follow him: the Byzantine methods turned out to be unprofitable. Something of this sort took place with Boris Godunov. The dynasty of the Terrible had disappeared, and Boris Godunov turned out to be his nearest relative. Neither the lawfulness of his election to the kingdom, nor his exceptional abilities as a statesman, can be doubted... With Boris Godunov everything, in essence, was in order, except for one thing: the shade of Tsarevich Demetrius."¹³⁴

This is an exaggeration: there were many things wrong with the reign of Boris Godunov, especially his encouragement of westerners¹³⁵, and his introduction of mutual spying and denunciation. However, there is no doubt that it was Boris's murder of the Tsarevich Demetrius, the lawful heir to the throne, that especially excited the people to rebel. For "who in Byzantium would have worried about the fate of a child killed twenty years earlier? There might created right, and might washed away sin. In Rus' right created might, and sin remained sin."¹³⁶ Although these words

¹³³ St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie Zakona o Prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia); in "Nasledstvennost' ili Vybory?" ("Hereditariness or Elections?"), *Svecha Pokaiania* (Candle of Repentance), № 4, February, 2000, p. 12.

¹³⁴ Solonevich, *Nardodnaia Monarkhia* (The People's Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, p. 81.

¹³⁵ The cellarer of the Holy Trinity Monastery, Abraham Palitsyn, said that he "was a good pander to the heresies of the Armenians and Latins" (in Archpriest Lev Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 114).

¹³⁶ Solonevich, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

exaggerate the contrast between Byzantium and Rus', the point concerning the importance of legitimacy in Muscovy is well taken. "As regards who had to be tsar," writes St. John Maximovich, "a tsar could hold his own on the throne only if the principle of legitimacy was observed, that is, the elected person was the nearest heir of his predecessor. The legitimate Sovereign was the basis of the state's prosperity and was demanded by the spirit of the Russian people."¹³⁷

The people were never sure of the legitimacy of Boris Godunov, so they rebelled against him. However, even if these doubts could excuse their rebellion against Boris (which is doubtful, since he was an anointed Tsar recognized by the Church), it did not excuse the cruel murder of his son, Tsar Theodore Borisovich, still less their recognition of a series of usurpers in the next decade. The lawless character of these rebellions has been compared, not without justice, to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.¹³⁸ First they accepted a real imposter, the false Demetrius – in reality a defrocked monk called Grishka Otrepev. In May, 1606, Prince Basil Shuisky led a successful rebellion against Demetrius, executed him and expelled the false patriarch Ignatius. He then called on Patriarch Job to come out of his enforced retirement, but he refused by reason of his blindness and old age.¹³⁹ Another Patriarch was required; the choice fell of Metropolitan Hermogen of Kazan, who anointed Tsar Basil Shuisky to the kingdom. "Wonderful was the Providence of God," writes Lebedev, "in bringing him to the summit of ecclesiastical power at this terrible Time of Troubles... In 1579 he had been ordained to the priesthood in the St. Nicholas Gostinodvordsky church in Kazan. And in the same year a great miracle had taken place, the discovery of the Kazan icon of the Most Holy Theotokos. This was linked with a great fall in the faith of Christ in the new land, the mocking of the Orthodox by the Muslims for failures in harvest, fires and other woes. A certain girl, the daughter of a rifleman, through a vision in sleep discovered on the place of their burned-down house an icon of the Mother of God. Nobody knew when or by whom it had been placed in the ground. The icon began to work wonders and manifest many signs of special grace. The whole of Kazan ran to it as to a source of salvation and intercession from woes. The priest Hermogen was a witness of all this. He immediately wrote down everything that had taken place in connection with the wonderworking icon and with great fervour composed a narrative about it. The glory of the Kazan icon quickly spread through Russia, many copies were made from it, and some of these also became wonderworking. The Theotokos was called "the fervent defender of the Christian race" in this icon of Kazan. It was precisely this icon and Hermogen who had come to love it that the Lord decreed should deliver Moscow and Russia from the chaos of the Time of Troubles and the hands of the enemies. By the Providence of the Theotokos Hermogen was in 1589 appointed Metropolitan of Kazan for his righteous life, and in 1606 he became Patriarch of all Rus'.

"As his first work it was necessary for him to correct the wavering of the people in

¹³⁷ St. John Maximovich, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹³⁸ Bishop Dionysius (Alferov), "Smuta" (Sedition), http://catacomb.org.ua/modlues.php?=&Pages&go=print_page&pid=642.

¹³⁹ According to Archpriest Lev Lebedev, Patriarch Job's blindness and expulsion from his see were his punishment for lying during the Council of 1598 that Ivan the Terrible had "ordered" that Boris Godunov be crowned in the case of the death of his son Theodore, and for lying again in covering up Boris' guilt in the murder of the Tsarevich Demetrius (*op. cit.*, p. 112).

relation to the false Demetrius and free them from the oath (curse) they had given. A special strict fast was declared, after which, on February 20, 1607, public repentance began in the Dormition cathedral of the Kremlin. Patriarch Job repented of having hidden from the people the fact that the Tsarevich Demetrius had been killed 'by the plotting of Boris' and called everyone to repentance. Nun Martha [the mother of the Tsarevich Demetrius] repented that out of fear she had recognized the Imposter to be her son. The Muscovites wept and repented of having sworn to Boris Godunov and Grisha Otrepev. Two Patriarchs - Job and Hermogen - absolved everyone with a special prayer-declaration, which was read aloud by the archdeacon.

"However, by this time it was already the question of another Imposter - false Demetrius the second. He was an obvious adventurer. And knowing about this, Rome and certain people in Poland again supported him! The legend was as follows: 'Tsar' Demetrius had not been killed in Moscow, but had managed to flee ('he was miraculously saved' for the second time!). And again Cossack detachments from Little Russia, the Don and Ukraine attached themselves to him. Again quite a few Russian people believed the lie, for they very much wanted to have a 'real', 'born' Tsar, as they put it at that time, who in the eyes of many could only be a direct descendant of Ivan IV. Marina Mnishek [the wife of the first false Demetrius] 'recognized' her lawful husband in the second false Demetrius. However, her spiritual father, a Jesuit, considered it necessary to marry her to the new Imposter; the Jesuit knew that he was not the same who had been killed in Moscow, but another false Demetrius... Certain secret instructions from Rome to those close to the new Imposter have been preserved. Essentially they come down to ordering them gradually but steadily to bring about the unia of the Russian Church with the Roman Church, and her submission to the Pope. In 1608 the second false Demetrius entered Russia and soon came near to Moscow, encamping at Tushino. For that reason he was then called 'the Tushino thief'. 'Thief' in those days mean a state criminal (those who steal things were then called robbers). Marinka gave birth to a son from the second false Demetrius. The people immediately called the little child 'the thieflet'. Moscow closed its gates. Only very few troops still remained for the defence of the city. A great wavering of hearts and minds arose. Some princes and boyars ran from Moscow to the 'thief' in Tushino and back again. Not having the strength to wage a major war, Tsar Basil Shuisky asked the Swedish King Carl IX to help him. In this he made a great mistake... Carl of Sweden and Sigismund of Poland were at that time warring for the throne of Sweden. By calling on the Swedes for help, Shuisky was placing Russia in the position of a military opponent of Poland, which she used, seeing the Troubles in the Russian Land, to declare war on Russia. Now the Polish king's army under a 'lawful' pretext entered the Muscovite Kingdom. The Imposter was not needed by the Poles and was discarded by them. Sigismund besieged Smolensk, while a powerful army under Zholevsky went up to Moscow. The boyars who were not contented with Shuisky removed him from the throne (forced him to abdicate) in July, 1610.¹⁴⁰ But whom would they now place as Tsar? This depended to a large extent on the boyars.

"O Great Russian princes and boyars! How much you tried from early times to seize

¹⁴⁰ The *Zemsky Sobor* of 1613 called this act "a common sin of the land, committed out of the envy of the devil" (Fomin S. & Fomina T., *Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem* (Russian before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1998, vol. I, p. 255). (V.M.)

power in the State! Now there is no lawful Tsar, now, it would seem, you have received the fullness of power. Now is the time for you to show yourselves, to show what you are capable of! And you have shown it...

“A terrible difference of opinions began amidst the government, which consisted of seven boyars and was called the ‘semiboyarschina’. Patriarch Hermogen immediately suggested calling to the kingdom the 14-year-old ‘Misha Romanov’, as he called him. But they didn’t listen to the Patriarch. They discussed Poland’s suggestion of placing the son of King Sigismund, Vladislav, on the Muscovite Throne. The majority of boyars agreed. The gates of Moscow were opened to the Poles and they occupied Chinatown and the Kremlin with their garrison. But at the same time a huge Polish army besieged the monastery of St. Sergius, ‘the Abbot of the Russian Land’, the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra. However, after a 16-month siege they were not able to take it! Patriarch Hermogen was ready to agree to having the crown-prince Vladislav, but under certain conditions. Vladislav would be immediately, near Smolensk, baptized into the Orthodox Faith. He would take for a wife only a virgin of the Orthodox Confession. The Poles would leave Russia, and all the Russian apostates who had become Catholic or uniates would be executed. There would never be any negotiations between Moscow and Rome about the faith. An embassy was sent from near Smolensk to Sigismund for negotiations about the succession to the Throne. The spiritual head of the embassy was Metropolitan Philaret Nikitich Romanov of Rostov, who had been taken out of exile and then consecrated to the episcopate under Tsar Basil Shuisky. But at the same time Patriarch Hermogen did not cease to exhort the Tushintsy who were still with the thief near Moscow, calling on them to be converted, repent and cease destroying the Fatherland.

“However, it turned out that Sigismund himself wanted to be on the Throne of Moscow... But this was a secret. The majority of the boyars agreed to accept even that, referring to the fact that the Poles were already in Moscow, while the Russians had no army with which to defend the country from Poland. A declaration was composed in which it was said that the Muscovite government ‘would be given to the will of the king’. The members of the government signed it. It was necessary that Patriarch Hermogen should also give his signature. At this point Prince Michael Saltykov came to him. The head of the Russian Church replied: ‘No! I will put my signature to a declaration that the king should give his son to the Muscovite state, and withdraw all the king’s men from Moscow, that Vladislav should abandon the Latin heresy, and accept the Greek faith... But neither I nor the other (ecclesiastical) authorities will write that we should all rely on the king’s will and that our ambassadors should be placed in the will of the king, and I order you not to do it. It is clear that with such a declaration we would have to kiss the cross to the king himself.’ Saltykov took hold of a knife and moved towards the Patriarch. He made the sign of the cross over Saltykov and said: ‘I do not fear your knife, I protect myself from it by the power of the Cross of Christ. But may you be cursed from our humility both in this age and in the age to come!’ Nevertheless, in December, 1611 the boyars brought the declaration to near Smolensk, to the Russian ambassadors who were there.”¹⁴¹

The boyars nearly produced a Russian Magna Carta, as Sir Geoffrey Hosking

¹⁴¹ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-121.

explains: "They presented King Sigismund with a set of conditions on which they were prepared to accept his son Wladyslaw as Tsar. The first was that the Orthodox faith should remain inviolate. Then came stipulations on the rights of individual estates, for example, not to be punished or to have property confiscated without trial before a properly constituted court, not to be demoted from a high chin [rank] without clear and demonstrable fault. The document implied a state structure in which supreme authority would be shared with a combined boyar assembly and *zemskii sobor* (*duma boiar i vseia zemli*), in agreement with which questions of taxes, salaries of service people and the bestowal of patrimonial and service estates would be decided. Such a document might have laid for the basis for a constitutional Muscovite monarchy in personal union with Poland."¹⁴²155

The Patriarch's authority was enough to scupper the plans of the Poles and the Russian boyars. For when the latter brought the document to the Poles at Smolensk, where a Russian embassy led by Metropolitan Philaret of Rostov had been for some time, then, "on not seeing the signature of the Patriarch on the document, the ambassadors replied to our boyars that the declaration was unlawful. They objected: 'The Patriarch must not interfere in affairs of the land'. The ambassadors said: 'From the beginning affairs were conducted as follows in our Russian State: if great affairs of State or of the land are begun, then our majesties summoned a council of patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops and conferred with them. Without their advice nothing was decreed. And our majesties revere the patriarchs with great honour... And before them were the metropolitans. Now we are without majesties, and the patriarch is our leader (that is - the main person in the absence of the Tsar). It is now unfitting to confer upon such a great matter without the patriarch... It is now impossible for us to act without patriarchal declarations, and only with those of the boyars...'

"The agreement with Sigismund and the transfer of the Muscovite Kingdom into his power did not take place... That is what such a mere 'detail' as a signature sometimes means - or rather, in the given case, the absence of a signature!

"This gave a spiritual and lawful basis (in prevision of fresh boyar betrayals) for the Russian cities to begin corresponding with each other with the aim of deciding how to save Moscow and the Fatherland. In this correspondence the name of Patriarch Hermogen was often mentioned, for he was 'straight as a real pastor, who lays down his life for the Christian Faith'. The inhabitants of Yaroslavl wrote to the citizens of Kazan: 'Hermogen has stood up for the Faith and Orthodoxy, and has ordered all of us to stand to the end. If he had not done this wondrous deed, everything would have perished.' And truly Russia, which so recently had been on the point of taking Poland at the desire of the Poles, was now a hair's-breadth away from becoming the dominion of Poland (and who knows for how long a time!). Meanwhile Patriarch Hermogen began himself to write to all the cities, calling on Russia to rise up to free herself. The letter-declarations stirred up the people, they had great power. The Poles demanded that he write to the cities and call on them not to go to Moscow to liberate it from those who had seized it. At this point Michael Saltykov again came to Hermogen. 'I will write,' replied the Patriarch, '... but only on condition that you and the traitors with you and the people of the king leave Moscow... I see the mocking of the true faith by

¹⁴² Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 60.

heretics and by you traitors, and the destruction of the holy Churches of God and I cannot bear to hear the Latin chanting in Moscow'. Hermogen was imprisoned in the Chudov monastery and they began to starve him to death. But the voice of the Church did not fall silent. The brothers of the Trinity-St. Sergius monastery headed by Archimandrite Dionysius also began to send their appeals to the cities to unite in defence of the Fatherland. The people's levies moved towards Moscow. The first meeting turned out to be unstable. Quite a few predatory Cossacks took part in it, for example the cossacks of Ataman Zarutsky. Quarrels and disputes, sometimes bloody ones, took place between the levies. Lyapunov, the leader of the Ryazan forces, was killed. This levy looted the population more than it warred with the Poles. Everything changed when the second levy, created through the efforts of Nizhni-Novgorod merchant Cosmas Minin Sukhorukov and Prince Demetrius Pozharsky, moved towards the capital. As we know, Minin, when stirring up the people to make sacrifices for the levy, called on them, if necessary, to sell their wives and children and mortgage their properties, but to liberate the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Dormition of the All-Holy Theotokos, where there was the Vladimir icon and the relics of the great Russian Holy Hierarchs (that is, he was talking about the Dormition cathedral of the Kremlin!). That, it seems, was the precious thing that was dear to the inhabitants of Nizhni, Ryazan, Yaroslavl, Kazan and the other cities of Russia and for the sake of which they were ready to sell their wives and lay down their lives! That means that the Dormition cathedral was at that time that which we could call as it were the geographical centre of patriotism of Russia!

"On the advice of Patriarch Hermogen, the holy Kazan icon of the Mother of God was taken into the levy of Minin and Pozharsky.

"In the autumn of 1612 the second levy was already near Moscow. But it did not succeed in striking through to the capital. Their strength was ebbing away. Then the levies laid upon themselves a strict three-day fast and began earnestly to pray to the Heavenly Queen before her Kazan icon. At this time Bishop Arsenius, a Greek by birth, who was living in a monastery in the Kremlin, and who had come to us in 1588 with Patriarch Jeremiah, after fervent prayer saw in a subtle sleep St. Sergius. The abbot of the Russian Land told Arsenius that 'by the prayers of the Theotokos judgement on our Fatherland has been turned to mercy, and that tomorrow Moscow will be in the hands of the levy and Russia will be saved!' News of this vision of Arsenius was immediately passed to the army of Pozharsky, which enormously encouraged them. They advanced to a decisive attack and on October 22, 1612 took control of a part of Moscow and Chinatown. Street fighting in which the inhabitants took part began. In the fire and smoke it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. On October 27 the smoke began to disperse. The Poles surrendered....

"Patriarch Hermogen did not live to this radiant day. On February 17, 1612 he had died from hunger in the Chudov monastery. In 1912 he was numbered with the saints, and his relics reside to this day in the Dormition cathedral of the Kremlin.

"Thus at the end of 1612 the Time of Troubles came to an end. Although detachments of Poles, Swedes, robbers and Cossacks continued to wander around Russia. After the death of the second false Demetrius Marina Mnishek got together with Zarutsky, who still tried to fight, but was defeated. Marinka died in prison... But

the decisive victory was won then, in 1612!"¹⁴³

In the Time of Troubles the best representatives of the Russian people, in the persons of the holy Patriarchs Job and Hermogen, stood courageously for those Tsars who had been lawfully anointed by the Church and remained loyal to the Orthodox faith, regardless of their personal virtues or vices. Conversely, they refused to recognize (even at the cost of their sees and their lives) the pretenders to the stardom who did not satisfy these conditions – again, regardless of their personal qualities. Most of the Russian clergy accepted the first false Demetrius. But “in relation to the second false Demetrius,” writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, they “conducted themselves more courageously. Bishops Galaction of Suzdal and Joseph of Kolomna suffered for their non-acceptance of the usurper. Archbishop Theoctistus of Tver received a martyric death in Tushino. Dressed only in a shirt, the bare-footed Metropolitan Philaret of Rostov, the future patriarch, was brought by the Poles into the camp of the usurper, where he remained in captivity. Seeing such terrible events, Bishop Gennadius of Pskov ‘died of sorrow...’”¹⁴⁴

There were other champions of the faith at this time: the monks of Holy Trinity – St. Sergius Lavra, who heroically resisted a long Polish siege, and the hermits St. Galaction of Vologda and Irinarchus of Rostov, who were both martyred by the Latins. Thus in the life of the latter we read: “Once there came into the elder’s cell a Polish noble, Pan Mikulinsky with other Pans. ‘In whom do you believe?’ he asked. ‘I believe in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!’ ‘And what earthly king do you have?’ The elder replied in a loud voice: ‘I have the Russian Tsar Basil Ioannovich [Shuisky]. I live in Russia, I have a Russian tsar – I have nobody else!’ One of the Pans said: ‘You, elder, are a traitor; you believe neither in our king, nor in [the second false] Demetrius!’ The elder replied: ‘I do not fear your sword, which is corruptible, and I will not betray my faith in the Russian Tsar. If you cut me off for that, then I will suffer it with joy. I have a little blood in me for you, but my Living God has a sword which will cut you off invisibly, without flesh or blood, and He will send your souls into eternal torment!’ And Pan Mikulinsky was amazed at the great faith of the elder...”¹⁴⁵

The history of the 17th and 18th centuries showed without a doubt which was the superior political principle: Russian Orthodox Autocracy or Polish Elective Monarchy. Thus while Russia went from strength to strength, finally liberating all the Russian lands from the oppressive tyranny of the Poles, Poland grew weaker under its elective monarchy, whose activity was constantly paralyzed by the vetoes that every noble in the kingdom had the right to exert. Finally, by the end of the eighteenth century it had ceased to exist as an independent State, being divided up three ways between Prussia, Austria and Russia...

At the beginning of February, 1613, a *Zemsky Sobor* was assembled in Moscow in order to elect a Tsar for the widowed Russian land. In accordance with pious tradition, it began with a three-day fast and prayer to invoke God’s blessing on the assembly. “At the first conciliar session,” writes Hieromartyr Nikon, Archbishop of Vologda, “it

¹⁴³ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-123.

¹⁴⁴ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia* (Patriarchal Moscow), Moscow, 1995, p. 14.

¹⁴⁵ *The Life of St. Irinarchus*, in Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

was unanimously decided: 'not to elect anyone of other foreign faiths, but to elect our own native Russian'. They began to elect their own; some pointed to one boyar, others to another... A certain nobleman from Galich presented a written opinion that the closest of all to the previous tsars by blood was Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov: he should be elected Tsar. They remembered that the reposed Patriarch had mentioned this name. An ataman from the Don gave the same opinion. And Mikhail Fyodorovich was proclaimed Tsar. But not all the elected delegates had yet arrived in Moscow, nor any of the most eminent boyars, and the matter was put off for another two weeks. Finally, they all assembled on February 21, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, and by a common vote confirmed this choice. Then Archbishop Theodoritus of Ryazan, the cellarer Abraham Palitsyn of the Holy Trinity Monastery and the boyar Morozov came out onto the place of the skull and asked the people who were filling Red Square: 'Who do you want for Tsar?' And the people unanimously exclaimed: 'Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov!' And the Council appointed Archbishop Theodoritus, Abraham Palitsyn, three archimandrites and several notable boyars to go to the newly elected Tsar to ask him to please come to the capital city of Moscow to his Tsarist throne."¹⁴⁶

It was with great difficulty that the delegation persuaded the adolescent boy and his mother, the nun Martha, to accept the responsibility. She at first refused, pointing to the fickleness of the Muscovites in relation to their tsars, the devastation of the kingdom, the youth of her son, the fact that his father was in captivity, her own fears of revenge... But in the end they succeeded. Then, in recognition of the fact that it was largely the nation's betrayal of legitimate autocratic authority that had led to the Time of Troubles, the delegates at this Sobor swore eternal loyalty to Michael Romanov and his descendants, promising to sacrifice themselves body and soul in his service against external enemies, "Poles, Germans and the Crimeans". Moreover, they called a curse upon themselves if they should ever break this oath. In February, 1917 the people of Russia broke this oath to the House of Romanov by their betrayal of Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II. The curse duly fell upon them in the form of the horrors of Soviet power...

"The outcome," writes Lebedev, "suggested that Russians identified themselves with strong authority, backed by the Orthodox Church and unrestrained by any charter or covenant, such as might prove divisive and set one social group against another... The *zemlia* had for the first time constituted itself as a reality, based on elective local government institutions, and had chosen a new master..."¹⁴⁷

For, as Pozharsky said in 1612, "we know that unless we possess a monarch we can neither fight our common enemies - Poles, Lithuanians, Germans nor our own brigands, who threaten the State with further bloodshed. Without a monarch how can we maintain relations with foreign states, or ourselves preserve the stability and strength of our country?"¹⁴⁸

"The Time of Troubles," writes Lebedev, "illuminated the profound basis of the

¹⁴⁶ Archbishop Nikon (Rozhdestvensky), "Dostoslavnoe Trekhstotletie" ("A worthy 300-hundred-year anniversary"), in *Mech Oboiudoostrij, 1913* (The Double-Edged Sword, 1913), St. Petersburg, 1995, pp. 25-26.

¹⁴⁷ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, pp. 63, 64.

¹⁴⁸ Pozharsky, in Arsène de Goulévitch, *Czarism and Revolution*, Hawthorne, Ca.: Omni Publications, 1962, p. 34.

interrelationship of ecclesiastical and royal power. This problem was reflected, as if under a magnifying glass, in the above-mentioned quarrels of the Russian ambassadors with regard to the absence of Patriarch Hermogen's signature on the document of the capitulation of Russia. It turns out that both the Russian hierarchs and the best statesmen understood the relationship of the tsar and the patriarch in a truly Christian, communal sense. In the one great Orthodox society of Russia there are two leaders: a spiritual (the patriarch) and a secular (the tsar). They are both responsible for all that takes place in society, but each in his own way: the tsar first of all for civil affairs (although he can also take a very active and honourable part in ecclesiastical affairs when that is necessary), while the patriarch is first of all responsible for ecclesiastical, spiritual affairs (although he can also, when necessary, take a most active part in state affairs). The tsars take counsel with the patriarchs, the patriarchs – with the tsars in all the most important questions. Traditionally the patriarch is an obligatory member of the boyars' Duma (government). If there is no tsar, then the most important worldly affairs are decided only with the blessing of the patriarch. If in the affair of the establishment of the patriarchate in Russia it was the royal power that was basically active, in the Time of Troubles the royal power itself and the whole of Russia were saved by none other than the Russian patriarchs! Thus the troubles very distinctly demonstrated that the Russian ecclesiastical authorities were not, and did not think of themselves as being, a 'legally obedient' arm of the State power, as some (A.V. Kartashev) would have it. It can remain and did remain in agreement with the State power in those affairs in which this was possible from an ecclesiastical point of view, and to the extent that this was possible.

“In this question it was important that neither side should try to seize for itself the prerogatives of the other side, that is, should not be a usurper, for usurpation can be understood not only in the narrow sense, but also in the broad sense of the general striving to become that which you are not by law, to assume for yourself those functions which do not belong to you by right. It is amazing that in those days there was no precise juridical, written law ('right') concerning the competence and mutual relations of the royal and ecclesiastical powers. Relations were defined by the spiritual logic of things and age-old tradition...”¹⁴⁹

And so, with the enthronement of the first Romanov tsar, Muscovy was reestablished on the twin pillars of the Orthodox Faith and the Dynastic Principle. The requirement of Orthodoxy had been passed down from the Byzantines. Hereditary Succession was not a requirement in Rome or Byzantium (which is one reason why so many Byzantine emperors were assassinated); but in Russia, as in some Western Orthodox autocracies (for example, the Anglo-Saxon), it had always been felt to be a necessity. Both pillars had been shaken during the Time of Troubles, after the death of the last Rurik tsar. But Orthodoxy had been restored above all by the holy Patriarchs Job and Hermogen refusing to recognize a Catholic tsar, and then by the national army of liberation that drove out the Poles. And the Hereditary Principle, already tacitly accepted if mistakenly applied by the people when they followed the false Demetrius, had been affirmed by all the estates of the nation at the *Zemsky Sobor* in 1613.

¹⁴⁹ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, pp. 18-19.

6. THE HEREDITARY PRINCIPLE

The whole of Russian history from Riurik to Nicholas II (862-1917) was the history of only two, interrelated dynasties – the Riuriks and the Romanovs. Only in the Time of Troubles (1598-1612) was that continuity of dynasty briefly interrupted. This continuity of the hereditary principle in Russian history has no parallel in world history with the possible exception of the very different case of China.

And yet the Troubles themselves cannot be understood if we do not take into account the continuing importance of the hereditary principle in the Russian mind in that period. According to V.O. Kliuchevsky, the soil for the Time of Troubles “was prepared by the harassed state of the people’s minds, by a general state of discontent with the reign of Ivan the Terrible – discontent that increased under Boris Godunov. The end of the dynasty and the subsequent attempt to revive it in the persons of the pretenders provided a stimulus for the Troubles. Their basic causes were, first, the people’s view of the old dynasty’s relation to the Muscovite state and consequently their difficulty in grasping the idea of an elected tsar, and secondly – the political structure of the state, which created social discord by its heavy demands on the people and an inequitable distribution of state dues. The first cause gave rise to the need of reviving the extinct ruling line, and thus furthered the pretenders’ success; the second transformed a dynastic squabble into social and political anarchy.”¹⁵⁰

The Russian people understood the state to be the personal property of the tsar and of his blood descendants. They could not conceive of a non-hereditary tsar, a legitimate ruler who was not the heir by blood of the previous tsar; hence the confusion when the last Riurik tsar, Theodore, died without issue. Boris Godunov was related to the Riuriks by marriage – but may have killed the Tsarevich Dmitri. So he, in the end, was rejected by the people. Tsar Vasili Shuisky was not a Riurik, but was “the boyars’ tsar”. So he, too, was not acceptable. The pretenders were followed because they claimed to be the Tsarevich. But their claims were of course false.

The tsar had to be a “born tsar”. Only Michael Romanov fitted that role because his family was related to the Riuriks through Ivan IV’s first wife, Anastasia Romanova... And so in almost all his proclamations Michael called himself the grandson of Ivan the Terrible.

Since the hereditary principle is commonly considered to be irrational insofar as it supposedly places the government of the State “at the mercy of chance”, it will be worth examining its significance in Russian Orthodox statehood more closely.

Some points need emphasizing. First, the hereditary principle was upheld by a still deeper principle: that the tsar had to be Orthodox. The second False Dmitri and the Polish King Sigismund’s son Vladislav were both rejected by St. Hermogen, Patriarch of Moscow, because they were Catholics.

¹⁵⁰ Kliuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, p. 60.

Secondly, after electing the first Romanov tsar, the people retained no right to depose him or any of his successors. On the contrary, they elected a hereditary dynasty, and specifically bound themselves by an oath to be loyal to that dynasty *forever*. Hence the peculiar horror and *accursedness* of their rejection of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917... As Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow said in 1851: "God established a king on earth in the image of His single rule in the heavens; He arranged for an autocratic king on earth in the image of His almighty power; and He placed an hereditary king on earth in the image of His imperishable Kingdom, which lasts from ages to ages."¹⁵¹

It follows that the hereditary tsar's rule is inviolable. As Metropolitan Philaret writes: "A government that is not fenced about by an inviolability that is venerated religiously by the whole people cannot act with the whole fullness of power or that freedom of zeal that is necessary for the construction and preservation of the public good and security. How can it develop its whole strength in its most beneficial direction, when its power constantly finds itself in an insecure position, struggling with other powers that cut short its actions in as many different directions as are the opinions, prejudices and passions more or less dominant in society? How can it surrender itself to the full force of its zeal, when it must of necessity divide its attentions between care for the prosperity of society and anxiety about its own security? But if the government is so lacking in firmness, then the State is also lacking in firmness. Such a State is like a city built on a volcanic mountain: what significance does its hard earth have when under it is hidden a power that can at any minute turn everything into ruins? Subjects who do not recognize the inviolability of rulers are incited by the hope of licence to achieve licence and predominance, and between the horrors of anarchy and oppression they cannot establish in themselves that obedient freedom which is the focus and soul of public life."¹⁵²

Thirdly, while the *Zemsky Sobor* of 1613 was, of course, an election, it was by no means a democratic election in the modern sense, but rather a recognition of *God's* election of a ruler on the model of the Israelites' election of Jephtha (Judges 11.11). For, as Fr. Lev Lebedev writes: "Tsars are not elected! And a Council, even a *Zemsky Sobor*, cannot be the source of his power. The kingdom is a calling of God, the Council can determine who is the lawful Tsar and summon him."¹⁵³

Again, as Ivan Solonevich writes, "when, after the Time of Troubles, the question was raised concerning the restoration of the monarchy, there was no hint of an 'election to the kingdom'. There was a 'search' for people who had the greatest hereditary right to the throne. And not an 'election' of the more worthy. There were not, and could not be, any 'merits' in the young Michael Fyodorovich. But since only the hereditary principle affords the advantage of absolutely indisputability, it was on this that the 'election' was based."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Metropolitan Philaret, "Slovo v den' Blagochestivejshego Gosudaria Imperatora Nikolaia Pavlovich" (Sermon on the day of his Most Pious Majesty Emperor Nicholas Pavlovich).

¹⁵² Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia* (Works), 1848, vol. 2, p. 134; *Pravoslavnaiia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 49, N 9 (573), September, 1997, p. 6.

¹⁵³ Lebedev, *Velikorossia*, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 126.

¹⁵⁴ Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, pp. 82-83.

St. John Maximovich writes: "It was almost impossible to elect some person as tsar for his qualities; everyone evaluated the candidates from his own point of view...."

"What drew the hearts of all to Michael Romanov? He had neither experience of statecraft, nor had he done any service to the state. He was not distinguished by the state wisdom of Boris Godunov or by the eminence of his race, as was Basil Shuisky. He was sixteen years old, and 'Misha Romanov', as he was generally known, had not yet managed to show his worth in anything. But why did the Russian people rest on him, and why with his crowning did all the quarrels and disturbances regarding the royal throne come to an end? The Russian people longed for a lawful, 'native' Sovereign, and was convinced that without him there could be no order or peace in Russia. When Boris Godunov and Prince Basil Shuisky were elected, although they had, to a certain degree, rights to the throne through their kinship with the previous tsars, they were not elected by reason of their exclusive rights, but their personalities were taken into account. There was no strict lawful succession in their case. This explained the success of the pretenders. However, it was almost impossible to elect someone as tsar for his qualities. Everyone evaluated the candidates from their point of view. However, the absence of a definite law which would have provided an heir in the case of the cutting off of the line of the Great Princes and Tsars of Moscow made it necessary for the people itself to indicate who they wanted as tsar. The descendants of the appanage princes, although they came from the same race as that of the Moscow Tsars (and never forgot that), were in the eyes of the people simple noblemen, 'serfs' of the Moscow sovereigns; their distant kinship with the royal line had already lost its significance. Moreover, it was difficult to establish precisely which of the descendants of St. Vladimir on the male side had the most grounds for being recognized as the closest heir to the defunct royal line. In such circumstances all united in the suggestion that the extinct Royal branch should be continued by the closest relative of the last 'native', lawful Tsar. The closest relatives of Tsar Theodore Ioannovich were his cousins on his mother's side: Theodore, in monasticism Philaret, and Ivan Nikitich Romanov, both of whom had sons. In that case the throne had to pass to Theodore, as the eldest, but his monasticism and the rank of Metropolitan of Rostov was an obstacle to this. His heir was his only son Michael. Thus the question was no longer about the election of a Tsar, but about the recognition that a definite person had the rights to the throne. The Russian people, tormented by the time of troubles and the lawlessness, welcomed this decision, since it saw that order could be restored only by a lawful 'native' Tsar. The people remembered the services of the Romanovs to their homeland, their sufferings for it, the meek Tsaritsa Anastasia Romanova, the firmness of Philaret Nikitich. All this still more strongly attracted the hearts of the people to the announced tsar. But these qualities were possessed also by some other statesmen and sorrowers for Rus'. And this was not the reason for the election of Tsar Michael Romanovich, but the fact that in him Rus' saw their most lawful and native Sovereign.

"In the acts on the election to the kingdom of Michael Fyodorovich, the idea that he was ascending the throne by virtue of his election by the people was carefully avoided, and it was pointed out that the new Tsar was the elect of God, the direct descendant of the last lawful Sovereign."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, pp. 13, 43-45.

Fourthly, the tsar is above the law. As Solonevich writes: "The fundamental idea of the Russian monarchy was most vividly and clearly expressed by A.S. Pushkin just before the end of his life: 'There must be one person standing higher than everybody, higher even than the law.' In this formulation, 'one man', Man is placed in very big letters above the law. This formulation is completely unacceptable for the Roman-European cast of mind, for which the law is everything: *dura lex, sed lex*. The Russian mind places, man, mankind, the soul higher than the law, giving to the law only that place which it should occupy: the place occupied by traffic rules. Of course, with corresponding punishments for driving on the left side. Man is not for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man. It is not that man is for the fulfilment of the law, but the law is for the preservation of man...

"The whole history of humanity is filled with the struggle of tribes, people, nations, classes, estates, groups, parties, religions and whatever you like. It's almost as Hobbes put it: 'War by everyone against everyone'. How are we to find a neutral point of support in this struggle? An arbiter standing above the tribes, nations, peoples, classes, estates, etc.? Uniting the people, classes and religions into a common whole? Submitting the interests of the part to the interests of the whole? And placing moral principles above egoism, which is always characteristic of every group of people pushed forward the summit of public life?"¹⁵⁶

But if the tsar is above the law, how can he not be a tyrant, insofar as, in the famous words of Lord Acton, "power corrupts, and absolute power absolutely corrupts"?

In order to answer this question we must remember, first, that as we have seen, the tsar's power is not absolute insofar as he is limited by the law of God and Orthodoxy.

Secondly, it is not only tsars, but rulers of all kinds that are subject to the temptations of power. Indeed, these temptations may even be worse with democratic rulers; for whereas the tsar stands above all factional interests, an elected president necessarily represents the interests only of his party at the expense of the country as a whole. "Western thought," writes Solonevich, "sways from the dictatorship of capitalism to the dictatorship of the proletariat, but no representative of this thought has even so much as thought of 'the dictatorship of conscience'."¹⁵⁷

"The distinguishing characteristic of Russian monarchy, which was given to it at its birth, consists in the fact that the Russian monarchy expressed the will not of the most powerful, but the will of the whole nation, religiously given shape by Orthodoxy and politically given shape by the Empire. The will of the nation, religiously given shape by Orthodoxy will be 'the dictatorship of conscience' Only in this way can we explain the possibility of the manifesto of February 19, 1861 [when Tsar Alexander II freed the peasants]: 'the dictatorship of conscience' was able overcome the opposition of the ruling class, and the ruling class proved powerless. We must always have this distinction in mind: the Russian monarchy is the expression of the will, that is: the conscience, of the nation, not the will of the capitalists, which both French Napoleons expressed, or the will of the aristocracy, which all the other monarchies of Europe expressed: the Russian monarchy is the closest approximation to the ideal of monarchy

¹⁵⁶ Solonevich, *op. cit.*, pp. 84, 85.

¹⁵⁷ Solonevich, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

in general. This ideal was never attained by the Russian monarchy – for the well-known reason that no ideal is realisable in our life. In the history of the Russian monarchy, as in the whole of our world, there were periods of decline, of deviation, of failure, but there were also periods of recovery such as world history has never known.”¹⁵⁸

Now State power, which, like power in the family or the tribe, always includes in itself an element of coercion, “is constructed in three ways: by inheritance, by election and by seizure: monarchy, republic, dictatorship. In practice all of these change places: the man who seizes power becomes a hereditary monarch (Napoleon I), the elected president becomes the same (Napoleon III), or tries to become it (Oliver Cromwell). The elected ‘chancellor’, Hitler, becomes a seizer of power. But in general these are nevertheless exceptions.

“Both a republic and a dictatorship presuppose a struggle for power – democratic in the first case and necessarily bloody in the second: Stalin – Trotsky, Mussolini-Matteotti, Hitler-Röhm. In a republic, as a rule, the struggle is unbloody. However, even an unbloody struggle is not completely without cost. Aristide Briand, who became French Prime Minister several times, admitted that 95% of his strength was spent on the struggle for power and only five percent on the work of power. And even this five percent was exceptionally short-lived.

“Election and seizure are, so to speak, rationalist methods. Hereditary power is, strictly speaking, the power of chance, indisputable if only because the chance of birth is completely indisputable. You can recognise or not recognise the principle of monarchy in general. But no one can deny the existence of the positive law presenting the right of inheriting the throne to the first son of the reigning monarch. Having recourse to a somewhat crude comparison, this is something like an ace in cards... An ace is an ace. No election, no merit, and consequently no quarrel. Power passes without quarrel and pain: the king is dead, long live the king!”¹⁵⁹

We may interrupt Solonevich’s argument here to qualify his use of the word “chance”. The fact that a man inherits the throne only because he is the firstborn of his father may be “by chance” from a human point of view. But from the Divine point of view it is *election*. For, as Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov writes: “There is no blind chance! God rules the world, and everything that takes place in heaven and beneath the heavens takes place according to the judgement of the All-wise and All-powerful God.”¹⁶⁰ Moreover, as Bishop Ignaty also writes, “in blessed Russia, according to the spirit of the pious people, the Tsar and the fatherland constitute one whole, as in a family the parents and their children constitute one whole.”¹⁶¹ This being so, it was only natural that the law of succession should be hereditary, from father to son.

Solonevich continues: “The human individual, born by chance as heir to the throne, is placed in circumstances which guarantee him the best possible professional

¹⁵⁸ Solonevich, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹⁵⁹ Solonevich, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

¹⁶⁰ Brianchaninov, “Sud’by Bozhii” (The Judgements of God), *Polnoe Sobranie Tvorenij* (Complete Collection of Works), volume II, Moscow, 2001, p. 72.

¹⁶¹ Brianchaninov, *Pis’ma* (Letters), Moscow, 2000, p. 781.

preparation from a technical point of view. His Majesty Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich was probably one of the most educated people of his time. The best professors of Russia taught him both law and strategy and history and literature. He spoke with complete freedom in three foreign languages. His knowledge was not one-sided... and was, if one can so express it, living knowledge...

“The Russian tsar was in charge of everything and was obliged to know everything - it goes without saying, as far as humanly possible. He was a ‘specialist’ in that sphere which excludes all specialization. This was a specialism standing above all the specialisms of the world and embracing them all. That is, the general volume of erudition of the Russian monarch had in mind that which every philosophy has in mind: the concentration in one point of the whole sum of human knowledge. However, with this colossal qualification, that ‘the sum of knowledge’ of the Russian tsars grew in a seamless manner from the living practice of the past and was checked against the living practice of the present. True, that is how almost all philosophy is checked - for example, with Robespierre, Lenin and Hitler - but, fortunately for humanity, such checking takes place comparatively rarely....

“The heir to the Throne, later the possessor of the Throne, is placed in such conditions under which temptations are reduced... to a minimum. He is given everything he needs beforehand. At his birth he receives an order, which he, of course, did not manage to earn, and the temptation of vainglory is liquidated in embryo. He is absolutely provided for materially - the temptation of avarice is liquidated in embryo. He is the only one having the Right - and so competition falls away, together with everything linked with it. Everything is organized in such a way that the personal destiny of the individual should be welded together into one whole with the destiny of the nation. Everything that a person would want to have for himself is already given him. And the person automatically merges with the general good.

“One could say that all this is possessed also by a dictator of the type of Napoleon, Stalin or Hitler. But this would be less than half true: everything that the dictator has he conquered, and all this he must constantly defend - both against competitors and against the nation. The dictator is forced to prove every day that it is precisely he who is the most brilliant, great, greatest and inimitable, for if not he, but someone else, is not the most brilliant, then it is obvious that that other person has the right to power...

“We can, of course, quarrel over the principle of ‘chance’ itself. A banal, rationalist, pitifully scientific point of view is usually formulated thus: the chance of birth may produce a defective man. But we, we will elect the best... Of course, ‘the chance of birth’ can produce a defective man. We have examples of this: Tsar Theodore Ivanovich. Nothing terrible happened. For the monarchy ‘is not the arbitrariness of a single man’, but ‘a system of institutions’, - a system can operate temporarily even without a ‘man’. But simple statistics show that the chances of such ‘chance’ events occurring are very small. The chance of ‘a genius on the throne’ appearing is still smaller.

“I proceed from the axiom that a genius in politics is worse than the plague. For a genius is a person who thinks up something that is new in principle. In thinking up

something that is new in principle, he invades the organic life of the country and cripples it, as it was crippled by Napoleon, Stalin and Hitler...

“The power of the tsar is the power of the average, averagely clever man over two hundred million average, averagely clever people... V. Klyuchevsky said with some perplexity that the first Muscovite princes, the first gatherers of the Russian land, were completely average people: - and yet, look, they gathered the Russian land. This is quite simple: average people have acted in the interests of average people and the line of the nation has coincided with the line of power. So the average people of the Novgorodian army went over to the side of the average people of Moscow, while the average people of the USSR are running away in all directions from the genius of Stalin.”¹⁶²

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow expressed the superiority of the hereditary over the elective principle as follows: “What conflict does election for public posts produce in other peoples! With what conflict, and sometimes also with what alarm do they attain the legalization of the right of public election! Then there begins the struggle, sometimes dying down and sometimes rising up again, sometimes for the extension and sometimes for the restriction of this right. The incorrect extension of the right of social election is followed by its incorrect use. It would be difficult to believe it if we did not read in foreign newspapers that elective votes are sold; that sympathy or lack of sympathy for those seeking election is expressed not only by votes for and votes against, but also by sticks and stones, as if a man can be born from a beast, and rational business out of the fury of the passions; that ignorant people make the choice between those in whom wisdom of state is envisaged, lawless people participate in the election of future lawgivers, peasants and craftsmen discuss and vote, not about who could best keep order in the village or the society of craftsmen, but about who is capable of administering the State.

“Thanks be to God! It is not so in our fatherland. Autocratic power, established on the age-old law of heredity, which once, at a time of impoverished heredity, was renewed and strengthened on its former basis by a pure and rational election, stands in inviolable firmness and acts with calm majesty. Its subjects do not think of striving for the right of election to public posts in the assurance that the authorities care for the common good and know through whom and how to construct it.”¹⁶³

“God, in accordance with the image of His heavenly single rule, has established a tsar on earth; in accordance with the image of His almighty power, He has established an autocratic tsar; in accordance with the image of His everlasting Kingdom, which continues from age to age, He has established a hereditary tsar.”¹⁶⁴

An elected president is installed by the will of man, and can be said to be installed by the will of God only indirectly, by permission. By contrast, the determination of who will be born as the heir to the throne is completely beyond the power of man, and

¹⁶² Solonevich, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88, 89-90, 91-92.

¹⁶³ Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia* (Works), 1861, vol. 3, pp. 322-323; *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 49, N 9 (573), September, 1997, p. 9.

¹⁶⁴ Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia* (Works), 1877, vol. 3, p. 442; *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 49, N 9 (573), September, 1997, p. 5.

so entirely within the power of God. The hereditary principle therefore ensures that the tsar will indeed be elected – but by God, not by man.

7. TSAR, PATRIARCH AND PEOPLE IN MUSCOVITE RUSSIA

The first Romanov tsar, Michael Fyodorovich, had his own natural father, Philaret Nikitich, as his Patriarch. This unusual relationship, in which both took the title "Great Sovereign", was profoundly significant in the context of the times. It was "unique," according to Lebedev, "not only for Russian history, but also for the universal history of the Church, when a natural father and son become the two heads of a single Orthodox power!"¹⁶⁵ And it was highly significant in that it showed what the relationship between the heads of the Church and the State should be – a filial one of mutual trust and love.

The sixteenth century had seen the power of the tsar, in the person of Ivan the Terrible, leaning dangerously towards caesaropapism in practice, if not in theory. However, the Time of Troubles had demonstrated how critically the Orthodox Autocracy depended on the legitimizing and sanctifying power of the Church. In disobedience to her, the people had broken their oath of allegiance to the legitimate tsar and plunged the country into anarchy. But in penitent obedience to her, they had succeeded in finally driving out the invaders. The election of the tsar's father to the patriarchal see both implicitly acknowledged this debt of the Autocracy and People to the Church, and indicated that while the Autocracy was now re-established in all its former power and inviolability, the tsar being answerable to God alone for his actions in the political sphere, nevertheless he received his sanction and sanctification from the Church in the person of the Patriarch, who was as superior to him in his sphere, the sphere of the Spirit, as a father is to his son, and who, as the *Zemsky Sobor* of 1619 put it, "for this reason [i.e. because he was father of the tsar] is to be a helper and builder for the kingdom, a defender for widows and intercessor for the wronged."¹⁶⁶

Patriarch Philaret's firm hand was essential in holding the still deeply shaken State together. As A.P. Dobroklonsky writes: "The Time of Troubles had shaken the structure of the State in Russia, weakening discipline and unleashing arbitrariness; the material situation of the country demanded improvements that could not be put off. On ascending the throne, Michael Fyodorovich was still too young, inexperienced and indecisive to correct the shattered State order. Having become accustomed to self-will, the boyars were not able to renounce it even now: 'They took no account of the tsar, they did not fear him,' says the chronicler, 'as long as he was a child... They divided up the whole land in accordance with their will.' In the census that took place after the devastation of Moscow many injustices had been permitted in taxing the people, so that it was difficult for some and easy for others. The boyars became 'violators', oppressing the weak; the Boyar Duma contained unworthy men, inclined to intrigues against each other rather than State matters and interests. In the opinion of some historians, the boyars even restricted the autocracy of the tsar, and the whole administration of the State depended on them. A powerful will and an experienced man was necessary to annihilate the evil. Such could be for the young sovereign his father, Patriarch Philaret, in whom circumstances had created a strong character, and to whom age and former participation in State affairs had given knowledge of the

¹⁶⁵ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia* (Patriarchal Moscow), Moscow, 1995, p. 20.

¹⁶⁶ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, p. 20.

boyar set and the whole of Russian life and experience in administration. Finally, the woes of the fatherland had generated a burning patriotism in him. In reality, Philaret became the adviser and right hand of the Tsar. The Tsar himself, in his decree to voyevodas of July 3, 1619 informing them of the return of his father from Poland, put it as follows: 'We, the great sovereign, having taken counsel with our father and intercessor with God, will learn how to care for the Muscovite State so as to correct everything in it in the best manner.' The chroniclers call Philaret 'the most statesmanlike patriarch', noting that 'he was in control of all governmental and military affairs' and that 'the tsar and patriarch administered everything together'. Philaret was in fact as much a statesman as a churchman. This is indicated by the title he used: 'the great sovereign and most holy Patriarch Philaret Nikitich'. All important State decrees and provisions were made with his blessing and counsel. When the tsar and patriarch were separated they corresponded with each other, taking counsel with each other in State affairs. Their names figured next to each other on decrees... Some decrees on State affairs were published by the patriarch alone; and he rescinded some of the resolutions made by his son. Subjects wrote their petitions not only to the tsar, but at the same time to the patriarch; the boyars often assembled in the corridors before his cross palace to discuss State affairs; they presented various reports to him as well as to the tsar. The patriarch usually took part in receptions of foreign ambassadors sitting on the right hand of the tsar; both were given gifts and special documents; if for some reason the patriarch was not present at this reception, the ambassadors would officially present themselves in the patriarchal palace and with the same ceremonies as to the tsar. The influence of the patriarch on the tsar was so complete and powerful that there was no place for any influence of the boyars who surrounded the throne."¹⁶⁷

The Church's recovery was reflected in the more frequent convening of Church Councils. If we exclude the false council of 1666-67 (of which more anon), these were genuinely free of interference from the State, and the tsar was sometimes forced to submit to them against his will. Thus a Church Council in 1621 decreed that the proposed Catholic bridegroom for the Tsar's daughter would have to be baptized first in the Orthodox Church, and that in general all Catholics and uniates joining the Orthodox Church, and all Orthodox who had been baptized incorrectly, without full immersion, should be baptized. For, as Patriarch Philaret said: "The Latin-papists are the most evil and defiled of all heretics, for they have received into their law the accursed heresies of all the Hellenes, the Judaizers, the Hagarenes (that is, the Muslims) and the heretical faiths, and in general they all think and act together with all the pagans and heretics."¹⁶⁸

However, seventeenth-century Russia not only displayed a rare symphony of Church and State. It also included in this symphony *the People*; for all classes of the population took part in the *Zemskie Sobory*, or "Councils of the Land". Again, this owed much to the experience of the Time of Troubles; for, as we have seen, the People played a large part at that time in the re-establishment of lawful autocratic rule. Thus in the reign of Tsar Michael Fyodorovich all the most important matters were decided by Councils, which, like the first Council of 1613, were Councils "of the whole land". Such Councils continued to be convened until 1689. The symphony between Tsar and

¹⁶⁷ Dobroklonksy, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (A Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, pp. 323-324.

¹⁶⁸ Patriarch Philaret, in Archpriest Lev Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 130.

People was particularly evident in judicial matters, where the people jealously guarded their ancient right to appeal directly to the Tsar for justice. Of course, as the State became larger it became impossible for the Tsar personally to judge all cases, and he appointed *posadniki*, *namestniki* and *volosteli* to administer justice in his name. At the same time, the Tsars always appreciated the significance of a direct link with the people over the heads of the bureaucracy; and in 1550 Ivan the Terrible created a kind of personal office to deal with petitions called the *Chelobitnij Prikaz*, which lasted until Peter the Great. It was also Ivan who convened the first *Zemskie Sobory*.

The bond between Tsar and People was maintained throughout the administration. The central administrative institutions were: (a) the *Prikazi*, or Ministries, over each of which the Tsar appointed a boyar with a staff of secretaries (*dyaki*), (b) the Boyar Duma, an essentially aristocratic institution, which, however, was broadened into the more widely representative (c) Councils of the Land (*Zemskie Sobory*) for particularly important matters. This constituted a much wider consultative base than prevailed in contemporary Western European states.

To the local administration, writes L.A. Tikhomirov, "voyevodas were sent, but besides them there existed numerous publicly elected authorities. The voyevodas' competence was complex and broad. The voyevoda, as representative of the tsar, had to look at absolutely everything: so that all the tsar's affairs should be intact, so that there should be guardians everywhere; to take great care that in the town and the *uyezd* there should be no fights, thievery, murder, fighting, burglary, bootlegging, debauchery; whoever was declared to have committed such crimes was to be taken and, after investigation, punished. The voyevoda was the judge also in all civil matters. The voyevoda was in charge generally of all branches of the tsar's administration, but his power was not absolute, and he practiced it together with representatives of society's self-administration... According to the tsar's code of laws, none of the administrators appointed for the cities and *volosts* could judge any matter without society's representatives...

"Finally, the whole people had the broadest right of appeal to his Majesty in all matters in general. 'The government,' notes Soloviev, 'was not deaf to petitions. If some *mir* [village commune] asked for an elected official instead of the crown's, the government willingly agreed. They petitioned that the city bailiff... should be retired and a new one elected by the *mir*: his Majesty ordered the election, etc. All in all, the system of the administrative authorities of Muscovy was distinguished by a multitude of technical imperfections, by the chance nature of the establishment of institutions, by their lack of specialization, etc. But this system of administration possessed one valuable quality: the broad admittance of aristocratic and democratic elements, their use as communal forces under the supremacy of the tsar's power, with the general right of petition to the tsar. This gave the supreme power a wide base of information and brought it closer to the life of all the estates, and there settled in all the Russias a deep conviction in the reality of a supreme power directing and managing everything."¹⁶⁹

For "in what was this autocratic power of the Tsar strong?" asks Hieromartyr

¹⁶⁹ Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992., pp. 270-271, 272.

Andronicus, Archbishop of Perm. "In the fact that it was based on the conscience and on the Law of God, and was supported by its closeness to the land, by the council of the people. The princely entourage, the boyars' Duma, the *Zemsky Sobor* - that is what preserved the power of the Tsars in its fullness, not allowing anyone to seize or divert it. The people of proven experience and honesty came from the regions filled with an identical care for the construction of the Russian land. They brought before to the Tsar the voice and counsel of the people concerning how and what to build in the country. And it remained for the Tsar to learn from all the voices, to bring everything together for the benefit of all and to command the rigorous fulfillment for the common good of the people of that for which he would answer before the Omniscient God and his own conscience."¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Archbishop Andronicus, *O Tserkvi Rossii* (On the Church of Russia), Fryazino, 1997, pp. 132-133.

8. THE SCHISM OF THE OLD RITUALISTS

Unfortunately, the almost ideal relationship between Tsar, Church and people in Muscovy did not survive for long into the second half of the seventeenth century. Under Tsar Michael's son, Alexis Mikhailovich, there were many rebellions, for his *Ulozhenie* or Law Code of 1649 had gone a significant step further in the process of tying the peasants to the land as serfs. However, the most serious, large-scale and long-term rebellion was that of the so-called Old Ritualists against both the State and the Orthodox Church, and more particularly against the Orthodox idea of the Universal Empire...

By the middle of the century, at a time when the principle of monarchical rule was being shaken to its foundations in the English revolution, the prestige of the Muscovite monarchy reached its height. Even the Greeks were looking to it to deliver them from the Turkish yoke and take over the throne of the Constantinopolitan Emperor. Thus in 1645, during the coronation of Tsar Alexis, Patriarch Joseph for the first time read the "Prayer of Philaret" on the enthronement of the Russian Tsar over the whole *oikoumene*. And in 1649 Patriarch Paisius of Jerusalem wrote to the tsar: "May the All-Holy Trinity multiply you more than all the tsars, and count you worthy to grasp the most lofty throne of the great King Constantine, your forefather, and liberate the peoples of the pious and Orthodox Christians from impious hands. May you be a new Moses, may you liberate us from captivity just as he liberated the sons of Israel from the hands of Pharaoh."¹⁷¹

As V.M. Lourié writes: "At that time hopes in Greece for a miraculous re-establishment of Constantinople before the end of the world [based on the prophecies of Leo the Wise and others], were somewhat strengthened, if not squeezed out, by hopes on Russia. Anastasius Gordius (1654-1729), the author of what later became an authoritative historical-eschatological interpretation of the Apocalypse (1717-23) called the Russian Empire the guardian of the faith to the very coming of the Messiah. The hopes of the Greeks for liberation from the Turks that were linked with Russia, which had become traditional already from the time of St. Maximus the Greek (1470-1555), also found their place in the interpretations of the Apocalypse. Until the middle of the 19th century itself - until the Greeks, on a wave of pan-European nationalism thought up their 'Great Idea' - Russia would take the place of Byzantium in their eschatological hopes, as being the last Christian Empire. They considered the Russian Empire to be their own, and the Russian Tsar Nicholas (not their Lutheran King Otto) as their own, to the great astonishment and annoyance of European travellers."¹⁷²

Tragically, however, it was at precisely this time, when Russia seemed ready to take the place of the Christian Roman Empire in the eyes of all the Orthodox, that the Russian autocracy and Church suffered a simultaneous attack from two sides from which it never fully recovered. From the right came the attack of the "Old Ritualists" or "Old Believers", as they came to be called, who expressed the schismatic and nationalist idea that the only true Orthodoxy was Russian Orthodoxy. From the left

¹⁷¹ Patriarch Paisius, in Sergius Fomin, *Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad: Holy Trinity - St. Sergius monastery, first edition, 1993, p. 20.

¹⁷² Lourié, "O Vozmozhnosti Kontsa Sveta v Odnog Otdel'no Vzyatoj Strane" ("On the Possibility of the End of the World in One Separate Country"), pp. 1-2 (MS).

came the attack of the westernising Russian aristocracy and the Greek pseudo-hierarchs of the council of 1666-67, who succeeded in removing the champion of the traditional Orthodox symphony of powers, Patriarch Nikon of Moscow.

The beginnings of the tragedy lay in the arrival in Moscow of some educated monks from the south of Russia, which at that time was under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and under the cultural and political influence of Catholic Poland. They (and Greek hierarchs visiting Moscow) pointed to the existence of several differences between the Muscovite service books and those employed in the Greek Church. These differences concerned such matters as how the word "Jesus" was to be spelt, whether two or three "alleluias" should be chanted in the Divine services, whether the sign of the Cross should be made with two or three fingers, etc.

A group of leading Muscovite clergy led by Protopriests John Neronov and Avvakum rejected these criticisms. They said that the reforms contradicted the decrees of the famous Stoglav council of 1551, which had anathematized the three-fingered sign of the cross, and they suspected that the southerners were tainted with Latinism through their long subjection to Polish rule. Therefore they were unwilling to bow unquestioningly to their superior knowledge.

However, the *Stoglav* council, while important, was never as authoritative as the Ecumenical Councils, and certain of its provisions have never been accepted in their full force by the Russian Church - for example, its 40th chapter, which decreed that anyone who shaved his beard, and died in such a state (i.e. without repenting), should be denied a Christian burial and numbered among the unbelievers. Moreover, in elevating ritual differences into an issue of dogmatic faith, the "zealots for piety" were undoubtedly displaying a Judaizing attachment to the letter of the law that quenches the Spirit. In the long run it led to their rejection of Greek Orthodoxy, and therefore of the need of any agreement with the Greeks whether on rites or anything else, a rejection that threatened the foundations of the Ecumenical Church.¹⁷³

This was the situation in 1652 when the close friend of the tsar, Metropolitan Nikon of Novgorod, was elected patriarch. Knowing of the various inner divisions within Russian society caused by incipient westernism and secularism, on the one hand, and Old Ritualism, on the other, the new patriarch demanded, and obtained a solemn oath from the tsar and all the people that they should obey him in all Church matters. The tsar was very willing to give such an oath because he regarded Nikon as his "special friend" and father, giving him the same title of "Great Sovereign" that Tsar Michael had given to his father, Patriarch Philaret.

The "zealots of piety" were also happy to submit to Nikon because he had been a member of their circle and shared, as they thought, their views. "Not immediately," writes Lebedev, "but after many years of thought (since 1646), and conversations with the tsar, Fr. Stefan [Bonifatiev], the Greek and Kievan scholars and Patriarch Paisius of Jerusalem, [Nikon] had come to the conviction that the criterion of the rightness of the correction of Russian books and rites consisted in their correspondence with that

¹⁷³ Thus "Protopriests Neronov, Habbakuk, Longinus and others considered that the faith of the Greeks 'had become leprous from the Godless Turks', and that it was impossible to trust the Greeks" (Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 136).

which from ages past had been accepted by the Eastern Greek Church and handed down by it to Rus' and, consequently, must be preserved also in the ancient Russian customs and books, and that therefore for the correction of the Russian books and rites it was necessary to take the advice of contemporary Eastern authorities, although their opinion had to be approached with great caution and in a critical spirit. It was with these convictions that Nikon completed the work begun before him of the correction of the Church rites and books, finishing it completely in 1656. At that time he did not know that the correctors of the books had placed at the foundation of their work, not the ancient, but the contemporary Greek books, which had been published in the West, mainly in Venice (although in the most important cases they had nevertheless used both ancient Greek and Slavonic texts). The volume of work in the correction and publishing of books was so great that the patriarch was simply unable to check its technical side and was convinced that they were correcting them according to the ancient texts.

“However, the correction of the rites was carried out completely under his supervision and was accomplished in no other way than in consultation with the conciliar opinion in the Eastern Churches and with special councils of the Russian hierarchs and clergy. Instead of using two fingers in the sign of the cross, the doctrine of which had been introduced into a series of very important books under Patriarch Joseph under the influence of the party of Neronov and Avvakum, the three-fingered sign was confirmed, since it corresponded more to ancient Russian customs¹⁷⁴ and the age-old practice of the Orthodox East. A series of other Church customs were changed, and all Divine service books published earlier with the help of the ‘zealots’ were re-published.

“As was to be expected, J. Neronov, Avvakum, Longinus, Lazarus, Daniel and some of those who thought like them rose up against the corrections made by his Holiness.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ But not to Russian practice since the *Stoglav* council of 1551, which had legislated in favour of the two-fingered sign because in some places the two-fingered sign was used, and in others the three-fingered (Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 70).

According to S.A. Zenkovsky, following the researches of Golubinsky, Kapterev and others, the two-fingered sign of the cross came from the Constantinopolitan (Studite) typicon, whereas the three-fingered sign was from the Jerusalem typicon of St. Sabbas. “In the 12th-13th centuries in Byzantium, the Studite typicon was for various reasons squeezed out by the Jerusalemite and at almost the same time the two-fingered sign of the cross was replaced by the three-fingered in order to emphasize the importance of the dogma of the All-Holy Trinity. Difficult relations with Byzantium during the Mongol yoke did not allow the spread of the Jerusalemite typicon in Rus' in the 13th-14th centuries. Only under Metropolitans Cyprian and Photius (end of the 14th, beginning of the 15th centuries) was the Jerusalemite typicon partly introduced into Rus' (gradually, one detail after another), but, since, after the council of Florence in 1439 Rus' had broken relations with uniate Constantinople, this reform was not carried out to the end. In the Russian typicon, therefore, a series of features of the Studite typicon – the two-fingered sign of the cross, processing in the direction of the sun, chanting alleluia twice and other features – were preserved.” (“Staroobriadchestvo, Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo” (Old Ritualism, the Church and the State), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1987- I, p. 86. (V.M.)

¹⁷⁵ This elicited the following comments by Epiphany Slavynetsky, one of the main correctors of the books: “Blind ignoramuses, hardly able to read one syllable at a time, having no understanding of grammar, not to mention rhetoric, philosophy, or theology, people who have not even tasted of study, dare to interpret divine writings, or, rather, to distort them, and slander and judge men well-versed in Slavonic and Greek languages. The ignoramuses cannot see that we did not correct the dogmas of faith, but only some expressions which had been altered through the carelessness and errors of uneducated scribes, or through the ignorance of correctors at the Printing Office”. And he compared the Old

Thus was laid the doctrinal basis of the Church schism, but the schism itself, as a broad movement among the people, began much later, without Nikon and independently of him. Patriarch Nikon took all the necessary measures that this should not happen. In particular, on condition of their obedience to the Church, he permitted those who wished it (J. Neronov) to serve according to the old books and rites, in this way allowing a variety of opinions and practices in Church matters that did not touch the essence of the faith.¹⁷⁶ This gave the Church historian Metropolitan Macarius (Bulgakov) a basis on which to assert, with justice, that 'if Nikon had not left his see and his administration had continued, there would have been no schism in the Russian Church.'"177

Again, Sergei Firsov writes: "At the end of his patriarchy Nikon said about the old and new (corrected) church-service books: 'Both the ones and the others are good; it doesn't matter, serve according to whichever books you want'. In citing these words, V.O. Klyuchevsky noted: 'This means that the matter was not one of rites, but of resistance to ecclesiastical authority'. The Old Believers' refusal to submit was taken by the church hierarchy and the state authorities as a rebellion, and at the Council of 1666-1667 the disobedient were excommunicated from the Church and cursed 'for their resistance to the canonical authority of the pastors of the Church'."178

All this is true, but fails to take into account the long-term effect of the actions of the Greek hierarchs, especially Patriarch Macarius of Antioch, in anathematizing the old books and practices...

Early in 1656 this patriarch was asked by Patriarch Nikon to give his opinion on the question of the sign of the cross. On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, "during the anathemas, Makarios stood before the crowd, put the three large fingers of his hand together 'in the image of the most holy and undivided Trinity, and said: 'Every Orthodox Christian must make the sign of the Cross on his face with these three first fingers: and if anyone does it based on the writing of Theodoret and on false tradition, let him be anathema!' The anathemas were then repeated by Gabriel and Gregory. Nikon further obtained written condemnations of the two-fingered sign of the Cross from all these foreign bishops.

Ritualists to Korah and Abiram, who had rebelled against Moses (in Paul Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 113). (V.M.)

¹⁷⁶ In this tolerance Nikon followed the advice of Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople. (V.M.)

¹⁷⁷ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁷⁸ Firsov, *Russkaia Tserkov' nakanune peremen (konets 1890-kh - 1918 gg.)* (The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes (the end of the 1890s to 1918)), Moscow, 2002, p. 252. Cf. Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky), *Zhizneopisanie Blazhennejshago Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago* (Life of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), volume 3, New York, 1957, p. 161. Again, Paul Meyendorff writes, "to its credit, the Russian Church appears to have realized its tactical error and tried to repair the damage. As early as 1656, Nikon made peace with Neronov, one of the leading opponents of the reform, and permitted him to remain in Moscow and even to use the old books at the Cathedral of the Dormition. After Nikon left the patriarchal throne in 1658, Tsar Alexis made repeated attempts to pacify the future Old-Believers, insisting only that they cease condemning the new books, but willing to allow the continued use of the old. This was the only demand made of the Old-Believers at the 1666 Moscow Council. Only after all these attempts to restore peace had failed did the 1667 Council, with Greek bishops present, condemn the old books and revoke the 1551 'Stoglav (Hundred Chapters)' Council." (*op. cit.*, p. 33)

“On April 23, a new council was called in Moscow. Its purpose was twofold: first, Nikon wanted to affirm the three-fingered sign of the Cross by conciliar decree; second, he wanted sanction for the publication of the *Skrizhal'*. Once again, the presence of foreign bishops in Moscow served his purpose. In his speech to the assembled council, Nikon explains the reasons for his request. The two-fingered sign of the Cross, he states, does not adequately express the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation...

“The significance of this council lies chiefly in its formal condemnation of those who rejected the three-fingered sign of the Cross – and, by extension, those who rejected the Greek model – as heretics. For those who make the sign of the Cross by folding their thumb together with their two small fingers ‘are demonstrating the inequality of the Holy Trinity, which is Arianism’, or ‘Nestorianism’. By branding his opponents as heretics, Nikon was making schism inevitable.”¹⁷⁹

Whether it made schism inevitable or not, it was certainly a serious mistake. And, together with the Old Ritualists’ blasphemous rejection of the sacraments of the Orthodox Church, on the one hand, and the over-strict police measures of the State against them, on the other, it probably contributed to the hardening of the schism.¹⁸⁰ Paradoxically, however, this mistake was the same mistake as that made by the Old Ritualists. That is, like the Old Ritualists, Nikon was asserting that differences in rite, and in particular in the making of the sign of the cross, reflected differences in faith. But this was not so, as had been pointed out to Nikon by Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople and his Synod the previous year. And while, as noted above, Nikon himself backed away from a practical implementation of the decisions of the 1656 council, the fact is that the decisions of the 1656 council remained on the statute books. Moreover, they were confirmed – again with the active connivance of Greek hierarchs – at the council of 1667. Only later, with the *yedinoverie* of 1801, was it permitted to be a member of the Russian Church and serve on the old books.

The process of removing the curses on the old rites began at the Preconciliar Convention in 1906. The section on the Old Ritual, presided over by Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), decreed: “Bearing in mind the benefit to the Holy Church, the pacification of those praying with the two-fingered cross and the lightening of the difficulties encountered by missionaries in explaining the curses on those praying with the two-fingered cross pronounced by Patriarch Macarius of Antioch and a Council of Russian hierarchs in 1656, - to petition the All-Russian Council to remove the indicated curses, as imposed out of ‘not good understanding’ (cf. Canon 12 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council) by Patriarch Macarius of the meaning of our two-fingered cross, which misunderstanding was caused in the patriarch by his getting to know an incorrect edition of the so-called ‘Theodorit’s Word’, which was printed in our books in the middle of the 17th century..., just as the Council of 1667 ‘destroyed’ the curse of the Stoglav Council laid on those not baptised with the two-fingered cross.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 61, 62.

¹⁸⁰ Rklitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

¹⁸¹ Rklitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

The All-Russian Council did not get round to removing the curses in 1917-1918. But in 1974 the Russian Church Abroad did remove the anathemas on the Old Rite (as did the Moscow Patriarchate).

“However,” writes Lebedev, the differences between the Orthodox and the Old Ritualists were not only “with regard to the correction of books and rites. The point was the deep differences in perception of the ideas forming the basis of the conception of ‘the third Rome’, and in the contradictions of the Russian Church’s self-consciousness at the time.”¹⁸²

These differences and contradictions were particularly important at this time because the Russian State, after consolidating itself in the first half of the seventeenth century, was now ready to go on the offensive against Catholic Poland, and rescue the Orthodox Christians who were being persecuted by the Polish and uniate authorities. In 1654 Eastern Ukraine was wrested from Poland and came within the bounds of Russia again. But the Orthodox Church in the Ukraine had been under the jurisdiction of Constantinople and employed Greek practices, which, as we have seen, differed somewhat from those in the Great Russian Church. So if Moscow was to be the Third Rome in the sense of the protector of all Orthodox Christians, it was necessary that the faith and practice of the Moscow Patriarchate should be in harmony with the faith and practice of the Orthodox Church as a whole. That is why Nikon, supported by the Grecophile Tsar Alexis, encouraged the reform of the service-books to bring them into line with the practices of the Greek Church.

In pursuing this policy the Tsar and the Patriarch were continuing the work of St. Maximus the Greek, who had been invited to Russia to carry out translations from Greek into Russian and correct the Russian service books against the Greek originals. For this he was persecuted by Metropolitan Daniel. And yet “the mistakes in the Russian Divine service books were so great,” writes Professor N.N. Pokrovsky, “that the Russian Church finally had to agree with Maximus’ corrections – true, some 120 years after his trial, under Patriarch Nikon (for example, in the Symbol of the faith).”¹⁸³

Paradoxically, the Old Ritualists cited St. Maximus the Greek in their support because he made no objection to the two-fingered sign. However, Professor Pokrovsky has shown that he probably passed over this as being of secondary importance by comparison with his main task, which was to broaden the horizons of the Russian Church and State, making it more ecumenical in spirit – and more sympathetic to the pleas for help of the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans. On more important issues – for example, the text of the Symbol of faith, the canonical subjection of the Russian metropolitan to the Ecumenical Patriarch, and a more balanced relationship between Church and State – he made no concessions.

The Old Ritualists represented a serious threat to the achievement of the ideal of Ecumenical Orthodoxy. Like their opponents, they believed in the ideology of the Third Rome, but understood it differently. First, they resented the lead that the

¹⁸² Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹⁸³ Pokrovsky, *Puteshestvia za redkimi knigami* (*Journeys for rare books*), Moscow, 1988; http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page&pid=779. The mistake in the Creed consisted in adding the word “true” after “and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord”.

patriarch was taking in this affair. In their opinion, the initiative in such matters should come from the tsar insofar as it was the tsar, rather than the hierarchs, who defended the Church from heresies. Here they were thinking of the Russian Church's struggle against the false council of Florence and the Judaizing heresy, when the great prince did indeed take a leading role in the defence of Orthodoxy while some of the hierarchs fell away from the truth. However, they ignored the no less frequent cases – most recently, in the Time of Troubles – when it had been the Orthodox hierarchs who had defended the Church against apostate tsars.

Secondly, whereas for the Grecophiles of the “Greco-Russian Church” Moscow the Third Rome was the continuation of Christian Rome, which in no wise implied any break with Greek Orthodoxy, for the Old Ritualists the influence of the Greeks, who had betrayed Orthodoxy at the council of Florence, could only be harmful. They believed that the Russian Church did not need help from, or agreement with, the Greeks; she was self-sufficient. Moreover, The Greeks could not be Orthodox, according to the Old Ritualists, not only because they had apostasized at the council of Florence, but also because they were “powerless”, that is, without an emperor. And when Russia, too, in their view, became “powerless” through the tsar's “apostasy”, they prepared for the end of the world. For, as Lourié writes, “the Niconite reforms were perceived by Old Ritualism as apostasy from Orthodoxy, and consequently... as the end of the last (Roman) Empire, which was to come immediately before the end of the world.”¹⁸⁴

This anti-Greek attitude was exemplified particularly by Archpriest Avvakum, who wrote from his prison cell to Tsar Alexis: "Say in good Russian 'Lord have mercy on me'. Leave all those Kyrie Eleisons to the Greeks: that's their language, spit on them! You are Russian, Alexei, not Greek. Speak your mother tongue and be not ashamed of it, either in church or at home!" Again, Avvakum announced “that newborn babies knew more about God than all the scholars of the Greek church”.¹⁸⁵ And in the trial of 1667, he told the Greek bishops: “You, ecumenical teachers! Rome has long since fallen, and lies on the ground, and the Poles have gone under with her, for to the present day they have been enemies of the Christians. But with you, too, Orthodoxy became a varied mixture under the violence of the Turkish Muhammed. Nor is that surprising: you have become powerless. From now on you must come to us to learn: through God's grace we have the autocracy. Before the apostate Nikon the whole of Orthodoxy was pure and spotless in our Russia under the pious rulers and tsars, and the Church knew no rebellion. But the wolf Nikon along with the devil introduced the tradition that one had to cross oneself with three fingers...”¹⁸⁶

It was this attempt to force the Russian Church into schism from the Greeks that was the real sin of the Old Ritualists, making theirs the first nationalist schism in Russian history.

¹⁸⁴ Lourié, “O Vozmozhnosti”, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁵ Michael Cherniavsky, “The Old Believers and the New Religion”, *Slavic Review*, vol. 25, 1966, pp. 27-33; Robert Massie, *Peter the Great*, London: Phoenix, 2001, p. 63.

¹⁸⁶ Avvakum, translated in Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 165.

9. PATRIARCH NICON AND THE SYMPHONY OF POWERS

It was against the Old Ritualists' narrow, nationalistic and state-centred conception of "Moscow – the Third Rome", that Patriarch Nikon erected a more universalistic, Church-centred conception which stressed the unity of the Russian Church with the Churches of the East.

"In the idea of 'the Third Rome'," writes Fr. Lev Lebedev, "his Holiness saw first of all its ecclesiastical, spiritual content, which was also expressed in the still more ancient idea of 'the Russian land – the New Jerusalem'. This idea was to a large degree synonymous with 'the Third Rome'. To a large extent, but not completely! It placed the accent on the Christian striving of Holy Rus' for the world on high.

"In calling Rus' to this great idea, Patriarch Nikon successively created a series of architectural complexes in which was laid the idea of the pan-human, universal significance of Holy Rus'. These were the Valdai Iveron church, and the Kii Cross monastery, but especially the Resurrection New-Jerusalem monastery, which was deliberately populated with an Orthodox, but multi-racial brotherhood (Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Lithuanians, Germans, Jews, Poles and Greeks).

"This monastery, together with the complex of 'Greater Muscovite Palestine', was in the process of creation from 1656 to 1666, and was then completed after the death of the patriarch towards the end of the 17th century. As has been clarified only comparatively recently, this whole complex, including in itself Jordan, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Capernaum, Ramah, Bethany, Tabor, Hermon, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, etc., was basically a monastery, and in it the Resurrection cathedral, built in the likeness of the church of the Sepulchre of the Lord in Jerusalem with Golgotha and the Sepulchre of the Saviour, was a double image – an icon of the historical 'promised land' of Palestine and at the same time an icon of the promised land of the Heavenly Kingdom, 'the New Jerusalem'.

"In this way it turned out that the true union of the representatives of all the peoples (pan-human unity) in Christ on earth and in heaven can be realised only on the basis of Orthodoxy, and, moreover, by the will of God, in its Russian expression. This was a clear, almost demonstrative opposition of the union of mankind in the Church of Christ to its unity in the anti-church of 'the great architect of nature' with its aim of constructing the tower of Babylon. But it also turned out that 'Greater Muscovite Palestine' with its centre in the New Jerusalem became the spiritual focus of the whole of World Orthodoxy. At the same time that the tsar was only just beginning to dream of become the master of the East, Patriarch Nikon as the archimandrite of New Jerusalem had already become the central figure of the Universal Church.

"This also laid a beginning to the disharmony between the tsar and the patriarch, between the ecclesiastical and state authorities in Russia. Alexis Mikhailovich, at first inwardly, but then also outwardly, was against Nikon's plans for the New Jerusalem. He insisted that only his capital, Moscow, was the image of the heavenly city, and that the Russian tsar (and not the patriarch) was the head of the whole Orthodox world. From 1657 there began the quarrels between the tsar and the patriarch, in which the

tsar revealed a clear striving to take into his hands the administration of Church affairs, for he made himself the chief person responsible for them."¹⁸⁷

This intrusion of the tsar into the ecclesiastical administration, leading to the deposition of Patriarch Nikon, was the decisive factor allowing the Old Ritualist movement to gain credibility and momentum... On becoming patriarch in 1652, as we have seen, Nikon secured from the Tsar, his boyars and the bishops a solemn oath to the effect that they would keep the sacred laws of the Church and State "and promise... to obey us as your chief pastor and supreme father in all things which I shall announce to you out of the divine commandments and laws." There followed a short, but remarkable period in which "the undivided, although unconfused, union of state and ecclesiastical powers constituted the natural basis of public life of Russia. The spiritual leadership in this belonged, of course, to the Church, but this leadership was precisely spiritual and was never turned into political leadership. In his turn the tsar... never used his political autocracy for arbitrariness in relation to the Church, since the final meaning of life for the whole of Russian society consisted in acquiring temporal and eternal union with God in and through the Church..."¹⁸⁸

This relationship was characterized in a service book published in Moscow in 1653, as "the diarchy, complementary, God-chosen" ...¹⁸⁹

Although the patriarch had complete control of Church administration and services, and the appointment and judgement of clerics in ecclesiastical matters, "Church possessions and financial resources were considered a pan-national inheritance. In cases of special need (for example, war) the tsar could take as much of the resources of the Church as he needed without paying them back. The diocesan and monastic authorities could spend only strictly determined sums on their everyday needs. All unforeseen and major expenses were made only with the permission of the tsar. In all monastic and diocesan administrations state officials were constantly present; ecclesiastical properties and resources were under their watchful control. And they judged ecclesiastical peasants and other people in civil and criminal matters. A special *Monastirskij Prikaz* [or "Ministry of Monasticism"], established in Moscow in accordance with the *Ulozhenie* [legal code] of 1649, was in charge of the whole clergy, except the patriarch, in civil and criminal matters. Although in 1649 Nikon together with all the others had put his signature to the *Ulozhenie*, inwardly he was not in agreement with it, and on becoming patriarch declared this opinion openly. He was most of all disturbed by the fact that secular people – the boyars of the *Monastirskij Prikaz* – had the right to judge clergy in civil suits. He considered this situation radically uneclesiastical and unchristian. When Nikon had still been Metropolitan of Novgorod, the tsar, knowing his views, had given him a 'document of exemption' for the whole metropolia, in accordance with which all the affairs of people subject to the Church, except for affairs of 'murder, robbery and theft', were transferred from the administration of the *Monastirskij Prikaz* to the metropolitan's court. On becoming patriarch, Nikon obtained a similar exemption from the *Monastirskij Prikaz* for his patriarchal diocese (at that time the patriarch, like all the ruling bishops, had his own

¹⁸⁷ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia* (Patriarchal Moscow), Moscow, 1995, pp. 40-41.

¹⁸⁸ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, p. 87.

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in Fr. Sergei Hackel, "Questions of Church and State in 'Holy Russia': some attitudes of the Romanov period", *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. II, no. 1, Spring, 1970, p. 8.

special diocese consisting of Moscow and spacious lands adjacent to it). As if to counteract the *Ulozhenie* of 1649, Nikon published 'The Rudder', which contains the holy canons of the Church and various enactments concerning the Church of the ancient pious Greek emperors. As we shall see, until the end of his patriarchy Nikon did not cease to fight against the *Monastirskij Prikaz*. It should be pointed out that this was not a struggle for the complete 'freedom' of the Church from the State (which was impossible in Russia at that time), but only for the re-establishment of the canonical authority of the patriarch and the whole clergy in strictly spiritual matters, and also for such a broadening of the right of the ecclesiastical authorities over people subject to them in civil matters as was permitted by conditions in Russia."¹⁹⁰

From May, 1654 to January, 1657, while the tsar was away from the capital fighting the Poles, the patriarch acted as regent, a duty he carried out with great distinction. Some later saw in this evidence of the political ambitions of the patriarch. However, he undertook this duty only at the request of the tsar, and was very glad to return the reins of political administration when the tsar returned. Nevertheless, from 1656, the boyars succeeded in undermining the tsar's confidence in the patriarch, falsely insinuating that the tsar's authority was being undermined by Nikon's ambition. And they began to apply the *Ulozhenie* in Church affairs, even increasing the rights given by the *Ulozhenie* to the *Monastirskij Prikaz*. The *Ulozhenie* also decreed that the birthdays of the Tsar and Tsarina and their children should be celebrated alongside the Church feasts, which drew from the Patriarch the criticism that men were being likened to God, "and even preferred to God".¹⁹¹ Another bone of contention was the tsar's desire to appoint Silvester Kossov as Metropolitan of Kiev, which Nikon considered uncanonical in that the Kievan Metropolitan was in the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople at that time.¹⁹²

Since the tsar was clearly determined to have his way, and was snubbing the patriarch, on July 10, 1658 Nikon withdrew to his monastery of New Jerusalem, near Moscow. He compared this move to the flight of the Woman clothed with the sun into the wilderness in Revelation 12, and quoted the 17th Canon of Sardica¹⁹³ and the words of the Gospel: "If they persecute you in one city, depart to another, shaking off the dust from your feet".¹⁹⁴ "The whole state knows," he said, "that in view of his anger against me the tsar does not go to the Holy Catholic Church, and I am leaving Moscow. I hope that the tsar will have more freedom without me."¹⁹⁵

Some have regarded Nikon's action as an elaborate bluff that failed. Whatever the truth about his personal motivation, which is known to God alone, there can be no

¹⁹⁰ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, pp. 88-89.

¹⁹¹ Fomin S. & Fomina T., *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, volume I, p. 281.

¹⁹² Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part II, p. 101.

¹⁹³ "If any Bishop who has suffered violence has been cast out unjustly, either on account of his science or on account of his confession of the Catholic Church, or on account of his insisting upon the truth, and fleeing from peril, when he is innocent and in danger, should come to another city, let him not be prevented from living there, until he can return or find relief from the insolent treatment he had received. For it is cruel and most burdensome for one who has had to suffer an unjust expulsion not to be accorded a welcome by us. For such a person ought to be shown great kindness and courtesy."

¹⁹⁴ Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., volume I, p. 23; Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 105.

¹⁹⁵ Zyzykin, op. cit., part II, p. 104.

doubt that the patriarch, unlike his opponents, correctly gauged the seriousness of the issue involved. For the quarrel between the tsar and the patriarch signified, in effect, the beginning of the schism of Church and State in Russia and the domination of the Church by the State. In withdrawing from Moscow to New Jerusalem, the patriarch demonstrated that "in truth 'the New Jerusalem', 'the Kingdom of God', the beginning of the Heavenly Kingdom in Russia was the Church, its Orthodox spiritual piety, and not the material earthly capital, although it represented... 'the Third Rome'." ¹⁹⁶

However, Nikon had appointed a vicar-metropolitan in Moscow, and had said: "I am not leaving completely; if the tsar's majesty bends, becomes more merciful and puts away his wrath, I will return". In other words, while resigning the active administration of the patriarchy, he had not resigned his rank – a situation to which there were many precedents in Church history. And to show that he had not finally resigned from Church affairs, he protested against moves made by his deputy on the patriarchal throne, and continued to criticise the Tsar for interfering in the Church's affairs, especially in the reactivation of the *Monastirskij Prikaz*.

Not content with having forced his withdrawal from Moscow, the boyars resolved to have him defrocked, portraying him as a dangerous rebel – although the Patriarch interfered less in the affairs of the Tsar than St. Philip of Moscow had done in the affairs of Ivan the Terrible.¹⁹⁷ And so, in 1660, they convened a council which appointed a patriarchal *locum tenens*, Metropolitan Pitirim, to administer the Church independently without seeking the advice of the patriarch and without commemorating his name. Nikon rejected this council, and cursed Pitirim...

But the State that encroaches on the Church is itself subject to destruction. Thus in 1661 Patriarch Nikon had a vision in which he saw the Moscow Dormition cathedral full of fire: "The hierarchs who had previously died were standing there. Peter the metropolitan rose from his tomb, went up to the altar and laid his hand on the Gospel. All the hierarchs did the same, and so did I. And Peter began to speak: 'Brother Nikon! Speak to the Tsar: why has he offended the Holy Church, and fearlessly taken possession of the immovable things collected by us. This will not be to his benefit. Tell him to return what he has taken, for the great wrath of God has fallen upon him because of this: twice there have been pestilences, and so many people have died, and now he has nobody with whom to stand against his enemies.' I replied: 'He will not listen to me; it would be good if one of you appeared to him.' Peter continued: 'The judgements of God have not decreed this. You tell him; if he does not listen to you, then if one of us appeared to him, he would not listen to him. And look! Here is a sign for him.' Following the movement of his hand I turned towards the west towards the royal palace and I saw: there was no church wall, the palace was completely visible, and the fire which was in the church came together and went towards the royal court and burned it up. 'If he will not come to his senses, punishments greater than the first will be added,' said Peter. Then another grey-haired man said: 'Now the Tsar wants to take the court you bought for the churchmen and turn it into a bazaar for mammon's sake. But he will not rejoice over his acquisition.'" ¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, p. 141. Italics mine (V.M.).

¹⁹⁷ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, pp. 106-107.

¹⁹⁸ Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 24-25.

With Nikon's departure, the tsar was left with the problem of replacing him at the head of the Church. S.A. Zenkovsky writes that he "was about to return Protopriest Avvakum, whom he personally respected and loved, from exile, but continued to keep the new typicon... In 1666-1667, in order to resolve the question of what to do with Nikon and to clarify the complications with the typicon, [the tsar] convened first a Russian council of bishops, and then almost an ecumenical one, with the participation of the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch [who had been suspended by the Patriarch of Constantinople]. The patriarch of Constantinople wrote that small details in the typicon were not so important - what was important was the understanding of the commandments of Christ, the basic dogmas of the faith, and devotion to the Church. So he and the patriarch of Jerusalem did not come to this council, not wishing to get involved in Russian ecclesiastical quarrels.

"The first part of the council sessions, with the participation only of Russian bishops, went quite smoothly and moderately. Before it, individual discussions of each bishop with the tsar had prepared almost all the decisions. The council did not condemn the old typicon, and was very conciliatory towards its defenders, who, with the exception of Avvakum, agreed to sign the decisions of the council and not break with the Church. The stubborn Avvakum refused, and was for that defrocked and excommunicated from the Church. The second part of the council sessions, with the eastern patriarchs, was completely under the influence of Metropolitan Paisius Ligarides of Gaza (in Palestine) [who had been defrocked by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and was in the pay of the Vatican]. He adopted the most radical position in relation to the old Russian ecclesiastical traditions. The old Russian rite was condemned and those who followed it were excommunicated from the Church (anathema). Also condemned at that time were such Russian writings as the Story of the White *Klobuk* (on Moscow as the Third Rome), the decrees of the *Stoglav* council, and other things."¹⁹⁹

The council then turned its attention to Patriarch Nikon. On December 12, 1666 he was reduced to the rank of a monk on the grounds that "he annoyed his great majesty [the tsar], interfering in matters which did not belong to the patriarchal rank and authority".²⁰⁰

The truth was the exact opposite: that the tsar and his boyars had interfered in matters which did not belong to their rank and authority, breaking the oath they had made to the patriarch. Ironically, they also transgressed those articles of the *Ulozhenie*, chapter X, which envisaged various punishments for offending the clergy.²⁰¹

Another charge against the patriarch was that in 1654 he had defrocked and exiled the most senior of the opponents to his reforms, Bishop Paul of Kolomna, on his own authority, without convening a council of bishops.²⁰² But, as Lebedev writes, "Nicon

¹⁹⁹ S.A. Zenkovsky, "Staroobriadchestvo, Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo" (Old Ritualism, the Church and the State), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1987- I, pp. 88-89.

²⁰⁰ Vladimir Rusak, *Istoria Rossijskoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Russian Church), USA, 1993, p. 191.

²⁰¹ Priest Alexis Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo* (Church and State), Izdanie Sretenskogo monastyrja, 1997, p. 71.

²⁰² A.P. Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (A Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 290; S.G. Burgaft and I.A. Ushakov, *Staroobriadchestvo* (Old Ritualism), Moscow, 1996, pp. 206-207. According to the Old Ritualists, Bishop Paul said that, in view of Nikon's

refuted this accusation, referring to the conciliar decree on this bishop, which at that time was still in the patriarchal court. Entering then [in 1654] on the path of an authoritative review of everything connected with the correction of the rites, Nikon of course could not on his own condemn a bishop, when earlier even complaints against prominent protopriests were reviewed by him at a Council of the clergy.”²⁰³

The council also sinned in that the *Tomos* sent by the Eastern Patriarchs to Moscow in 1663 to justify the supposed lawfulness of Nikon’s deposition and attached to the acts of the council under the name of *Patriarchal Replies* expressed a caesaropapist doctrine, according to which the Patriarch was exhorted to obey the tsar and the tsar was permitted to remove the patriarch in case of conflict with him. Patriarch Dionysius of Constantinople expressed this doctrine as follows in a letter to the tsar: “I inform your Majesty that in accordance with these chapters you have the power to have a patriarch and all your councilors established by you, for in one autocratic state there must not be two principles, but one must be the senior.” To which Lebedev justly rejoins: “It is only to be wondered at how the Greeks by the highest authority established and confirmed in the Russian kingdom that [caesaropapism] as a result of which they themselves had lost their monarchy! It was not Paisius Ligarides who undermined Alexis Mikhailovich: it was the ecumenical patriarchs who deliberately decided the matter in favour of the tsar.”²⁰⁴

However, opposition was voiced by Metropolitans Paul of Krutitsa and Hilarion of Ryazan, who feared “that the *Patriarchal Replies* would put the hierarchs into the complete control of the royal power, and thereby of a Tsar who would not be as pious as Alexis Mikhailovich and could turn out to be dangerous for the Church”. They particularly objected to the following sentence in the report on the affair of the patriarch: “It is recognized that his Majesty the Tsar alone should be in charge of spiritual matters, and that the Patriarch should be obedient to him”, which they considered to be humiliating for ecclesiastical power and to offer a broad scope for the interference of the secular power in Church affairs.²⁰⁵ So, as Zzyzkin writes, “the Patriarchs were forced to write an explanatory note, in which they gave another interpretation to the second chapter of the patriarchal replies... The Council came to a unanimous conclusion: ‘Let it be recognized that the Tsar has the pre-eminence in civil affairs, and the Patriarch in ecclesiastical affairs, so that in this way the harmony of the ecclesiastical institution may be preserved whole and unshaken.’ This was the principled triumph of the Nikonian idea, as was the resolution of the Council to close the Monastirskij Prikaz and the return to the Church of judgement over clergy in civil matters (the later remained in force until 1700).”²⁰⁶

And yet it had been a close-run thing. During the 1666 Council Ligarides had given voice to an essentially pagan view of tsarist power: “[The tsar] will be called the new Constantine. He will be both tsar and hierarch, just as the great Constantine, who was so devoted to the faith of Christ, is praised among us at Great Vespers as priest and

“violation” of Orthodoxy, his people should be received into communion with the Old Ritualists by the second rite, i.e. chrismation.

²⁰³ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, p. 100.

²⁰⁴ Lebedev, *Moskva Patriarshaia*, p. 132.

²⁰⁵ Dobroklonsky, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

²⁰⁶ Zzyzkin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw : Synodal Press, 1931, part III, pp. 274, 275.

tsar. Yes, and both among the Romans and the Egyptians the tsar united in himself the power of the priesthood and of the kingship." If this doctrine had triumphed at the Council, then Russia would indeed have entered the era of the Antichrist, as the Old Ritualists believed.

And if the good sense of the Russian hierarchs finally averted a catastrophe, the unjust condemnation of Patriarch Nikon, the chief supporter of the Orthodox doctrine, cast a long shadow over the proceedings, and meant that within a generation the attempt to impose absolutism on Russia would begin again...

True, the tsar asked forgiveness of the patriarch just before his death. But the reconciliation was not complete. For the patriarch replied to the tsar's messenger: "Imitating my teacher Christ, who commanded us to remit the sins of our neighbours, I say: may God forgive the deceased, but a written forgiveness I will not give, because during his life he did not free us from imprisonment" ²⁰⁷

Now Muscovite Russia in the seventeenth century was a stable, prosperous society. Nor was the prosperity confined only to the upper classes. As J. Krijanich, a Serb by birth, and a graduate of the Catholic College of Vienna, wrote in 1646, after he had spent five years in Russia: "The Russians lead a simpler life than other Europeans. The gulf between rich and poor is not as great as in the West, where some wallow in riches and others are sunk in the depths of misery. Everyone in Russia, rich and poor, eats to his heart's content and lives in well-heated houses, whereas in the West the poor suffer from cold and hunger.... Thus life for the workman and peasant in Russia is better than in other countries." ²⁰⁸

But this material prosperity was based on spiritual piety – that is, on firm obedience to the Orthodox Church in spiritual matters and to the Orthodox Autocracy in secular matters. However, the rebellion of the Old Ritualists and the unlawful deposition of Patriarch Nikon in the middle years of the century opened a schism within the people, and between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, that was never fully overcome. And so, the Lord allowed the State based on the Orthodox ideal of the symphony of powers of Muscovite Russia to be transformed into the State modelled on heretical Western ideas of statehood founded by Peter the Great.

What should be the relationship of an Orthodox King to the Orthodox Church within his dominions?

"There is no question," writes Lebedev, "that the Orthodox Sovereign cares for the Orthodox Church, defends her, protects her, takes part in all her most important affairs. But not he in the first place; and not he mainly. The Church has her own head on earth – the Patriarch. Relations between the head of the state and the head of the Church in Russia, beginning from the holy equal-to-the-apostles Great Prince Vladimir and continuing with Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon, were always formed in a spirit of symphony.

²⁰⁷ Nikon, in Rusak, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

²⁰⁸ Krijanich, in de Goulévitch, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

“Not without exceptions, but, as a rule, this symphony was not broken and constituted the basis of the inner spiritual strength of the whole of Rus’, the whole of the Russian state and society. The complexity of the symphony consisted in the fact that the Tsar and Patriarch were identically responsible for everything that took place in the people, in society, in the state. But at the same time the Tsar especially answered for worldly matters, matters of state, while the Patriarch especially answered for Church and spiritual affairs. In council they both decided literally everything. But in worldly affairs the last word lay with the Tsar; and in Church and spiritual affairs – with the Patriarch. The Patriarch unfailingly took part in the sessions of the State Duma, that is, of the government. The Tsar unfailingly took part in the Church Councils. In the State Duma the last word was with the Sovereign, and in the Church Councils – with the Patriarch. This common responsibility for everything and special responsibility for the state and the Church with the Tsar and the Patriarch was the principle of symphony or agreement.”²⁰⁹

That Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich sincerely believed this teaching is clear from his letter to the Patriarch of Jerusalem: “The most important task of the Orthodox Tsar is care for the faith, the Church, and all the affairs of the Church.” However, it was he who introduced the *Ulozhenie*, the first serious breach in Church-State symphony. And it was he who deposed Patriarch Nikon...

Therefore while it is customary to date the breakdown of Church-State symphony or agreement in Russia to the time of Peter the Great, the foundations of Holy Russia had been undermined, already in the time of his father, Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich. As M.V. Zyzykin writes, “in Church-State questions, Nikon fought with the same corruption that had crept into Muscovite political ideas after the middle of the 15th century and emerged as political Old Ritualism, which defended the tendency towards caesaropapism that had established itself. The fact that the guardian of Orthodoxy, at the time of the falling away of the Constantinopolitan Emperor and Patriarch and Russian Metropolitan into the unia, turned out to be the Muscovite Great Prince had too great an influence on the exaltation of his significance in the Church. And if we remember that at that time, shortly after the unia, the Muscovite Great Prince took the place of the Byzantine Emperor, and that with the establishment of the *de facto* independence of the Russian Church from the Constantinopolitan Patriarch the Muscovite first-hierarchs lost a support for their ecclesiastical independence from the Great Princes, then it will become clear to us that the Muscovite Great Prince became *de facto* one of the chief factors in Church affairs, having the opportunity to impose his authority on the hierarchy.”²¹⁰

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Patriarch Nikon corrected the caesaropapist bias of the Russian Church as expressed especially by the friend of the tsar, the defrocked metropolitan and crypto-papist Paisius Ligarides. He set down his thoughts in detail in his famous work *Razzorenje* (“Destruction”), in which he defined the rights and duties of the tsar as follows: “The tsar undoubtedly has power to give rights and honours, but within the limits set by

²⁰⁹ Lebedev, “Razmyshlenia vozle sten novogo Ierusalima” (“Thoughts next to the Walls of New Jerusalem”), *Vozvrashchenie* (Return), №№ 12-13, 1999, p. 60.

²¹⁰ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 9.

God; he cannot give spiritual power to Bishops and archimandrites and other spiritual persons: spiritual things belong to the decision of God, and earthly things to the king” (I, 555).²¹¹

“The main duty of the tsar is to care for the Church, for the dominion of the tsar can never be firmly established and prosperous when his mother, the Church of God, is not strongly established, for the Church of God, most glorious tsar, is thy mother, and if thou art obliged to honour thy natural mother, who gave thee birth, then all the more art thou obliged to love thy spiritual mother, who gave birth to thee in Holy Baptism and anointed thee to the kingdom with the oil and chrism of gladness.”²¹²

Indeed, “none of the kings won victory without the prayers of the priests” (I, 187).²¹³ For “Bishops are the successors of the Apostles and the servants of God, so that the honour accorded to them is given to God Himself.”²¹⁴ “It was when the evangelical faith began to shine that the Episcopate was venerated; but when the spite of pride spread, the honour of the Episcopate was betrayed.”

“A true hierarch of Christ is everything. For when kingdom falls on kingdom, that kingdom, and house, that is divided in itself will not stand.”²¹⁵ “The tsar is entrusted with the bodies, but the priests with the souls of men. The tsar remits money debts, but the priests – sins. The one compels, the other comforts. The one wars with enemies, the other with the princes and rulers of the darkness of this world. Therefore the priesthood is much higher than the kingdom.”²¹⁶

The superiority of the priesthood is proved by the fact that the tsar is anointed by the patriarch and not vice-versa. “The highest authority of the priesthood was not received from the tsars, but on the contrary the tsars are anointed to the kingdom through the priesthood... We know no other lawgiver than Christ, Who gave the power to bind and to loose. What power did the tsar give me? This one? No, but he himself seized it for himself... Know that even he who is distinguished by the diadem is subject to the power of the priest, and he who is bound by him will be bound also in the heavens.”²¹⁷

The patriarch explains why, on the one hand, the priesthood is higher than the kingdom, and on the other, the kingdom cannot be abolished by the priesthood: “The kingdom is given by God to the world, but in wrath, and it is given through anointing from the priests with a material oil, but the priesthood is a direct anointing from the Holy Spirit, as also our Lord Jesus Christ was raised to the high-priesthood directly by the Holy Spirit, as were the Apostles. Therefore, at the consecration to the episcopate, the consecrator holds an open Gospel over the head of him who is being consecrated” (I, 234, 235)... There is no human judgement over the tsar, but there is a warning from

²¹¹ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 15.

²¹² Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 16.

²¹³ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 41.

²¹⁴ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 91.

²¹⁵ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 86.

²¹⁶ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 17.

²¹⁷ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, pp. 30, 32.

the pastors of the Church and the judgement of God.”²¹⁸ However, the fact that the tsar cannot be judged by man shows that the kingdom is given him directly by God, and not by man. “For even if he was not crowned, he would still be king.” But he can only be called an Orthodox, anointed king if he is crowned by the Bishop. Thus “he receives and retains his royal power by the sword *de facto*. But the name of king (that is, the name of a consecrated and Christian or Orthodox king) he receives from the Episcopal consecration, for which the Bishop is the accomplisher and source.” (I, 254).²¹⁹

We see here how far Nikon is from the papocaesarism of a Pope Gregory VII, who claimed to be able to depose kings precisely “as kings”. And yet he received a reputation for papocaesarism (which prevented his recognition at least until the Russian Council of 1917-18) because of his fearless exposure of the caesaropapism of the Russian tsar: “Everyone should know his measure. Saul offered the sacrifice, but lost his kingdom; Uzziah, who burned incense in the temple, became a leper. Although thou art tsar, remain within thy limits. Wilt thou say that the heart of the king is in the hand of God? Yes, but the heart of the king is in the hand of God [only] when the king remains within the boundaries set for him by God.”²²⁰

In another passage Nikon combines the metaphor of the two swords with that of the sun and moon. The latter metaphor had been used by Pope Innocent III; but Nikon’s development of it is Orthodox and does not exalt the power of the priesthood any more than did the Fathers of the fourth century: “The all-powerful God, in creating the heaven and the earth, order the two great luminaries – the sun and the moon – to shine upon the earth in their course; by one of them – the sun – He prefigured the episcopal power, while by the other – the moon – He prefigured the tsarist power. For the sun is the greater luminary, it shines by day, like the Bishop who enlightens the soul. But the lesser luminary shines by night, by which we must understand the body. As the moon borrows its light from the sun, and in proportion to its distance from it receives a fuller radiance, so the tsar derives his consecration, anointing and coronation (but not power) from the Bishop, and, having received it, has his own light, that is, his consecrated power and authority. The similarity between these two persons in every Christian society is exactly the same as that between the sun and the moon in the material world. For the episcopal power shines by day, that is, over souls; while the tsarist power shines in the things of this world. And this power, which is the tsarist sword, must be ready to act against the enemies of the Orthodox faith. The episcopate and all the clergy need this defence from all unrighteousness and violence. This is what the secular power is obliged to do. For secular people are in need of freedom for their souls, while spiritual people are in need of secular people for the defence of their bodies. And so in this neither of them is higher than the other, but each has power from God.”²²¹

But Nikon insists that when the tsar encroaches on the Church he loses his power. For “there is in fact no man more powerless than he who attacks the Divine laws, and

²¹⁸ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 41. As Zyzykin says in another place, Nikon “not only does not call for human sanctions against the abuses of tsarist power, but definitely says that there is no human power [that can act] against them, but there is the wrath of God, as in the words of Samuel to Saul: ‘It is not I that turn away from thee, in that thou has rejected the Word of the Lord, but the Lord has rejected thee, that thou shouldst not be king over Israel’ (I Kings 15.26)” (*op. cit.*, part II, p. 17).

²¹⁹ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 55.

²²⁰ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, pp. 19-20.

²²¹ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 59.

there is nothing more powerful than a man who fights for them. For he who commits sin is the slave of sin, even if he bears a thousand crowns on his head, but he who does righteous deeds is greater than the tsar himself, even if he is the last of all."²²² So a tsar who himself chooses patriarchs and metropolitans, breaking his oath to the patriarch "is unworthy even to enter the church, but he must spend his whole life in repentance, and only at the hour of death can he be admitted to communion... Chrysostom forbade every one who breaks his oath ... from crossing the threshold of the church, even in he were the tsar himself."²²³

Nicon comes very close to identifying the caesaropapist tsar with the Antichrist. For, as Zyzykin points out, "Nicon looked on the apostasy of the State law from Church norms (i.e. their destruction) as the worship by the State of the Antichrist, 'This antichrist is not satan, but a man, who will receive from satan the whole power of his energy. A man will be revealed who will be raised above God, and he will be the opponent of God and will destroy all gods and will order that people worship him instead of God, and he will sit, not in the temple of Jerusalem, but in the Churches, giving himself out as God. As the Median empire was destroyed by Babylon, and the Babylonian by the Persian, and the Persian by the Macedonian, and the Macedonian by the Roman, thus must the Roman empire be destroyed by the antichrist, and he - by Christ. This is revealed to us by the Prophet Daniel. The divine Apostle warned us about things to come, and they have come for us through you and your evil deeds (he is speaking to the author of the *Ulozhenie*, Prince Odoevsky) Has not the apostasy from the Holy Gospel and the traditions of the Holy Apostles and holy fathers appeared? (Nicon has in mind the invasion by the secular authorities into the administration of the Church through the *Ulozhenie*). Has not the man of sin been discovered - the son of destruction, who will exalt himself about everything that is called God, or that is worshipped? And what can be more destructive than abandoning God and His commandments, as they have preferred the traditions of men, that is, their codex full of spite and cunning? But who is this? Satan? No. This is a man, who has received the work of Satan, who has united to himself many others like you, composer of lies, and your comrades. Sitting in the temple of God does not mean in the temple of Jerusalem, but everywhere in the Churches. And sitting not literally in all the Churches, but as exerting power over all the Churches. The Church is not stone walls, but the ecclesiastical laws and the pastors, against whom thou, apostate, hast arisen, in accordance with the work of satan, and in the *Ulozhenie* thou hast presented secular people with jurisdiction over the Patriarch, the Metropolitans, the Archbishops, the Bishops, and over all the clergy, without thinking about the work of God. As the Lord said on one occasion: 'Depart from Me, satan, for thou thinkest not about what is pleasing to God, but about what is pleasing to men.' 'Ye are of your father the devil and you carry out his lusts.' Concerning such Churches Christ said: 'My house will be called a house of prayer, but you will make it a den of thieves'; as Jeremiah says (7.4): 'Do not rely on deceiving words of those who say to you: here is the temple of the Lord.' How can it be the temple of God if it is under the power of the tsar and his subjects, and they order whatever they want in it? Such a Church is no longer the temple of God, but the house of those who have power over it, for, if it were the temple of God, nobody, out of fear of God, would be capable of usurping power over it or taking anything away from it. But as far as the persecution of the Church is

²²² Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 62.

²²³ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, pp. 63-64.

concerned, God has revealed about this to His beloved disciple and best theologian John (I, 403-408),... [who] witnesses, saying that the Antichrist is already in the world. But nobody has seen or heard him perceptibly, that is, the secular authorities will begin to rule over the Churches of God in transgression of the commandments of God.' For the word 'throne' signifies having ecclesiastical authority, and not simply sitting... And he will command people to bow down to him not externally or perceptibly, but in the same way as now the Bishops, abandoning their priestly dignity and honour, bow down to the tsars as to their masters. And they ask them for everything and seek honours from them" (I, 193)."²²⁴ For "there is apostasy also in the fact that the Bishops, abandoning their dignity, bow down before the tsar as their master in spiritual matters, and seek honours from him."²²⁵

The power of the Roman emperors, of which the Russian tsardom is the lawful successor, is "that which restraineth" the coming of the Antichrist. And yet "the mystery of iniquity is already being accomplished" in the shape of those kings, such as Nero, who ascribed to themselves divine worship.²²⁶ The warning was clear: that which restrains the antichrist can be swiftly transformed into the antichrist himself.

Even the present tsar could suffer such a transformation; for "what is more iniquitous than for a tsar to judge bishops, taking to himself a power which has not been given him by God?... This is apostasy from God."²²⁷

It was not only the Russian State that had sinned in Nikon's deposition: both the Russian hierarchs and the Eastern Patriarchs had submitted to the pressure of tsar and boyars. (In 1676 Patriarch Joachim convened a council which hurled yet more accusations against him...²²⁸) But judgement was deferred for a generation or two, while the Russian autocracy restored the Ukraine, "Little Russia", to the Great Russian kingdom. With the weakening of Poland and the increase in strength of the generally pro-Muscovite Cossacks under Hetman Bogdan Khmel'nitsky, large areas of Belorussia and the Ukraine, including Kiev, were freed from Latin control, which could only be joyful news for the native Orthodox population who had suffered so much from the Polish-Jesuit yoke. Moreover, the liberated areas were returned to the jurisdiction of the Russian Church in 1686.²²⁹ This meant that most of the Russian lands were now, for the first time for centuries, united under a single, independent Russian State and Church. The Russian national Church had been restored to almost its original dimensions. The final step would be accomplished by Tsar Nicholas II in 1915, just before the fall of the empire...

²²⁴ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, pp. 24-25, 28.

²²⁵ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 27.

²²⁶ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part II, p. 48.

²²⁷ Patriarch Nikon, in Hackel, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²²⁸ Rusak, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-194.

²²⁹ However, Constantinople's agreement to the transfer was extracted under heavy pressure. Patriarch Dionysius signed the transfer of power under pressure from the Sultan, who wanted to ensure Moscow's neutrality in his war with the Sacred League in Europe. Then, in 1687, Dionysius was removed for this act, and the transfer of Kiev to Moscow denounced as anti-canonical by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Things were made worse when, in 1688, Moscow reneged on its promise to give Kiev the status of an autonomous metropolia and turned it into an ordinary diocese. This had consequences in the twentieth century, when Constantinople granted the Polish Church autocephaly in 1924, and then, from the beginning of the 1990s, began to lay claims to the Ukraine.

As if in acknowledgement of this, at the coronation of Tsar Theodore Alexeyevich certain additions were made to the rite that showed that the Russian Church now looked on the tsardom as a quasi-priestly rank. "These additions were: 1) the proclamation of the symbol of faith by the tsar before his crowning, as was always the case with ordinations, 2) the vesting of the tsar in royal garments signifying his putting on his rank, and 3) communion in the altar of the Body and Blood separately in accordance with the priestly order, which was permitted only for persons of the three hierarchical sacred ranks. These additions greatly exalted the royal rank, and Professor Pokrovsky explained their introduction by the fact that at the correction of the liturgical books in Moscow in the second half of the 17th century, the attention of people was drawn to the difference in the rites of the Byzantine and Muscovite coronation and the additions were introduced under the influence of the Council of 1667, which wanted to exalt the royal rank."²³⁰

The pious tsar did not use his exalted position to humiliate the Church. On the contrary, he tried, as far as it was in his power, to correct the great wrong that had been done to the Church in his father's reign. Thus when Patriarch Nikon died it was the tsar who ordered "that the body should be conveyed to New Jerusalem. The patriarch did not want to give the reposed hierarchical honours. [So] his Majesty persuaded Metropolitan Cornelius of Novgorod to carry out the burial. He himself carried the coffin with the remains."²³¹

Again, it was the tsar rather than the patriarch who obtained a *gramota* from the Eastern Patriarchs in 1682 restoring Nikon to patriarchal status and "declaring that he could be forgiven in view of his redemption of his guilt by his humble patience in prison".²³² This was hardly an adequate summary of the situation. But it did go some of the way to helping the Greeks redeem their guilt in the deposition of the most Grecophile of Russian patriarchs...

²³⁰ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 165.

²³¹ Rusak, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

²³² Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 26.

10. THE REBELLION OF THE STRELTSY

It has been suggested that if Patriarch Nikon had not been forced to leave his see, there would have been no Old Ritualist schism. Nor would there have been that weakening of the authority of the Church vis-à-vis the State that was to have such catastrophic consequences. And yet in the reign of Tsar Theodore Alexeyevich, Patriarch Nikon was posthumously restored to his see, the Old Ritualist schism was still of small proportions, and Church-State relations were still essentially “symphonic”. Even the *Monastirskij Prikaz*, which Nikon had fought so hard and unsuccessfully to remove, was in fact removed in 1675. What made the situation worse, and made the schism more or less permanent, was the stubborn fanaticism of the Old Ritualists and their turning a *Church* quarrel into a rebellion against *the State*. For, as Bishop Gregory Grabbe writes: “The Church Herself hardly participated in the persecution... The persecutions were from the State and for political reasons, insofar as (some of) the Old Believers considered the power of the State to be antichristian and did not want to submit to it.”²³³

S.A. Zenkovsky writes: “The struggle between the supporters of the old rite, on the one hand, and the state (the tsar) and the Church, on the other, was complicated by two important phenomena: the rebellion of the Solovki monastery (the monks were joined, at the beginning of the 1670s, by a part of the defeated rebels of Stepan Razin) and the burnings. The siege of Solovki, the very important monastery and fortress on the White Sea, lasted for ten years and ended with the deaths of almost all its defenders. This was no longer a conflict between the Church and the Old Ritualists, but between rebels and the state. More important in their consequences were the burnings – mass immolations of those Old Ritualists who considered that after the council of 1667 grace in the Church had dried up and that the Antichrist was already ruling on earth. The burnings had already begun in the middle of the 1660s under the influence of the ‘woodsman’, the fanatical and religiously completely pessimistic elder Capiton.

“The burnings lasted until the beginning of the 19th century, but at the end of the 17th, especially in the 1670s, they acquired the terrible character of a mass religio-psychological epidemic. In Poshekhonye (in the Trans-Volga region, near Kostroma) between 4000 and 5000 people perished in the burnings; in one of the northern burnings about 2500 people died at once. It is very difficult to estimate the general number of victims of the burning before the end of the 17th century, but in all probability their number was no less than 20,000, and perhaps even more...

“The uprising on Solovki, the burnings, the participation of the Old Ritualists in the Razin rebellion, and the formation of a Cossack Old Ritualist ‘republic’ that separated from the Russian State at the turn of the 17th-18th centuries, gave the government enough reasons to persecute all the supporters of the Old Russian faith [sic] without examination...”²³⁴

²³³ Grabbe, *Pis'ma* (Letters), Moscow, 1998, p. 24.

²³⁴ Zenkovsky, “Starobriadchestvo, Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo” (Old Ritualism, the Church and the State), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1987- I, p. 89. Zenkovsky also notes that the priestless communities were not touched by the authorities, and that in general “the persecutions affected [only] those who tried to preach amidst the non-Old Ritualist population” (p. 92).

A critical point came with the death of Tsar Theodore in 1682. Lebedev writes: "He did not have a son and heir. Therefore power had to pass to the brother of the deceased, Ivan, the son of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich from his first marriage with Maria Ilyinichna Miloslavskaja. Behind Ivan Alexeyevich, there also stood his very active sister the Tsarevna Sophia. But we know that from the second marriage of Alexei Mikhailovich with Natalia Kirillovna Naryshkina there was another son, Peter Alexeyevich, who was born in 1672. In 1682 he was ten years old, while his half-brother Ivan was fifteen. The Naryshkins did not want to let their interests be overlooked, and wanted Peter to be made Tsar. A battle began between them and their supporters and the supporters of the Miloslavsky princes. The result was yet another schism, this time in the Royal Family itself... This of course elicited a time of troubles. Behind Sophia and the Miloslavskys there stood a part of the boyars, including Prince Basil Vasilyevich Golitsyn. Against them was Patriarch Joachim (at first not openly) and other supporters of the Naryshkins. A rumour was spread about them that they wanted to 'remove' (kill) Ivan Alexeyevich. The army of riflemen [streltsy] in Moscow rebelled. The riflemen more than once burst into the royal palace looking for plotters and evil-doers, and once right there, in the palace, before the eyes of the Royal Family, including Peter, they killed the boyars A. Matveev and I. Naryshkin. The country was on the edge of a new time of troubles and civil war. The wise Sophia was able to come to an agreement with the Naryshkins and in the same year both Tsareviches, Ivan and Peter, were proclaimed Tsars, while their 'governess', until they came of age, became the Tsarevna Sophia. The leader of the riflemen's army, the very aged Prince Dolgorukov, was removed in time and Prince Ivan Andreevich Khovansky was appointed. He was able quickly to take the riflemen in hand and submit them to his will.

"The Old Ritualists decided to make use of these disturbances. Protopriest Nikita Dobrynin, aptly nicknamed 'Emptyholy', together with similarly fanatical Old Ritualists, unleashed a powerful campaign amidst the riflemen and attained the agreement of the Royal Family and the Patriarch to the holding of a public debate on the faith with the 'Niconians', that is, first of all with the Patriarch himself. This debate took place on July 5, 1682 in the Granovita palace in the Kremlin in the presence of the Royal Family, the clergy and the Synclite. Nikita read aloud a petition from the Old Ritualists that the new books and rites should be removed, declaring that they constituted 'the introduction of a new faith'. Against this spoke Patriarch Joachim, holding in his hands an icon of Metropolitan Alexis of Moscow. He was very emotional and wept. The Old Ritualists did not want even to listen to him! They began to interrupt the Patriarch and simply shout: 'Make the sign of the cross in this way!', raising their hands with the two-fingered sign of the cross. Then Archbishop Athanasius of Kholmogor (later Archangelsk), who had himself once been an Old Ritualist, with knowledge of the subject refuted 'Emptyholy's' propositions, proving that the new rites were by no means 'a new faith', but only the correction of mistakes that had crept into the services. Protopriest Nikita was not able to object and in powerless fury hurled himself at Athanasius, striking him on the face. There was an uproar. The behaviour of the Old Ritualists was judged to be an insult not only to the Church, but also to the Royal Family, and they were expelled. Finding themselves on the street, the Old Ritualists shouted: 'We beat them! We won!' - and set off for the riflemen in the area on the other side of the Moscow river. As we see, in fact there was no 'beating', that is, they gained no victory in the debate. On the same night the riflemen captured the Old Ritualists and handed them over to the authorities. On July

11 on Red Square Nikita Dobrynin 'Emptyholy' was beheaded in front of all the people.

"Then, at a Church Council in 1682, it was decided to ask their Majesties to take the most severe measures against the Old Ritualists, to the extent of executing the most stubborn of them through burning. And so Protopriest Avvakum was burned in Pustozersk. This is perhaps the critical point beyond which the church schism began in full measure, no longer as the disagreement of a series of supporters of the old rites, but as a movement of a significant mass of people. Now the Old Ritualists began to abuse not only the 'Niconian' Church, but also the royal power, inciting people to rebel against it. Their movement acquired not only an ecclesiastical, but also a political direction. It was now that it was necessary to take very severe measures against them, and they were taken, which probably saved the State from civil war. Many Old Ritualists, having fled beyond the boundaries of Great Russia, then began to undertake armed raids on the Russian cities and villages. It is now considered fashionable in our 'educated' society to relate to the schismatical Old Ritualists with tender feeling, almost as if they were martyrs or innocent sufferers. To a significant degree all this is because they turned out to be on the losing, beaten side. And what if they had won? Protopriest Avvakum used to say that if he were given power he would hang 'the accursed Niconians' on trees (which there is no reason to doubt, judging from his biography). He said this when he had only been exiled by the 'Niconians', and not even defrocked. So if the Old Ritualists had won, the Fatherland would simply have been drowned in blood. Protopriest Avvakum is also particularly venerated as the author of his noted 'Life'. It in fact displays the very vivid Russian language of the 17th century and in this sense, of course, it is valuable for all investigators of antiquity. But that is all! As regards the spirit and the sense of it, this is the work of a boundlessly self-deceived man. It is sufficient to remember that none of the Russian saints wrote a 'Life' praising himself..."²³⁵

The apocalyptic element in Old Ritualism took its starting-point from the prophecy of Archimandrite Zachariah (Kopystensky) of the Kiev Caves Lavra, who in 1620 had foretold that the coming of the Antichrist would take place in 1666. And in a certain sense the Antichrist did indeed come in 1666. For as a result of the unlawful deposition of Patriarch Nikon, the symphony of powers between Church and State in Russia was fatally weakened, leading, in the long run, to the appearance of Soviet power, in 1917...

The Old Ritualists also saw apocalyptic signs in the Tsar's acceptance of the Patriarch's reforms. And yet the parallel here, paradoxically, is with the Protestants, who similarly believed that true Christianity ended when State and Church came to work together in the time of the Emperor Constantine. The Old Ritualists fled into the woods to escape the Antichrist and wait for the Second Coming of Christ in their democratic communes, accepting the authority of neither king nor priest. Similarly, the Czech Taborites and German Anabaptists and English Puritans and Independents and Quakers fled from existing states to build their millennial communities in which the only king and priest was God.

²³⁵ Lebedev, *Velikorossia*, St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 154-156.

This was particularly so with the priestless Old Ritualists, called the *Bespopovtsi* (as opposed to the *Popovtsi*, who still had priests, and the *Beglopopovtsi* who used priests fleeing from the official Church). The *Popovtsi*, according to St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, “are different in certain rites which have no influence on the essence of Christianity, while the latter [*Bespopovtsi*] have no Bishop over themselves, contrary to the ecclesiastical canons. The formation of the former was aided in part by ignorance ascribing to certain rites and customs a greater importance than these rites have; while the formation of the latter was aided by the Protestant tendency of certain individual people.”²³⁶

The communities of the priestless, like those on the River Vyg in the north, were almost democratic communes, having no priests and recognising no political authority – not unlike the contemporary Puritan communities of North America. And gradually, as in the writings of Semeon Denisov, one of the leaders of the Vyg community, they evolved a new conception of Holy Russia, according to which the real Russia resided, not in the Tsar and the Church, for they had both apostasised, but in the common people. As Sergius Zenkovsky writes, Denisov “transformed the old doctrine of an autocratic Christian state into a concept of a democratic Christian nation.”²³⁷

From that time an apocalyptic rejection of the State became the keynote of Old Ritualism. As Fr. George Florovsky writes, “the keynote and secret of Russia’s Schism was not ‘ritual’ but the Antichrist, and thus it may be termed a socio-apocalyptic utopia. The entire meaning and pathos of the first schismatic opposition lies in its underlying apocalyptic intuition (‘the time draws near’), rather than in any ‘blind’ attachment to specific rites or petty details of custom. The entire first generation of *raskolouchitelei* [‘teachers of schism’] lived in this atmosphere of visions, signs, and premonitions, of miracles, prophecies, and illusions. These men were filled with ecstasy or possessed, rather than being pedants... One has only to read the words of Avvakum, breathless with excitement: ‘What Christ is this? He is not near; only hosts of demons.’ Not only Avvakum felt that the ‘Nikon’ Church had become a den of thieves. Such a mood became universal in the Schism: ‘the censor is useless; the offering abominable’.

“The Schism, an outburst of a socio-political hostility and opposition, was a social movement, but one derived from religious self-consciousness. It is precisely this apocalyptic perception of what has taken place which explains the decisive or rapid estrangement among the Schismatics. ‘Fanaticism in panic’ is Kliuchevskii’s definition, but it was also panic in the face of ‘the last apostasy’...

“The Schism dreamed of an actual, earthly City: a theocratic utopia and chiliasm. It was hoped that the dream had already been fulfilled and that the ‘Kingdom of God’ had been realized as the Muscovite State. There may be four patriarchs in the East, but the one and only Orthodox tsar is in Moscow. But now even this expectation had been deceived and shattered. Nikon’s ‘apostasy’ did not disturb the Old Ritualists nearly as

²³⁶ Brianchaninov, “O Raskole” (“On the Schism”), in “Neizdannia proizvedenia episkopa Ignatia (Brianchaninova)” (“Unpublished Works of Bishop Ignatius (Brianchaninov)”), *Tserkovnaia Zhizn’* (Church Life), №№ 1-2, January-February-March-April, 2003, p. 18.

²³⁷ Zenkovsky, in Sir Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 72.

much as did the tsar's apostasy, which in their opinion imparted a final apocalyptic hopelessness to the entire conflict.

“At this time there is no tsar. One Orthodox tsar had remained on earth, and whilst he was unaware, the western heretics, like dark clouds, extinguished this Christian sun. Does this not, beloved, clearly prove that the Antichrist's deceit is showing its mask?”

“History was at an end. More precisely, sacred history had come to an end; it had ceased to be sacred and had become without Grace. Henceforth the world would seem empty, abandoned, forsaken by God, and it would remain so. One would be forced to withdraw from history into the wilderness. Evil had triumphed in history. Truth had retreated into the bright heavens, while the Holy Kingdom had become the tsardom of the Antichrist...”²³⁸

In spite of this apocalypticism, some of the Old Ritualists came to accept the Russian State as the legitimate Orthodox empire. Thus an investigator of the Old Rite in the 1860s, V.I. Kel'siev asserted that “the people continue to believe today that Moscow is the Third Rome and that there will be no fourth. So Russia is the new Israel, a chosen people, a prophetic land, in which shall be fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, and in which even the Antichrist will appear, as Christ appeared in the previous Holy Land. The representative of Orthodoxy, the Russian Tsar, is the most legitimate emperor on earth, for he occupies the throne of Constantinople...”²³⁹

²³⁸ Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, part I, 1979, pp. 98, 99.

²³⁹ Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

11. FROM HOLY RUS' TO GREAT RUSSIA

Although the Old Ritualists were truly schismatics, they were not wrong in discerning signs of serious decline in Muscovy towards the end of the seventeenth century. Under the influence of the West, such practices as smoking and drunkenness appeared.²⁴⁰ And concubinage also appeared in the highest places. And so, as Archbishop Nathaniel of Vienna writes: "By the time of Peter Holy Rus' was not an integral, full-blooded vital phenomenon, since it had been broken... The Moscow Rus' of Tsars Alexis Mikhailovich and Theodore Alekseyevich and Tsarevna Sophia, with whom Peter had to deal, was already only externally Holy Rus'.

"There is evidence that Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich had an illegitimate son (who later became the boyar Ivan Musin-Pushkin). Concerning Tsaritsa Natalia Kirillovna Tikhon Streshnev said that he was not her only lover, and Tsarevna Sophia had a "dear friend" in Prince Basil Golitsyn. Such sinful disruptions had been seen earlier, being characteristic of the generally sensual Russian nature. But earlier these sins had always been clearly recognised as sins. People did not justify them, but repented of them, as Great Prince Ivan III repented to St. Joseph of Volotsk for his sin of sorcery and fortune-telling, as the fearsome Ivan the Terrible repented of his sins. But if the tsars did not repent of their sins, as, for example, Basil III did not repent of his divorce from St. Solomonia, these sins were rebuked by the representatives of the Church and burned and rooted out by long and painful processes. In the second half of the 17th century in Moscow we see neither repentance for sins committed, not a pained attitude to them on the part of the sinners themselves and the surrounding society. There was only a striving to hide sins, to make them unnoticed, unknown, for 'what is done in secret is judged in secret'. A very characteristic trait distinguishing Muscovite society of the second half of the 17th century from preceding epochs, a trait fraught with many consequences, was the unrestrained gravitation of the upper echelons of Muscovite society towards the West, to the sinful West, to the sinful free life there, which, as always with sin viewed from afar, seemed especially alluring and attractive against the background of the wearisome holy Russian way of life.

"Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich, and all the higher Moscow boyars after him, introduced theatres. Originally the theatrical troupes most frequently played 'spiritual' pieces. But that this was only an offering to hypocrisy is best demonstrated by the fact that the actors playing 'sacred scenes' gratifying unspoiled sensuality about Joseph and Potiphar's wife, David and Bathsheba and Herod and Salome, were profoundly despised by the tsar and other spectators, who considered them to be sinful, 'scandal-mongering' people. Neither holy days nor festal days, and still more not the eves of feasts, were chosen for the presentation of these scenes. (It is known that Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich changed the date of a presentation fixed for December 18, for 'tomorrow is the eve of the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ'.) The real exponents of the really sacred scenes: The Action in the Cave and the Procession on the Donkey were considered by nobody to be sinful people, and their scenes were put on precisely on holy days. The tsar was followed by the boyars, and the boyars by the noblemen; everything that was active and leading in the people was drawn at this time to a timid,

²⁴⁰ There is evidence that drunkenness, long thought to be the vice of Russians from the beginning, was in fact rare before the seventeenth century and severely punished. Things began to change under the Romanovs, and western traders encouraged the new trend...

but lustful peeping at the West, at its free life, in which everything was allowed that was strictly forbidden in Holy Rus', but which was so longed for by sin-loving human nature, against which by this time the leading echelons of Muscovite life no longer struggled, but indecisively pandered to. In this sinful gravitation towards the West there were gradations and peculiarities: some were drawn to Polish life, others to Latin, a third group to German life. Some to a greater degree and some to a lesser degree, but they all turned away from the Orthodox Old Russian way of life. Peter only decisively opened up this tendency, broke down the undermined partition between Rus' and the West, beyond which the Muscovites timidly desired to look, and unrestrainedly threw himself into the desired sinful life, leading behind him his people and his state.

"Holy Rus' was easily broken by Peter because much earlier it had already been betrayed by the leading echelons of Muscovite society.

"We can see the degree of the betrayal of the Holy Rus' to a still greater degree than in the pandering to the desires of the flesh and the gravitation towards the free and sinful life, in the state acts of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich, and principally in the creation of the so-called *Monastirskij Prikaz*, through which, in spite of the protests of Patriarch Nikon, the tsar crudely took into his own hands the property of the Church 'for its better utilisation', and in the persecutions to which 'the father and intercessor for the tsar', his Holiness Patriarch Nikon, was subjected. Nikon understood more clearly than anyone where the above-listed inner processes in the Muscovite state were inclining, and unsuccessfully tried to fight them. For a genuinely Old Russian consciousness, it was horrific to think that the state could 'better utilise' the property of the Church than the Church. The state had been able earlier - and the more ancient the epoch, and the more complete its Old Russianness, the easier and the more often - to resort to Church property and spend it on its own urgent military and economic needs. After all, the Church took a natural interest in this. A son or daughter can freely take a mother's money in a moment of necessity, and in the given case it is of secondary importance whether he returns it or not: it is a question of what is more convenient to the loving mother and her loving son. They do not offend each other. But in the removal of the monastery lands by Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich (although this measure was elicited by the needs of the war in the Ukraine, which the Church very much sympathized with), another spirit was clearly evident: the spirit of secularization. This was no longer a more or less superficial sliding towards the longed-for sinful forms of western entertainment, it was not a temporary surrender to sin: it was already a far-reaching transfer into the inner sphere of the relations between Church and State - and what a state: Holy Rus' (!), - of the secular ownership relations with a view to 'better utilization' instead of the loving relations between mother and children characteristic of Orthodox morality. Better utilization for what ends? For Church ends? But it would be strange to suppose that the state can use Church means for Church ends better than the Church. For state ends? But then the degree of the secularization of consciousness is clear, since state ends are placed so much higher than Church ends, so that for their attainment Church property is removed. State ends are recognized as 'better' in relation to Church ends.

"Finally, the drying up of holiness in Rus' in the second half of the 17th century is put in clearer relief by the fact that, after the period of the 14th-16th centuries, which

gave a great host of saints of the Russian people, the 17th century turned out to be astonishingly poor in saints. There were far more of them later. In the century of the blasphemous Peter there were far more saints in Russia than in the century of the pious tsars Alexis Mikhailovich and Theodore Alexeyevich. In the second half of the 17th century there were almost no saints in Rus'. And the presence or absence of saints is the most reliable sign of the flourishing or, on the contrary, the fall of the spiritual level of society, the people or the state.

“And so it was not Peter who destroyed Holy Rus'. Before him it had been betrayed by the people and state nurtured by it. But Peter created Great Russia...”²⁴¹

Although this conclusion is true, there were short periods when improvements are discernible. Thus Alexander Rozhintsev writes: “‘The rule of Tsarevna Sophia,’ in the words of Tsar Peter’s brother-in-law Prince B.I. Kurakin, ‘began with all diligence and justice for all, to the satisfaction of the people, so that there had never been such a wise administration in the Russian state; and the whole state during her reign of seven years came to a peak of great wealth; commerce multiplied as did every kind of trade, and the study of Greek and Latin began to be set up... Then did the satisfaction of the people triumph.’ These witnesses of Sophia’s enemy, Prince Kurakin, were confirmed by the observations of foreigners.

“We can judge the peak of great wealth from the fact that in wooden Moscow, which at that time contained 5000 people, more than 3000 stone houses were built during Golitsyn’s ministry. And in spite of this, in 1689 Tsarevna Sophia was supported neither by the boyars, nor by the riflemen, and at the insistence of the latter she renounced the Throne and was imprisoned in Novodevichi monastery.

“In 1727 the same Prince B. Kurakin wrote that after the seven-year reign of Tsarevna Sophia, which had been carried out ‘in all order and justice’, when ‘the satisfaction of the people triumphed’, there began the ‘anarchical’ time of the reign of Peter’s mother, Natalia Kirillovna (1689-1696). It was then that there began ‘great bribe-taking and state theft, which continues at an increasing rate to the present day, and it is hard to extirpate this plague.’

“Tsar Peter Alexandrovich then and later struggled fiercely but unsuccessfully with this plague. It is known, as V.O. Kliuchevsky writes, that once in the Senate, exasperated by such universal unscrupulousness, Peter Alexandrovich wanted to issue a decree ordering every official who stole enough to buy even a rope to be hanged. Then ‘the eye of the sovereign’ and guardian of the law, General-Procurator Yagzhinsky got up and said: ‘Does your Majesty want to reign alone, with servants or subjects? We all steal, only some more and more noticeably than others...’”²⁴²

Still more important than western cultural influences introduced were the *theological* influences, both Catholic and Protestant. The Russian hierarchy was supported in its struggle against these by the Eastern Patriarchs, and in particular by Patriarch

²⁴¹ Archbishop Nathaniel (Lvov), “O Petre Velikom” (“On Peter the Great”), *Epokha* (The Epoch), № 10, 2000, no. 1, pp. 39-41.

²⁴² Rozhintsev, “Patriarkh Ioakim” (“Patriarch Joachim”), *Pravoslavnaiia Rus'* (Orthodox Rus'), № 4 (1745), February 15/28, 2004, p. 13.

Dositheus of Jerusalem, who as Archimandrite Hilarion (Troitsky) wrote, was “a great zealot of Orthodoxy in the 17th century, sharply following Russian church life and often writing epistles to Russian patriarchs, tsars, even individual church and civil activists. Patriarch Dositheus looked on Russia as the support of the whole of Ecumenical Orthodoxy, and for that reason it was necessary for Russia first of all to keep to the Orthodox faith in all its strictness and purity. The patriarch looked with great alarm and fear at the increasing establishment of western, especially Catholic influence in Moscow. Patriarch Dositheus thought in a very definite way about Catholicism: ‘The papist delusion is equivalent to atheism, for what is papism and what is the unia if not open atheism?’ ‘The lawless papists are worse than the impious and the atheists; they are atheists, for they put forward two gods – one in the heavens, and the other on earth.’ ‘Papism is nothing other than open and undoubting atheism’. ‘The Latins, who have introduced innovations into the faith, the sacraments and all the church ordinances, are openly impious and schismatic, because they make a local church universal, and instead of Christ they venerate the popes as the head of the Church, and they venerate the Roman Church, which is a local church, as universal. And for that reason, according to the words of the Fathers and Teachers of the Church, they are deceivers, unfitting and shameless persons, not having love and being enemies of the peace of the Church, slanderers of the Orthodox, inventors of new errors, disobedient, apostate, as they were recognized to be by the Fathers, and therefore worthy of disdain.’”²⁴³

In order to preserve the purity of the faith in Muscovy, Patriarch Dositheus proposed reserving the most important posts in the State and Church to Great Russians, who were purer in their faith than the Little Russians coming from Polish-dominated lands. He proposed that Patriarch Joachim burn heretical books, and defrock or excommunicate those who read them. Moreover, he supported the creation of a Greco-Slavonic Theological Academy that would strengthen traditional patristic Orthodoxy against the Latinism of the Jesuit schools. Most of these aims were achieved. However, during the reign of Peter the Great, who turned the State and Church sharply towards the West, the Academy had been renamed as Latino-Slavonic and Little Russians were again in the ascendant over Great Russians...

The transition from Holy Rus’ to Great Russia can be seen in the career of the last Patriarch of Muscovite Russia, Adrian. At his enthronement in 1690 he expressed a traditional, very Niconian concept of the relationship between the Church and the State: “The kingdom has dominion only on earth, ... whereas the priesthood has power on earth as in heaven... I am established as archpastor and father and head of all, for the patriarch is the image of Christ. He who hears me hears Christ. For all Orthodox are the spiritual sons [of the patriarch] – tsars, princes, lords, honourable warriors, and ordinary people... right-believers of every age and station. They are my sheep, they know me and they heed my archpastoral voice...”²⁴⁴

However, this boldness evaporated when the domineering personality of Peter the Great came to full power in the kingdom. Thus, as M.V. Zyzykin writes, “when

²⁴³ Troitsky, “Bogoslovie i Svoboda Tserkvi” (Theology and the Freedom of the Church), *Bogoslovskij Vestnik* (Theological Herald), September, 1915, vol. 3, 2005, pp. 32-33.

²⁴⁴ Patriarch Adrian, in Fr. Sergei Hackel, “Questions of Church and State in ‘Holy Russia’: some attitudes of the Romanov period”, *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. II, no. 1, Spring, 1970, p. 10.

Tsaritsa Natalia, who had supported Patriarch Adrian, a supporter of the old order of life, died [in 1694], there began a reform of customs which showed itself already in the outward appearance of the Tsar [Peter]. The Tsar's way of life did not accord with the sacred dignity of the Tsar and descended from this height to drinking bouts in the German suburb and the life of a simple workman. The Church with its striving for salvation.. retreated into the background, and, as a consequence of this, a whole series of changes in customs appeared. Earlier the First-hierarchs and other hierarchs had been drawn into the Tsar's council even in civil matters; they had been drawn to participate in the *Zemskie Sobory* and the Boyar's Duma; now Peter distanced the Church's representatives from participation in state matters; he spoke about this even during the lifetime of his mother to the Patriarch and did not summon him to the council. The ceremony on Palm Sunday in which the Tsar had previously taken part only as the first son of the Church, and not as her chief master, was scrapped. This ceremony on the one hand exalted the rank of the Patriarch before the people, and on the other hand also aimed at strengthening the authority of his Majesty's state power through his participation in front of the whole people in a religious ceremony in the capacity of the first son of the Church. Until the death of his mother Peter also took part in this ceremony, holding the reins of the ass on which Patriarch Adrian [representing Christ Himself] sat, but between 1694 and 1696 this rite was put aside as if it were humiliating for the tsar's power. The people were not indifferent to this and in the persons of the riflemen who rebelled in 1698 they expressed their protest. After all, the motive for this rebellion was the putting aside of the procession on Palm Sunday, and also the cessation of the cross processions at Theophany and during Bright Week, and the riflemen wanted to destroy the German suburb and beat up the Germans because 'piety had stagnated among them'. In essence this protest was a protest against the proclamation of the primacy of the State and earthly culture in place of the Church and religion. So as to introduce this view into the mass of the people, it had been necessary to downgrade the significance of the First Hierarch of the Church, the Patriarch. After all, he incarnated in himself the earthly image of Christ, and in his position in the State the idea of the enchurchment of the State, that lay at the foundation of the symphony of powers, was vividly expressed. Of course, Peter had to remove all the rights of the Patriarch that expressed this. We have seen that the Patriarch ceased to be the official advisor of the Tsar and was excluded from the Boyars' Duma. But this was not enough: the Patriarch still had one right, which served as a channel for the idea of righteousness in the structure of the State. This was the right to make petitions before the Tsar, and its fall symbolized the fall in the authority of the Patriarch. Soloviev has described this scene of the last petitioning in connection with the riflemen's rebellion. 'The terrible preparations for the executions went ahead, the gallows were placed on Belij and *Zemlyanoj gorod*, at the gates of the Novodevichi monastery and at the four assembly houses of the insurgent regiments. The Patriarch remembered that his predecessors had stood between the Tsar and the victims of his wrath, and had petitioned for the disgraced ones, lessening the bloodshed. Adrian raised the icon of the Mother of God and set off for Peter at Preobrazhenskoye. But the Tsar, on seeing the Patriarch, shouted at him: 'What is this icon for? Is coming here really your business? Get away from here and put the icon in its place. Perhaps I venerate God and His All-holy Mother more than you. I am carrying out my duties and doing a God-pleasing work when I defend the people and execute evil-doers who plot against it.' Historians rebuke Patriarch Adrian for not saying what the First Priest was bound to say, but humbly yielded to the Tsar, leaving the place of execution in

shame without venturing on an act of heroic self-sacrifice. He did not oppose moral force to physical force and did not defend the right of the Church to be the guardian of the supreme righteousness. The petitioning itself turned out to be, not the heroism of the Patriarch on his way to martyrdom, but an empty rite. The Patriarch's humiliation was put in the shade by Peter in that he heeded the intercession of a foreigner, the adventurer Lefort. 'Lefort, as Golikov informs us, firmly represented to Peter that his Majesty should punish for evil-doing, but not lead the evil-doers into despair: the former is the consequence of justice, while the latter is an act of cruelty.' At that very moment his Majesty ordered the stopping of the execution..."²⁴⁵

In February, 1696 Patriarch Adrian was paralyzed, and in October, 1700, he died. Peter did not permit the election of a new patriarch, but only a *locum tenens*. Later in his reign he abolished the patriarchate itself and introduced what was in effect a Protestant form of Church-State relations...

Thus the seventeenth century ended with the effective fall of the symphony of powers in Russia in the form of the shackling of one of its two pillars - the patriarchate... That this would eventually lead to the fall of the other pillar, the tsardom, had been demonstrated by events in contemporary England. For there were uncanny parallels in the histories of the two countries at this time. Thus 1649 saw both the enactment of the *Ulozhenie*, the first official and legal expression of caesaropapism in Russia, and the execution of the king in England - the first legalized regicide in European history. And if by the 1690s both the patriarchate in Russia and the monarchy in England appeared to have been restored to their former status, this was only an illusion. Soon the doctrine of the social contract, which removed from the monarchy its Divine right and gave supreme power to the people, would triumph in both countries: in England in its liberal, Lockean form, and in Russia in its absolutist, Hobbesean form...

²⁴⁵ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part III, pp. 218-220.

12. THE "STATE HERESY" OF PETER THE GREAT

In the eighteenth century the Russian autocracy gradually developed in the direction of western absolutist monarchy or despotism. The difference between the Orthodox autocracy and the absolutist monarchies was explained by the Slavophile Ivan Kireyevsky as follows: "Autocracy is distinguished from despotism by the fact that in the former everyone is bound by the laws except the supreme sovereign, who supports their force and holiness for their own advantage, while in a despotic government all the servants of the power are autocrats, thereby forcibly limiting the autocracy of the highest guardian of the law by their own lawlessness."²⁴⁶

Peter and the West

The change in the political system of government from autocracy to absolutism led to a still deeper change in the spiritual life of the nation. "On the whole," writes Fr. Alexis Nikolin, "the 18th century was an age of practically unceasing attempts on the part of the State power to rework the world-view of the Russian man, and the way of life of the Russian people, on a German, Protestant model. It was an age when the State power, instead of working together with the Church 'to adorn the life of men' through the religious education of the people, set out on the path of its gradual religious corruption, its alienation from the Church.

"As a result of the Church, or more accurately anti-Church, reforms of Peter I and the actions of his successors, there began a cooling towards the Orthodox faith in the Russian people, in the first place among the nobility. Freethinking and superstition increased. Russian educated society began to be ashamed of its faith, the faith of its fathers. Peter I injected into the Russian people, who were living a life of sincere, childlike, simple-hearted religiousness, the seeds of rationalist Protestantism - when the mind begins to prevail over the faith and deceive man by the supposed independence and progressiveness of its origins. At the same time the Russian Church was deprived of the possibility of fighting with Protestantism, and of educating men in the true faith. The actions of the State power led to a situation in which in Rus' there began to empty many 'places sanctified by the exploits of the holy monks. The path

²⁴⁶ Kireyevsky, "Ob otnoshenii k tsarkoj vlasti" ("On the Relationship to Royal Power"), in *Razum na puti k istine* (Reason on the Way to Truth), Moscow, 2002, p. 67. Again, Nicholas Berdyaev writes: "[In the Orthodox autocracy] there are no rights to power, but only obligations of power. The power of the tsar is by no means absolute, unrestricted power. It is autocratic because its source is not the will of the people and it is not restricted by the people. But it is restricted by the Church and by Christian righteousness; it is spiritually subject to the Church; it serves not its own will, but the will of God. The tsar must not have his own will, but he must serve the will of God. The tsar and the people are bound together by one and the same faith, by one and the same subjection to the Church and the righteousness of God. Autocracy presupposes a wide national social basis living its own self-sufficient life; it does not signify the suppression of the people's life. Autocracy is justified only if the people has beliefs which sanction the power of the tsar. It cannot be an external violence inflicted on the people. The tsar is autocratic only if he is a truly Orthodox tsar. The defective Orthodoxy of Peter the Great and his inclination towards Protestantism made him an absolute, and not an autocratic monarch. Absolute monarchy is a child of humanism... In absolutism the tsar is not a servant of the Church. A sign of absolute monarchy is the subjection of the Church to the State. That is what happened to the Catholic Church under Louis XIV. Absolutism always develops a bureaucracy and suppresses the social life of the people." ("Tsarstvo Bozhie i tsarstvo kesaria" ("The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Caesar"), *Put' (The Way)*, September, 1925, pp. 39-40)

along which the masses of the people walked to the holy elders for instruction, and to the holy graves for prayer, began to be grown over. Many schools, hospitals and workhouses attached to the churches and monasteries were closed. Together with the closing of the monasteries an end [only a temporary end, fortunately] was also put to the great work of the enlightenment of the natives in Siberia and other places in boundless Russia."²⁴⁷

In August, 1698 Peter returned from his first trip abroad, and his westernizing reforms began immediately. It was decreed that all beards should be removed by New Year's Day, January 1, 1699.²⁴⁸ There followed a struggle against the traditional form of Russian dress and its replacement by western fashions.

Peter learned many useful things on his journey to the West, especially in relation to warfare. But in religion, as we shall see, the influences were harmful. And many were prepared to condemn his undermining of the foundations of Russian society.

Thus in 1699 or 1700, on a visit to Voronezh, he ordered the bishop of the city, St. Metrophanes, to visit him at the palace he had erected on an island in the River Voronezh. "Without delay the holy hierarch set out on foot to go to the tsar. But when he entered the courtyard which led to the palace, he saw that statues of the ancient Greek gods and goddesses had been set up there on the tsar's order, to serve as architectural adornment. The holy one immediately returned to his residence. The sovereign was apprised of this, but, not knowing the reason why the holy Metrophanes had turned back, he sent another messenger to him with orders that he attend upon the sovereign in the palace. But the saintly bishop replied: 'Until the sovereign commandeth that the idols, which scandalise all the people, be taken away, I cannot set foot in the palace!' Enraged by the holy hierarch's reply, the tsar sent him the following message: 'If he will not come, he shall incur the death sentence for disobedience to the powers that be.' To this threat the saint replied: 'The sovereign hath authority over my life, but it is not seemly for a Christian ruler to set up heathen idols and thus lead the hearts of the simple into temptation.' Towards evening, the tsar suddenly heard the great bell of the cathedral toll, summoning the faithful to church. Since there was no particular feast being celebrated the following day, he sent to ask the bishop why the bell was being rung. 'Because His Majesty has condemned me to be executed, I, as a sinful man, must bring the Lord God repentance before my death and ask forgiveness of my sins at a general service of prayer, and for this cause I have ordered an all-night vigil to be served.' When he learned of this, the tsar laughed and straightway commanded that the holy hierarch be told that his sovereign forgave him, and that he cease to alarm the people with the extraordinary tolling. And afterwards, Tsar Peter ordered the statues removed. One should understand that Peter never gave up his innovations, and if in this respect he yielded, it merely demonstrates the great respect he cherished for the bishop of Voronezh..."²⁴⁹

It was not only the Church that suffered from Peter's drive to westernize and

²⁴⁷ Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo* (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, p. 103.

²⁴⁸ One of Peter's innovations was to introduce January 1 as a holiday, rivaling the traditional Church New Year's Day of September 1.

²⁴⁹ "The Life of our Father among the Saints Metrophanes, Bishop of Voronezh", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XII, № 6, November-December, 1990, p. 16.

modernize the country. The nobility were chained to public service in the bureaucracy or the army; the peasants - to the land.²⁵⁰ And the whole country was subjected, by force at times, to the cultural, scientific and educational influence of the West. This transformation was symbolized especially by the building, at great cost in human lives, of a new capital at St. Petersburg. Situated on a bog at the extreme western end of the vast empire as Peter's 'window to the West', this extraordinary city was largely built by Italian architects on the model of Amsterdam, peopled by shaven and pomaded courtiers who spoke more French than Russian, and ruled, from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, by monarchs of German origin. In building St. Petersburg, Peter was also trying to replace the traditional idea of Russia as the Third Rome by the western idea of the secular empire on the model of the First Rome, the Rome of the pagan Caesars and Augusti.

As Wil van den Bercken writes: "Rome remains an ideological point of reference in the notion of the Russian state. However, it is no longer the second Rome but the first Rome to which reference is made, or ancient Rome takes the place of Orthodox Constantinople. Peter takes over Latin symbols: he replaces the title tsar by the Latin emperor, designates his state imperia, calls his advisory council senate, and makes the Latin *Rossija* the official name of his land in place of the Slavic *Rus'* ...

"Although the primary orientation is on imperial Rome, there are also all kinds of references to the Christian Rome. The name of the city, St. Petersburg, was not just chosen because Peter was the patron saint of the tsar, but also to associate the apostle Peter with the new Russian capital. That was both a diminution of the religious significance of Moscow and a religious claim over papal Rome. The adoption of the religious significance of Rome is also evident from the cult of the second apostle of Rome, Paul, which is expressed in the name for the cathedral of the new capital, the SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral. This name was a break with the pious Russian tradition, which does not regard the two Roman apostles but Andrew as the patron of Russian Christianity. Thus St. Petersburg is meant to be the new Rome, directly following on the old Rome, and passing over the second and third Romes..."²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ "Under Peter I a beginning was laid to that serfdom which for a long time became the shame and illness of Russia. Before Peter from time immemorial not only state peasants, but also those of the landowners were not deprived of rights, they were under the protection of the laws, that is, they could never be serfs or slaves, the property of their lords! We have already seen that there were measures to limit and, finally, to ban the free departure of peasants, or their transfer from one lord to another. And there were measures to tie the Russian peasants to the land (but not to the lords!) with the aim of preserving the cultivation of the land in the central lands of Great Russia, keeping in them the cultivators themselves, the peasants that were capable of working. But Russian landowners always had bond-slaves, people who had fallen into complete dependence on the lords, mortgaging themselves for debts, or runaways, or others who were hiding from persecution. Gradually (not immediately) the landowners began to provide these bond-slaves, too, with their own (not common) land, forcing them to work on it to increase the lords' profits, which at that time consisted mainly in the products of the cultivation of the land. Peter I, in introducing a new form of taxation, a poll-tax (on the person), and not on the plot of land and not on the 'yard' composed of several families, as had been the case before him, also taxed the bond-slaves with this poll-tax, thereby putting them in the same rank as the peasants. From that time the lords gradually began to look on their free peasants, too, as bond-slaves, that is, as their own property. Soon, under Catherine II, this was already legalized, so that the Empress called the peasants 'slaves', which had never been the case in Russia!" (Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 173-174).

²⁵¹ Van den Brecken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, pp. 168-169.

And yet the ideal of Russia as precisely the *Third Rome* remained in the consciousness of the people. "The service of 'him that restraineth', although undermined, was preserved by Russian monarchical power even after Peter – and it is necessary to emphasize this. It was preserved because neither the people nor the Church renounced the very ideal of the Orthodox kingdom, and, as even V. Klyuchevsky noted, continued to consider as law that which corresponded to this ideal, and not Peter's decrees."²⁵²

But if Russia was still the Third Rome, it was highly doubtful, in the people's view, that Peter was her true Autocrat. For how could one who undermined the foundations of the Third Rome be her true ruler? The real Autocrat of Russia, the rumour went, was sealed up in a column in Stockholm, and Peter was a German who had been substituted for him...

Peter's Leviathan

Perhaps the most important and dangerous influence that Peter had received on his journey to the West was that of the Anglican Bishop Gilbert Burnet. The Tsar and the famous preacher had many long talks, and according to Burnet what interested the Tsar most was his exposition of the "authority that the Christian Emperors assumed in matters of religion and the supremacy of our Kings". Burnet told the Tsar that "the great and comprehensive rule of all is, that a king should consider himself as exalted by Almighty God into that high dignity as into a capacity of doing much good and of being a great blessing to mankind, and in some sort a god on earth"²⁵³

Peter certainly came to believe a similar teaching concerning his role as tsar. "By God's dispensation," he said, "it has fallen to me to correct both the state and the clergy; I am to them both sovereign and patriarch; they have forgotten that in [pagan] antiquity these [roles] were combined."²⁵⁴ And he now set out gradually to enslave the Church to the power of the State. From 1701 to 1718 he acted through a series of piecemeal measures, but was to some extent inhibited by the intermittent resistance of the *locum tenens*, Metropolitan Stefan Yavorsky of Ryazan, and of his own son, the Tsarevich Alexis. However, after the execution of the Tsarevich and the replacement of Yavorsky by a man more after his reforming heart, Metropolitan Theophanes Prokopovich of Pskov, Peter set about a systematic codification and consolidation of his reforms in his *Ecclesiastical Regulation*, published in 1721.

On January 24, 1701 Peter ordered the re-opening of the *Monastirskij Prikaz* which Patriarch Nikon had so struggled against. The *Prikaz* was authorized to collect all state taxes and peasant dues from the estates of the church, as well as purely ecclesiastical emoluments. A large proportion of this sum was then given to the state to help the

²⁵² Priest Timothy and Hieromonk Dionysius Alferov, *O Tserkoi, pravoslavnom Tsarstve i poslednem vremeni* (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Times), Moscow: "Russkaia Idea", 1998, p. 66.

²⁵³ Quoted in James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great*, London: Macmillan, 1971, pp. 37, 35.

²⁵⁴ It had not always been so, however. Thus early in his reign, in 1701, he replied to some Catholic Saxons who proposed a union between the Orthodox and Catholic churches: "Sovereigns have rights only over the bodies of their people. Christ is the sovereign of their souls. For such a union, a general consent of the people is necessary and that is in the power of God alone..." (Robert Massie, *Peter the Great*, London: Phoenix, 2001, p. 345)

war-effort against Sweden. In other words, while the Church was not formally dispossessed, the State took complete control over her revenues. St. Demetrius of Rostov protested: "You want to steal the things of the Church? Ask Heliodorus, Seleucus' treasurer, who wanted to go to Jerusalem to steal the things of the Church. He was beaten by the hands of an angel."²⁵⁵

The Church lost not only her economic independence, but also her right to judge her own people in her own courts. The State demanded that clergy be defrocked for transgressing certain state laws. It put limits on the numbers of clergy, and of new church buildings. Monks were confined to their monasteries, no new monasteries could be founded, and the old ones were turned into hospitals and rest-homes for retired soldiers.

"Under Peter", writes Andrew Bessmertny, "a fine for the giving of alms (from 5 to 10 rubles) was introduced, together with corporal punishments followed by cutting out of the nostrils and exile to the galleys 'for the proclamation of visions and miracles'. In 1723 a decree forbidding the tonsuring of monks was issued, with the result that by 1740 Russian monasticism consisted of doddering old men, while the founder of eldership, St. Paisius Velichkovsky, was forced to emigrate to Moldavia. Moreover, in the monasteries they introduced a ban on paper and ink - so as to deprive the traditional centres of book-learning and scholarship of their significance. Processions through the streets with icons and holy water were also banned (almost until the legislation of 1729)! At the same time, there appeared... the government ban on Orthodox transferring to other confessions of faith."²⁵⁶

If Peter was a tyrant, he was nevertheless not a conventional tyrant, but one who genuinely wanted the best for his country. And in spite of the drunken orgies in which he mocked her institutions and rites, he did not want to destroy the Church, but only "reform" her in directions which he thought would make her more efficient and "useful".²⁵⁷ Some of the "reforms" were harmful, like his allowing mixed marriages (the Holy Synod decreed the next year that the children of these marriages should be Orthodox, which mitigated, but did not remove the harmfulness and anticanonicity of the decree). Others were beneficial. Thus the decree that the lower age limit for ordination to the diaconate should be twenty-five, and for the priesthood - thirty, although motivated by a desire to limit the number of persons claiming exemption from military service, especially "ignorant and lazy clergy", nevertheless corresponded to the canonical ages for ordination. Again, his measures ensuring regular attendance at church by laypeople, if heavy-handed, at least demonstrated his genuine zeal for the flourishing of Church life. Moreover, he encouraged missionary

²⁵⁵ Fomin S. & Fomina T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, volume I, p. 290.

²⁵⁶ Bessmertny, "Natsionalizm i Universalizm v russkom religioznom soznanii" ("Nationalism and Universalism in the Russian Religious Consciousness"), in *Na puti k svobode sovesti* (On the Path to Freedom of Conscience), Moscow: Progress, 1989, p. 136.

²⁵⁷ "We know of a case when he beat Tatischev with a club for permitting a certain liberty relative to church traditions. He added: 'Don't scandalize believing souls, don't introduce freethinking which is harmful to public good order; I did not teach you to be an enemy of society and the Church'" (A.P. Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 717).

work, especially in Siberia, where the sees of Tobolsk and Irkutsk were founded and such luminaries as St. John of Tobolsk and St. Innocent of Irkutsk flourished during his reign. And in spite of his own Protestant tendencies, he blessed the publication of some, if not all, books defending the principles of the Orthodox faith against Protestantism. The measure that most shockingly revealed the State's invasion of the Church's life was the demand that priests break the seal of confession and report on any parishioners who confessed anti-government sentiments. Thus did Peter create a "police state" in which the priests were policemen. Now "a 'police state'," writes Fr. Georges Florovsky, "is not only, or even largely, an outward reality, but more an inner reality: it is less a structure than a style of life; not only a political theory, but also a religious condition. 'Policism' represents the urge to build and 'regularize' a country and a people's entire life - the entire life of each individual inhabitant - for the sake of his own and the 'general welfare' or 'common good'. 'Police' pathos, the pathos of order and paternalism, proposes to institute nothing less than universal welfare and wellbeing, or, quite simply, universal 'happiness'. [But] guardianship all too quickly becomes transformed into surveillance. Through its own paternalist inspiration, the 'police state' inescapably turns against the church. It also usurps the church's proper function and confers them upon itself. It takes on the undivided care for the people's religious and spiritual welfare."²⁵⁸

Peter and His Family

Before Peter could complete his reforms, he had to crush the opposition to them. This meant, in the first place, his son Alexis. For the Tsarevich, whose mother Peter had cast away in favour of the German Anna Mons and then the Balt Catherine, represented a focus around which all those who hoped for a restoration of the old traditions gathered. So in killing him Peter was declaring that there was no going back. In 1918, the Bolsheviki would do the same, and for the same reasons, to Tsar Nicholas II...

Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: "On returning from his first trip to the West in 1698, Peter I, in spite of all the canons and the opinion of Patriarch Adrian, incarcerated his lawful wife Eudocia Lopukhina in a monastery in the city of Suzdal, the very same in which the first wife of Basil III, Solomonina Saburova, had once been kept. But if Basil III married a second time 'for the sake of royal procreation' (Solomonina was infertile), Peter I did not have such a justification for his actions. Eudocia had born him a son, the heir Alexis, in 1690. Peter divorced his wife, the Tsaritsa, for the sake of adultery with the German woman Anna Mons. This had never happened in Rus' at the highest level of authority!...

"The Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich grew up as kind, clever and capable, but weak in health and will. However, he was not completely without will. In this, as in other capacities, he was perhaps, usual, normal, like the majority of Russian people of the time - not a genius and not without ability, not a hero and not a coward, not an ascetic and not a debauchee, not a righteous man, but also not a criminal. Thus Alexis Petrovich well represented the type of the normal Russian person of his time.

²⁵⁸ Florovsky, *The Ways of Russian Theology*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1979, p. 115.

“Above all the Tsarevich grew up into a sincerely and deeply believing Orthodox person... He very much loved everything that was Russian and Orthodox from ages past. And for that reason he from the beginning hated the corruption of the spiritual principles of Great Russia by his Tsar-father... To this should be added the fact that Alexis Petrovich, loving his mother by birth, and seeing her unlawful incarceration and his father’s living with other women, was naturally penetrated by a feeling of pity for her and disdain for his father. This disdain sometimes reached the point that Alexis Petrovich began to wish the death of Peter. Since he himself feared this desire, he perceived it as a sin which needed Confession. And he confessed. His spiritual father completely understood him and said: ‘God will forgive you; we all want his (Peter’s) death’. And so, being a conscious and profound opponent of the anti-Orthodox acts of his father, the Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich at the same time tried to be obedient in all things to his father, fulfilling all his instructions to the measure of his ability...”²⁵⁹

Peter could not stand the thought that his heir might reverse everything that he stood for. So he gave him the choice: “change your attitude and un hypocritically make yourself worthy to be the heir, or become a monk”. Alexis chose to be a monk. However, this was not really Peter’s intention. He wanted to kill him – and kill him he did, once he had found the right excuse – which he found in Alexis’ flight to Europe with his mistress. Although he was tempted back by the promise of forgiveness (the Tsar even announced publicly that “sympathizing with a paternal heart over [his son], he forgives him and frees him from every punishment”), he was not really going to be forgiven. For at the same time he let Alexis know that if kept information about anything or anyone from him, “he would be deprived of life”.

“Usually,” writes Lebedev, “the semi-official historians of Russia have tried to represent the ‘affair’ of the Tsarevich Alexis as the gradual revelation of his treason against the State, the creation by him of a terrible plot against his father the Tsar. But it was not like that at all! It is sufficient to pay heed to this warning concerning Alexis Petrovich’s execution made before any clarification... The investigation began. From the testimonies of the Tsarevich and other people drawn into the case it became clear that Alexis Petrovich had spoken to various people, mainly orally, but sometimes in letters, that he did not agree with the changes made to Russian customs by his father, that he was hoping on the support of the ‘mob’ (people), the clergy and many in the ruling classes, that he sympathized with his mother and did not recognize Catherine [Peter’s new wife] to be the Tsaritsa. The investigation also revealed that people of various ranks and classes were telling the Tsarevich that they supported his views and feelings. Although such conversations directed against the actions of the Tsar were already seditious and people paid for them in those days with their freedom and life, all of this was just conversation (sometimes when ‘tipsy’). Even the actions of those who helped Alexis Petrovich to flee to Vienna did not amount to a plot, but looked like a desire to save the Tsarevich out of natural devotion and love towards him. A special investigation was undertaken in relation to Peter’s first wife Eudocia (forcibly tonsured as Elena), who was in the Protection monastery in the city of Suzdal. They wanted to know just in case whether it was not from her that the ‘harmful’ influence on Alexis Petrovich had proceeded. It turned out that there had been no influence... They also discovered that the clergy, including Metropolitan Dositheus of Rostov,

²⁵⁹ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 184, 185, 186.

commemorated her during the services as 'Tsaritsa'. Besides, Dositheus had prophesied to Eudocia that she would return to her royal dignity; he wanted the death of Peter I and the enthronement of his son Alexis Petrovich. An ecclesiastical trial was conducted on Dositheus, at which he declared: 'Look what is in the hearts of all. Listen to the people, to what the people are saying...' The Rostov Vladyka was defrocked and then executed 'with a cruel death' by being placed on the wheel. But Peter I well knew that Dositheus was by no means the only member of the hierarchy of the Russian Church who was against him. Thus immediately after the announcement of the marriage of the Tsar to Catherine Alexeyevna (after which, by the way, Moscow suffered a terrible fire), on March 17, 1712 such an obedient person to Peter as Metropolitan Stefan Yavorsky 'shouted' his famous sermon in which he loudly denounced the 'impiety' of adultery, of abandoning one's wife, of breaking the fasts, which the hearers (and later the Tsar himself) rightly understood as a reference to Peter. The sermon was delivered on the day of the commemoration of St. Alexis the Man of God and Metropolitan Stefan called the Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich 'a true servant of Christ', 'our only hope'....

"Reprisals against the Church and the removal of the Patriarchate were already planned. But the realization of a matter that was so unheard-of for the Russian Land would be the more successful the more guilty 'the only hope' of the churchmen, the Tsarevich Alexis, would turn out to be."²⁶⁰

Not only did the Tsarevich have to appear to be guilty: it had to seem as if it was not the Tsar himself who was punishing him... Under torture, the Tsarevich "confessed" to asking the Emperor Charles for military help in overthrowing Peter. The Church in a conciliar epistle called on the Tsar to forgive his son. But the Senate decreed the death sentence, and on June 26, 1718 the Tsarevich was secretly smothered in the Peter and Paul fortress.

Lebedev writes: "Peter I's persecution of his own son, ending with the secret killing of the latter, was in essence the persecution of immemorial Great Russia, which did not want to change its nature, to be reborn according to the will of the monarch into something complete opposite to it. It was not by chance that the characteristics of the personality of the Tsarevich Alexis Petrovich mirrored so well the characteristics of the personality of the major part of Russia. In this major part the Tsar continued to be venerated, in spite of everything, as 'the Anointed of God', whom it was necessary to obey in everything except in matters of the faith, if he began to break or destroy its root foundations. Peter could not directly and openly war against this Great Russia (that is, with the majority of his people). Therefore he went on the path of slander (that his actions were opposed, supposedly, only by sluggards or traitors) and the hidden, as it were secret suffocation of everything whose root and core was Holy Rus', Orthodox Rus'. On this path Peter was ineluctably forced to resort to one very terrible means: to cover his deliberately anti-God, dishonourable, if not simply criminal actions with pious words, using the name of God and other holy names, excerpts from the Holy Scriptures and Tradition, false oaths, etc. – or in other words, to act under the mask of Orthodox piety. Such had happened in earlier history and especially, as we remember, in the form of the actions of the 'Judaizing' heretics, Ivan IV and Boris Godunov. But

²⁶⁰ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-192.

from Peter I it becomes as it were a certain norm, a kind of rule for rulers that did not require explanation..."²⁶¹

Theophan Prokopovich

Now that the Tsarevich was dead, Peter could proceed to the completion of his subjection of the Church to the State. But for that he needed a new first-hierarchy. He found him in Metropolitan Theophanes (Prokopovich) of Pskov, a man distinguished by an extreme pro-westernism that naturally endeared him to Peter's heart. Thus he called Germany the mother of all countries and openly expressed his sympathy with the German theologians.

"Theophanes was naturally accused of Lutheranism," writes M.V. Zyzykin, "if not in the sense of accepting [its] theological teaching, as in the sense of the general tendency of his convictions and the direction of his activity. His child, which he together with Peter I gave birth to, the *Ecclesiastical Regulation*, received the most flattering review from the Protestants in a brochure which came out in Germany under the title, *Curieuse Nachrichten von der itzigen Religion Ihre Kaiserlliche Majestät in Russland Petri Alexieovich unde seines grossen Reichs dass dasselbe ast nach Evangelisch Lutherischen Grundsätzen eingerichtet sei*. The brochure concluded by declaring that Peter was drawing Orthodox Russia out on the path of Lutheranizing Russia, although there were still some 'remnants of Papism' in her. '... In Holland, England and Germany he has learned what is the best, true and saving faith, and he has imprinted it firmly in his mind. His communion with Protestants has still more firmly established him in this manner of thought; we will not be mistaken if we say that His Majesty sees Lutheranism as the true religion. For, although so far in Russia things have not been built in accordance with the principles of our true religion, nevertheless a beginning has been laid, and *we* are not prevented from believing in a happy outcome by the fact that we know that crude and stubborn minds brought up in their superstitious Greek religion cannot be changed immediately and yield only gradually; they must be brought, like children, step by step to the knowledge of the truth.' Peter's ecclesiastical reforms were for the author the earnest of the victory of Protestantism in Russia: 'The Tsar has removed the patriarchate and, following the example of the Protestant princes, has declared himself to be the supreme bishop of the country.' The author praised Peter for setting about the reform of the people's way of life on his return from abroad. 'As regards calling on the Saints, His Majesty has indicated that the images of St. Nicholas should not be anywhere in rooms, and that there should not be the custom of first bowing to the icons on entering a house, and then to the master... The system of education in the schools established by the Tsar is completely Lutheran, and the young people are being brought up in the rules of the true Evangelical religion. Monasteries have been significantly reduced since they can no longer serve, as before, as dens for a multitude of idle people, who were a heavy burden for the state and could be stirred up against it. Now all the monks are obliged to study something good, and everything is constructed in a most praiseworthy manner. Miracles and relics also no longer enjoy their former veneration; in Russia, as in Germany, they have already begun to believe that in this respect much has been fabricated. If calling on the Saints will be phased out in Russia, then there will not be faith in personal merits before God,

²⁶¹ Lebedev, op. cit., p. 194.

and in good works, and the opinion that one can obtain a heavenly reward by going round holy places or by generous contributions to the clergy and monasteries will also disappear; so that the only means for attaining blessedness will remain faith in Jesus Christ, Who is the base of true Evangelical religion.”²⁶²

The sermons of Prokopovich show his attachment to the Lutheran teaching on Church-State relations. Thus in his sermon on Palm Sunday, 1718, he said: “Do we not see here [in Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem] what honour is paid to the King? Does this not require us not to remain silent about the duty of subjects to esteem the supreme authority, and about the great resistance to this duty that has been exposed in our country at the present time? For we see that not a small part of the people abide in such ignorance that they do not know the Christian doctrine concerning the secular authorities. Nay more, they do not know that the supreme authority is established and armed with the sword by God, and that to oppose it is a sin against God Himself, a sin to be punished by death not temporal but eternal...”

“Christians have to be subject even to perverse and unbelieving rulers. How much more must they be utterly devoted to an Orthodox and just sovereign? For the former are masters, but the latter are also fathers. What am I saying? That our autocrat [Peter], and all autocrats, are fathers. And where else will you find this duty of ours, to honour the authorities sincerely and conscientiously, if not in the commandment: ‘Honour thy father!’ All the wise teachers affirm this; thus Moses the lawgiver himself instructs us. Moreover the authority of the state is the primary and ultimate degree of fatherhood, for on it depends not a single individual, not one household, but the life, the integrity, and the welfare of the whole great nation.”²⁶³

Already in a school book published in 1702 Prokopovich had referred to the emperor as “the rock Peter on whom Christ has built His Church”.²⁶⁴ And in another sermon dating from 1718 he “relates Peter, ‘the first of the Russian tsars’, to his patron saint Peter, ‘the first of the apostles’. Like the latter, tsar Peter has an ‘apostolic vocation... And what the Lord has commanded your patron and apostle concerning His Church, you are to carry out in the Church of this flourishing empire.’ This is a far-reaching theological comparison...”²⁶⁵

In July, 1721 Prokopovich published an essay “expressing the view that since Constantine’s time the Christian emperors had exercised the powers of a bishop, ‘in the sense that they appointed the bishops, who ruled the clergy’. This was, in short, a justification of Peter’s assumption of complete jurisdiction over the government of the church; for a ‘Christian sovereign’, Prokopovich concluded in a celebrated definition of the term, is empowered to nominate not only bishops, ‘but the bishop of bishops, because the Sovereign is the supreme authority, the perfect, ultimate, and authentic supervisor; that is, he holds supreme judicial and executive power over all the ranks and authorities subject to him, whether secular or ecclesiastical’. ‘Patriarchalism [*patriarshestvo*]’ – the belief that a patriarch should rule the autocephalous Russian

²⁶² Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part III, pp. 227-228.

²⁶³ Cracraft, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 58-59.

²⁶⁴ Van den Brecken, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

²⁶⁵ Van den Brecken, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

church – Prokopovich equated with ‘papalism’, and dismissed it accordingly.”²⁶⁶

The notion that not the Patriarch, but only the Tsar, was the father of the people was developed by Prokopovich in his *Primer*, which consisted of an exposition of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer and the Beatitudes: “Question. What is ordained by God in the fifth commandment [‘Honour thy father and thy mother’]? Answer: To honour all those who are as fathers and mothers to us. But it is not only parents who are referred to here, but others who exercise paternal authority over us. Question: Who are such persons? Answer: The first order of such persons are the supreme authorities instituted by God to rule the people, of whom the highest authority is the Tsar. It is the duty of kings to protect their subjects and to seek what is best for them, whether in religious matters or in the things of this world; and therefore they must watch over all the ecclesiastical, military, and civil authorities subject to them and conscientiously see that they discharge their respective duties. That is, under God, the highest paternal dignity; and subjects, like good sons, must honour the Tsar. [The second order of persons enjoying paternal authority are] the supreme rulers of the people who are subordinate to the Tsar, namely: the ecclesiastical pastors, the senators, the judges, and all other civil and military authorities.”²⁶⁷

As Cracraft justly observes, “the things of God, the people were being taught by Prokopovich, were the things of Caesar, and vice-versa: the two could not be distinguished.”²⁶⁸

With Prokopovich as his main assistant, Peter now proceeded to the crown of his caesaropapist legislation, his *Ecclesiastical Regulation* of 1721, which established an “Ecclesiastical College” in parallel with nine secular Colleges, or Ministries, to replace the old patriarchal system. Peter did not hide the fact that he had abolished the patriarchate because he did not want rivals to his single and undivided dominion over Russia. In this he followed the teaching of Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan*: “Temporal and spiritual are two words brought into the world to make men see double, and mistake their lawful sovereign... A man cannot obey two masters...”

“The fatherland,” intoned the *Regulation*, “need not fear from an administrative council [the Ecclesiastical College] the sedition and disorders that proceed from the personal rule of a single church ruler. For the common fold do not perceive how different is the ecclesiastical power from that of the Autocrat, but dazzled by the great honour and glory of the Supreme Pastor [the patriarch], they think him a kind of second Sovereign, equal to or even greater than the Autocrat himself, and imagine that

²⁶⁶ Cracraft, *op. cit.*, p. 60. It should be noted that according to some synodal canonists, notably Zaozersky, Peter’s church reforms were not that different from Byzantine practice. “Byzantium under Justinian and Russia under Peter had, according to Zaozersky, one and the same form of Church administration, ‘state-synodal’, and he gives quite a convincing basis for this view... In the thinking of Theophan Prokopovich, according to their analysis, the dominant elements were Byzantine, not Protestant, that is, the very direction of Peter’s reforms had their roots in Byzantine tradition and organically proceeded from it.” (Evgenij, “Dorevoliutsionnie kanonisty i sinodal’nij stroj” (“The Prerevolutionary Canonists and the Synodal Order”), <http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=4895762&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&board=12871&arhv>).

²⁶⁷ Cracraft, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

²⁶⁸ Cracraft, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

the ecclesiastical order is another and better state.

“Thus the people are accustomed to reason among themselves, a situation in which the tares of the seditious talk of ambitious clerics multiply and act as sparks which set dry twigs ablaze. Simple hearts are perverted by these ideas, so that in some matters they look not so much to their Autocrat as to the Supreme Pastor. And when they hear of a dispute between the two, they blindly and stupidly take sides with the ecclesiastical ruler, rather than with the secular ruler, and dare to conspire and rebel against the latter. The accursed ones deceive themselves into thinking that they are fighting for God Himself, that they do not defile but hallow their hands even when they resort to bloodshed. Criminal and dishonest persons are pleased to discover such ideas among the people: when they learn of a quarrel between their Sovereign and the Pastor, because of their animosity towards the former they seize on the chance to make good their malice, and under pretense of religious zeal do not hesitate to take up arms against the Lord’s Anointed; and to this iniquity they incite the common folk as if to the work of God. And what if the Pastor himself, inflated by such lofty opinions of his office, will not keep quiet? It is difficult to relate how great are the calamities that thereby ensue.

“These are not our inventions: would to God that they were. But in fact this has more than once occurred in many states. Let us investigate the history of Constantinople since Justinian’s time, and we shall discover much of this. Indeed the Pope by this very means achieved so great a pre-eminence, and not only completely disrupted the Roman Empire, while usurping a great part of it for himself, but more than once has profoundly shaken other states and almost completely destroyed them. Let us not recall similar threats which have occurred among us.

“In an ecclesiastical administrative council there is no room for such mischief. For here the president himself enjoys neither the great glory which amazes the people, nor excessive lustre; there can be no lofty opinion of him; nor can flatterers exalt him with inordinate praises, because what is done well by such an administrative council cannot possible be ascribed to the president alone... Moreover, when the people see that this administrative council has been established by decree of the Monarch with the concurrence of the Senate, they will remain meek, and put away any hope of receiving aid in their rebellions from the ecclesiastical order.”²⁶⁹

Thus the purely imaginary threat of a papist revolution in Russia was invoked to effect a real revolution in Church-State relations along Protestant lines. The Catholic threat was already receding in Peter’s time, although the Jesuits continued to make strenuous efforts to bring Russia into the Catholic fold. The real threat came from the Protestant monarchies, where caesaropapism was an article of faith. Sweden and Prussia were the main models by the time of the *Ecclesiastical Regulation*, but the original ideas had come during Peter’s earlier visit to England and Holland.²⁷⁰

The full extent of the Peter’s secularization of the Church administration was

²⁶⁹ Cracroft, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155; Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part III, pp. 229-230.

²⁷⁰ Thus, according to Dobroklonsky, “they say that in Holland William of Orange [who was also king of England] advised him to make himself ‘head of religion’, so as to become the complete master in his state.” (*op. cit.*).

revealed by the oath that the clerics appointed to the Ecclesiastical College were required to swear: "I acknowledge on oath that the Supreme Judge [*Krainij Sud'ia*] of this Ecclesiastical College is the Monarch of All Russia himself, our Most Gracious Sovereign". And they promised "to defend unsparingly all the powers, rights, and prerogatives belonging to the High Autocracy of His Majesty" and his "august and lawful successors". Igor Smolitsch called it the capitulation document of the Russian Church.²⁷¹

Hobbes wrote in his *Leviathan*: "He who is chief ruler in any Christian state is also chief pastor, and the rest of the pastors are created by his authority."²⁷² Similarly, according to Peter and Prokopovich, the chief ruler was empowered to nominate not only bishops, "but the bishop of bishops [i.e. the patriarch], because the Sovereign is the supreme authority, the perfect, ultimate, and authentic supervisor; that is, he holds supreme judicial and executive power over all the ranks and authorities subject to him, whether secular or ecclesiastical". The Tsar henceforth took the place of the Patriarch – or rather, of the Pope, for he consulted with his bishops much less even than a Patriarch is obliged to with his bishops. Thus, as Uspensky relates, "the bishops on entering the Emperor's palace had to leave behind their hierarchical staffs... The significance of this fact becomes comprehensible if it is borne in mind that according to a decree of the Council of 1675 hierarchs left their staffs behind when concelebrating with the Patriarch... Leaving behind the staff clearly signified hierarchical dependence..."²⁷³

As Bishop Nicodemus of Yeniseisk (+1874) put it: "The Synod, according to Peter's idea, is a political-ecclesiastical institution parallel to every other State institution and for that reason under the complete supreme commanding supervision of his Majesty. The idea is from the Reformation, and is inapplicable to Orthodoxy; it is false. The Church is her own Queen. Her Head is Christ our God. Her law is the Gospel." In worldly matters, according to the bishop, the Tsar was the supreme power, but "in spiritual matters his Majesty is a son of the Church" and therefore subject to the Church.²⁷⁴

Zyzykin writes: "Basing the unlimitedness of his power in *Pravda Voli Monarshej* on Hobbes' theory, and removing the bounds placed on this power by the Church, he changed the basis of the power, placing it on the human base of a contract and thereby subjecting it to all those waverings to which every human establishment is subject; following Hobbes, he arbitrarily appropriated ecclesiastical power to himself; through the 'dechurchification' of the institution of royal power the latter lost its stability and the inviolability which is proper to an ecclesiastical institution. It is only by this dechurchification that one can explain the possibility of the demand for the abdication of the Tsar from his throne without the participation of the Church in 1917. The beginning of this ideological undermining of royal power was laid through the basing of the unlimitedness of royal power in *Pravda Voli Monarshej* in accordance with Hobbes, who in the last analysis confirmed it on the basis, not of the Divine call, but of

²⁷¹ Smolitsch, *Geschichte der russischen Kirche 1700-1917*, vol. I, Leiden, 1964, p. 106.

²⁷² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I, 161; in Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part III, p. 237.

²⁷³ Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, volume 1, p. 297.

²⁷⁴ Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, volume I, p. 296.

the sovereignty of the people..."²⁷⁵

The paradox that Petrine absolutism was based on democracy is confirmed by L.A. Tikhomirov, who writes: "This *Pravda* affirms that Russian subjects first had to conclude a contract amongst themselves, and then the people 'by its own will abdicated and gave it [power] to the monarch.' At this point it is explained that the sovereign can by law command his people to do not only anything that is to his benefit, but also simply anything that he wants. This interpretation of Russian monarchical power entered, alas, as an official act into the complete collection of laws, where it figures under No. 4888 in volume VII.

"... In the *Ecclesiastical Regulation* it is explained that 'conciliar government is most perfect and better than one-man rule' since, on the one hand, 'truth is more certainly found by a conciliar association than by one man', and on the other, 'a conciliar sentence more strongly inclines towards assurance and obedience than one man's command'... Of course, Theophanes forced Peter to say all this to his subjects in order to destroy the patriarchate, but these positions are advanced as a general principle. If we were to believe these declarations, then the people need only ask itself: why do I have to 'renounce my own will' if 'conciliar government is better than one-man rule and if 'a conciliar sentence' elicits greater trust and obedience than one man's command?

"It is evident that nothing of the sort could have been written if there had been even the smallest clarity of monarchical consciousness. Peter's era in this respect constitutes a huge regression by comparison with the Muscovite monarchy."²⁷⁶

Thus did Peter the Great destroy the traditional symphonic pattern of Church-State relations that had characterized Russian history since the time of St. Vladimir. As Karamzin put it, under Peter "we became citizens of the world, but ceased to be, in some cases, citizens of Russia. Peter was to blame."²⁷⁷

If we compare Peter I with another great and terrible tsar, Ivan IV, we see striking similarities. Both tsars were completely legitimate, anointed rulers. Both suffered much from relatives in their childhood; both killed their own sons and showed streaks of pathological cruelty and blasphemy. Both were great warriors who defeated Russia's enemies and expanded the bounds of the kingdom. Both began by honouring the Church; both ended by attempting to bend the Church completely to their will...

There is one important difference, however. While Ivan never attempted to impose a caesaropapist constitution on the Church (although he did kill her leader!), Peter did just that. The result was that Ivan's caesaropapism disappeared after his death, whereas Peter's lasted for another 200 years...

²⁷⁵ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part III, p. 239.

²⁷⁶ Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 302-303.

²⁷⁷ Karamzin, in V.F. Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo: ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry: from Peter I to our Days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, p. 137.

Tsar Peter and the Orthodox East

In September, 1721 Peter wrote to the Ecumenical Patriarch asking for his formal recognition of the new form of ecclesiastical administration in Russia – now more traditionally called a “Spiritual Synod” rather than “Ecclesiastical College”, and endowed “with equal to patriarchal power”.²⁷⁸ The reply came on September 23, 1723 in the form of “two nearly identical letters, one from Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople, written on behalf of himself and the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria, and the other from Patriarch Athanasius of Antioch. Both letters ‘confirmed, ratified, and declared’ that the Synod established by Peter ‘is, and shall be called, our holy brother in Christ’; and the patriarchs enjoined all Orthodox clergy and people to submit to the Synod ‘as to the four Apostolic thrones’.”²⁷⁹

If the submission of Russia to the new order can be understood in view of Peter’s iron grip on the country, the Eastern Patriarchs’ agreement to the abolition of the patriarchate they themselves had established needs more explaining. Undoubtedly influential in their decision was Peter’s assurance that he had instructed the Synod to rule the Russian Church “in accordance with the unalterable dogmas of the faith of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Greek Church”. Also relevant was the fact that the Russian tsar was the last independent Orthodox ruler and the main financial support of the Churches of the East. This made it difficult for the Patriarchs to resist the Tsar in this, as in other requests. Thus in 1716 Patriarch Jeremiah III acceded to Peter’s request to allow his soldiers to eat meat during all fasts while they were on campaign²⁸⁰; and a little later he permitted the request of the Russian consul in Constantinople that Lutherans and Calvinists should not be rebaptized on joining the Orthodox Church.²⁸¹ But a still more likely explanation is the fact that the Eastern Patriarchs were themselves in an uncanonical situation in relation to their secular ruler, the Sultan, which would have made any protest against a similar uncanonicity in Russia seem hypocritical.

In order to understand this, we need to remind ourselves of the new relationship between Church and State established after the fall of Constantinople in 1453... “The Muslims,” writes Bishop Kallistos Ware, “drew no distinction between religion and politics: from their point of view, if Christianity was to be recognized as an independent religious faith, it was necessary for Christians to be organized as an independent political unit, an Empire within the Empire. The Orthodox Church therefore became a civil as well as a religious institution: it was turned into the *Rum millet*, the ‘Roman nation’. The ecclesiastical structure was taken over *in toto* as an instrument of secular administration. The bishops became government officials, the Patriarch was not only the spiritual head of the Greek Orthodox Church, but the civil

²⁷⁸ Vladimir Rusak, *Istoria Rossijskoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Russian Church), USA, 1993, p. 266.

²⁷⁹ Cracraft, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

²⁸⁰ However, “Christopher Hermann von Manstein found that during the Ochakov campaign in the 1730s ‘though the synod grants them a dispensation for eating flesh during the actual campaign, there are few that choose to take the benefit of it, preferring death to the sin of breaking their rule’ (in Janet M. Hartley, *A Social History of the Russian Empire, 1650-1825*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 242).

²⁸¹ Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 294. At the Moscow council of 1666-67, it had been decreed, under pressure from Ligarides, that papists should be received, not by baptism, but by chrismation.

head of the Greek nation – the *ethnarch* or *milletbashi*.”²⁸²

In fact, by the 18th century we have the tragic spectacle of the Orthodox Church almost everywhere in an uncanonical position vis-à-vis the secular powers: in Russia, deprived of its lawful head and ruled by a secular, albeit Orthodox ruler; in the Greek lands, under a lawful head, the Ecumenical Patriarch, who nevertheless unlawfully combined political and religious roles and who had to bribe the Sultan in order to obtain his position; in the Balkans, deprived of their lawful heads (the Serbian and Bulgarian patriarchs) and ruled in both political and religious matters by the Ecumenical Patriarch while being under the supreme dominion of the same Muslim ruler, or, as in Montenegro, ruled (from 1782) by prince-bishops of the Petrovic-Njegos family. Only little Georgia retained something like the traditional symphony of powers. But even the Georgians were forced, towards the end of the eighteenth century, to seek the suzerainty of Orthodox Russia in the face of the Muslim threat: better an Orthodox absolutism than a Muslim one.

The problem for the smaller Orthodox nations was that there was no clear way out of this situation. Rebellion on a mass scale was out of the question. So it was natural to look in hope to the north, where Peter, in spite of his “state heresy” (Glubokovsky’s phrase), was an anointed sovereign who greatly strengthened Russia militarily and signed all the confessions of the faith of the Orthodox Church. And their hopes were not unfounded: by the end of the century the Ottomans had been defeated several times by the Russian armies, who now controlled the northern littoral of the Black Sea. And the threat posed by the Russian navy to Constantinople itself translated into real influence with the Sultan, which the Russian emperors and empresses used frequently in order to help their co-religionists in the Balkans.

Military defeat undermined the authority of the Sultans. As Philip Mansel points out, they “owed their authority to military success. Unlike other Muslim dynasties such as the Sherifs, the senior descendants of the Prophet who had ruled in Mecca and Medina since the tenth century, they could not claim long-established right or the blood of the *Qureish*, the Prophet’s tribe. This ‘legitimacy deficit’ created conflict, even in the mind of a sixteenth-century Grand Vizier like Lutfi Pasha. Could the Ottoman Sultan be, as he frequently proclaimed, [the] ‘Shadow of God’?”²⁸³

Any or all of these factors may have persuaded the Eastern Patriarchs to employ “economy” and bless the absolutist form of Church-State relations imposed by Peter on Russia. Nevertheless, every transgression of the sacred canons is regrettable. And the transgression in this case was to have serious long-term consequences...

[Was Peter an Orthodox Tsar?](#)

In view of all that has been said about Peter’s evil deeds, can we count him as an

²⁸² Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 89. An outward symbol of this change in the status of the Patriarch was his wearing a crown in the Divine services. Hieromonk Elia writes: “Until Ottoman times, that is, until the 14th century, bishops did not wear crowns, or anything else upon their heads in church. When there was no longer an Emperor, the Patriarch began to wear a crown, and the ‘sakkos’, an imperial garment, indicating that he was now head of the millet or nation.” (Fr. Elia, “[paradosis] Re: Bareheaded”, orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com, May 9, 2006)

²⁸³ Mansel, *Constantinople, City of the World’s Desire, 1453-1924*, London: Penguin, 1997, p. 28.

Orthodox Tsar? There are some, even among conservative historians, who believe that Petrine absolutism was not an unmitigated evil, and that some of his aims were good. Thus the distinguished theorist of monarchism L.A. Tikhomirov wrote: "It would be superfluous to repeat that in his fundamental task Peter the Great was without question right and was a great Russian man. He understood that as a monarch, as the bearer of the duties of the tsar, he was obliged dauntlessly to take upon his shoulders a heavy task: that of leading Russia as quickly as possible to as a complete as possible a mastery of all the means of European culture. For Russia this was a 'to be or not be' question. It is terrible even to think what would have been the case if we had not caught up with Europe before the end of the 18th century. Under the Petrine reforms we fell into a slavery to foreigners which has lasted to the present day, but without this reform, of course, we would have lost our national existence if we had lived in our barbaric powerlessness until the time of Fredrick the Great, the French Revolution and the era of Europe's economic conquest of the whole world. With an iron hand Peter forced Russia to learn and work – he was, of course, the saviour of the whole future of the nation.

"Peter was also right in his coercive measures. In general Russia had for a long time been striving for science, but with insufficient ardour. Moreover, she was so backward, such terrible labour was set before her in order to catch up with Europe, that the whole nation could not have done it voluntarily. Peter was undoubtedly right, and deserved the eternal gratitude of the fatherland for using the whole of his royal authority and power to create the cruellest dictatorship and move the country forward by force, enslaving the whole nation, because of the weakness of her resources, to serve the aims of the state. There was no other way to save Russia [!]

"But Peter was right only for himself, for his time and for his work. But when this system of enslaving the people to the state is elevated into a principle, it becomes murderous for the nation, it destroys all the sources of the people's independent life. Peter indicated no limits to the general enserfment to the state, he undertook no measures to ensure that a temporary system should not become permanent, he even took no measures to ensure that enserfed Russia did not fall into the hands of foreigners, as happened immediately after his death."²⁸⁴

However, Archpriest Lev Lebedev, even while admitting the useful things that Peter accomplished, comes to a different and much darker conclusion: "We are familiar with the words that Peter 'broke through a window into Europe'. But no! He 'broke through a window' into Russia for Europe, or rather, opened the gates of the fortress of the soul of Great Russia for the invasion into it of the hostile spiritual forces of 'the dark West'. Many actions of this reformer, for example, the building of the fleet, the building of St. Petersburg, of the first factories, were accompanied by unjustified cruelties and merciless dealing with his own people. The historians who praise Peter either do not mention this, or speak only obliquely about it, and with justification, so as not to deprive their idol of the aura of 'the Father of the Fatherland' and the title 'Great'. For the Fatherland Peter I was the same kind of 'father' as he was for his own son the Tsarevich Alexis, whom he ordered to be killed – in essence, only because Alexis did not agree with his father's destructive reforms for the Fatherland. That

²⁸⁴ Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-296.

means that Peter I did not at all love Russia and did not care for her glory. He loved his own idea of the transformation of Russia and the glory of the successes precisely of this idea, and not of the Homeland, not of the people as it then was, especially in its best and highest state – the state of Holy Rus’.

“Peter was possessed by ideas that were destructive for the Great Russian soul and life. It is impossible to explain this only by his delectation for all things European. Here we may see the influence of his initiation into the teaching of evil [Masonry] that he voluntarily accepted in the West. Only a person who had become in spirit not Russian could so hate the most valuable and important thing in Great Russia – the Orthodox spiritual foundations of her many-centuries’ life. Therefore if we noted earlier that under Peter the monarchy ceased to be Orthodox and Autocratic, now we must say that in many ways it ceased to be Russian or Great Russian. Then we shall see how the revolutionary Bolshevik and bloody tyrant Stalin venerated Peter I and Ivan IV. Only these two Autocrats were venerated in Soviet times by the communists – the fighters against autocracy... Now we can understand why they were venerated – for the antichristian and anti-Russian essence of their actions and transformations!

“Investigators both for and against Peter I are nevertheless unanimous in one thing: those transformations in the army, fleet, state administration, industry, etc. that were useful to Russia could not have been introduced (even with the use of western models) without breaking the root spiritual foundations of the life of Great Russia as they had been formed up to Peter. Therefore when they say that the actions of Peter can be divided into ‘harmful’ and ‘useful’, we must object: that which was useful in them was drowned in that which was harmful. After all, nobody would think of praising a good drink if a death-dealing poison were mixed with it...”²⁸⁵

Certainly, there were many in Peter’s reign who were prepared to pay with their lives for their confession that he was, if not the Antichrist, at any rate a forerunner of the Antichrist. Thus the layman Andrew Ivanov travelled 400 versts from Nizhni-Novgorod province to tell the Tsar that he was a heretic and was destroying the foundations of the Christian faith.²⁸⁶ Others went further. Thus as early as 1690 Gregory Talitsky circulated a pamphlet calling Moscow the New Babylon and Peter the Antichrist, for which he was executed.²⁸⁷ In 1718 Hilarion Dokukin publicly refused allegiance to Peter because of his unlawful removal of the Tsarevich from the Russian throne, and was tortured and executed.²⁸⁸ And in 1722 Monk Varlaam Levin from Penza was publicly executed for calling Peter the Antichrist.²⁸⁹

Archbishop Nathaniel of Vienna poses the question: “Why, in the course of two centuries, have we all, both those who are positively disposed and those who are negatively disposed towards Peter, not considered him as the Antichrist? Why, next to the pious rebukers of Peter, could there be pious, very pious venerators of him? Why

²⁸⁵ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

²⁸⁶ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part III, p. 259.

²⁸⁷ Van den Bercken, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

²⁸⁸ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

²⁸⁹ Stefan Yavorsky is said to have modified this judgement, saying that Peter was “not the Antichrist, but an iconoclast” – which was a contemporary Russian word for “Protestant” (Cracraft, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-164).

could St. Metrophanes of Voronezh, who fearlessly rebuked Peter's comparatively innocent attraction to Greek-Roman statues in imitation of the Europeans, nevertheless sincerely and touchingly love the blasphemous-tsar and enjoy his love and respect in return? Why could Saints Demetrius of Rostov and Innocent of Irkutsk love him (the latter, as 'over-hieromonk' of the fleet, had close relations with him)? Why did the most ardent and conscious contemporary opponent of Peter's reforms, the *locum tenens* of the Patriarchal Throne, Metropolitan Stefan Yavorsky, who struggled with Peter's anti-ecclesiastical reforms and was persecuted and constrained by him for that, nevertheless not only not recognize Peter as the Antichrist, but also wrote a book refuting such an opinion? Why in general did the Church, which has always put forward from its midst holy fighters against all antichristian phenomena contemporary to it, however much these phenomena may have been supported by the bearers of supreme power, the Church which later, under Catherine II, put forward against her far more restrained, veiled and far less far-reaching anti-ecclesiastical reforms such uncompromising fighters as Metropolitans Arsenius (Matseyevich) and Paul (Konyuskevich) - why, under the Emperor Peter, did the Church not put forward against him one holy man, recognized as such, not one rebuker authorized by Her? Why did our best Church thinker, who understood the tragedy of the fall of Holy Rus' with the greatest clarity and fullness, A.S. Khomiakov, confess that that in Peter's reforms, 'sensing in them the fruit of pride, the intoxication of earthly wisdom, we have renounced all our holy things that our native to the heart', why could he nevertheless calmly and in a spirit of sober goodwill say of Peter: 'Many mistakes darken the glory of the Transformer of Russia, but to him remains the glory of pushing her forward to strength and a consciousness of her strength'?

"And finally, the most important question: why is not only Russia, but the whole of the rest of the world, in which by that time the terrible process of apostasy from God had already been taking place for centuries, obliged precisely to Peter for the fact that this process was stopped by the mighty hand of Russia for more than 200 years? After all, when we rightly and with reason refer the words of the Apostle Paul: 'The mystery of lawlessness is already working, only it will not be completed until he who now restrains is removed from the midst' to the Russian tsars, we think mainly of the Russian [St. Petersburg] emperors, and not of the Muscovite tsars?²⁹⁰

"These comparatively weak, exotic rulers, to whom the world outside their immediate dominions related in approximately the way that, in later times, they related to the Neguses and Negestas of Abyssinia, could not be the restrainers of the world. Consequently Peter was simultaneously both the Antichrist and the Restrainer from the Antichrist. But if that is the case, then the whole exceptional nature of Peter's spiritual standing disappears, because Christ and Antichrist, God and the devil fight with each other in every human soul, for every human soul, and in this case Peter turned out to be only more gifted than the ordinary man, a historical personality who was both good and evil, but always powerful, elementally strong. Both the enemies

²⁹⁰ The assertion that in the presence of the Orthodox Kingdom - the Russian Empire - that terrible universal outpouring of evil which we observe today could not be complete, is not an arbitrary claim. This is witnessed to by one of the founders of the bloodiest forms of contemporary anti-theism, Soviet communism - Friedrich Engels, who wrote: "Not one revolution in Europe and in the whole world can attain final victory while the present Russian state exists" ("Karl Marx and the revolutionary movement in Russia"). (V.M.)

and the friends of Peter will agree with this characterization...²⁹¹

So Peter was both a forerunner of the Antichrist and the Restrainer against the Antichrist. He did great harm to the Church, but he also effectively defended her against her external enemies, and supported her missionary work in Siberia and the East. And he sincerely believed himself to be, as he once wrote to the Eastern patriarchs, “a devoted son of our Most Beloved Mother the Orthodox Church”.²⁹²

Did Peter repent of his anti-Church acts? It is impossible to say. All we know is that “from January 23 to 28 he confessed and received communion three times; while receiving holy unction, he displayed great compunction of soul and several times repeated: ‘I believe, I hope!’ ...”²⁹³ This gives us, too, reason to hope and believe in his salvation. For from that eternal world his old friend and foe, St. Metrophanes, once appeared to one of his venerators and said: “If you want to be pleasing to me, pray for the peace of the soul of the Emperor Peter the Great...”²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Archbishop Nathaniel (Lvov), “O Petre Velikom”, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

²⁹² Cracraft, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

²⁹³ Ivanov, *op. cit.* See also “Smert’ Imperatora Petra I kak obrazets khristianskoj konchiny” (“The Death of Peter I as a Model of Christian Death”), *Svecha Pokaiania* (The Candle of Repentance), № 1, March, 1999, pp. 6-7).

²⁹⁴ *Svecha Pokaiania* (The Candle of Repentance), № 1, March, 1999, p. 7.

13. THE GERMAN PERSECUTION OF ORTHODOXY

Before his death Peter had instituted a new method of determining the succession to the throne. Abolishing primogeniture, which he called “a bad custom”, he decreed “that it should always be in the will of the ruling sovereign to give the inheritance to whomever he wishes”. The result was a woman on the throne, his (unlawful) wife Catherine I. “That,” writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, “had never happened before in Great Russia. Moreover, she was not of the royal family, which nobody in Russia could ever have imagined up to that time.”²⁹⁵

This retrograde step led to a situation in which, in sharp contrast to the relative stability of succession under the Muscovite tsars, every single change of monarch from the death of Peter I in 1725 to the assassination of Paul I in 1801 was a violent coup d'état involving the intervention of the Guards regiments and their aristocratic protégés. The result was perhaps the lowest nadir of Russian statehood, when the state was governed by children or women under the control of a Masonic aristocratic élite whose own support came, not from the people but from the army.²⁹⁶ This showed that the tsars, far from strengthening their power-base by the suppression of the Church, had actually weakened it.

Moreover, not only was the nationality of the Sovereigns mainly German, but the whole culture of their court was predominantly Franco-German, and most education in ecclesiastical schools was conducted in Latin.

And not only was a foreign culture imposed on the native one: for a short time the Russian Autocracy could even be said to have been abolished. For when Anna Ioannovna came to the throne in 1730, it was under certain conditions, which obliged her “in everything to follow the decisions of the Supreme Secret Council, not to marry, not to appoint an Heir, and in general to decide practically nothing on her own. In essence the ‘superiors’ thereby abolished the Autocracy!”²⁹⁷

No sooner was Peter dead than thoughts about the restoration of the patriarchate re-surfaced. “The very fact of his premature death,” writes Zyzykin, “was seen as the punishment of God for his assumption of ecclesiastical power. ‘There you are,’ said Archbishop Theodosius of Novgorod in the Synod, ‘he had only to touch spiritual matters and possessions and God took him.’ From the incautious words of Archbishop Theodosius, Theophanes [Prokopovich] made a case for his having created a rebellion, and he was arrested on April 27 [1725], condemned on September 11, 1725 and died in 1726. Archbishop Theophylactus of Tver was also imprisoned in 1736 on a charge of wanting to become Patriarch. On December 31, 1740 he again received the insignia of hierarchical rank and died on May 6, 1741. For propagandizing the idea of the patriarchate Archimandrite Marcellus Rodyshevsky was imprisoned in 1732, was later

²⁹⁵ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 200.

²⁹⁶ “In the course of thirty-seven years Russia had, sardonic commentators remark, six autocrats: three women, a boy of twelve, an infant, and a mental weakling” (Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 242).

²⁹⁷ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

forgiven, and died as a Bishop in 1742.²⁹⁸ Also among the opponents of Peter's Church reform was Bishop George Dashkov of Rostov, who was put forward in the time of Peter I as a candidate for Patriarch... After the death of Peter, in 1726, he was made the third hierarch in the Synod by Catherine I. On July 21, 1730, by a decree of the Empress Anna, he, together with Theophylactus, was removed from the Synod, and on November 19 of the same year, by an order of the Empress Anna he was imprisoned, and in February, 1731 took the schema. He was imprisoned in the Spasokamenny monastery on an island in Kubensk lake, and in 1734 was sent to Nerchinsk monastery – it was forbidden to receive any declaration whatsoever from him... Thus concerning the time of the Empress Anna a historian writes what is easy for us to imagine since Soviet power, but was difficult for a historian living in the 19th century: 'Even from a distance of one and a half centuries, it is terrible to imagine that awful, black and heavy time with its interrogations and confrontations, with their iron chains and tortures. A man has committed no crime, but suddenly he is seized, shackled and taken to St. Petersburg or Moscow - he knows not where, or what for. A year or two before he had spoken with some suspicious person. What they were talking about – that was the reason for all those alarms, horrors and tortures. Without the least exaggeration we can say about that time that on lying down to sleep at night you could not vouch for yourself that by the morning that you would not be in chains, and that from the morning to the night you would not land up in a fortress, although you would not be conscious of any guilt. The guilt of all these clergy consisted only in their desire to restore the canonical form of administration of the Russian Church and their non-approval of Peter's Church reform, which did not correspond to the views of the people brought up in Orthodoxy.'²⁹⁹

“But even under Anna the thought of the patriarchate did not go away, and its supporters put forward Archimandrite Barlaam, the empress' spiritual father, for the position of Patriarch. We shall not name the many others who suffered from the lower ranks; we shall only say that the main persecutions dated to the time of the Empress Anna, when the impulse given by Peter to Church reform produced its natural result, the direct persecution of Orthodoxy. But after the death of Theophanes in 1736 Bishop Ambrose Yushkevich of Vologda, a defender of the patriarchate and of the views of Marcellus Rodyshevsky, became the first member of the Synod. With the enthronement of Elizabeth he greeted Russia on her deliverance from her internal hidden enemies who were destroying Orthodoxy.

“Chistovich writes: ‘The Synod remembered its sufferers under Elizabeth; a true resurrection from the dead took place. Hundreds, thousands of people who had disappeared without trace and had been taken for dead came to life again. After the death of the Empress Anna the released sufferers dragged themselves back to their homeland, or the places of their former service, from all the distant corners of Siberia

²⁹⁸ He tried to explain that “the patriarchate is not only the oldest but also the only lawful form of government (understanding by the patriarchate the leadership of the Church by one of her bishops)” (Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part III, p. 263). (V.M.)

²⁹⁹ Tikhomirov writes: “In the first decade after the establishment of the Synod most of the Russian bishops were in prison, were defrocked, beaten with whips, etc. I checked this from the lists of bishops in the indicated work of Dobroklonsky. In the history of the Constantinopolitan Church after the Turkish conquest we do not find a single period when there was such devastation wrought among the bishops and such lack of ceremony in relation to Church property.” (*Monarkhcheskaia Gosudarstvennost'*, St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 300) (V.M.)

- some with torn out nostrils, others with their tongue cut out, others with legs worn through by chains, others with broken spines or arms disfigured from tortures.' The Church preachers under Elizabeth attributed this to the hatred for the Russian faith and the Russian people of Biron, Osterman, Minikh, Levenvold and other Lutheran Germans who tried to destroy the very root of eastern piety. They were of this opinion because most of all there suffered the clergy - hierarchs, priests and monks..."³⁰⁰

"In Biron's time," writes Andrei Bessmertny, "hundreds of clergy were tonsured, whipped and exiled, and they did the same with protesting bishops - and there were quite a few of those. 6557 priests were forced into military service, as a consequence of which in only four northern dioceses 182 churches remained without clergy or readers."³⁰¹

"This is what happened in Russia," writes Zyzykin, "when the State secularization which had begun under Alexis Mikhailovich led to the dominion of the State over the Church, while the authority in the State itself was in the hands of genuine Protestants, who did not occupy secondary posts, as under Peter, but were in leading posts, as under the Empress Anna. The ideology of royal power laid down under Peter remained throughout the period of the Emperors; the position of the Church in the State changed in various reigns, but always under the influence of those ideas which the secular power itself accepted; it was not defined by the always unchanging teaching of the Orthodox Church"³⁰² - the symphony of powers.

How did the hierarchs themselves remember Biron's time? Bishop Ambrose of Vologda wrote: "They attacked our Orthodox piety and faith, but in such a way and under such a pretext that they seemed to be rooting out some unneeded and harmful superstition in Christianity. O how many clergymen and an even greater number of learned monks were defrocked, tortured and exterminated under that pretense! Why? No answer is heard except: he is a superstitious person, a bigot, a hypocrite, a person unfit for anything. These things were done cunningly and purposefully, so as to extirpate the Orthodox priesthood and replace it with a newly conceived priestlessness [bezpovshchina]..."

"Our domestic enemies devised a strategem to undermine the Orthodox faith; they consigned to oblivion religious books already prepared for publication; and they forbade others to be written under penalty of death. They seized not only the teachers, but also their lessons and books, fettered them, and locked them in prison. Things reached such a point that in this Orthodox state to open one's mouth about religion was dangerous: one could depend on immediate trouble and persecution."³⁰³

Biron's was a time, recalled Metropolitan Demetrius (Sechenov) of Novgorod, "when our enemies so raised their heads that they dared to defile the dogma of the

³⁰⁰ Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part III, pp. 261-262.

³⁰¹ Bessmertny, "Natsionalizm i Universalizm v russkom religioznom soznanii" ("Nationalism and Universalism in the Russian Religious Consciousness"), in *Na puti k svobode sovesti* (On the Path to Freedom of Conscience), Moscow: Progress, 1989, p. 136.

³⁰² Zyzykin, *op. cit.*, part III, p. 263.

³⁰³ Bishop Ambrose, in Fr. Georges Florovsky, *The Ways of Russian Theology*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1979, pp. 128-129.

holy faith, the Christian dogmas, on which eternal salvation depends. They did not call on the aid of the intercessor of our salvation, nor beseech her defense; they did not venerate the saints of God; they did not bow to the holy icons; they mocked the sign of the holy cross; they rejected the traditions of the apostles and holy fathers; they cast out good works, which attract eternal reward; they ate eat during the holy fasts, and did not want even to hear about mortifying the flesh; they laughed at the commemoration of the reposed; they did not believe in the existence of gehenna.”³⁰⁴

Hardly coincidentally, the humiliation of the Russians was accompanied by the first real resurgence of Jewish influence since the heresy of the Judaizers in the fifteenth century.

Thus Solzhenitsyn writes, citing Jewish sources: “In 1728, under Peter II, ‘the admission of Jews into Little Russia was permitted, as being people who were useful for trade in the region’, first as a ‘temporary visit’, but ‘of course, the temporary visit was turned into a constant presence’. Reasons were found. Under Anna this right was extended in 1731 to the Smolensk province, and in 1734 – to Slobodskaya Ukraine (to the north-east of Poltava). At the same time the Jews were allowed to rent property from land-owners, and to take part in the wine trade. And in 1736 the Jews were permitted to transport vodka also to the state taverns of Great Russia.

“Mention should be made of the figure of the financier Levi Lipmann from the Baltic area. When the future Empress Anna Ioannovna was still living in Courland, she had great need of money, ‘and it is possible that already at that time Lipman had occasion to be useful to her’. Already under Peter he had moved to Petersburg. Under Peter II he ‘became a financial agent or jeweller at the Russian court.’ During the reign of Anna Ioannovna he received ‘major connections at the court’ and the rank of Ober-Gofkommissar. ‘Having direct relations with the empress, Lipmann was in particularly close touch with her favourite, Biron... Contemporaries asserted that... Biron turned to him for advice on questions of Russian state life. One of the consuls at the Prussian court wrote... that “it is Lipmann who is ruling Russia”.’ Later, these estimates of contemporaries were subjected to a certain re-evaluation downwards. However, Biron ‘transferred to him [Lipmann] almost the whole administration of the finances and various trade monopolies’. (‘Lipmann continued to carry out his functions at the court even when Anna Leopoldovna... exiled Biron’.)”³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Metropolitan Demetrius, in V.F. Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo: ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry: from Peter I to our Days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, p. 155.

³⁰⁵ Solzhenitsyn, *Dvesti Let Vmeste* (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, pp. 26-27.

14. THE ORIGINS OF RUSSIAN FREEMASONRY

The westernization of official Russia was accomplished by a revolution from above, by Tsar Peter I and his successors, especially Catherine II. However, state power would have been insufficient to carry out such a radical change if it had not been supported and propelled by the spread of Masonic ideas among the aristocracy, in whose hands the real power rested after the death of Peter.

Russia became infiltrated by Freemasonry during the reign of Peter the Great, who undertook a programme of westernization that was supported and propelled by the spread of Masonic ideas among the aristocracy.

“There is no doubt,” writes V.F. Ivanov, “that the seeds of Masonry were sown in Russian by the ‘Jacobites’, supporters of the English King James II, who had been cast out of their country by the revolution and found a hospitable reception at the court of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich.

“Independently of the Masonic propaganda of the Jacobite Masons, the Russians had learned of the existence of the mysterious union of free stonemasons during their journeys abroad. Thus, for example, Boris Petrovich Sheremetev had got to know Masonry during his travels. Sheremetev had been given a most triumphant meeting on Malta. He took part in the great feast of the Maltese order in memory of John the Forerunner, and they had given him a triumphant banquet there. The grand-master had bestowed on him the valuable Maltese cross made of gold and diamonds. On returning to Moscow on February 10, 1699, Sheremetev was presented to the Tsar at a banquet on February 12 at Lefort’s, dressed in German clothes and wearing the Maltese cross. He received ‘great mercy’ from the Tsar, who congratulated him on becoming a Maltese cavalier and gave him permission to wear this cross at all times. Then a decree was issued that Sheremetev should be accorded the title of ‘accredited Maltese cavalier’.

“‘The early shoots of Russian Masonry,’ writes Vernadsky, ‘were particularly possible in the fleet, since the fleet had been created entirely on western models and under western influence.

“‘In one manuscript of the Public library the story is told that Peter was received into the Scottish degree of St. Andrew, and ‘made an undertaking that he would establish this order in Russia, a promise which he carried out (in the form of the order of St. Andrew the First-Called, which was established in 1698)...

“‘Among the manuscripts of the Mason Lansky, there is a piece of grey paper on which this fact is recorded: ‘The Emperor Peter I and Lefort were received into the Templars in Holland.’

“In the Public library manuscript ‘A View on the Philosophers and the French Revolution’ (1816), it is indicated that Masonry ‘existed during the time of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich. Bruce was its great master, while Tsar Peter was its first inspector.’”³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo: ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry: from Peter I to our Days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, pp. 95-96. Keith founded his Russian

Russians joined the lodges, according to Hosking, because they “became a channel by which young men aspiring to high office or good social standing could find acquaintances and protectors among their superiors; in the Russian milieu this meant an easier and pleasanter way of rising up the Table of Ranks...”³⁰⁷

There were also, however deeper, more sinister reasons for Masonry’s success. “Freemasonry,” writes Andrzej Walicki, “had a dual function: on the one hand, it could draw people away from the official Church and, by rationalizing religious experience, could contribute to the gradual secularisation of their world view; on the other hand, it could attract people back to religion and draw them away from the secular and rationalistic philosophy of the Enlightenment. The first function was fulfilled most effectively by the rationalistic and deistic wing of the movement, which set the authority of reason against that of the Church and stood for tolerance and the freedom of the individual. The deistic variety of Freemasonry flourished above all in England, where it had links with the liberal movement, and in France, where it was often in alliance with the encyclopedists. The second function was most often fulfilled by the mystical trend, although this too could represent a modernization of religious faith, since the model of belief it put forward was fundamentally anti-ecclesiastical and postulated a far-reaching internalisation of faith founded on the soul’s immediate contact with God.”³⁰⁸

Russians, though not uninfluenced by the rationalist side of Masonry, were especially drawn by its mystical side. For while their faith in Orthodoxy was weak, they were by no means prepared to live without religion altogether. “Finding myself at the crossroads between Voltairianism and religion”, wrote Novikov, “I had no basis on which to work, no cornerstone on which to build spiritual tranquillity, and therefore I fell into the society.”³⁰⁹

The conversion of Tsar Peter to Masonry, if it is a fact, was the fulfilment of the fervent hopes of western Masons such as the philosopher Leibnitz, who in 1696 had written to Ludolph: “If only the Muscovite kingdom inclined to the enlightened laws of Europe, Christianity would acquire the greatest fruits. There is, however, hope that the Muscovites will arise from their slumbers. There is no doubt that Tsar Peter is conscious of the faults of his subjects and desires to root out their ignorance little by little.”³¹⁰ According to K.F. Valishevsky, Leibnitz “had worked out a grandiose plan of scientific undertakings, which could be achieved with the help of the Muscovite monarch and in which the greatest German philosopher marked out a role for himself. Leibnitz studied the history and language of Russia.”³¹¹ And it was Leibnitz, together

lodge in 1741-1742, and left Russia in 1747. A contemporary Masonic source writes: “One Russian tradition has it that Peter became a Mason on trip to England and brought it back to Russia. There is no hard evidence of this...” (Richard I. Rhoda, “Russian Freemasonry: A New Dawn”, paper delivered at Orient Lodge no. 15 on June 29, 1996, <http://members.aol.com/houltonme/rus.htm>)

³⁰⁷ Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917*, London: Harper Collins, 1997, pp. 164-165.

³⁰⁸ Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, p. 19.

³⁰⁹ Novikov, in Janet M. Hartley, *A Social History of the Russian Empire, 1650-1825*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 232

³¹⁰ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

³¹¹ Valishevsky, *Petr Velikij* (Peter the Great), in Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

with his pupil Wolf, who played the leading role in the foundation of the Russian Academy of Sciences.³¹²

Masonry continued to grow until the reign of Elizabeth, when “German influence began to be replaced by French,” an investigator of this question tells us. ‘At this time the West European intelligentsia was beginning to be interested in so-called French philosophy; even governments were beginning to be ruled by its ideas... In Russia, as in Western Europe, a fashion for this philosophy appeared. In the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna a whole generation of its venerators was already being reared. They included such highly placed people as Count M. Vorontsov and Shuvalov, Princess Dashkova and the wife of the heir to the throne, Catherine Alexeyevna. But neither Elizabeth nor Peter III sympathized with it.

“Individual Masons from Peter’s time were organizing themselves. Masonry was developing strongly...”³¹³

Nevertheless, “in society people began to be suspicious of Masonry. Masons in society acquired the reputation of being heretics and apostates... Most of Elizabethan society considered Masonry to be an atheistic and criminal matter...

“The Orthodox clergy had also been hostile to Masonry for a long time already. Preachers at the court began to reprove ‘animal-like and godless atheists’ and people ‘of Epicurean and Freemasonic morals and mentality’ in their sermons. The sermons of Gideon Antonsky, Cyril Florinsky, Arsenius Matseyevich, Cyril Lyashevetsky, Gideon Krinovsky and others reflected the struggle that was taking place between the defenders of Orthodoxy and their enemies, the Masons.”³¹⁴

It was in Elizabeth’s reign that the Secret Chancellery made an inquiry into the nature and membership of the Masonic lodges. The inquiry found that Masonry was defined by its members as “nothing else than the key of friendship and eternal brotherhood”. It was found not to be dangerous and was allowed to continue, “although under police protection”.³¹⁵

Masonry was particularly strong in the university and among the cadets. “The cadet corps was the laboratory of the future revolution. From the cadet corps there came the representatives of Russian progressive literature, which was penetrated with Masonic ideals....

“Towards the end of the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna Masonry openly revealed its real nature. At this time a bitter struggle was developing in the West between Austria and Prussia for the Austrian succession. In 1756 there began the Seven-Year war, in which Russia took an active part.

“The Mason Frederick II was again striving to subject Russia to his influence.

³¹² Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

³¹³ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 160, 161, 162-163.

³¹⁴ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 165, 166.

³¹⁵ Rhoda, “Russian Freemasonry: A New Dawn”, *op. cit.*

“This aim was to be attained completely by means of the defeat of the Russian army and her capitulation before the ‘genius’ commander.

“And one has to say that everything promised victory for Frederick II over the Russian army.

“He had a very well trained, armed and provisioned army with talented officers.

“Frederick was undoubtedly helped by the Masons – Germans who had taken high administrative and military posts in Russia.

“The noted James Cate, the great provincial master for the whole of Russia, was a field-marshal of the Russian army, but in fact carried out the role of Frederick’s spy; in 1747 he fled [Russia] to serve him and was killed in battle for his adored and lofty brother.

“In general the Russian army was teeming with Prussian spies and Russian Mason-traitors.

“The Russian army was deliberately not prepared...

“And at the head of the Russian army the Masons placed Apraxin, who gave no orders, displayed an unforgivable slowness and finally entered upon the path of open betrayal.

“The victory at Gross-Egersford was won exclusively thanks to the courage and bravery of the Russian soldiers, and was not used as it should have been by the Russian commander-in-chief. Apraxin had every opportunity to cross conquered Prussia, extend a hand to the Swedes in Pomerania and appear before the walls of Berlin. But instead of moving forward he stopped at Tilsit and refused to use the position that was favourable for the Russian army... Apraxin was only fulfilling his duty of a Mason, which obliged him to deliver his lofty brother, Frederick II, from his woes...

“But this was not the only help extended to Prussia by the Russian Masons. In 1758, instead of Apraxin, who was placed on trial, Fermor was appointed as commander-in-chief. He was an active Mason and a supporter of Frederick II. Fermor acted just like Apraxin. He displayed stunning inactivity and slowness. At the battle of Tsonrdof the commander-in-chief Fermor hid from the field of battle. Deserted and betrayed by their commander-in-chief the Russian army did not panic...

“With the greatest equanimity the soldiers did not think of fleeing or surrendering...

“Frederick II had everything on his side: complete gun crews, discipline, superior weapons, the treachery of the Russian commander-in-chief. But he did not have enough faith and honour, which constituted the strength and glory of the Christ-loving Russian Army.

“The help of the dark powers was again required: and the Russian Masons for the third time gave help to Frederick II.

“At first it was suggested that Fermor be replaced by Buturlin, whom Esterhazy quite justly called ‘an idiot’, but when this did not happen, they appointed Peter Saltykov to the post of commander-in-chief. The soldiers called him ‘moor-hen’ and openly accused him of treachery. At Könersdorf the Russian commanders displayed complete incompetence. The left wing of the Russian army under the command of Golitsyn was crushed. At two o’clock Frederick was the master of Mulberg, one of the three heights where Saltykov had dug in. By three o’clock the victory was Frederick’s. And once again the situation was saved by the Russian soldiers. The king led his army onto the attack three times, and three times he retreated, ravaged by the Russian batteries. ‘Scoundrels’, ‘swine’, ‘rascals’ was what Frederick called his soldiers, unable to conquer the Russian soldiers who died kissing their weapons.

“‘One can overcome all of them (the Russian soldiers) to the last man, but not conquer them,’ Frederick II had to admit after his defeat.

“The victory remained with the Russian soldiers, strong in the Orthodox faith and devotion to the autocracy....”³¹⁶

Frederick was saved because Elizabeth died unexpectedly in 1761 and was succeeded by Peter III, a grandson of Peter the Great who nevertheless preferred the Germany he had been brought up in to Russia and adored Frederick the Great.

As Nicholas Riasanovsky writes: “His reign of several months, best remembered in the long run for the law abolishing the compulsory state service of the gentry, impressed many of his contemporaries as a violent attack on everything Russian and a deliberate sacrifice of Russian interests to those of Prussia. While not given to political persecution and in fact willing to sign a law abolishing the security police, the new emperor threatened to disband the guards, and even demanded that icons be withdrawn from the churches and that Russian priests dress like Lutheran pastors, both of which orders the Holy Synod did not dare execute. In foreign policy Peter III’s admiration for Frederick the Great led to the withdrawal of Russia from the Seven Years’ War, an act which probably saved Prussia from a crushing defeat and deprived Russia of great potential gains. Indeed, the Russian emperor refused to accept even what Frederick the Great was willing to give him for withdrawing and proceeded to make an alliance with the Prussian king.”³¹⁷

Peter III was succeeded (or murdered) by a group of Masonic nobles, and with the probable cooperation of his wife, the German princess and future Empress Catherine. Catherine not only tried to emancipate the Jews: she also allowed the Masons to reach the peak of their influence in Russia. In her reign there were about 2500 Masons in about 100 lodges in St. Petersburg, Moscow and some provincial towns.³¹⁸ “By the middle of the 1780s,” writes Dobroklonsky, Masonry “had even penetrated as far as Tobolsk and Irkutsk; Masonic lodges existed in all the more or less important towns.

³¹⁶ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 169, 170, 171-172.

³¹⁷ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 248.

³¹⁸ Riasanovsky, *op. cit.*

Many of those who were not satisfied by the fashionable scepticism of French philosophy or, after being drawn by it, became disillusioned by it, sought satisfaction for their heart and mind in Masonry".³¹⁹

Fr. Georges Florovsky writes: "The freemasons of Catherine's reign maintained an ambivalent relationship with the Church. In any event, the formal piety of freemasonry was not openly disruptive. Many freemasons fulfilled all church 'obligations' and rituals. Others emphatically insisted on the complete immutability and sacredness of the rites and orders 'particularly of the Greek religion'. However, the Orthodox service, with its wealth and plasticity of images and symbols, greatly attracted them. Freemasons highly valued Orthodoxy's tradition of symbols whose roots reach back deeply into classical antiquity. But every symbol was for them only a transparent sign or guidepost. One must ascend to that which is being signified, that is, from the visible to the invisible, from 'historical' Christianity to spiritual or 'true' Christianity, from the outer church to the 'inner' church. The freemasons considered their Order to be the 'inner' church, containing its own rites and 'sacraments'. This is once again the Alexandrian [Gnostic] dream of an esoteric circle of chosen ones who are dedicated to preserving sacred traditions: a truth revealed only to a few chosen for extraordinary illumination."³²⁰

"Who became freemasons? The Russian historian Vernadsky estimated that in 1777 4 of the 11-member Council of State, 11 of the 31 gentlemen of the bedchamber, 2 of the 5 senators of the first department of the Senate, 2 of the 5 members of the College of Foreign Affairs and the vice-president of the Admiralty College were masons (there were none known at this date in the War College). A large number of the noble deputies in the Legislative Commission were masons. Members of the high aristocracy and prominent figures at court were attracted to freemasonry, including the Repnins, Trubetskoi, Vorontsovs and Panins. Special lodges attracted army officers (like the Mars lodge, founded at Iasi in Bessarabia in 1774) and naval officers (like the Neptune lodge, founded in 1781 in Kronstadt). There were masons amongst the governors of provinces established after 1775 (including A.P. Mel'gunov in Yaroslavl' and J.E. Sievers in Tver'), and amongst senior officials in central and provincial institutions. Almost all Russian poets, playwrights, authors and academics were masons. Other lodges had a predominantly foreign membership, which included academics, members of professions, bankers and merchants....

"Catherine II had little sympathy for the mystical elements of freemasonry and their educational work and feared that lodges could become venues for conspiracies against the throne. In the 1790s, at a time of international tension following the French Revolution, Catherine became more suspicious of freemasonry, following rumours that Grand Duke Paul... was being induced to join a Moscow lodge. In 1792 (shortly after the assassination of Gustavus III of Sweden), Novikov's house was searched and Masonic books were found which had been banned as harmful in 1786. Novikov was arrested and sentenced, without any formal trial, to fifteen years imprisonment,

³¹⁹ A.P. Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (A Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 664.

³²⁰ Florovsky, *The Ways of Russian Theology*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1979, pp. 155-156.

though he was freed when Paul came to the throne in 1796. In 1794, Catherine ordered the closure of all lodges."³²¹

Catherine was not wrong in her suspicion that the Masons were aiming at the Russian throne. Already in 1781, at their convention in Frankfurt, the Illuminati "had decided to create in Russia two capitularies 'of the theoretical degree' under the general direction of Schwartz. One of the capitularies was ruled by Tatischev, and the other by Prince Trubetskoj. At a convention of the Mason-Illuminati in 1782 Russia was declared to be 'the Eighth Province of the Strict Observance'. It was here that the Masons swore to murder Louis XVI and his wife and the Swedish King Gustavus III, which sentences were later carried out. In those 80s of the 18th century Masonry had decreed that it should strive to destroy the monarchy and the Church, beginning with France and continuing with Russia. But openly, 'for the public', and those accepted into the lower degrees, the Masons said that they were striving to end enmity between people and nations because of religious and national quarrels, that they believed in God, that they carried out charitable work and wanted to educate humanity in the principles of morality and goodness, that they were the faithful citizens of their countries and kings..."³²²

However, Russia did not follow the path of France at this time because eighteenth-century Russian Masonry, unlike its contemporary French counterpart, was not very radical in its politics. Thus Novikov, according to Richard Pipes, must be classified as "a political conservative because of his determination to work 'within the system', as one would put it today. A freemason and a follower of Saint-Martin, he thought all evil stemmed from man's corruption, not from institutions under which he lived. He mercilessly exposed 'vice' and promoted with such enthusiasm useful knowledge because of the conviction that only improving man could one improve mankind. He never questioned the autocratic form of government or even serfdom. This stress on man rather than the environment became a hallmark of Russian conservatism."³²³

Another Mason who was conservative in his political thought was Prince Michael Shcherbatov, who represented the extreme right wing of the aristocratic opposition to Catherine. He was a monarchist who believed in the close alliance of tsar and aristocrats, and opposed all concessions to the peasantry or the merchants. He believed that Russia's traditional autocracy had been replaced by despotism under Peter, who treated the aristocrats brutally and opened the way for widespread "voluptuousness" in Russian life.

If Shcherbatov represented a nobleman pining nostalgically for the non-despotic orderliness of pre-Petrine Russia, Count Nikita Panin and Alexander Radishchev represented a more radical, forward-looking element in the aristocracy. Panin and his brother had already, as we have seen, taken part in the coup against Peter III which brought Catherine to the throne. But when Catherine refused to adopt Nikita's plan for a reduction in the powers of the autocrat and an extension of the powers of the

³²¹ Hartley, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-235. "I made a mistake," said Catherine, "let us close our high-brow books and get down to our ABC".

³²² Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

³²³ Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, London: Penguin Books, 1995, p. 258.

aristocratic Senate, they plotted to overthrow her, too. Their plot was discovered; but Catherine pardoned them.

Nothing daunted, Nikita wrote a *Discourse on the Disappearance in Russia of All Forms of Government*, intended for his pupil, Crown Prince Paul, in which he declared: "Where the arbitrary rule of one man is the highest law, there can be no lasting or unifying bonds; there is a state, but no fatherland; there are subjects, but no citizens; there is no body politic whose members are linked to each other by a network of duties and privileges."³²⁴

With Alexander Radishchev, we come to the first true Enlightenment figure in Russian history. His *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* (1790), writes Pipes, "exposed the seamier sides of Russian provincial life...[He] drank deeply at the source of the French Enlightenment, showing a marked preference for its more extreme materialist wing (Helvétius and d'Holbach)."³²⁵

Thus if Voltaire, Rousseau and the other *philosophes* introduced English social contract theory into France, thereby providing the philosophical justification for the French revolution, it was Radishchev, whose favourite countries were England and the United States, who introduced the theory into Russia, thereby laying the foundation for the Russian revolution. Radishchev represents the first truly modern, westernised Russian. The ideas of duty, of self-sacrifice, of God and immortality play no part in his thought. Rightly, therefore, has the *Journey* been called "the first trial balloon of revolutionary propaganda in Russia."³²⁶ For everything in it is based on the idea of individual advantage, self-interest pure and simple. Nothing of the sacred, of the veneration due to that which is established by God, remains. Only: "The sovereign is the first citizen of the people's commonwealth." "Wherever being a citizen is not to his advantage, he is not a citizen."

Such ideas lead logically to the self-annihilation of society. In his personal case, they led to suicide... "There are grounds for assuming," writes Walicki, "that this act was not the result of a temporary fit of depression. Suicide had never been far from his thoughts. In the *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* he wrote: 'If outrageous fortune hurl upon you all its slings and arrows, if there is no refuge left on earth for your virtue, if, driven to extremes, you find no sanctuary from oppression, then remember this: you are a man, call to mind your greatness and seize the crown of bliss which they are trying to take from you. Die.'³²⁷

Radischev clearly exemplifies the bitter fruits of the westernizing reforms of Peter the Great and his successors. It was this mad, proud striving for mastery of one's life, without acknowledgement of the Master, God, that was to lead much of Europe to a kind of collective suicide in the next age. And its appearance in Orthodox Russia was the result, in large part, of the "reforms" of Peter I and Catherine II...

³²⁴ Walicki, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³²⁵ Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

³²⁶ Olga Eliseeva, "Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Sibir'" ("Journey from Petersburg to Siberia"), *Rodina* (Homeland), № 3, 2004, p. 48.

³²⁷ Walicki, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

15. CATHERINE THE GREAT AND THE RUSSIAN AUTOCRACY

Catherine's accession to the throne was doubly illegal. Not only in that it took place over the dead body of her husband, whose murder she probably plotted, but also in that the legitimate successor was her son, the future Tsar Paul I. Catherine was in fact a usurper; the lawful monarch should have been her son. Always conscious of this, she did not simply not love her son: she did everything in her power to humiliate him. As Alexander Bokhanov writes, "she was not ashamed even to deny the paternity of her lawful son [that is, that Tsar Peter III was his father]! Catherine had an instinctive dislike of Paul Petrovich; we can even speak of a kind of maniacal syndrome."³²⁸ Her hatred of him went so far as to deprive him of the possibility of bringing up his own sons Alexander and Nicholas, and to refuse him all participation in state affairs.

Catherine's first act was to reward her co-conspirators handsomely with money and serfs. This pattern became the rule during her reign as the number of those who needed to be rewarded (mainly her lovers) increased, as well as the numbers of serfs "on the market" through the conquest of new territories and the expropriation of church lands. Thus she took away about a million peasants from the Church, while giving about a million previously free (state) peasants into the personal possession of the nobility.³²⁹

Thus in the course of the eighteenth century, and especially during Catherine's reign, the nobility recovered the dominant position they had lost under the Ivan the Terrible and the seventeenth-century Tsars. With this dominance of the nobility came the dominance of westernism in all its forms. As Pipes writes: "It has been said that under Peter [I] Russia learned western techniques, under Elizabeth western manners, and under Catherine western morals. Westernization certainly made giant progress in the eighteenth century; what had begun as mere aping of the west by the court and its élite developed into close identification with the very spirit of western culture. With the advance of westernization it became embarrassing for the state and the *dvorianstvo* [nobility and civil servants] to maintain the old service structure. The *dvorianstvo* wished to emulate the western aristocracy, to enjoy its status and rights; and the Russian monarchy, eager to find itself in the forefront of European enlightenment, was, up to a point, cooperative.

"In the course of the eighteenth century a consensus developed between the crown and the *dvorianstvo* that the old system had outlived itself. It is in this atmosphere that the social, economic and ideological props of the patrimonial regime were removed....

"*Dvoriane* serving in the military were the first to benefit from the general weakening of the monarchy that occurred after Peter's death. In 1730, provincial *dvoriane* frustrated a move by several boyar families to impose constitutional limitations on the newly elected Empress Anne. In appreciation, Anne steadily eased the conditions of service which Peter had imposed on the *dvorianstvo*...

"These measures culminated in the Manifesto 'Concerning the Granting of Freedom and Liberty to the Entire Russian *Dvorianstvo*', issued in 1762 by Peter III, which 'for

³²⁸ Bokhanov, *Pavel I (Paul I)*, Moscow: Veche, 2010, p. 78.

³²⁹ Lebedev, *Velikorossia (Great Russia)*, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 217.

ever, for all future generations' exempted Russian *dvoriane* from state service in all its forms. The Manifesto further granted them the right to obtain passports for travel abroad, even if their purpose was to enroll in the service of foreign rulers – an unexpected restoration of the ancient boyar right of 'free departure' abolished by Ivan III. Under Catherine II, the Senate on at least three occasions confirmed this Manifesto, concurrently extending to the *dvorianstvo* other rights and privileges (e.g. the right, given in 1783, to maintain private printing presses). In 1785 Catherine issued a *Charter of the Dvorianstvo* which reconfirmed all the liberties acquired by this estate since Peter's death, and added some new ones. The land which the *dvoriane* held was now recognized as their legal property. They were exempt from corporal punishment. These rights made them – on paper, at any rate – the equals of the upper classes in the most advanced countries of the west."³³⁰

"The nobles," writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, "thus possessed certain secure rights, including that of private property in land. This was an unprecedented situation in Russian society, and, in the absence of a similar charter for peasants, it consolidated in practice their right to buy and sell the serfs who occupied that land as if they too were private property.

"Catherine's reforms thus took the first step towards creating a civil society in Russia, but at the cost of deepening yet further the already considerable juridical, political and cultural gap between the nobles and the serfs among whom they lived. Serfs became mere chattels in the eyes of their masters, objects which could be moved around or disposed of at will, as part of a gambling debt, a marriage settlement or an economic improvement scheme. In practice, they could normally be sold as commodities, without the land to which they were theoretically attached, and without members of their own families.

"Lords had judicial and police powers over their serfs, as well as economic ones, which meant that they could punish serfs in any way they saw fit: they could flog them, send them to the army or exile them to Siberia. Theoretically, they were not permitted to kill a serf, but if a harsh flogging or other ill-treatment caused a serf's death, there was very little his fellow peasants could do about it. Not that the great majority of lords were remotely so brutal or careless. But the mentality induced by this impunity nevertheless blunted the lord's sense of responsibility for the consequences of his own actions."³³¹

³³⁰ Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, London: Penguin Books, 1995, pp. 132, 133. Lebedev writes that "nobility itself was now also transferred by heredity insofar as the nobles had been completely freed from the obligation to serve anywhere. They could send their serfs to forced labour *without trial*, apply physical punishments to them, buy and sell them ('exchange them for wolfhounds'...) Catherine II forbade only the sale of families of peasants one by one: but (this became usual) ordered them to be sold in families. But in practice this ruling was violated pretty often." (*op. cit.*, p. 227).

³³¹ Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917*, London: Harper Collins, 1997, p. 158. "Only extreme cruelty in relation to serfs (and that in the rarest cases!), sadistic torture and murder was punished, insofar as all this sickened the 'moral feelings' of the nobles, who considered themselves an 'enlightened' class. They paid no attention at all to 'ordinary' cruelty, it was in the nature of things. The serfs no longer *vowed allegiance* to the Tsars, and their testimonies were not admitted in court and they themselves could not take anybody to court. Their whole life, destiny, land and property were the personal property of the landowners. By forbidding the transfer of peasants from their lords in Little Russia, Catherine II began to spread *serfdom into the Ukraine*." (Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 227).

Catherine also gave the nobles the rights to trade and to organize local associations that would elect local government officials. All this would seem to indicate the influence of her reading of Montesquieu and Diderot. Thus Montesquieu had argued for the creation of aristocratic “intermediate institutions” between the king and the people – institutions such as the parlements and Estates General in France; he believed that “no monarch, no nobility, no nobility, no monarch.”³³² However, Montesquieu’s aim had been that these institutions and the nobility should check the power of the king. Catherine, on the other hand, was attempting to buttress her power by buying the support of the nobles.³³³

But if the sovereign and the nobility were coming closer together, this only emphasized the gulf between this nobility and the masses of the Russian people. Even their concept of Russianness was different. As Hosking writes, “the nobles’ Russianness was very different from that of the peasants, and for that matter of the great majority of merchants and clergy. It was definitely an imperial Russianness, centred on élite school, Guards regiment and imperial court. Even their landed estates were islands of European culture in what they themselves often regarded as an ocean of semi-barbarism. The Russianness of the village was important to them, especially since it was bathed in childhood memories, but they knew it was something different.”³³⁴

Above all, the Russianness of the nobles was different from that of the peasants because the latter was based on Orthodoxy. But the nobles had different ideals, those of the French Enlightenment. Even the sovereign, the incarnation of Holy Russia, was becoming a bearer of the French ideals rather than those of the mass of his people. Moreover, with the growth in the power of the bureaucracy he was becoming increasingly isolated from ordinary people and unable to hear their voice.

The Muscovite tsars had created a *Chelobitnij Prikaz* that enabled the ordinary people to bring their complaints directly to the tsar. Even Peter, who, as we have seen, created the beginnings of a powerful bureaucracy, had retained sufficient control over the bureaucrats to ensure that he was not cut off from the people and remained the real ruler of the country. “But after his death, as Tikhomirov explained, “the supreme power was cut off from the people, and at the same time was penetrated by a European spirit of absolutism. This latter circumstance was aided by the fact that the bearers of supreme power were themselves not of Russian origin during this period, and the education of everyone in general was not Russian. [This] imitation of administrative creativity continued throughout the eighteenth century.”³³⁵

Catherine went even further than Peter I in expropriating ecclesiastical and monastic lands. Already between 1762 and 1764 the number of monasteries was reduced from 1072 to 452, and of monastics – from 12,444 to 5105!

It goes without saying, therefore, that Catherine was no supporter of the traditionally Orthodox “symphonic” model of Church-State relations. “[The

³³² Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*.

³³³ Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³³⁴ Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

³³⁵ Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'*, St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 341.

Archbishop of Novgorod],” she wrote to Voltaire, “is neither a persecutor nor a fanatic. He abhors the idea of the two powers”.³³⁶ And in her correspondence with the Austrian Emperor Joseph II she called herself head of the Greek Church.³³⁷

Under Peter, the election of bishops had been as follows. The Synod presented two candidates for the episcopacy of a vacant see to the monarch, and he chose one of them. The newly elected bishop then had to swear an oath that included recognizing the monarch as “supreme Judge” of the Church. Catherine did not change this arrangement; and she restricted the power of the bishops still further in that out of fear of “fanaticism”, as Rusak writes, “cases dealing with religious blasphemies, the violation of order in Divine services, and magic and superstition were removed from the competence of the spiritual court...”³³⁸

Catherine’s choice of over-procurators further fettered the expression of a truly Orthodox spirit in the Church. “The first over-procurator in the reign of Catherine II,” writes Vladimir Rusak, “was Prince A. Kozlovsky, who was not particularly distinguished in anything, but under whom the secularization of the Church lands took place.

“His two successors, according to the definition of Kartashev, were ‘bearers of the most modern, anti-clerical, enlightenment ideology’. In 1765 there followed the appointment of I. Melissino as over-procurator. His world-view was very vividly reflected in his ‘Points’ – a project for an order to the Synod. Among others were the following points:

“3)... to weaken and shorten the fasts...

“5)... to purify the Church from superstitions and ‘artificial’ miracles and superstitions concerning relics and icons: for the study of this problem, to appoint a special commission from various unblended-by-prejudices people;

“7) to remove something from the long Church rites; so as to avoid pagan much speaking in prayer, to remove the multitude of verses, canons, troparia, etc., that have been composed in recent times, to remove many unnecessary feast days, and to appoint short prayer-services with useful instructions to the people instead of Vespers and All-Night Vigils...

“10) to allow the clergy to wear more fitting clothing;

“11) would it not be more rational completely to remove the habit of commemorating the dead (such a habit only provides the clergy with an extra excuse for various kinds of extortions)...

³³⁶ Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, London: Phoenix, 2002, p. 114.

³³⁷ She once said to Countess Dashkova: “Also strike out ‘as a beneficent Deity’ - this apotheosis does not agree with the Christian religion, and, I fear, I have no right to sanctity insofar as I have laid certain restrictions on the Church’s property” (Fomin S. & Fomina, T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, p. 299).

³³⁸ Rusak, *Istoria Rossijskoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Russian Church), USA, 1993, p. 276. Cf. Priest Alexis Nikolin, *Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo* (Church and State), Izdanie Sretenskogo monastyrja, 1997, pp. 100, 101.

“In other points married bishops, making divorces easier, etc., were suggested.

“As successor to Melessino there was appointed Chebyshev, a Mason, who openly proclaimed his atheism. He forbade the printing of works in which the existence of God was demonstrated. ‘There is no God!’ he said aloud more than once. Besides, he was suspected, and not without reason, of spending large sums of Synodal money.

“In 1774 he was sacked. In his place there was appointed the pious S. Akchurin, then A. Naumov. Both of them established good relations with the members of the Synod. The last over-procurator in the reign of Catherine II was the active Count A. Musin-Pushkin, the well-known archaeologist, a member of the Academy of Sciences, who later revealed the ‘Word on Igor’s Regiment’. He took into his hands the whole of the Synodal Chancellery. Being a Church person, he did not hinder the members of the Synod from making personal reports to the empress and receiving orders directly from her.”³³⁹

The best hierarchs of the time were inhibited from attending Synodal sessions by the impiety of most of the over-procurators. Thus Metropolitan Platon of Moscow protested “on seeing that the over-procurators in the Synod (Melessino and Chebyshev) were penetrated with the spirit of freethinking, and that the opinions of the members of the Synod were paralyzed by the influence of the then all-powerful in church matters spiritual father of the empress, Protopriest Ioann Pamphilov”.³⁴⁰

With the hierarchs in paralysis, it is not surprising that in the eighteenth century the lower clergy were in a still more humiliating condition, and were even subjected to physical violence by governors and landowners. Moreover, as Lebedev writes, “under Catherine II, the age-old Russian home and church schools for children were forbidden as not being scientific and aiding superstition. The local authorities were ordered ‘from the highest levels’ to introduce ‘correct’ schools with good teaching. But at that time for a series of reasons they were not able to do this, while the schools of the old ‘amateur’ type disappeared both in the cities and in the countryside. And it turned out that ‘the enlightened age of Catherine’ laid a beginning to the wide spreading of illiteracy and ignorance in the masses of the Great Russian people, both in the lower classes of the city population and even more in the country. In the cities... schools and gymnasia were built mainly for the higher classes. It was at that time that lycea for men and the women’s Smolny institute appeared... There they studied the secular sciences thoroughly, but it was necessary to teach something spiritual there as well! The imperial power understood that it was impossible not to teach religion. On the contrary, in the interests of the authorities the Orthodox Faith and Church and Orthodox education were used as a means to educating the ‘new breed’ of noble (above all noble) fathers and mothers in the spirit of devotion to the authorities, a definite ‘morality’ and the honourable fulfilment of duty. But in ‘society’ at that time the Law of God was considered to be a purely ‘priestly’ subject. It was ordered that ‘children should not be infected with superstition and fanaticism’, that is, they were not to speak to them about the Old Testament punishments of God or about miracles

³³⁹ Rusak, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-276.

³⁴⁰ A.P. Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (A Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 549.

and the Terrible Judgement (!), but they were to instill in them primarily 'the rules of morality', 'natural (?!) religion and 'the importance of religious tolerance'. We shall see later what kind of 'new breed' of people were the products of this kind of 'Law of God'..."³⁴¹

Catherine also developed a new concept of the place of Russia in the world. "Russia," she wrote in the first line of his *Instruction* for government in 1767, "is a European power." "The next paragraph," writes Bernard Simms, "went on to say that Russia had become a great power by being European, that is 'by introducing the manners and customs of Europe'. What Catherine had in mind here was not the Europe of representative institutions, but that of princely absolutism. This was because, as the second chapter of her 'instruction' explained, 'the extent of the [tsarist] Dominion requires an absolute power to be vested in that person who rules over it,' in order to expedite decisions. The 'intention and end of Monarchy,' she continued, 'is the glory of their citizens, of the state and of the monarchy', that is, territorial expansion and military success. 'From this glory,' Catherine added, 'a sense of liberty arises in a people governed by monarch, which... may contribute as much to the happiness of the subjects as even liberty itself.' In other words, Russians would find compensation for their lack of freedom in the glory of their state as a European great power."³⁴²

But this was directly contrary to the ordinary Orthodox Russian's concept of his state. First of all, to him Russia was not a European power in the sense of just another of the Catholic-Protestant states of the West. She was the Third Rome, the successor of Byzantium. And her aim was not her own glory, or the glory of her citizens, but the glory of God and of Orthodoxy. Catherine made some concessions to these sentiments, always insisting on her Orthodoxy and gladly adopting the traditional aim of the Russian tsars of liberating Constantinople and the Balkans from the Muslim yoke. (That is why she called her grandson Constantine in anticipation of the desired event.) But under the cloak of traditionally Orthodox aspirations, she pursued a typically West European agenda of Great Power politics and territorial expansion...

Few were those who, in this nadir of Russian statehood and spirituality, had the courage to expose the vices of Russian society while proposing solutions in the spirit of a truly Orthodox piety. One of the few, as we have seen, was St. Tikhon, Bishop of Zadonsk. He both rebuked tsars and nobles for their profligate lives and injustice to their serfs; and criticized the western education they were giving their children: "God will not ask you whether you taught your children French, German or Italian or the politics of society life - but you will not escape Divine reprobation for not having instilled goodness into them. I speak plainly but I tell the truth: if your children are bad, your grandchildren will be worse... and the evil will thus increase... and the root of all this is our thoroughly bad education..."³⁴³

Another righteous one was Metropolitan Arsenius (Matseyevich) of Rostov, who rejected Catherine's expropriation of the monasteries in 1763-1764, saying that the decline of monasticism in Russia might in the end lead "to atheism". He also refused

³⁴¹ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

³⁴² Simms, *Europe: The Struggle for Supremacy, 1453 to the Present*, London: Allen Lane, 2013, p. 119.

³⁴³ Quoted in Nadejda Gorodetzky, *Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk*, London: S.P.C.K., 1976, p. 127.

to swear an oath of allegiance to her as head of the Church. For this he was defrocked and exiled to the Therapontov monastery, where Patriarch Nikon had once been kept. But since he continued to write letters against secularization, he was deprived of monasticism and under the name of "Andrew the Liar" was incarcerated for life in the prison of the castle in Revel (Tallinn). There he died in 1772, after accurately prophesying the fates of those bishops who had acquiesced in his unjust sentence.³⁴⁴

Neither Saint Tikhon nor Metropolitan Arsenius counseled armed rebellion against the State. However, some of the people, seeing the increasing alienation of their sovereigns from traditional Orthodoxy, took action to liberate, as they saw it, the Russian tsardom from foreign and heterodox influence.

Thus the rebellion of Pugachev in 1774, while superficially a rebellion for the sake of freedom, and the rights of Cossacks and other minorities, was the very opposite of a democratic rebellion in the western style. For Pugachev did not seek to destroy the institution of the tsardom: on the contrary, he proclaimed himself to be Tsar Peter III, the husband of the Empress Catherine. He was claiming to be the real Tsar, who would restore the real Orthodox traditions of pre-Petrine Russia – by which he meant Old Ritualism.

As we have seen, a false legitimism, as opposed to liberalism, was also characteristic of the popular rebellions in the Time of Troubles. K.N. Leontiev considered it to be characteristic also of Stenka Razin's rebellion in 1671, and saw this legitimism as another proof of how deeply the Great Russian people was penetrated by the Byzantine spirit: "Almost all of our major rebellions have never had a Protestant or liberal-democratic character, but have borne upon themselves the idiosyncratic seal of false-legitimism, that is, of that native and religious monarchist principle, which created the whole greatness of our State.

"The rebellion of Stenka Razin failed immediately people became convinced that the tsar did not agree with their ataman. Moreover, Razin constantly tried to show that he was fighting, not against royal blood, but only against the boyars and the clergy who agreed with them.

"Pugachev was cleverer in fighting against the government of Catherine, whose strength was incomparably greater than the strength of pre-Petrine Rus'. He deceived the people, he used that legitimism of the Great Russian people of which I have been speaking."³⁴⁵

"The slogan of Pugachev's movement," writes Ivanov, "was The Freedom of the Orthodox Faith. In his manifestos Pugachev bestowed 'the cross and the beard' on the Old Believers. He promised that in his new kingdom, after Petersburg had been destroyed, everyone would 'hold the old faith, the shaving of beards will be strictly forbidden, as well as the wearing of German clothes.' The present churches, went the rumour, would be razed, seven-domed ones would be built, the sign of the cross would

³⁴⁴ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 221. Metropolitan Arsenius has recently been canonized by the Moscow Patriarchate.

³⁴⁵ Leontiev, "Vizantinizm i Slavianstvo" ("Byzantinism and Slavism"), in *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavism), Moscow: "Respublika", 1996, p. 105.

be made, not with three fingers, but with two. In Pugachev the people saw the longed-for lawful tsar. It was in this that the power of Pugachev's movement consisted. There is no doubt that economic reasons played a significant role in this movement. The dominance of foreigners and Russian rubbish under Peter I and of the Masonic oligarchy under his successors had created fertile soil for popular discontent. The Masonic oligarchy acted in its own egoistic interests, despising the needs and interests of the people."³⁴⁶

However, the Church and the great mass of the people still recognized Catherine as the lawful anointed sovereign, and the hierarchs of the Church publicly called on the people to reject the pretender. As a result, writes A.P. Dobroklonsky, "it is not surprising that Pugachev dealt cruelly with the clergy. From their midst he created at this time no fewer than 237 martyrs for faithfulness to the throne."³⁴⁷

There were weighty reasons for this loyalty. The eighteenth-century sovereigns of Russia, while being despotic in their administration and non-Russian in their culture, never formally renounced the Orthodox faith, and even defended it at times. Thus "Peter I," writes Dobroklonsky, "who allowed himself a relaxed attitude towards the institutions of the Church, and even clowning parodies of sacred actions, nevertheless considered it necessary to restrain others. There was a case when he beat Tatischev with a rod for having permitted himself some liberty in relation to church traditions, adding: 'Don't lead believing souls astray, don't introduce free-thinking, which is harmful for the public well-being; I did not teach you to be an enemy of society and the Church.' On another occasion he subjected Prince Khovansky and some young princes and courtiers to cruel physical punishments for having performed a blasphemous rite of burial on a guest who was drunk to the point of unconsciousness and mocked church vessels. While breaking the fast himself, Peter I, so as not to lead others astray, asked for a dispensation for himself from the patriarch. Anna Ioannovna, the former duchess of Courland, who was surrounded by Germans, nevertheless paid her dues of veneration for the institutions of the Orthodox Church; every day she attended Divine services, zealously built and adorned churches, and even went on pilgrimages. Elizabeth Petrovna was a model of sincere pity: she gave generous alms for the upkeep of churches, the adornment of icons and shrines both with money and with the work of her own hand: in her beloved Alexandrovsk sloboda she was present at Divine services every day, rode or went on foot on pilgrimages to monasteries, observed the fast in strict abstinence and withdrawal, even renouncing official audiences. There is a tradition that before her death she had the intention of becoming tonsured as a nun. Even Catherine II, in spite of the fact that she was a fan of the fashionable French philosophy, considered it necessary to carry out the demands of piety: on feastsdays she was without fail present at Divine services; she venerated the clergy and kissed the hands of priests..."³⁴⁸

Moreover, the eighteenth-century sovereigns undoubtedly served the ends of Divine Providence in other important ways. Thus it was under Peter I, and with his

³⁴⁶ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-183.

³⁴⁷ Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 579.

³⁴⁸ Dobroklonsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 717-718.

active support, that the Russian Spiritual Mission in Beijing was established.³⁴⁹ Again, it was towards the end of the eighteenth century that the Russian mission to Alaska began. Moreover, it was under Catherine especially that the age-old persecutor of Russian Orthodoxy, Poland, was humbled, literally disappearing from the map of Europe, while Ottoman Turkey was driven from the north shore of the Black Sea, thus enabling the fertile lands of southern Russia to be colonized and exploited. These important military triumphs, which were essential for the survival of the Orthodox Empire into the next century (although they created their own problems, as we shall see), would have been impossible, given Russia's lack of economic development, without a very authoritarian power at the helm. Moreover, it must be remembered that at this low point in Russia's spiritual progress, a rigid straitjacket may well have been necessary.

Thus with regard to religion, as the historian Mikhail Pogodin once commented, "if the ban on apostasy had been lifted, half the Russian peasants would have joined the *raskol* [Old Ritualists], while half the aristocrats would have converted to Catholicism."³⁵⁰

Although this is clearly an exaggeration, it nevertheless contains this kernel of truth: that the greater initiative and responsibility given to the Church and people in a true Orthodox autocracy would have been too great a burden for the Russian Church and people to sustain at this time. They were simply not prepared for it. For sometimes the body needs to regain its strength before the soul can begin the process of regeneration. A broken limb needs to be strapped in a rigid encasement of plaster of Paris until the break has healed, the plaster can be removed and the restored limb is strong enough to step out without any support. In the same way, the straitjacket of "Orthodox absolutism", contrary to the Orthodox ideal though it was, was perhaps necessary until the double fracture in Russian society caused by westernism and the Old Ritualist schism could be healed...

And yet, as so often in history, we see that the seeds of revival were being sown in this, the nadir of Russian spiritual history. For it was in the reign of Catherine that St. Paisius Velichkovsky was laying the foundation for the revival of Russian monasticism in the nineteenth century that would produce such beautiful fruits as the elders of Optina. And it was in her reign that a young man called Seraphim entered the monastery of Sarov and from there began his ascent to the summit of spiritual excellence. For history remains the domain, not only of psychological, sociological, political and economic laws, which are in principle predictable, but also of the free will of man and the grace of God, which no man can predict...

And so, on the one hand, the results of the transformation of the Russian State from an autocracy into an absolutist state were spiritually disastrous (even if they had some good results in the secular realm). And on the other hand, while groaning beneath this western yoke, the people retained its Orthodox faith, making possible the slow but steady, if incomplete return of Russia to its pre-Petrine traditions from the reign of the Emperor Paul onwards. Thus while the eighteenth century represented the deepest

³⁴⁹ Dr. Jeremias Norman, "The Orthodox Mission to the Chinese", *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. XVIII, N 1, 2001, pp. 29-35.

³⁵⁰ Pogodin, in Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

nadir yet in Russian statehood, Russia still remained recognizably Russia, the chief bearer and defender of Orthodoxy in the world.

We return, finally, to the thought that the eighteenth-century rulers of Russia were *both* forerunners of the Antichrist, insofar as they undermined the traditional Orthodox way of life in Russia, *and* restrainers of the Antichrist, in that they built up a mighty state that was able to defend what was left of the Orthodox way of life in the next century. They made possible both the glorious victory of 1812 over the French Antichrist, and the catastrophic surrender of 1917 to the Soviet Antichrist. And so it was in the eighteenth century that Russia finally emerged on the world stage as the universalist empire of the Third Rome, the heir of the Second, New Rome of Byzantium – only to fall, in the twentieth century, to the pagan spirit of the First Rome that these same eighteenth-century rulers had re-implanted in her...

16. TSAR PAUL I

Tsar Paul I has in general had a bad press from historians. Nevertheless, it was he who began the slow process whereby the absolutist Russian empire of the eighteenth century was transformed into the less absolutist, more truly autocratic empire of the nineteenth, by restoring the links of the monarchy with the people's faith, Orthodoxy. For, contrary to the generally held view, the Orthodox Autocracy is not a form of absolutism. Indeed, as D.A. Khomiakov writes, "the tsar is 'the denial of absolutism' precisely because it is bound by the confines of the people's understanding and world-view, which serve as that framework within which the power can and must consider itself to be free."³⁵¹

Restorer of the Autocracy

St. John Maximovich writes that the Tsarevich Paul, "was very different in his character and convictions from the Empress Catherine. Catherine II preferred to remove her son from the inheritance and make her eldest grandson, Alexander Pavlovich, her heir... At the end of 1796 Catherine II finally decided to appoint Alexander as her heir, passing Paul by, but she suddenly and unexpectedly died. The heir, Tsarevich Paul Petrovich, ascended the throne..."³⁵²

Tsar Paul had been educated by Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, and shared his teacher's devotion to pre-Petrine Russia. Moreover, he witnessed to the terrible condition to which his predecessors had brought Russia: "On ascending the throne of All-Russia, and entering in accordance with duty into various parts of the state administration, at the very beginning of the inspection We saw that the state economy, in spite of the changes in income made at various times, had been subjected to extreme discomforts from the continuation over many years of unceasing warfare and other circumstances. Expenses exceeded income. The deficit was increasing from year to year, multiplying the internal and external debts; in order to make up a part of this deficit, large sums were borrowed, which brought great harm and disorder with them."³⁵³

Tsar Paul's coronation took place in the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow on April 5, 1797, the first day of Holy Pascha. The rite moved a significant step away from the symbolism of the First Rome, the model of the eighteenth-century Tsars, and back to the symbolism of the New Rome of Constantinople, the Mother-State of Holy Rus'. For before putting on the purple, Paul was vested in the dalmatic, one of the royal vestments of the Byzantine emperors...

Then, writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "he himself read out a new *Statute [Uchrezhdenie] on the Imperial Family* which he had composed together with [the Tsaritsa] Maria Fyodorovna. By this law he abolished Peter I's decree of 1722 on the

³⁵¹ Khomiakov, *Pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost'* (Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality), Minsk, 1997, p. 103.

³⁵² St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie Zakona o Prestolonasledovanii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law on the Succession to the Throne in Russia), Shanghai, 1936, Podolsk, 1994.

³⁵³ Tsar Paul, in V.F. Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo: ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, p. 211.

right of the Russian Autocrat to appoint the Heir to the Throne according to his will *and revived* the Basic Act of 1613. From now on and forever (!) a strict *order* of succession was established according to which the eldest son became his father's heir, and in the case of childlessness – his elder brother. The law also foresaw various other cases, determining the principles of the succession to the Throne in accordance with *the ancient, pre-Petrine* (!) Russian customs and certain important new rules (for example, a Member of the Imperial Family wanting to preserve his rights to the succession must enter only into an *equal by blood* marriage with a member of a royal or ruling house, that is, who is not lower than himself by blood). Paul I's new law once and for all cut off the danger in Russia of those 'revolution'-coups which had taken place in the eighteenth century. And it meant that the power of the nobility over the Russian Tsars was ending; now they could be independent of the nobility's desires and sympathies. *The autocracy was restored in Russia!* Deeply wounded and 'offended', the nobility immediately, from the moment of the proclamation of the law 'On the Imperial Family', entered into opposition to Paul I. The Tsar had to suffer the first and most powerful blow of the opposition. This battle between the Autocrat and the nobility was *decisive*, it determined the future destiny of the whole state. It also *revealed who was who* in Great Russia. All the historians who hate Paul I are not able to diminish the significance of the Law of 1797, they recognize that it was exceptionally important and correct, but they remark that it was the only outstanding act of this Emperor (there were no others supposedly). But *such* an act would have been more than sufficient for the whole reign! For this act signified a radical counter-coup – or, following the expression of the time, counter-revolution – to that which Catherine II had accomplished.

"However, the haters lie here, as in everything else! The law was not the only important act of his Majesty. *On the same day* of 1797 Paul I proclaimed a manifesto in which *for the first time the serf-peasants* were obliged to make an oath of allegiance to the Tsars and were called, not 'slaves', but '*beloved subjects*', that is, they were recognized as *citizens* of the State! There is more! Paul I issued a decree *forbidding* landowners to force serfs to work corvée for more than *three days* in the week: the other three days the peasants were to work for themselves, and on Sundays – rest and celebrate 'the day of the Lord', like all Christians.³⁵⁴ Under the threat of severe penalties it was confirmed that masters were forbidden to sell families of peasants one by one. *It was forbidden* to subject serfs older than seventy to physical punishments. (And at the same time *it was permitted* to apply physical punishments to *noblemen* who had been condemned for criminal acts.) All this was nothing other than *the beginning of the liberation of the Russian peasants from serfdom!* In noble circles of the time it was called a 'revolution from above', and for the first time they said of about their Emperor: 'He is mad!' Let us recall that this word was used in relation to the 'peasant' politics of Paul I. He even received a special 'Note' from one assembly of nobles, in which it was said that 'the Russian people *has not matured* sufficiently for the removal of physical punishments'."³⁵⁵

³⁵⁴ The decree said: "The Law of God given to us in the ten commandments teaches us to devote the seventh day to God; which is why on this day, which is glorified by the triumph of the Faith, and on which we have been counted worthy to receive the sacred anointing and royal crowning on our Forefathers' Throne, we consider it our duty before the Creator and Giver of all good things to confirm the exact and constant fulfillment of this law throughout our Empire, commanding each and every one to observe it, so that no one should have any excuse to dare to force his peasants to work on Sundays...."

³⁵⁵ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 239-240.

“We know of a case when the Tsar came to the defense of some peasants whose landowner was about to sell them severally, without their families and land, so as to make use of the peasants’ property. The peasants refused to obey, and the landowner informed the governor of the rebellion. But the governor did not fail to carry out his duty and quickly worked out what was happening. On receiving news about what was happening, Tsar Paul declared the deal invalid, ordered that the peasants be left in their places, and that the landowner be severely censured in his name. The landowner’s conscience began to speak to him: he gathered the village commune and asked the peasants for forgiveness. Later he set off for St. Petersburg and asked for an audience with his Majesty. ‘Well, what did you sort out with your peasants, my lord? What did they say?’ inquired the Emperor of the guilty man. ‘They said to me, your Majesty: *God will forgive...*’ ‘Well, since God and they have forgiven you, I also forgive you. But remember from now on that they are not your slaves, but my subjects just as you are. You have just been entrusted with looking after them, and you are responsible for them before me, as I am for Russia before God...’ concluded the Sovereign.”³⁵⁶

The Tsar also acted to humble the pride of the Guards regiments which, together with the nobility, had acted in the role of king-makers in the eighteenth century. “He forbade the assigning of noblemen’s children, babies, into the guards (which had been done before him to increase ‘the number of years served’). The officers of the guards were forbidden to drive in four- or six-horse carriages, to hide their hands in winter in fur muffs, or to wear civilian clothing in public. No exception was made for them by comparison with other army officers. At lectures and inspections the Guards were asked about rules and codes with all strictness. How much, then and later, did they speak (and they still write now!) about the ‘cane discipline’ and the amazing cruelties in the army under Paul I, the nightmarish punishments which were simply means of mocking the military.... Even among the historians who hate Paul I we find the admission that the strictnesses of the Emperor related only to the *officers* (from the nobility), while with regard to the *soldiers* he was most concerned about their food and upkeep, manifesting a truly paternal attentiveness. By that time the ordinary members of the Guards had long been not nobles, but peasants. And the soldierly mass of the Guards of Paul I very much *loved* him and were devoted to him. Officers were severely punished for excessive cruelty to soldiers... On the fateful night of the murder of Paul I *the Guards soldiers* rushed to support him. The *Preobrazhensky* regiment *refused* to shout ‘hurrah!’ to Alexander Pavlovich as to the new Emperor, since they were not sure whether his Majesty Paul I was truly dead. Two *soldiers* of the regiment demanded that their commanders give them exact proof of the death of the former Emperor. These soldiers were not only not punished, but were sent as an ‘embassy’ of the *Preobrazhensky* to the grave of Paul I. On their return the regiment gave the oath of allegiance to Alexander I. That was the *real* situation of the Russian soldier of Paul’s times, and not their fictitious ‘rightlessness!’”³⁵⁷

“The Emperor Paul’s love for justice and care for the simple people was expressed also in the accessibility with which he made his subjects happy, establishing the famous box in the Winter palace whose key was possessed by him personally and into which the first courtier and the last member of the simple people could cast their letters

³⁵⁶ “Svyatoj Tsar-Muchenik Pavel”, *Svecha Pokaiania*, № 4, February, 2000, p. 18.

³⁵⁷ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 240, 241.

with petitions for the Tsar's immediate defence or mercy. The Tsar himself emptied the box every day and read the petitions, leaving not a single one of them unanswered.

"There was probably no sphere in the State which did not feel the influence of the industrious Monarch. Thus he ordered the minting of silver rubles to struggle against the deflation in the value of money. The Sovereign himself sacrificed a part of the court's silver on this important work. He said that he himself would eat on tin 'until the ruble recovers its rate'. And the regulation on medical institutions worked out by the Emperor Paul could be used in Russia even in our day."³⁵⁸

"Paul I gave hierarchs in the Synod the right *themselves to choose* a candidate for the post of over-procurator, took great care for the material situation of the clergy, and the widows and orphans of priests, and forbade physical punishments for priests before they had been defrocked."³⁵⁹ He also increased the lands of hierarchical houses and the pay of the parish clergy, and freed the clergy from being pressed into army service. The power of bishops was extended to all Church institutions and to all diocesan servers.³⁶⁰ He opened many seminaries, increased the income of the theological academies by five times, and greatly broadened the curriculum.³⁶¹

In general, as K.A. Pappmehl writes, "Paul proved to be much more generous and responsive to the Church's financial needs than his mother. Although this may to some – perhaps considerable – extent be attributed to his general tendency to reverse her policies, it was probably due, in at least equal measure, to his different attitude toward the Church based, as it undoubtedly was, on sincere Christian belief.... One symptom of this different attitude was that, unlike his predecessor – or, indeed, successor, Paul dealt with the Synod not through the *Ober-Prokurator*, but through the senior ecclesiastical member: first Gavriil and later Amvrosii."³⁶²

"One of the Tsar's contemporaries, N.A. Sablukov, who had the good fortune, thanks to his service at the Royal Court, to know the Emperor personally, remembered the Emperor Paul in his memoirs as 'a deeply religious man, filled with a true piety and the fear of God.... He was a magnanimous man, ready to forgive offences and recognise his mistakes. He highly prized righteousness, hated lies and deceit, cared for justice and was merciless in his persecution of all kinds of abuses, in particular usury and bribery.'

³⁵⁸ "Svyatoj Tsar-Muchenik Pavel", *op. cit.*

³⁵⁹ Lebedev, *Velikorossia*, *op. cit.*, p. 242. A.P. Dobroklonsky writes: "At the beginning of the [19th] century the over-procurator Yakovlev planned to place [the consistories] in a position more independent of the bishops and presented to the sovereign a report about establishing in them a special post of procurator subject only to the over-procurator; but the realization of this report was hindered by Metropolitan Ambrose Podobedov of St. Petersburg, who presented a report on his part that in such a case the canonical authority of the bishops would be shaken and they would become dependent on secular officials" (*Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (Handbook on the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, p. 534).

³⁶⁰ Fr. Alexis Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo* (The Church and the State), Moscow, 1997, p. 106.

³⁶¹ Yu. A. Sorokin, "Pavel I i 'vol'nie kamenschiki'" (Paul I and the 'Freemasons'), *Voprosy Istorii* (Questions of History), 11, 2005, p. 30.

³⁶² Pappmehl, *Metropolitan Platon of Moscow*, Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1983, p. 78.

“The well-known researcher of Paul, Shabelsky-Bork, writes: ‘While he was Tsarevich and Heir, Paul would often spend the whole night in prayer. A little carpet is preserved in Gatchina; on it he used to pray, and it is worn through by his knees.’ The above-mentioned N.A. Sablukov recounts, in agreement with this: ‘Right to the present day they show the places on which Paul was accustomed to kneel, immersed in prayer and often drenched in tears. The parquet is worn through in these places. The room of the officer sentry in which I used to sit during my service in Gatchina was next to Paul’s private study, and I often heard the Emperor’s sighs when he was standing at prayer.’

“The historical records of those years have preserved a description of the following event: ‘A watchman had a strange and wonderful vision when he was standing outside the summer palace... The Archangel Michael stood before the watchman suddenly, in the light of heavenly glory, and the watchman was stupefied and in trembling from this vision... And the Archangel ordered that a cathedral should be raised in his honour there and that this command should be passed on to the Emperor Paul immediately. The special event went up the chain of command, of course, and Paul Petrovich was told about everything. But Paul Petrovich replied: “I already know”: he had seen everything beforehand, and the appearance to the watchman was a kind of repetition...’ From this story we can draw the conclusion that Tsar Paul was counted worthy also of revelations from the heavenly world...”³⁶³

We should also not forget here the salutary influence of Tsar Paul’s wife, Empress Maria Fyodorovna, who was very popular among the people. A.V. Buganov writes: “While it was the inveterate desire of the enserfed peasants throughout Russia to be liberated, in the villages of Maria Fyodorovna the complete opposite was observed: tradesmen and free men generally were assigned to the number of her peasants. The empress took care that they had enough, and founded village charitable-educational institutions. She often put on feasts for her peasants in her park, where in her presence the young people sang songs and had round dances. The summit of Maria Fyodorovna’s activity and the crown of her charitable work was her educational system, which was known as ‘the institutions of Empress Maria’. These included shelters and children’s homes and educational institutions, especially for women.”³⁶⁴

[The Annexation of Georgia](#)

Tsar Paul’s love for the Church found expression in two important events in the year 1800: the annexation of Georgia and the reunion of some of the Old Ritualists with the Orthodox Church on a “One Faith” (*Yedinoverie*) basis. The former strengthened the security of the Orthodox world against the external foe, and the latter - its internal unity.

The Georgians had first appealed for Russian protection in 1587. Since then, they had suffered almost continual invasions from the Persians and the Turks, leading to

³⁶³ “Svyatoj Tsar-Muchenik Pavel”, *op. cit.* And after his death he himself appeared to people from the other world. See <http://lib.rus.ec/b/30838/read>.

³⁶⁴ Buganov, “Lichnosti i sobytia istorii v pamiati russkikh krestian XIX – nachala XX veka” (Personalities and historical events in the memory of the Russian peasants of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries), *Voprosy Istorii* (Questions of History), December, 2005, p. 120.

many martyrdoms, of which the most famous was that of Queen Ketevan in 1624. One king, Rostom, even adopted Islam and persecuted Orthodoxy. In fact, from 1634 until the crowning of King Wakhtang in 1701, all the sovereigns of Georgia were Mohammedan. The eighteenth century saw only a small improvement, and in 1762 King Teimuraz II travelled to Russia for help. In 1783, in the treaty of Georgievsk, protection was formally offered to King Heraclius II of Kartli-Kakhetia by Catherine II.

“The last, most heavy trial for the Church of Iberia,” writes P. Ioseliani, “was the irruption of Mahomed-Khan into the weakened state of Georgia, in the year 1795. In the month of September of that year the Persian army took the city of Tiflis, seized almost all the valuable property of the royal house, and reduced the palace and the whole of the city into a heap of ashes and of ruins. The whole of Georgia, thus left at the mercy of the ruthless enemies of the name of Christ, witnessed the profanation of everything holy, and the most abominable deeds and practices carried on in the temples of God. Neither youth nor old age could bring those cruel persecutors to pity; the churches were filled with troops of murderers and children were killed at their mothers’ breasts. They took the Archbishop of Tiflis, Dositheus, who had not come out of the Synod of Sion, made him kneel down before an image of [the most holy Mother of God], and, without mercy on his old age, threw him from a balcony into the river Kur; then they plundered his house, and set fire to it. The pastors of the Church, unable to hide the treasures and other valuable property of the Church, fell a sacrifice to the ferocity of their foes. Many images of saints renowned in those days perished for ever; as, for instance, among others, the image of [the most holy Mother of God] of the Church of Metekh, and that of the Synod of Sion. The enemy, having rifled churches, destroyed images, and profaned the tombs of saints, revelled in the blood of Christians; and the inhuman Mahomed-Khan put an end to these horrors only when there remained not a living soul in Tiflis.

“King George XIII, who ascended the throne of Georgia (A.D. 1797-1800) only to see his subjects overwhelmed and rendered powerless by their incessant and hopeless struggles with unavoidable dangers from enemies of the faith and of the people, found the resources of the kingdom exhausted by the constant armaments necessary for its own protection; before his eyes lay the ruins of the city, villages plundered and laid waste, churches, monasteries, and hermitages demolished, troubles within the family, and without it the sword, fire, and inevitable ruin, not only of the Church, but also of the people, yea, even of the very name of the people. In the fear of God, and trusting to His providence, he made over Orthodox Georgia in a decided manner to the Tzar of Russia, his co-religionist; and thus obtained for her peace and quiet. It pleased God, through this king, to heal the deep wounds of an Orthodox kingdom.

“Feeling that his end was drawing near, he, with the consent of all ranks and of the people, requested the Emperor Paul I to take Georgia into his subjection for ever (A.D. 1800). The Emperor Alexander I, when he mounted the throne, promised to protect the Georgian people of the same faith with himself, which had thus given itself over the people of Georgia (A.D. 1801) he proclaimed the following:- ‘One and the the same honour, and humanity laid upon us the sacred duty, after hearing the prayers of sufferers, to grant them justice and equity in exchange for their affliction, security for

their persons and for their property, and to give to all alike the protection of the law.”³⁶⁵

What we have called “Georgia” was in fact the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti in Eastern Georgia. But there was another independent Georgian kingdom in the West, Imeretia.

After the annexation of the eastern kingdom, “the Russian government,” as we read in the *Life* of Hieroschemamonk Hilarion the Georgian of Mount Athos, “initiated correspondence with the Imeretian king concerning the uniting of his nation with Russia. King Solomon II sought the counsel of his country’s foremost nobles, and in 1804, due to pressure from Russia, he was left with little choice but to set forth the following: since the king did not have an heir to the throne, Imeretia would retain her independence until his death, remaining in brotherly relations with Russia as between two realms of the same faith. The Russian army had free passage across Imeretian territory to the Turkish border, and the Imeretian army was required to render them aid. The relations of the two countries were to be upheld in those sacred terms which are proper to God’s anointed rulers and Christian peoples united in an indivisible union of soul – eternally and unwaveringly. But after the king’s death the legislation of the Russian Empire would be introduced. The resolution was then sent to the Governor-General of the Caucasus in Tbilisi for forwarding to Tsar Alexander I.

“Despite the general approval of the resolution by the king’s subjects, one nobleman, Prince Zurab Tsereteli, began plotting how he could seize the Imeretian throne for himself. He first attempted to erode the friendly relations between the two monarchs by slandering each to the other. Unable to sow discord, he began a communication with the Russian governor-general of the Caucasus, Alexander Tormasov. Depicting the royal suite in the darkest colors to the governor-general, after repeated intrigues he finally succeeded in his designs. Eventually, the report reached the tsar. He, believing the slander, ordered Tormasov to lure Solomon II to Tbilisi and escort him to Russia, where he would remain a virtual prisoner.

“Not able to believe that others could be so base, treacherous and ignoble, the king fell into the trap set by Tormasov and Prince Zurab. Fr. Ise [the future Hieroschemamonk Hilarion] had initially warned the king of Prince Zurab’s disloyalty. However, upon learning of his wife’s repose he returned to Kutaisi and was unable to further counsel the king.

“King Solomon II and his entire retinue were eventually coaxed all the way to Tbilisi. There they were put under house arrest; the plan being to send the king to live out his days in a palace in St. Petersburg. Preferring exile to imprisonment, the king and his noblemen conceived a plan of escape and fled across the border to Turkey. There, with Fr. Ise and his retinue, he lived out the remainder of his life. After great deprivations and aborted attempts to reclaim the Imeretian Kingdom from Russia, King Solomon II reposed at Trebizond on February 19, 1815, in his forty-first year...

“After the king’s death, Fr. Ise intended to set out for Imeretia (then annexed to Russia) no matter what the consequences. He informed all the courtiers, who

³⁶⁵ Ioseliani, *A Short History of the Georgian Church*, Jordanville, 1983, pp. 190-193.

numbered about six hundred men, and suggested that they follow his example. Many of them accepted his decision joyfully, but fear of the tsar's wrath hampered this plan. Fr. Ise reassured everyone, promising to take upon himself the task of mediating before the tsar. He immediately wrote out a petition in the name of all the princes and other members of the retinue, and sent it to the tsar. The sovereign graciously received their petition, restored them to their former ranks, and returned their estates..."³⁶⁶

Although union with Russia protected Georgia from the incursions of the Muslims, it had the unfortunate effect of destroying the autocephaly of the Georgian Church and weakening its culture. Archpriest Zakaria Machitadze writes: "The foreign officials sent to rule in Georgia began to interfere considerably in the affairs of the Church, and it soon became clear that the Russian government [contrary to eighth paragraph of the treaty of 1783] intended to abolish the autocephaly of the Georgian Church and subordinate it to the Russian Synod.

"On June 10, 1811, Tsar Alexander summoned Anton II, Patriarch of All Georgia, to his court and from there sent him into exile. For ten years Georgia had neither a king nor a spiritual leader, and the people began to lose their sense of political and spiritual independence.

"There ensued a period of great difficulty in the life of the Georgian Church. The Church was subordinated to the Russian Synod through an exarch, or representative, of the synod. From 1811 to 1817 the Georgian nobleman Varlaam served as exarch, but after his term all the subsequent exarches were Russian by descent. The foreign exarches' ignorance of the Georgian language, traditions, local saints, and feast gave rise to many conflicts between the foreign clergy and the Georgian Orthodox believers. The most contemptible exarches stole valuable pieces of jewelry and masterpieces of the Georgian enamel arts and sent them to Russia. Many cathedrals were left to fall into ruin, and the number of diocese in Georgia dropped dramatically from twenty-four to five. Divine services in the Georgian language and ancient polyphonic chants were replaced by services in Slavonic and the music of the post-Petrine Russian Church.

"Russian domination of the Church aroused considerable vexation and indignation in the Georgian people, and evidence of the exarchs' anti-Georgian activities exacerbated their discontent. Despite the wise admonitions of many Russian elders to respect the portion assigned by lot to the Theotokos and converted by the holy Apostles themselves, appalling crimes continued to be committed against the Georgian Church and nation. Frescoes in churches were whitewashed, and the Khakuli Icon of the Theotokos along with other icons and objects adorned with precious gold and silver were stolen..."³⁶⁷

In spite of these deviations, the annexation of Georgia marked an important step forward in Russia's progress to becoming the Third Rome. In the eighteenth century "the gathering of the Russian lands" was on its way to completion, and the wars with

³⁶⁶ "Tower of Virtue: The Life and Ascetic Labors of St. Hilarion the Georgian of Mount Athos", *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 39, №№ 3-4 (230-231), May-August, 2003, pp. 117-118.

³⁶⁷ Machitadze, *Lives of the Georgian Saints*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood Press, 2006, pp. 123-124.

Turkey demonstrated Russia's determination to liberate the Orthodox under the Turkish yoke. Georgia was the first non-Russian Orthodox nation to enter the empire on a voluntary basis...

In 1901 Fr. John Vostorgov meditated on this union of as follows: "In voluntarily uniting herself voluntarily with Russia, Georgia gained much. But we must not forget that she also lost: she lost her independent existence as a separate state, that which served and serves as the object of ardent desires and bloody struggles up to now in many peoples, and which Georgia herself defended for a long series of centuries as an inestimable treasure with as lofty heroism as can be attributed to any people in history.

"Whether we recognize or not the providential significance of peoples in history, we must in any case agree that historical and geographical conditions at least place before this or that people this or that *world task*. Only from this point of view do the ardent enthusiasms of patriotism, and the fervent desire and care to bring greatness and power to one's homeland, acquire a meaning and higher justification: her greatness and power are not an end, but the means to serve the universal, pan-human good. But what was the destiny of Russia on the universal-historical plane? It would not be an exaggeration, nor an artificial invention to point to the fact that she, as standing on the borders of the East and the West, is destined to mediate between them, and to work out in her own history a higher synthesis of the principles of life of the East and the West, which are often contradictory and hostile to one another, pushing them onto the path of bitter struggle, reconciling them in the unity of a higher, unifying cultural type. This task - a great, colossal, unique task - was bequeathed to Russia by deceased Byzantium, which in her turn inherited it from ancient Greece with her eastern-Persian armies, her powerful Hellenism, which was victoriously borne even in the time of Alexander the Great into the very heart of the East.

"But much earlier than Russia this great task was recognized and accepted by Georgia...

"In the days of the ancient struggle between Greece and Persia, the West was characterized, spiritually speaking, by the religions of anthropomorphism, and the East - by Parsism. Georgia, like Armenia, stood at that time completely on the side of the latter. The Persians placed a seal on the clothing, morals and customs of the Georgians, and on their royal dynasties, language and religion, that is perceptible to this day, because in deep antiquity the native paganism of the Georgians was supplanted by the worship of Armazd, in whose name we can undoubtedly hear the name of the Persian Ormuzd. A new, powerful influence entered into the world when the West accepted Christianity and placed it on the banner of her historical existence. And before the appearance of Christianity, under Caesar and Pompey, we see in Georgia the beginnings of an attraction towards the West. But she finally understood her own mission in the world only in the light of Christianity: under the emperor Hadrian, this was still expressed in an indecisive manner and bore the character of a certain compulsion, but under Constantine the Great this was finally and irreversibly recognized.

"It is not in vain that the year of the victory of Constantine the Great near Adrianople (323), and the declaration that Christianity was not only permitted (as it

had been in 312 and 313) but the dominant religion of the Roman empire, coincides with the year of the baptism of the Georgians in Mskhet... A remarkable coincidence! King Mirian, who was by birth from a Persian dynasty, wavered quite a bit until, propelled by the historical calling of his people, in spite of his family links with Persia, he decided to make this step, which irreversibly defined the destiny of Georgia. Soon the East, in its turn, exchanged Parsism for Islam, and there began the great duel of two worlds. Western Europe responded, and responded powerfully, to this duel with its crusades. But we can say that the life and history of Georgia was one long crusade, one long heroic and martyric feat! The arena of the great struggle was continually being widened in the direction of the north: from ancient Greece to Byzantium, to Georgia, to the south-western Slavic peoples. But when Byzantium began to decline, from the tenth century, still further to the north, the young Russian people was called into the arena, bearing upon herself the seal of great powers and a great destiny. But until she grew up and thrust aside a multitude of paths that bound her childhood and youth, until she had passed through the educational suffering of her struggle with the wild hordes, with the infidels, in the crucible of the Tatar yoke, and in domestic upheavals, Georgia remained alone. It is difficult to represent and describe her boundless sufferings, her faithfulness to the Cross, her heroism worthy of eternal memory, her merits before the Christian world.

“Soon the Tatar yoke became synonymous with Islam; Russia, casting aside that yoke, moved further and further into the Muslim world, became stronger and stronger, and finally the hour of the will of God sounded: she gave the hand of help and complete union to exhausted Iberia, which had reached the final limits of exhaustion in her unequal struggle. Peoples having a single world task naturally merged into one on the level of the state also...

“But this is not all: the situation of the struggle between Islam and Christianity, between the East and the West, immediately changed. Russia, having established herself in Transcaucasia, immediately became a threat to Persia and Turkey; with unprecedented rapidity and might she cast the banner of Islam far from the bounds of tormented Georgia. Only one century has passed since the time of the union of Russia and Georgia, and in the meantime what a huge, hitherto unseen growth has taken place in Christian Russia, and, by contrast, fall in Muslim Turkey and Persia! This demonstrates to all how much good the executed decision of the two peoples to merge into one on the basis of the communality of their world tasks brought to the history of the world one hundred years ago.

“But did both peoples understand these tasks, and do they understand them now?

“Even if they had not understood them clearly, they would have striven towards them semi-consciously: if a people is an organism, then in it there must be instincts which subconsciously direct its life purposefully and infallibly, having before it, not death, but life. But there is a force which gave to both the one and the other people an understanding of their world tasks, and the means of their fulfillment. This force is *Orthodoxy*. It alone includes in itself the principles of true Catholicity, and does not suppress nationalities, but presents to each one spiritual freedom without tying its spiritual life to a person, a place or an external discipline, while at the same time it stands higher than all nationalities. By means of undying tradition it preserves a man

from confusing freedom with license, from destructive spiritual anarchy, and makes possible in him constant vitality and growth, as of a spiritual organism. Not being tied to a place or time, and including in itself the principles of true democracy and good, healthy cosmopolitanism (in the Orthodox understanding of the Church), Orthodoxy – and only Orthodoxy – serves as a religion having an eternal and global significance, uniting mankind inwardly, and not outwardly. Without suppressing nationalities, it can at the same time become a pan-popular religion in the full sense of the word. And truly it has become the fundamental strength and popular religion both for the Russians and for the Georgians. Outside Orthodoxy both Russians and Georgians cease to be themselves. But in it they find the true guarantee of the preservation of their spiritual personalities under any hostile attacks. For that reason it has become infinitely dear to the hearts of both peoples; for that reason it has so quickly and firmly united both peoples in an unbroken union hitherto unknown in history of state and Church, in spite of the absence of tribal kinship, for kinship according to faith is higher than kinship according to blood, union in the spirit is higher than union in race, and stronger than unions created for the avaricious aims of states. This is a union in life and death, for the present and the future, since it rests on spiritual, age-old foundations. And the eternal and the spiritual give sense to the temporal and make it truly fertile...”³⁶⁸

[The Yedinoverie](#)

Although the Old Ritualists were not allowed to have open churches, the numbers of those executed or tortured in the eighteenth were not large – and certainly smaller than the numbers of those who immolated themselves in the burnings of the previous century. As long as they did not seek to make converts, they were in general left alone. Some emigrated to the Urals, Siberia, Lithuania and Courland; but the Empress Elizabeth invited those who had gone abroad to return to Russia.

“In 1761,” writes S.A. Zenkovsky, “when Peter III came to power, he almost immediately issued a decree forbidding any kind of persecution of the Old Ritualists, which was confirmed in 1762, 1764 and 1784 by Catherine II. She asked the Old Ritualists living abroad to return to the homeland, and tens of thousands of them responded to her appeal, returned to Russia and settled in the Middle and Lower Volga regions and in New Russia, where they were immediately offered large plots of land. The ‘schismatics’ office’ that controlled Old Ritualist affairs was closed, the Old Ritualists received civil rights, and the monasteries of Irgiz on the Lower Volga were opened and became important centres of the Old Ritualist *popovtsi*.”

“At the end of the century large Old Ritualist centres were formed in Moscow – the Rogozhsky (*popovtsi*) and Preobrazhensky (*bespopovtsi*), and the Korolevsky in Petersburg. In many cities and village districts there were Old Ritualist (popovtsi) churches or chapels in which priests who had come over from the ‘dominant’ church

³⁶⁸ Vostorgov, “Gruzia i Rossia” (Georgia and Russia), in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij Protoiereia Ioanna Vostorgova* (The Complete Collection of the Works of Protopriest John Vostorgov), Moscow, 1914, vol. 1, pp. 63-67.

to Old Ritualism served. To speak of executions or tortures of the Old Ritualists... since 1761 would simply be a distortion of the truth..."³⁶⁹

It is against this background that we should view the movement that began among some Old Ritualist communities towards union with the Orthodox on the basis of *Yedinoverie*, or "One Faith" – that is, agreement on dogmas and the acceptance of the authority of the Orthodox hierarchy, together with retention of the pre-Niconian rites. "The essence of the *Yedinoverie*," writes Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky), consisted in the fact that the 'one-faithers', while having amongst themselves the priesthood and the fullness of the sacraments, did not at the same time lose their beloved rites, with which they were accustomed to pray to God and to please Him. The first person who had the idea of the *Yedinoverie* was none other than Patriarch Nikon himself. After his Church reforms he allowed the first and most important leader of the Church disturbance that then arose, Gregory Neronov, to carry out Divine services according to the old printed service books and books of needs, and blessed for him 'to increase the alleluias' during his presence in the Dormition cathedral. In this way Patriarch Nikon returned the first schismatic to the Church. Moreover, already after the correction of the Divine service books, Patriarch Nikon published books of the Hours in which the controversial passages were printed in the old way. It is evident that Patriarch Nikon treated this necessary Church reform very rationally and clearly understood that after the danger of the Russian Orthodox Church being torn away from Ecumenical Orthodoxy had been averted by the accomplished Church reform, the old books and rites could be freely allowed for those who attached particular significance to them without at the same time violating the dogmas of the faith.

"It is also known that in the best Russian monasteries of the second half of the 17th century they looked upon the old and new books in the same way and carried out Church services with the ones and the others. There are also indications that in the 18th century, too, the Church took a condescending attitude towards the Church rite practice of the Old Ritualists, and her attention was mainly directed at the dogmas of the faith, and not at rites and books. The strict measures taken by the government, and the formal, bureaucratic attitude of the Synodal administration, together with the striving to achieve unity in rites by means of force put an end to this *rapprochement* and deepened the schism... There is no doubt that the main reasons [for the gradual mutual alienation of the ruling clergy and the Old Ritualists] were not so much religious and ecclesiastical, as political, including the influence of foreign States striving to weaken and disrupt the inner unity of the Russian people..."³⁷⁰

"Before 1800," writes K.V. Glazkov, "almost all the Old Ritualist communities had united with the Orthodox Church on their own conditions. Besides, there were quite a few so-called crypto-Old Ritualists, who formally belonged to the ruling Church, but who in their everyday life prayed and lived according to the Old Ritualist ways (there were particularly many of these amidst the minor provincial nobility and merchant class). This state of affairs was evidently not normal: it was necessary to work out definite rules, common for all, for the union of the Old Ritualists with the Orthodox

³⁶⁹ Zenkovsky, "Staroobriadchestvo, Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo" (Old Ritualism, the Church and the State), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1987- I, pp. 92-93.

³⁷⁰ Rklitsky, *Zhizneopisanie Blazhennejshago Antonia, Mitropolitan Kievskago i Galitskago* (Life of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), volume 3, New York, 1957, pp. 164-165.

Church. As a result of negotiations with the Muscovite Old Ritualists the latter in 1799 put forward the conditions under which they would agree to accept a priesthood from the Orthodox Church. These conditions, laid out in 16 points, partly represented old rules figuring in the 1793 petition of the Starodub 'agreers', and partly new ones relating to the mutual relations of the 'one-fathers' with the Orthodox Church. These relations required the union of the 'one-fathers' with the Orthodox Church, but allowed for their being to a certain degree isolated. On their basis the Muscovite Old Ritualists submitted a petition to his Majesty for their reunion with the Orthodox Church, and Emperor Paul I wrote at the bottom of this document: 'Let this be. October 27, 1800.' This petition with the royal signature was returned to the Muscovite Old Ritualists and was accepted as complete confirmation of their suggested conditions for union, as an eternal act of the recognition of the equal validity and honour of Old Ritualism and Orthodoxy.

"But on the same day, with the remarks (or so-called 'opinions') of Metropolitan Plato of Moscow, conditions were confirmed that greatly limited the petition of the Old Ritualists. These additions recognized reunited Old Ritualism as being only a transitional stage on the road to Orthodoxy, and separated the 'old-faith' parishes as it were into a special semi-independent ecclesiastical community. Wishing to aid a change in the views of those entering into communion with the Church on the rites and books that they had acquired in Old Ritualism, and to show that the Old Ritualists were falsely accusing the Church of heresies, Metropolitan Plato called the 'agreers' 'one-fathers'...

"The one-fathers petitioned the Holy Synod to remove the curses [of the Moscow Council of 1666-1667] on holy antiquity, but Metropolitan Plato replied in his additional remarks that they were imposed with justice. The Old Ritualists petitioned for union with the Church while keeping the old rites, but Metropolitan Plato left them their rites only for a time, only 'in the hope' that with time the reunited would abandon the old rites and accept the new...

"Amidst the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church the view became more and more established that the 'One Faith' was a transitional step towards Orthodoxy. *But in fact the One Faith implies unity in dogmatic teaching and the grace of the Holy Spirit with the use in the Divine services of various Orthodox rites.* But the old rite continued to be perceived as incorrect, damaged and in no way blessed by the Church, but only 'by condescension not forbidden' for a time."³⁷¹

"The Synodal administration, which was built on formalist foundations, looked on the edinoverie not from a paternal-caring point of view, but only as on a certain group that was constantly making petitions for something, and the Church authorities, in reply to these petitions, constantly restricted them, and regarded them with suspicion and did not satisfy their age-old desire to have a common spiritual father, a [one-father] bishop.

³⁷¹ Glazkov, "K voprosu o edinoverii v sviazi s ego dvukhsotletiem" ("Towards the Question of the 'One Faith' in connection with its 200th anniversary"), *Pravoslavnij Put'* (The Orthodox Way), 2000, pp. 74-75, 76-77.

“Thanks to this situation, the *Yedinoverie* gradually fell into decline and disorder, to the great joy of the hardened schismatics and neighbouring States, which used this misfortune and helped in creating for the Old Ritualists the so-called Austrian hierarchy...”³⁷²

The Murder of the Tsar

When the Empress Catherine saw the effect that the ideas of the Enlightenment had in generating the French revolution, she backed away from her former support of them. “Yesterday I remembered,” she wrote to Grimm in 1794, “that you told me more than once: this century is the century of preparations. I will add that these preparations consisted in preparing dirt and dirty people of various kinds, who produce, have produced and will produce endless misfortunes and an infinite number of unfortunate people.”

“The next year,” writes Ivanov, “she categorically declared that the *Encyclopédie* had only two aims: the one – to annihilate the Christian religion, and the other – royal power. ‘I will calmly wait for the right moment when you will see how right is my opinion concerning the philosophers and their hangers-on that they participated in the revolution..., for Helvétius and D’Alambert both admitted to the deceased Prussian king that this book had only two aims: the first – to annihilate the Christian religion, and the second – to annihilate royal power. They spoke about this already in 1777.”³⁷³

In his estimate of Masonry and French influence, if in little else, Tsar Paul was in agreement with his mother. Well-known Masons were required to sign that they would not open lodges (the rumour that Paul himself became a Mason is false³⁷⁴), and the great General Suvorov was sent to Vienna to join Austria and Britain in fighting the French.³⁷⁵ But the French continued to advance through Europe, and when, in 1797, Napoleon threatened the island of Malta, the knights of the Order of the Maltese Cross, who had ruled the island since the 16th century, appealed to the protection of Tsar Paul. Paul accepted the responsibility, and in gratitude the Maltese offered that he become their Grand Master. Paul accepted because it was anti-French and anti-revolutionary.³⁷⁶

³⁷² Rklitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

³⁷³ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

³⁷⁴ Yu. A. Sorokin, “Pavel I i ‘vol’nie kamenschiki” (Paul I and the ‘Freemasons’), *Voprosy Istorii* (Questions of History), 11, 2005. The Maltese Order that he headed was a Roman Catholic, not a Masonic institution.

³⁷⁵ Suvorov’s extraordinarily successful career was based, according to Lebedev, “on *Orthodox spirituality*. He taught the soldiers prayer and life according to the commandments of God better than any preacher, so that at times it was difficult to say what Suvorov taught his soldiers more – to be a warrior or to be a real Orthodox Christian!” (*Velikorossia*, *op. cit.*, p. 234).

³⁷⁶ Sorokin, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34. Not too much should be of the fact that the Tsar was sympathetic, or at least not antipathetic, towards Catholicism, which, as Nikolin points out, “was to a large extent linked with fear of the French revolution, which had been cruel to believing Catholics, monks and clergy. This relationship is attested by such facts as his offering the Pope of Rome to settle in Russia, his cooperation with the establishment of the Jesuit order in Russia, and his support for the establishment of a Roman Catholic chapel in St. Petersburg. At the same time attention should be drawn to Paul I’s *ukaz* of March 18, 1797, which protected the consciences of peasants whom landowners were trying to detach forcibly from Orthodoxy into the unia or convert to Catholicism.” (Nikolin, *op. cit.*, p. 106). “On October 12, 1799 the holy things of the Order were triumphantly brought to Gatchina: *the right hand of St. John the Baptist, a particle of the Cross of the Lord and the icon of the Filerma Odigitria icon of the Mother of God*. Only a

In 1798 Napoleon seized Malta. Paul then entered into an alliance union with Prussia, Austria and England against France. A Russian fleet entered the Mediterranean, and in 1799 a Russian army under Suvorov entered Northern Italy, liberating the territory from the French. However, in 1800, writes Lebedev, "England seized the island of Malta, taking it away from the French and not returning it to the Maltese Order. Paul I sent Suvorov with his armies back to Russia and demanded that Prussia take decisive measures against England (the seizure of Hanover), threatening to break relations and take Hanover, the homeland of the English monarchs, with Russian forces. But at the same time there began direct relations between Paul and Napoleon. They began in an unusual manner. Paul challenged Napoleon *to a duel* so as to decide State quarrels by means of a personal contest, without shedding the innocent blood of soldiers. Bonaparte declined from the duel, but had a high opinion of Paul I's suggestion, and as a sign of respect released his Russian prisoners without any conditions, providing them with all that they needed at France's expense. Paul I saw that with the establishment of Napoleon in power, an end had been put to the revolution in France.³⁷⁷ Therefore he concluded a union with Napoleon against England (with the aim of taking Malta away from her and punishing her for her cunning), and united Russia to the 'continental blockade' that Napoleon had constructed against England, undermining her mercantile-financial might.³⁷⁸ Moreover, in counsel with Napoleon, Paul I decided [on January 12, 1801] to send a big Cossack corps to India – the most valuable colony of the English.³⁷⁹ To this day his Majesty's order has been deemed 'mad' and 'irrational'. But those who say this conceal the fact that the plan for this Russian expedition against India did not at all belong to Paul I: it arose under Catherine II and was seriously considered by her (Paul I only put it into action).

"Russia's break with England and the allies signified for them a catastrophe and in any case an irreparable blow to *the British pocket*, and also to *the pocket of the major Russian land-owners* and traders (English trade in Russia had been very strong for a long time!). From the secret *masonic* centres of England and Germany an order was delivered to the Russian Masons *to remove the Emperor* and as quickly as possible!

"Long disturbed by Paul I's attitude, the Russian nobles were quick to respond to the Masonic summons. Even before this, ... in 1798 the Russian Masons had succeeded in sowing dissension in the Royal Family. They slandered the Tsaritsa Maria Fyodorovna of supposedly trying to rule her husband and instead of him. At the same time he was 'set up with' the beauty Lopukhina, the daughter of a very powerful Mason, and a faithful plotter. But the affair was foiled through the nobility of the Emperor. Learning that Lopukhina loved Prince Gagarin, Paul I arranged their marriage, since he was just good friends with Lopukhina. The Masons had to save the

spiritually blind man, on learning this fact, would not see the Providence of God in the fact that the Tsar became Master of the Maltese Order. October 12 was introduced into the number of festal days by the Church, and a special service to this feast was composed..." ("Svyatoj Tsar-Muchenik Pavel", *op. cit.*).

³⁷⁷ This was, of course, a great mistake. Napoleon was a child of the revolution and the instrument of the spread of its ideas throughout Europe. (V.M.)

³⁷⁸ Another mistake, for it did precisely the opposite, weakening the continental economies and allowing England, with her superior navy, to seize the colonies of her rivals around the world. (V.M.)

³⁷⁹ They had crossed the Volga on March 18 when they heard of the death of the Tsar...

situation in such a way that Prince Gagarin himself began to help *his own wife* come closer to Paul I. She settled in the Mikhailov palace and became a very valuable agent of the plotters. From the autumn of 1800 the plot rapidly acquired a systematic character. Count N.P. Panin (the college of foreign affairs) was drawn into it, as was General Count Peter Alexeyevich von der Pahlen, the governor of Petersburg and a very close advisor of the Tsar, General Bennigsen (also a German), Admiral Ribas (a native of the island of Malta), the brothers Plato, Nicholas and Valerian Zubov and their sister, in marriage Princes Zherbtsova, the *senators* Orlov, Chicherin, Tatarinov, Tolstoy, Torschinsky, Generals Golitsyn, Depreradovich, Obolyaninov, Talysin, Mansurov, Uvarov, Argamakov, the officers Colonel Tolbanov, Skaryatin, a certain Prince Yashvil, Lieutenant Marin and very many others (amongst them even General M.I. Kutuzov, one of the prominent Masons of those years). At the head of the conspiracy stood the *English consul* in Petersburg, Sir Charles Whitford. According to certain data, England paid the plotters *two million* rubles in gold through him.

“The most important plotters were the Mason-Illuminati, who acted according to the principle of their founder Weishaupt: ‘slander, slander – something will stick!’ Floods of slanderous inventions poured onto the head of the Emperor Paul I. Their aim was to ‘prove’ that he was mad, mentally ill and therefore in the interests of the people (!) and dynasty (!) he could not remain in power. The slander was strengthened by the fact that the Emperor’s orders either were not carried out, or were distorted to an absurd degree, or in his name instructions of a crazy character were given out. Von Pahlen was especially successful in this. He began to insinuate to Paul I that his son Alexander Pavlovich (and also Constantine), with the support of the Empress, wanted to cast him from the throne. And when Paul I was upset by these communications, it was insinuated to his sons and Alexander and Constantine that the Emperor by virtue of a paranoid illness was intending to imprison them together with their mother for good, while he was supposedly intending to place the young Prince Eugene of Wurtemberg, who had then arrived in Russia, on the throne. Noble society was frightened by the fact that Paul I in a fit of madness [supposedly] wanted to execute some, imprison others and still others send to Siberia. Pahlen was the person closest to the Tsar and *they could not fail to believe* him! While he, as he later confessed, was trying to deceive everyone, including Great Prince Alexander. At first the latter was told that they were talking about removing his father the Emperor from power (because of his ‘illness’), in order that Alexander should become regent-ruler. Count N.P. Panin sincerely believed precisely in this outcome of the affair, as did many other opponents of Paul I who had not lost the last trace of humanity. At first Alexander did not at all agree with the plot, and prepared to suffer everything from his father to the end. But Panin, and then Pahlen convinced him that the coup was necessary for *the salvation of the Fatherland!* Alexander several times demanded an oath from the plotters that they would not allow any violence to his father and would preserve his life. These oaths were given, but they lied intentionally, as Pahlen later boasted, only in order to ‘calm the conscience’ of Alexander.³⁸⁰ They convinced Constantine Pavlovich in

³⁸⁰ Alan Palmer writes: “One of the older conspirators, more sober than the others, pertinently asked the question which Alexander had always ignored: what would happen if the Tsar offered resistance? ‘Gentlemen,’ Pahlen replied calmly, ‘you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs’. It was an ominous remark, difficult to reconcile with his assurance to Alexander” (*Alexander I*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974, p. 44). (V.M.) The remark about the omelette was later to be repeated by Lenin...

approximately the same way. The coup was marked for the end of March, 1801. Before this Ribas died, and Panin landed up in exile, from which he did not manage to return. The whole leadership of the plot passed to Pahlen, who from the beginning wanted *to kill the Emperor*. Many people faithful to his Majesty knew about this, and tried to warn him. *Napoleon* also heard about all this through his own channels, and hastened to inform Paul I in time.... On March 7, 1801 Paul I asked Pahlen directly about the plot. He confirmed its existence and said that *he himself was standing at the head* of the plotters, since only in this way could he know what was going on and prevent it all at the necessary moment... This time, too, Pahlen succeeded in deceiving the Tsar, but he felt that it would not do that for long, and that he himself 'was hanging by a thread'. He had to hurry, the more so in that many officials, generals and especially all the soldiers were devoted to Paul I. Besides, the Jesuits, who were at war with the *Illuminati*, knew everything about the plot in advance. In the afternoon of March 11, in the Tsar's reception-room, Pater Gruber appeared with a full and accurate list of the plotters and data on the details. But they managed not to admit the Jesuit to an audience with Paul I. Pahlen told Alexander that his father had already prepared a decree about his and the whole Royal Family's incarceration in the Schlüsselburg fortress, and that for that reason it was necessary to act without delay. Detachments of units loyal to Paul I were removed from the Mikhailov castle, where he lived. On March 11, 1801 the father invited his sons Alexander and Constantine and personally asked them whether they had any part in the conspiracy, and, having received a negative reply, considered it necessary that they should swear as it were for a second time to their faithfulness to him as to their Tsar. The sons *swore*, deceptively... On the night of the 11th to 12th of March, 1801, an English ship entered the Neva with the aim of taking the conspirators on board in case they failed. Before that Charles Whitford had been exiled from Russia. Zherebtsova-Zubova was sent to him in England so as to prepare a place for the conspirators there if it proved necessary to flee. On the night of the 12th March up to 60 young officers who had been punished for misdemeanours were assembled at Pahlen's house and literally pumped with spirits. One of them drunkenly remarked that it would be good for Russia if *all the members of the Royal Family* were slaughtered at once! The rest rejected such an idea with horror, but it spoke volumes! After much drinking they all moved by night across Mars field to the Mikhailov castle. There the brave officers were scared to death by some crows which suddenly took wing at night in an enormous flock and raised a mighty cry. As became clear later, some of the young officers *did not even know* where they were being led and why! But the majority knew. One by one (and frightening each other), they managed to enter in two groups into Paul I's bedroom, having killed one faithful guard, a chamber-hussar at the doors (the second ran for the sentry). Paul I, hearing the noise of a fight, tried to run through a secret door, but a tapestry, 'The School in Athens', a gift from the murdered king and queen of France, fell on top of him. The plotters caught the Tsar. Bennigsen declared to him that they were arresting him and that he had to abdicate from the throne, otherwise they could not vouch for the consequences. The greatly disturbed Paul I did not reply. He rushed to a room where a gun was kept, trying to break out of the ring of his murderers, but they formed a solid wall around him, breathing in the face of the Emperor, reeking of wine and spitefulness. Where had the courtier nobles disappeared! 'What have I done to you?' asked Paul I. 'You have tormented us for four years!' was the reply. The drunken Nicholas Zubov took hold of the Emperor by the hand, but the latter struck the scoundrel on the hand and repulsed him. Zubov took a swing and hit the Tsar on the left temple with a golden snuff-box given by Catherine

II, wounding his temple-bone and eyes. Covered with blood, Paul I fell to the ground. The brutalized plotters hurled themselves at him, trampled on him, beat him, suffocated him. Special zeal was displayed by the Zubovs, Skoriatin, Yashvil, Argamakov and, as people think, Pahlen (although there are reasons for thinking that he took no personal part in the fight). At this point the sentries made up of Semenovtsy soldiers faithful to Alexander appeared (the soldiers had not been initiated into the plot). Bennigsen and Pahlen came out to them and said that the Tsar had died from an attack of apoplexy and now his son Alexander was on the throne. Pahlen rushed into Alexander's rooms. On hearing of the death of his father, Alexander sobbed. 'Where is your oath? You promised not to touch my father!' he cried. 'Enough of crying! They're going to lift all of us on their bayonets! Please go out to the people!' shouted Pahlen. Alexander, still weeping, went out and began to say something to the effect that he would rule the state well... The sentries in perplexity were silent. The soldiers could not act against the Heir-Tsarevich, but they could also not understand what had happened. But the simple Russian people, then and later and even now (!) understood well. *To this day* (since 1801) believing people who are being oppressed by the powerful of this world in Petersburg (and recently also in Leningrad) order pannikhidas for 'the murdered Paul', asking for his intercession. And *they receive* what they ask for!...

"And so the plot of the Russian nobles against the Emperor they did not like succeeded. Paul I was killed with *the clear connivance* of his sons. The eldest of them, Alexander, became the Tsar of Russia. In the first hours and days nobody yet suspected how all this would influence the destiny of the country in the future and the personal destiny and consciousness of Alexander I himself. All the plotters had an evil end. Some were removed by Alexander I, others were punished by the Lord Himself. The main regicide Pahlen was quickly removed from all affairs and sent into exile on his estate. There he for a long time *went mad*, becoming completely irresponsible. Nicholas Zubov and Bennigsen also went mad (Zubov began to eat his own excreta). Having falsely accused Paul I of being mentally ill, they themselves became truly mentally ill! God is not mocked. 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay', He said. The joy of the Russian nobility was not especially long-lived. Alexander I and then Nicholas I were nevertheless *sons of their father!* Both they and the Emperors who followed them no longer allowed the nobility to rule them. Immediately the Russian nobility understood this, that is, that they *no longer had any power over the Autocracy*, they began to strive for *the annihilation of the Autocracy in Russia altogether*, which they succeeded in doing, finally, in February, 1917 - true, *to their own destruction!*.. Such was the zig-zag of Russian history, beginning with Catherine I and ending with Nicholas II.

"The reign of Emperor Paul Petrovich *predetermined* the following reigns *in the most important thing*. As we have seen, this Tsar 'turned his face' towards the Russian Orthodox Church, strengthened the foundations of the Autocracy and tried to make it truly of the people. Personally this cost him his life. But thereby the later *foundations* were laid for the State life of Russia in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries: '*Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality!*' Or, in its military expression - 'For the Faith, the Tsar and the Fatherland!'"³⁸¹

³⁸¹ Lebedev, *Velikorossia*, pp. 245-249.

“The prophecy of the clairvoyant monk Abel was completely fulfilled. He personally foretold to the Emperor Paul: ‘Your reign will be short, and I, the sinner, see your savage end. On the feast of St. Sophronius of Jerusalem you will receive a martyric death from unfaithful servants. You will be suffocated in your bedchamber by evildoers whom you warm on your royal breast... They will bury you on Holy Saturday... But they, these evildoers, in trying to justify their great sin of regicide, will proclaim that you are mad, and will blacken your good memory.... But the Russian people with their sensitive soul will understand and esteem you, and they will bring their sorrows to your grave, asking for your intercession and the softening of the hearts of the unrighteous and cruel.’ This part of the prophecy of Abel was also fulfilled. When Paul was killed, for many years the people came to his grave to pray, and he is considered by many to be an uncanonised saint.”³⁸²

³⁸² “Monk Abel ‘the Prophet’ of Valaam”, *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 36, № 1, January-February, 2000.

17. TSAR ALEXANDER THE BLESSED

Monk Abel prophesied the following about Paul's son and successor, Tsar Alexander I: "Under him the French will burn down Moscow, but he will take Paris from them and will be called the Blessed. But his tsar's crown will be heavy for him, and he will change the exploit of service as tsar for the exploit of fasting and prayer, and he will be righteous in God's eyes."³⁸³

The Golden Age of Masonry

The reign of Tsar Alexander can be divided into three phases: a first phase until 1812, when he was strongly influenced by the ideas of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment; a second phase from 1812 to about 1822, when the main influence on him was a kind of romantic mysticism; and a third phase until his death, when he returned to True Orthodoxy. Tsar Alexander faced, in a particularly acute form, the problems faced by all the "enlightened despots" of the eighteenth century - that is, how to relieve the burdens of his people without destroying the autocratic system that held the whole country together. Like his fellow despots, Alexander was strongly influenced by the ideals of the French revolution and by the Masonic ferment that had penetrated the nobility of Russia no less than the élites of Western Europe. So it is not surprising that he should have wavered between the strictly autocratic views of his mother the Dowager Empress Maria Fyodorovna, the Holy Synod and the court historian Nicholas Karamzin, on the one hand, and the liberalism of the Masons that surrounded him, on the other.

Karamzin was one of the first *intelligenty*, together with the poet Pushkin and the hierarch Philaret of Moscow, who called for a return to Russian traditions in public life, and in particular to the Russian language, after the century of forced westernization since Peter the Great. Karamzin believed that Russia had nothing to be ashamed of by comparison with the West. Nor did he accept the western vogue for republicanism. "Russia was founded through victories and one-man-rule; she perished [at the end of the Kievan period] because of a variety of rulers; and it was saved by the wise autocracy [of the Muscovite tsars]."³⁸⁴

And yet the autocrat of all the Russias had his doubts about autocracy. Only ten days after the death of his father, Alexander returned to the Winter Palace one night to find an anonymous letter on his desk, full of liberal, anti-autocratic sentiments of the kind that Alexander had espoused in his youth.³⁸⁵ "Is it possible," it asked, "to set aside the hope of nations in favour of the sheer delight of self-rule?... No! He will at last open the book of fate which Catherine merely perceived. He will give us

³⁸³ Shabelsky-Bork, in Fomin S., *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem (Russia before the Second Coming)*, Sergiev Posad, 1993, p. 121.

³⁸⁴ Karamzin, "Zapiska o novej i drevnej Rossii i ee politicheskom i grazhdanskom otnosheniakh" (Note on the new and ancient Russia and her political and civil relations), 1811; in N.G. Fyodorovsky, *V poiskakh svoego puti: Rossia mezhdru Evropoj i Aziej (In Search of her own path: Russia between Europe and Asia)*, Moscow, 1997, p. 27.

³⁸⁵ Alexander had once said to his tutor [La Harpe, a Swiss republican]: "Once... my turn comes, then it will be necessary to work, gradually of course, to create a representative assembly of the nation which, thus directed, will establish a free constitution, after which my authority will cease absolutely" (in Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 123).

immutable laws. He will establish them for ever by an oath binding him to all his subjects. To Russia he will say, 'Here lie the bounds to my autocratic power and to the power of those who will follow me, unalterable and everlasting.'"

The author turned out to be a member of the chancery staff, Karazin. "There followed," writes Alan Palmer, "an episode which anywhere except Russia would have seemed fantastic. When summoned to the Tsar's presence, Karazin feared a severe rebuke for his presumption. But Alexander was effusively magnanimous. He embraced Karazin warmly and commended his sense of patriotic duty. Karazin, for his part, knelt in tears at Alexander's feet, pledging his personal loyalty. Then the two men talked at length about the problems facing the Empire, of the need to safeguard the people from acts of arbitrary tyranny and to educate them so that they could assume in time the responsibilities of government..."³⁸⁶

Alexander was further hindered in breaking with his liberal past by the guilt he felt at not stopping his father's murder, and by the fact that he was still surrounded by many of those Masons who had murdered his father. The result was a continual increase in the power of Masonry, which was not without its effect on the conduct of government. Thus within a few weeks of ascending the throne Alexander formed a *neglassny komitet* (secret committee) composed of three or four people of liberal views who with the emperor plotted the transformation of Russia on liberal lines.

"On June 24, 1801," writes V.F. Ivanov, "the secret committee opened its proceedings. Alexander called it, on the model of the revolution of 1789, 'the Committee of public safety', and its opponents from the conservative camp - 'the Jacobin gang'.

"There began criticism of the existing order and of the whole government system, which was recognized to be 'ugly'. The firm and definite conclusion was reached that 'only a constitution can muzzle the despotic government'"³⁸⁷.

However, Alexander's coronation in September, 1801, in Moscow, the heart of Old Russia with its autocratic traditions, pulled him in the opposite direction to the liberal ideas of St. Petersburg. "After being anointed with Holy Oil by the Metropolitan, Alexander swore a solemn oath to preserve the integrity of the Russian lands and the sacred concept of autocracy; and he was then permitted, as one blessed by God, to pass through the Royal Doors into the Sanctuary where the Tsars had, on this one occasion in their lives, the privilege of administering to themselves the Holy Sacrament. But Alexander felt unworthy to exercise the priestly office in this way; and, as [Metropolitan] Platon offered him the chalice, he knelt to receive communion as a member of the laity. Although only the higher clergy and their acolytes witnessed this gesture of humility, it was soon known in the city at large and created a deep impression of the new Tsar's sense of spiritual discipline."³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Palmer, *Alexander I*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974, p. 50.

³⁸⁷ Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo: ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, p. 246.

³⁸⁸ Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

“The movement was encouraged,” writes Janet Hartley, “by the rumours, which cannot be substantiated, that Alexander I became a mason (he certainly visited lodges in Russia and Germany)³⁸⁹; his younger brother Constantine certainly was a mason. Regional lodges continued to flourish and young army officers who accompanied Russian forces through Europe in 1813 and 1814 also attended, and were influenced by, lodges in the territory through which they passed. The constitutions of secret societies which were formed by army officers in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, like the Order of the Russian Knights and the Union of Salvation and Welfare, copied some of their rules and hierarchical organization from masonic lodges. In 1815, the higher orders of masonry in Russia were subordinated to the Astrea grand lodge.”³⁹⁰

In January, 1800 A.F. Labzin opened the “Dying Sphinx” lodge in Petersburg. The members of the order were sworn to sacrifice themselves and all they had to the aims of the lodge, whose existence remained a closely guarded secret. In 1806 Labzin founded *The Messenger of Zion* as the vehicle of his ideas. Suppressed at first by the Church hierarchy, it was allowed to appear by Prince Golitsyn in 1817. “*The Messenger of Zion*,” writes Walicki, “preached the notion of ‘inner Christianity’ and the need for a moral awakening. It promised its readers that once they were morally reborn and vitalized by faith, they would gain supra-rational powers of cognition and be able to penetrate the mysteries of nature, finding in them a key to a superior revelation beyond the reach of the Church.

“Labzin’s religion was thus a nondenominational and anti-ecclesiastical Christianity. Men’s hearts, he maintained, had been imbued with belief in Christ on the first day of creation; primitive pagan peoples were therefore closer to true Christianity than nations that had been baptized but were blinded by the false values of civilization. The official Church was only an assembly of lower-category Christians, and the Bible a ‘silent mentor who gives symbolic indications to the living teacher residing in the heart’. All dogmas, according to Labzin, were merely human inventions: Jesus had not desired men to think alike, but only to act justly. His words ‘Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden’ showed that he did not mean to set up any intermediate hierarchy between the believers and God.”³⁹¹

In 1802 A.A. Zherebtsov opened the “United Friends” lodge in Petersburg. Its aim was “to remove between men the distinctions of races, classes, beliefs and views, and to destroy fanaticism and superstition, and annihilate hatred and war, uniting the whole of humanity through the bonds of love and knowledge.”³⁹²

Then there was the society of Count Grabianka, “The People of God”. “The aim of the society was ‘to announce at the command of God the imminent Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious reign upon earth’ and to prepare the humble and faithful

³⁸⁹ Richard Rhoda writes: “The tradition exists that Alexander became a Mason in 1803 and there is evidence that he was the member of a lodge in Warsaw” (“Russian Freemasonry: A New Dawn”, paper read at Orient Lodge N 15 on June 29, 1996, <http://members.aol.com/houltonme/ru.htm>). (V.M.) But, as we shall see, he later repented and banned Masonry. (V.M.)

³⁹⁰ Hartley, *A Social History of the Russian Empire, 1650-1825*, London and New York: Longman, 1999, pp. 233-235. “Astrea” is the goddess of justice (O.F. Soloviev, *Masonstvo v Mirovoj Politike XX Veke* (Masonry in World Politics in the 20th Century), Moscow, 1998, p. 23.

³⁹¹ Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, p. 73.

³⁹² Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

souls for the approaching Kingdom of God. 'As in the Rosecrucian lodges,' writes Sokolskaia, 'in the lodge of Count Grabianka people indulged, besides theosophy, in alchemy and magic. But while asserting that the brothers of the "Golden Rose Cross" had as their object of study 'white, Divine magic', the leaders of the Rosecrucians accused the followers of Count Grabianka of indulging in reading books of black magic and consorting with evil spirits. In sorrow at the lack of firmness of these brothers, who had become enmeshed in a new teaching, the leaders wrote: 'Those who are known to us are wavering on their path and do not know what to join. And - God have mercy on them! - they are falling into the hands of evil magicians or *Illuminati*...'"³⁹³

Alexander, Napoleon and Speransky

St. Petersburg and Moscow, liberalism and autocracy, the false "inner church" of Masonry and the True Church of Orthodoxy, divided Alexander's heart between them, making his reign a crossroads in Russian history. Finally he was forced to make his choice for Orthodoxy by the appearance in Russia of that supreme representative of the despotic essence of the revolution - Napoleon.

Tsar Paul had been murdered with the connivance of the British. Knowing this, writes Palmer, Alexander "did not trust the British..., and much that Consul Bonaparte was achieving in France appealed to his own political instincts. Provided Napoleon had no territorial ambitions in the Balkans or the eastern Mediterranean, Alexander could see no reason for a clash of interests between France and Russia. The Emperor's 'young friends' on the Secret Committee agreed in general with him rather than with [the Anglophile] Panin, and when Alexander discussed foreign affairs with them during the late summer of 1801, they received the impression that he favoured settling differences with France as a preliminary to a policy of passive isolation. As St. Helens wrote to Hawksbury shortly before Alexander's departure for Moscow, 'The members of the Emperor's Council, with whom he is particularly connected... been... zealous in promoting the intended peace with France, it being their professed System to endeavour to disengage the Emperor from all foreign Concerns... and induce him to direct his principal attention to the affairs of the Interior.'"³⁹⁴

However, the influence of Napoleon on Alexander began to wane after the Russian Emperor's meeting with the Prussian king Frederick William and his consort Queen Louise in June, 1802. The closeness of the two monarchs threatened to undermine the Tsar's policy of splendid isolation from the affairs of Europe, and alarmed his foreign minister Kochubey, as well as annoying the French. But isolation was no longer a practical policy as Napoleon continued to encroach on the rights of the German principalities, and so Alexander replaced his foreign minister and, in May, 1803, summoned General Arakcheev to strengthen the Russian army in preparation for possible conflicts in the future...

In 1804 the Duc d'Enghien was kidnapped by French agents, tried and executed as a traitor. "Alexander was enraged by the crime. The Duc d'Enghien was a member of the French royal house. By conniving at his kidnapping and execution the First Consul became, in Alexander's eyes, a regicide. Nor was this the only cause of the Tsar's

³⁹³ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

³⁹⁴ Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

indignation. He regarded the abduction of the Duke from Baden as a particular insult to Russia, for Napoleon had been repeatedly reminded that Alexander expected the French authorities to respect the lands of his wife's family. His response was swift and dramatic. A meeting of the Council of State was convened in mid-April at which it was resolved, with only one dissentient voice, to break off all diplomatic contact with France. The Russian Court went into official mourning and a solemn note of protest was despatched to Paris.

"But the French paid little regard to Russian susceptibilities. Napoleon interpreted Alexander's complaint as unjustified interference with the domestic affairs and internal security of France. He entrusted the reply to Talleyrand, his Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a bland statement appeared in the official *Moniteur*: 'If, when England prepared the assassination of Paul I, the Russian Government had discovered that the organizers of the plot were no more than a league away from the frontier, would it not have seized them at once?' No allusion could have been better calculated to wound the Tsar than this deliberate reference to the circumstances of his own accession. It was a rhetorical question which he found hard to forgive or forget. A month later news came from Paris that the First Consul had accepted from the French Senate the title of Emperor. Now, to all his other transgressions, Napoleon had added contempt for the dynastic principle. Resolutely the successor of Peter the Great refused to acknowledge the newest of empires."³⁹⁵

Alexander now formed a defensive alliance with Austria and Prussia against France (there were extensive negotiations with Britain, too, but no final agreement was reached). The Tsar and his new foreign minister, the Polish Mason Adam Czartoryski, added an interesting ideological element to the alliance. "No attempt would be made to impose discredited regimes from the past on lands liberated from French military rule. The French themselves were to be told that the Coalition was fighting, not against their natural rights, but against a government which was 'no less a tyranny for France than the rest of Europe'. The new map of the continent must rest on principles of justice: frontiers would be so drawn that they coincided with natural geographical boundaries, provided outlets for industries, and associated in one political unit 'homogeneous peoples able to agree among themselves'."³⁹⁶

Appealing to peoples over the heads of their rulers, and declaring that states should be made up of homogeneous ethnic units were, of course, innovative steps, derived from the French revolution, which presented considerable dangers for multi-ethnic empires such as the Russian and the Austrian. Similarly new and dangerous was the idea that the nation was defined by blood alone. None of these ideological innovations appealed to the other nations, and the Coalition (including Britain) that was eventually patched up in the summer of 1805 was motivated more by Napoleon's further advances in Italy than by a common ideology.

However, although the British defeated Napoleon at sea at Trafalgar, it was a different story on land. At Austerlitz the Allies lost between 25,000 and 30,000 men killed, wounded or captured. And this was only the beginning. In 1806 Napoleon routed the Prussians at Jena and Auerstadt, and in 1807, after an indecisive conflict at

³⁹⁵ Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-82.

³⁹⁶ Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Eylau, he defeated the Russians at Friedstadt. Almost the whole of Europe up to the borders of the Russian empire was in French hands...

Two religious events of the year 1806 gave a deeper and darker hue to the political and military conflict. In France Napoleon re-established the Jewish Sanhedrin, which then proclaimed him the Messiah. Partly in response to this, the Holy Synod of the Russian Church called Napoleon the antichrist, declaring that he was threatening "to shake the Orthodox Greco-Russian Church, and is trying by a diabolic invasion to draw the Orthodox into temptation and destruction". It said that during the revolution Napoleon had bowed down to idols and to human creatures. Finally, 'to the greater disgrace of the Church of Christ he has thought up the idea of restoring the Sanhedrin, declaring himself the Messiah, gathering together the Jews and leading them to the final uprooting of all Christian faith'.³⁹⁷

In view of this unprecedented anathema, and the solemn pledges he had made to the King of Prussia, it would seem to have been unthinkable for Alexander to enter into alliance with Napoleon at this time. And yet this is precisely what he did at the famous treaty of Tilsit, on the river Niemen, in July, 1807. It came as a terrible shock to many that he should invite Napoleon to the meeting, saying: "Alliance between France and Russia has always been a particular wish of mine and I am convinced that this alone can guarantee the welfare and peace of the world". Queen Louise of Prussia, who was very close to Alexander, wrote to him: "You have cruelly deceived me". And it is hard not to agree with her since, with Alexander's acquiescence, Napoleon took most of the Prussian lands and imposed a heavy indemnity on the Prussians, while Alexander took a part of what had been Prussian territory in Poland, the province of Bialystok. The only concession Alexander was able to wring from the Corsican was that King Frederick should be restored to the heart of his greatly reduced kingdom "from consideration of the wishes of His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russias".

"As the days went by with no clear news from Tilsit," writes Palmer, "the cities of the Empire were again filled with alarming rumours, as they had been after Austerlitz: was Holy Russia to be sold to the Antichrist? For, whatever the fashion on the Niemen, in St. Petersburg and Moscow the Church still thundered on Sundays against Bonaparte, that 'worshipper of idols and whores'."³⁹⁸ Metropolitan Platon of Moscow wrote to the Tsar warning him not to trust Napoleon, whose ultimate aim was to subjugate the whole of Europe.³⁹⁹ In other letters, Platon compared Napoleon to Goliath and to "the Pharaoh, who will founder with all his hosts, just as the other did in the Red Sea".⁴⁰⁰

Of course, in view of his crushing military defeats, Alexander was in a weak position at Tilsit. Nevertheless, if he could not defeat his enemy, he did not have to enter into alliance with him or legitimize his conquests, especially since Napoleon did not (at that time) plan to invade Russia. To explain Alexander's behaviour, which went against the Church, his Allies and most of public opinion at home, it is not sufficient

³⁹⁷ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 260. Cf. Cronin, *Napoleon*, London: HarperCollins, 1994, p. 315; Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127.

³⁹⁸ Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

³⁹⁹ Pappmehl, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁴⁰⁰ Pappmehl, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

to point to the liberal ideas of his youth, although those undoubtedly played a part. It is necessary to point also to a personal factor, the *romantically seductive* powers of that truly antichristian figure, Napoleon Bonaparte. As we have seen in the last chapter, Napoleon had seduced a whole generation of young people in Europe and America; so it is hardly surprising that the Tsar should also have come under his spell. As Tsaritsa Elizabeth wrote to her mother: "You know, Mamma, this man seems to me like an irresistible seducer who by temptation or force succeeds in stealing the hearts of his victims. Russia, the most virtuous of them, has defended herself for a long time; but she has ended up no better than the others. And, in the person of her Emperor, she has yielded as much to charm as to force. He feels a secret attraction to his enticer which is apparent in all he does. I should indeed like to know what magic it is that he [Napoleon] employs to change people's opinions so suddenly and so completely..."⁴⁰¹

In any case, "the peace of Tilsit," writes Ivanov, "did not bring pacification. A year after Tilsit a meeting took place at Erfurt between Napoleon and Alexander, to which Alexander brought Speransky. At this last meeting Napoleon made a huge impression and convinced him of the need of reforming Russia on the model of France.

"The historian Professor Shiman in his work, *Alexander I*, writes:

"And so he (Alexander) took with him to Erfurt the most capable of his officials, the privy councillor Michael Mikhailovich Speransky, and put him in direct contact with Napoleon, who did not miss the opportunity to discuss with him in detailed conversations various questions of administration. The result of these conversations was a whole series of outstanding projects of reform, of which the most important was the project of a constitution for Russia."⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ Quoted in Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

⁴⁰² Professor Theodore Shiman, *Alexander I*, Moscow, 1908. L. A. Tikhomirov writes: "From the beginning of the 19th century, the Petrine institutions finally collapsed. Already the practice of our 19th century has reduced 'the collegiate principle' to nothing. Under Alexander I the elegant French system of bureaucratic centralization created by Napoleon on the basis of the revolutionary ideas captivated the Russian imitative spirit. For Russians this was 'the last word' in perfection, and Speransky, an admirer of Napoleon, together with the Emperor, an admirer of the republic, created a new system of administration which continued essentially until Emperor Alexander II.

"Alexander I's institutions completed the absolutist construction of the government machine. Until that time, the very imperfection of the administrative institutions had not allowed them to escape control. The supreme power retained its directing and controlling character. Under Alexander I the bureaucracy was perfectly organized. A strict separation of powers was created. An independent court was created, and a special organ of legislation – the State Council. Ministries were created as the executive power, with an elegant mechanism of driving mechanisms operating throughout the country. The bureaucratic mechanism's ability to act was brought to a peak by the strictest system of centralization. But where in all these institutions was the nation and the supreme power?

"The nation was subjected to the ruling mechanism. The supreme power was placed, from an external point of view, at the intersection of all the administrative powers. In fact, it was surrounded by the highest administrative powers and was cut off by them not only from the nation, but also from the rest of the administrative mechanism. With the transformation of the Senate into the highest judicial organ, the supreme power lost in it an organ of control.

"The idea of the administrative institutions is that they should attain such perfection that the supreme power will have no need to conduct any immediate administrative activity. As an ideal this is correct. But in fact there is hidden here the source of a constant usurpation of administrative powers in relation to the supreme power. The point is that the most perfect administrative institutions act in an orderly fashion only under the watchful control of the supreme power and his constant direction. But where control and direction by the supreme power is undermined, the bureaucracy becomes the more harmful

“Alexander returned to Petersburg enchanted with Napoleon, while his State-Secretary Speransky was enchanted both with Napoleon and with everything French.

“The plan for a transformation of the State was created by Speransky with amazing speed, and in October, 1809 the whole plan was on Alexander’s desk. This plan reflected the dominant ideas of the time, which were close to what is usually called ‘the principles of 1789’.

“1) The source of power is the State, the country.

“2) Only that phenomenon which expresses the will of the people can be considered lawful.

“3) If the government ceases to carry out the conditions on which it was summoned to power, its acts lose legality. The centralised administration of Napoleon’s empire influenced Alexander’s ideas about how he should reform his own administration.

“4) So as to protect the country from arbitrariness, and put a bound to absolute power, it is necessary that it and its organs – the government institutions – should be led in their acts by basic laws, unalterable decrees, which exactly define the desires and needs of the people.

“5) As a conclusion from what has been said: the basic laws must be the work and creation of the nation itself.

“Proceeding from Montesquieu’s proposition that ‘three powers move and rule the state: the legislative power, the executive power and the judicial power’, Speransky constructed the whole of his plan on the principle of the division of powers – the legislative, the executive and the judicial. Another masonic truth was introduced, that the executive power in the hands of the ministers must be subject to the legislative, which was concentrated in the State Duma.

“The plot proceeded, led by Speransky, who was supported by Napoleon.

“After 1809 stubborn rumours circulated in society that Speransky and Count N.P. Rumyantsev were more attached to the interests of France than of Russia.

“Karamzin [the historian] in his notes and conversations tried to convince Alexander to stop the carrying out of Speransky’s reforms, which were useless and would bring only harm to the motherland.⁴⁰³

the more perfectly it is constructed. With this it acquires the tendency to become de facto free of the supreme power and even submits it to itself...” (*Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 342-343).

⁴⁰³ Speransky was a great admirer of Napoleon’s Civil Code. Karamzin noted, however: “Russia really does not need solemnly to acknowledge her ignorance before all of Europe and to bend graying heads over a volume devised by a few perfidious lawyers and Jacobins. Our political principles do not find inspiration in Napoleon’s Code of Laws, nor in an encyclopedia published in Paris, but in another

“Joseph de Maistre saw in the person of Speransky a most harmful revolutionary, who was undermining the foundations of all state principles and was striving by all means to discredit the power of the Tsar.

“For two years his Majesty refused to believe these rumours and warnings. Towards the beginning of 1812 the enemies of Speransky in the persons of Arakcheev, Shishkov, Armfeldt and Great Princess Catherine Pavlovna convinced his Majesty of the correctness of the general conviction of Speransky’s treachery.

“The following accusations were brought against Speransky: the incitement of the masses of the people through taxes, the destruction of the finances and unfavourable comments about the government.

“A whole plot to keep Napoleon informed was also uncovered. Speransky had been entrusted with conducting a correspondence with Nesselrode, in which the main French actors were indicated under pseudonyms. But Speransky did not limit himself to giving this information: on his own, without authorization from above, he demanded that all secret papers and reports from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be handed over to him. Several officials were found who without objections carried out his desire....

“Then from many honourable people there came warnings about the traitrous activities of Speransky.

“At the beginning of 1812 the Swedish hereditary prince Bernadotte, who was in opposition to Napoleon, informed Petersburg that ‘the sacred person of the Emperor is in danger’ and that Napoleon was ready with the help of a big bribe to establish his influence in Russia again.

“A letter was intercepted in which Speransky told a friend about the departure of his Majesty with the aim of inspecting the fortifications that had been raised on the western border, and he used the expression ‘our Boban’. ‘Our Boban’ was a humorous nickname inspired by Voltaire’s story, ‘White Bull’.

“Speransky was completely justly accused of belonging to the most harmful sect of Masonry, the *Illuminati*. Moreover, it was pointed out that Speransky was not only a member of it, but was ‘the regent of the *Illuminati*’.⁴⁰⁴

encyclopedia infinitely older, the Bible.” (in Alexis S. Troubtezkoy, *Imperial Legend. The Disappearance of Tsar Alexander I*, Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2003, p. 85). (V.M.)

⁴⁰⁴ In 1810 an *Illuminati* lodge, “Polar Star”, was opened by the German Lutheran and pantheist mystic Professor I.A. Fessler, whom Speransky had summoned from Germany. Speransky joined this lodge, and Professor Shiman writes that Speransky ““was a Freemason who accepted the strange thought of using the organization of the lodge for the reform of the Russian clergy, which was dear to his heart. His plan consisted in founding a masonic lodge that would have branch-lodges throughout the Russian State and would accept the most capable clergy as brothers.

“Speransky openly hated Orthodoxy. With the help of Fessler he wanted to begin a war against the Orthodox Church. The Austrian chargé d’affaires Saint-Julien, wrote in a report to his government on the fall of Speransky that the higher clergy, shocked by the protection he gave to Fessler, whom he had sent for from Germany, and who had the rashness to express Deist, antichristian views, were strongly

“Speransky’s relations with the Martinists and *Illuminati* were reported by Count Rastopchin, who in his ‘Note on the Martinists’, presented in 1811 to Great Princess Catherine Pavlovna, said that ‘they (the Martinists) were all more or less devoted to Speransky, who, without belonging in his heart to any sect, or perhaps any religion, was using their services to direct affairs and keep them dependent on himself.’

“Finally, in the note of Colonel Polev, found in Alexander I’s study after his death, the names of Speransky, Fessler, Magnitsky, Zlobin and others were mentioned as being members of the *Illuminati* lodge...

“On March 11, 1812 Sangley was summoned to his Majesty, who informed him that Speransky ‘had the boldness to describe all Napoleon’s military talents and advised him to convene the State Duma and ask it to conduct the war while he absented himself’. ‘Who am I then? Nothing?’, continued his Majesty. ‘From this I see that he is undermining the autocracy, which I am obliged to transfer whole to my heirs.’

“On March 16 Professor Parrot of Derpt university was summoned to the Winter Palace. ‘The Emperor,’ he wrote in a later letter to Emperor Nicholas I, ‘angrily described to me the ingratitude of Speransky, whom I had never seen, expressing himself with feeling that drew tears from him. Having expounded the proof of his treachery that had been presented to him, he said to me: ‘I have decided to shoot him tomorrow, and have invited you here because I wish to know your opinion on this.’

“Unfortunately, his Majesty did not carry out his decision: Speransky had too many friends and protectors. They saved him, but for his betrayal he was exiled to Nizhni Novgorod, and then – in view of the fact that the Nizhni Novgorod nobility were stirred up against him – to Perm.... At a patriotic banquet in the house of the Provincial Governor Prince Gruzinsky in Nizhni Novgorod, the nobles’ patriotism almost cost Speransky his life. ‘Hang him, execute him, burn Speransky on the pyre’ suggested the Nizhni Novgorod nobles.

“Through the efforts of his friends, Speransky was returned from exile and continued his treachery against his kind Tsar. He took part in the organisation of the uprising of the Decembrists, who after the coup appointed him first candidate for the provisional government.”⁴⁰⁵

[Napoleon’s Invasion of Russia](#)

However, it was Napoleon’s invasion rather than any internal factors that swung the scales in favour of the status quo, thereby paradoxically saving Russia from revolution. Napoleon decided on this fatal step after a gradual cooling in relations between the two countries that ended with Alexander’s withdrawal, in 1810, from the economically disastrous Continental System that Napoleon had established against

instrumental in his fall (letter of April 1, 1812). However, our ‘liberators’ were in raptures with Speransky’s activities....” (in Ivanov, op. cit., p. 255) (V.M.)

⁴⁰⁵ Ivanov, op. cit., pp. 255-258. After the attempted coup, Tsar Nicholas used him, but told one of his officials to keep an eye on him...

England. By May, 1811, Tsar Alexander was showing a much firmer, more realistic, attitude to the political and military situation: "Should the Emperor Napoleon make war on me, it is possible, even probable, that we shall be defeated. But this will not give him peace... We shall enter into no compromise agreements; we have plenty of open spaces in our rear, and we shall preserve a well-organized army... I shall not be the first to draw my sword, but I shall be the last to sheathe it... I should sooner retire to Kamchatka than yield provinces or put my signature to a treaty in my conquered capital which was no more than a truce..."⁴⁰⁶

The invasion also probably saved Russia from a union with Catholicism, which by now had made its Concordat with Napoleon and was acting, very probably, on Napoleon's orders. For in 1810 Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, as K.A. Papmehl writes, "became the recipient of ecumenical overtures by the French senator Grégoire (formerly Bishop of Blois), presumably on Napoleon's initiative. In a letter dated in Paris in May of that year, Grégoire referred to the discussions held in 1717, at the Sorbonne, between Peter I and some French bishops, with a view of exploring the prospects of re-unification. Peter apparently passed the matter on to the synod of Russian bishops who, in their turn, indicated that they could not commit themselves on a matter of such importance without consulting the Eastern Patriarchs. Nothing had been heard from the Russian side since then. Grégoire nevertheless assumed that the consultation must have taken place and asked for copies of the Patriarchs' written opinions. He concluded his letter by assuring Platon that he was hoping and praying for reunification of the Churches..."

"Platon passed the letter to the Synod in St. Petersburg. In 1811 [it] replied to Grégoire, with Emperor Alexander's approval, to the effect that a search of Russian archives failed to reveal any of the relevant documents. The idea of a union, Platon added, was, in any case 'contrary to the mood of the Russian people' who were deeply attached to their faith and concerned with its preservation in a pure and unadulterated form."⁴⁰⁷

Only a few years before, at Tilsit in 1807, the Tsar had said to Napoleon: "In Russia I am both Emperor and Pope – it's much more convenient."⁴⁰⁸ But this was not true: if Napoleon was effectively both Emperor and Pope in France, this could never be said of the tsars in Russia, damaged though the Orthodox symphony of powers had been by a century of semi-absolutism. And the restraint on Alexander's power constituted by what remained of that symphony of powers evidently led him to think again about imitating the West too closely, whether politically or ecclesiastically. That the symphony of powers was still intact was witnessed at the consecration of the Kazan cathedral in St. Petersburg on September 27, 1811, the tenth anniversary of Alexander's coronation. "There was an 'immense crowd' of worshippers and onlookers. Not for many years had the people of St. Petersburg witnessed so solemn a ceremony symbolizing the inter-dependence of Church and State, for this essential bond of

⁴⁰⁶ Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

⁴⁰⁷ Papmehl, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁴⁰⁸ Debidour, *Histoire des rapports de l'église et de l'état en France* (History of Church-State Relations in France), p. 255; in M.V. Zzyzkin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part III, p. 251. In 1805 Platon remarked to an English visitor that "the English government had done a very wicked thing in tolerating Popery" (*op. cit.*, p. 82).

Tsardom was customarily emphasized in Moscow rather than in the newer capital. To some it seemed, both at the time and later, that the act of consecration served Alexander as a moment of re-dedication and renewal, linking the pledges he had given at his crowning in Moscow with the mounting challenge from across the frontier. For the rest of the century, the Kazan Cathedral remained associated in people's minds with the high drama of its early years, so that it became in time a shrine for the heroes of the Napoleonic wars."⁴⁰⁹

It was from the Kazan Cathedral that Alexander set out at the start of the campaign, on April 21, 1812. As Tsaritsa Elizabeth wrote to her mother in Baden: "The Emperor left yesterday at two o'clock, to the accompaniment of cheers and blessings from an immense crowd of people who were tightly packed from the Kazan Church to the gate of the city. As these folk had not been hustled into position by the police and as the cheering was not led by planted agents, he was – quite rightly – moved deeply by such signs of affection from our splendid people!... 'For God and their Sovereign' – that was the cry! They make no distinction between them in their hearts and scarcely at all in their worship. Woe to him who profanes the one or the other. These old-world attitudes are certainly not found more intensively anywhere than at the extremes of Europe. Forgive me, dear Mamma, for regaling you with commonplaces familiar to everyone who has a true knowledge of Russia, but one is carried away when speaking of something you love; and you know my passionate devotion to this country."⁴¹⁰

And so Napoleon's invasion of Russia acquired a significance that the other Napoleonic wars did not have: it became a struggle, not simply between two not-so-different political systems, but between two radically opposed *faiths*: the faith in the Revolution and the faith in Orthodoxy. 1812 produced an explosion of Russian patriotism and religious feeling. God's evident support for the heroic Russian armies, at the head of which was the "Reigning" icon of the Mother of God⁴¹¹, reanimated a fervent pride and belief in Holy Russia.

As K.N. Leontiev writes: "It was ecclesiastical feeling and obedience to the authorities (the Byzantine influence) that saved us in 1812. It is well-known that many of our peasants (not all, of course, but those who were taken unawares by the invasion) found little purely national feeling in themselves in the first minute. They robbed the landowners' estates, rebelled against the nobility, and took money from the French. The clergy, the nobility and the merchants behaved differently. But immediately they saw that the French were stealing the icons and putting horses in our churches, the people became harder and everything took a different turn..."⁴¹²

Of particular significance was the fact that it had been Moscow, the old capital associated with the Muscovite tsars, rather than the new and westernized capital of St. Petersburg, which had borne the brunt of the suffering. For it was not so much the

⁴⁰⁹ Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

⁴¹⁰ Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 215. A century later, at the beginning of a still greater war against a western enemy, another German-born Tsaritsa would express almost exactly similar sentiments on seeing her husband and Tsar go to war...

⁴¹¹ That same icon which was to reappear miraculously on March 2, 1917, at another time of mortal danger for the State.

⁴¹² Leontiev, "Vizantizm i Slavianstvo" ("Byzantinism and Slavdom"), *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo (The East, Russia and Slavdom)*, Moscow, 1996, p. 104.

indecisive battle of Borodino, a contest in which, according to Napoleon, “the French showed themselves worthy of victory and the Russians of being invincible”⁴¹³, as the burning of Moscow, which destroyed 80% of dwellings in the city, and Alexander’s refusal to surrender even after that, which proved the decisive turning-point, convincing Napoleon that he could not win...

The leadership on both sides made serious mistakes. But it was the French who suffered most from their mistakes. In this, as in many other ways, especially the weather, God was clearly on the side of the Orthodox. Thus early in the campaign terrible rain storms killed thousands of horses that were desperately needed by Napoleon. Then terrible heat killed many soldiers. The late onset of winter tempted Napoleon to stay too long in Moscow. But then, when the winter did come, it was savage...⁴¹⁴

The terrible sufferings of the French on their return march are well-known. There was even cannibalism, - a sure sign of apocalyptic times, - as the soldiers of the Great Army began to put their fellow-soldiers in the stew pots. Out of the vast army - nearly 600,000 men, only about half of whom were French - that set out for Russia, only 120,000 returned, 35,000 of them French. The Russians lost 400,000, but they had saved their homeland...

However, the Russian victory was almost foiled by the intrigues of the Masons, including Commander-in-chief Kutuzov, who, according to Sokolskaia, was initiated into Masonry at the “Three Keys” lodge in Regensburg, and was later received into lodges in Frankfurt, Berlin, Petersburg and Moscow, penetrating into the secrets of the higher degrees.⁴¹⁵ The Tsar had been against Kutuzov’s appointment, but said: “The public wanted his appointment, I appointed him: as regards myself personally, I wash my hands of him.” He was soon proved right: the Russian position at the battle of Borodino was poorly prepared by Kutuzov, who took little part in it. The previous commander-in-chief, Barclay, took the lead and acted heroically, but gained little credit for it.

In Moscow, Count Rastopchin, well aware of the pro-Napoleonic, potentially seditious sentiments of the nobility, had them evacuated from the city with their families while Kutuzov slept. As the Martinist Runich said: “Rastopchin, acting through fear, threw the nobility, the merchants and the non-gentry intellectuals out of Moscow in order that they should not give in to the enticements and influence of Napoleon’s tactics. He stirred up the hatred of the people by the horrors that he ascribed to the foreigners [although he had started it], whom he mocked at the same time. He saved Russia from the yoke of Napoleon.”⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ 70,000 men fell in one day, the largest death-toll in a single day’s warfare until the first day of the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

⁴¹⁴ See Adam Zamoyski, *1812: Napoleon’s Fatal March on Moscow*, London: HarperCollins, 2004.

⁴¹⁵ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

⁴¹⁶ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-265. However, Alexander Solzhenitsyn writes that as a result of the fire of Moscow 15,000 Russian soldiers who were recovering from wounds suffered at Borodino in the military hospitals of the city were burned alive (*Le ‘problème russe’ à la fin du xxe siècle* (The ‘Russian Problem’ at the End of the 20th Century), Paris: Fayard, 1994, pp. 52-53).

“The fire of Moscow started the people’s war. Napoleon’s situation deteriorated from day to day. His army was demoralised. The hungry French soldiers wandered round the outskirts of Moscow searching for bread and provisions. Lootings and murders began. Discipline in the army declined sharply. Napoleon was faced with a threatening dilemma: peace, or destruction.

“Peace negotiations began. On September 23 at Tarutino camp Kutuzov met Napoleon’s truce-envoy Lauriston. Kutuzov willingly accepted this suggestion and decided to keep the meeting a complete secret. He told Lauriston to meet him outside the camp, beyond the line of our advance posts, on the road to Moscow. Everything was to be done in private and the project for a truce was to be put forward very quickly. This plan for a secret agreement between Napoleon and the Masonic commander-in-chief fell through. Some Russian generals and especially the English agent attached to the Russian army, [General] Wilson, protested against the unofficial secret negotiations with Napoleon. On September 23 Wilson made a scene in front of Kutuzov; he came to him as the representative of the general staff and army generals and declared that the army would refuse to obey him. Wilson was supported by the Duke of Wurtemberg, the Emperor’s uncle, his son-in-law the Duke of Oldenburg and Prince Volkonsky, general-adjutant, who had arrived not long before with a report from Petersburg. Kutuzov gave way, and the meeting with Lauriston took place in the camp headquarters.

“Kutuzov’s failure in securing peace did not stop him from giving fraternal help to Napoleon in the future.

“After insistent urgings from those close to him and at the insistence of his Majesty, Kutuzov agreed to attack near Tarutino.

“The battle of Tarutino revealed the open betrayal of the commander-in-chief.

“When in the end the third and fourth corps came out of the wood and the cavalry of the main army was drawn up for the attack, the French began a general retreat. When the French retreat was already an accomplished fact and the French columns were already beyond Chernishina, Bennigsen moved his armies forward.

“The main forces at the moment of the French retreat had been drawn up for battle. In spite of this, and the persuasions of Yermolov and Miloradovich, Kutuzov decisively refused to move the armies forward, and only a part of the light cavalry was set aside for pursuing the enemy, the rest of the army returned to the Tarutino camp.

“Bennigsen was so enraged by the actions of the field-marshal that after the battle he did not even consider it necessary to display military etiquette in front of him and, on receiving his congratulations on the victory, did not even get off his horse.

“In private conversations he accused Kutuzov not only of not supporting him with the main army for personal reasons, but also of deliberately holding back Osterman’s corps.

“For many this story will seem monstrous; but from the Masonic point of view it was necessary: the Mason Kutuzov was only carrying out his obligations in relation to his brother (Murat), who had been beaten and fallen into misfortune.

“In pursuing the retreating army of Napoleon Kutuzov did not have enough strength or decisiveness to finish once and for all with the disordered French army. During the retreat Kutuzov clearly displayed criminal slowness.

“‘The behaviour of the field-marshal drives me mad,’ wrote the English agent General Wilson about this.”

For “the Masonic oath was always held to be higher than the military oath.”⁴¹⁷

[The Children of 1812](#)

1812 was not only a great military victory. It also rekindled the religious and national consciousness of Russia. Orlando Figes writes: “As readers of *War and Peace* will know, the war of 1812 was a vital watershed in the culture of the Russian aristocracy. It was a war of national liberation from the intellectual empire of the French – a moment when noblemen like the Rostovs and the Bolkonskys struggled to break free from the foreign conventions of their society and began new lives on Russian principles. This was no straightforward metamorphosis (and it happened much more slowly than in Tolstoy’s novel, where the nobles rediscover their forgotten national ways almost overnight). Though anti-French voices had grown to quite a chorus in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the aristocracy was still immersed in the culture of the country against which they were at war. The salons of St. Petersburg were filled with young admirers of Bonaparte, such as Pierre Bezhukhov in *War and Peace*. The most fashionable set was that of Counts Rumiantsev and Caulaincourt, the French ambassador in Petersburg, the circle in which Tolstoy’s Hélène moved. ‘How can we fight the French?’ asks Count Rostopchin, the Governor of Moscow, in *War and Peace*. ‘Can we arm ourselves against our teachers and divinities? Look at our youths! Look at our ladies! The French are our Gods. Paris is our Kingdom of Heaven.’ Yet even in these circles there was horror at Napoleon’s invasion, and their reaction against all things French formed the basis of a Russian renaissance in life and art.”⁴¹⁸

This Russian renaissance took many forms. At its simplest it meant that the noble army officers evinced a greater appreciation of the Russian peasants with whom they had marched all the way from Moscow to Paris. In the eighteenth century the only contact the nobility had had with the Russian peasants, their speech and their values, was through their peasant nannies. As Figes shows, this was a vital influence on many nobles, preserving a kind of stream of Russian subconsciousness under their European consciousness. As a result of 1812, this subconscious stream came more to the fore.

One of the consequences of this was the birth of a specifically Russian-language literature in the works of such “children of 1812” as the great poet Pushkin. It was Pushkin who started the trend of looking back to childhood, when the influence of his peasant nanny had been dominant. Thus “compared with their parents, the Russian

⁴¹⁷ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 269-270, 272.

⁴¹⁸ Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*, London: Penguin, 2002, pp. 101-102.

nobles who grew up after 1812 put a higher valuation on childhood. It took a long time for such attitudes to change, but already by the middle decades of the nineteenth century one can discern a new veneration of childhood on the part of those memoirists and writers who recalled their upbringing after 1812. This nostalgia for the age of childhood merged with a new reverence for the Russian customs which they had known as children through their father's household serfs."⁴¹⁹

Again, the new focus on the Russian language, Russian customs and childhood influences merged with a new focus on history – beginning, of course, with the events of 1812 itself, but going much further back into the childhood of the nation. “‘Oh please, Nurse, tell me again how the French came to Moscow.’ Thus Herzen starts his sublime memoir *My Past and Thoughts*, one of the greatest works of Russian literature. Born in 1812, Herzen had a special fondness for his nanny's stories of that year. His family had been forced to flee the flames that engulfed Moscow, the young Herzen carried out in his mother's arms, and it was only through a safe conduct from Napoleon himself that they managed to escape to their Yaroslav estate. Herzen felt great ‘pride and pleasure at [having] taken part in the Great War’. The story of his childhood merged with the national drama he so loved to hear: ‘Tales of the fire of Moscow, of the battle of Borodino, of the Berezina, of the taking of Paris were my cradle songs, my nursery stories, my Iliad and my Odyssey.’ For Herzen's generation, the myths of 1812 were intimately linked with their childhood memories. Even in the 1850s children were still brought up on the legends of that year. History, myth and memory were intertwined.

“For the historian Nikolai Karamzin, 1812 was a tragic year. While his Moscow neighbours moved to their estates, he refused to ‘believe that the ancient holy city could be lost’ and, as he wrote on 20 August, he chose to ‘die on Moscow's walls’. Karamzin's house burned down in the fires and, since he had not thought to evacuate his library, he lost his precious books to the flames as well. But Karamzin saved one book – a bulging notebook that contained the draft of his celebrated *History of the Russian State* (1818-1826). Karamzin's masterpiece was the first truly national history – not just in the sense that it was the first by a Russian, but also in the sense that it rendered Russia's past as a national narrative. Previous histories of Russia had been arcane chronicles of monasteries and saints, patriotic propaganda, or heavy tomes of documents compiled by German scholars, unread and unreadable. But Karamzin's *History* had a literary quality that made its twelve large volumes a nationwide success. It combined careful scholarship with the narrative techniques of a novelist. Karamzin stressed the psychological motivations of his historical protagonists – even to the point of inventing them – so that his account became more compelling to a readership brought up on the literary conventions of Romantic texts. Medieval tsars like Ivan the Terrible or Boris Godunov became tragic figures in Karamzin's *History* – subjects for a modern psychological drama; and from its pages they walked on to the stage in operas by Mussorgsky and Rimsky Korsakov.

“The first eight volumes of Karamzin's *History* were published in 1818. ‘Three thousand copies were sold within a month – something unprecedented in our country. Everyone, even high-born ladies, began to read the history of their country,’ wrote

⁴¹⁹ Figes, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

Pushkin. 'It was a revelation. You could say that Karamzin discovered ancient Russia as Columbus discovered America.' The victory of 1812 had encouraged a new interest and pride in Russia's past. People who had been raised on the old conviction that there was no history before the reign of Peter the Great began to look back to the distant past for the sources of their country's unexpected strengths. After 1812 history books appeared at a furious pace. Chairs were established in the universities (Gogol held one for a term at St. Petersburg). Historical associations were set up, many in the provinces, and huge efforts were suddenly devoted to the rescuing of Russia's past. History became the arena for all those troubling questions about Russia's nature and its destiny. As Belinsky wrote in 1846, 'we interrogate our past for an explanation of our present and a hint of our future'."⁴²⁰

Both of the major intellectual movements of the mid-century – the Slavophiles and the Westerners – may be said to have originated in this passion for Russian history, which began after 1812. The Slavophiles believed that the real Russia was to be found in the Orthodox medieval state that existed before Peter the Great, while the Westerners believed that Russian history only really *began* with Peter and his westernizing reforms. However, both movements represented a turning away from the "pure" westernism of the eighteenth century. For both were speaking in Russian about Russia – and not merely about the upper classes, but about the whole people.

1812 elicited not only patriotic feelings but also specifically *religious* feeling, not least in the Tsar himself, who said: "The burning of Moscow enlightened my soul, and the judgement of God on the icy fields filled my heart with a warmth of faith such as I had not felt before. Then I came to know God as He is depicted in the Holy Scriptures. I am obliged to the redemption of Europe from destruction for my own redemption". All the crosses and medallions minted in memory of 1812, he said, were to bear the inscription: "Not to us, not to us, but to Thy name give the glory".⁴²¹

God was teaching the Russians a most important lesson: that those western influences which had so inundated Russia in the century up to 1812, were evil and threatened to destroy Russia. As St. Theophan the Recluse wrote some generations later: "We are attracted by enlightened Europe... Yes, there for the first time the pagan abominations that had been driven out of the world were restored; then they passed and are passing to us, too. Inhaling into ourselves these poisonous fumes, we whirl around like madmen, not remembering who we are. But let us recall 1812: Why did the French come to us? God sent them to exterminate that evil which we had taken over from them. Russia repented at that time, and God had mercy on her."⁴²²

Tragically, however, that lesson was only superficially learned. Although the Masonic plans to overthrow both Church and State had been foiled, both Masonry and other unhealthy religious influences continued to flourish. And discontent with the existing order was evident in both the upper and the lower classes. Thus the question arose of the emancipation of the peasants, who had played such a great part in the victory, voluntarily destroying their own homes and crops in order to deny them to

⁴²⁰ Figes, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131.

⁴²¹ Dobroklonsky, *op. cit.*, p. 666. For more on Alexander's religious feelings in this period, see Troubetskoy, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

⁴²² Bishop Theophan, *Mysli na kazhdij den'* (Thoughts for every day), p. 461.

the French. They hoped for more in return than they actually received. "There was great bitterness," writes Hosking, "among peasants who returned from their militia service to find that there was no emancipation. Alexander, in his manifesto of 30 August 1814, thanking and rewarding all his subjects for their heroic deeds, said of the peasants simply that they would 'receive their reward from God'.... Some nobles tried to persuade the authorities not to allow them back, but to leave them in the regular army as ordinary soldiers. The poet Gavriil Derzhavin was informed by his returnees that they had been 'temporarily released' and were now state peasants and not obliged to serve him. Rumours circulated that Alexander had intended to free them all, but had been invited to a special meeting of indignant nobles at night in the Senate, from which he had allegedly been rescued, pleading for his life, by his brother Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich..."⁴²³

Here we have the familiar theme of the people laying the blame for their woes, not on the tsar, but on the nobles. Some peasants may have wanted emancipation and a share in the nobles' wealth. But they wanted it *with* the Tsar and *through* the Tsar, *not* as the expression of some egalitarian and anti-monarchist ideology. The French revolution in this, its imperialist, expansionist phase, overthrew many kingdoms and laid the seeds for the overthrow of still more. But it broke against the rock of the Russian people's faith in their God and their Tsar...

However, if the masses of the people were still Orthodox and loyal to the Tsar, this could not be said of the nobility. We have seen the extent to which Masonry penetrated the bureaucracy in the early part of Alexander's reign. Unfortunately, the triumphant progress of the Russian army into the heart of Masonry, Paris, did not destroy this influence, but only served to strengthen it. For, as Zamoyski writes, "if nobles at home wanted to keep their serfs, the nobles who served as officers in the armies that occupied Paris were exposed to other, liberal influences. They had been brought up speaking French and reading the same literature as educated people in other countries. They could converse effortlessly with German and English allies as well as with French prisoners and civilians. Ostensibly, they were just like any of the Frenchmen, Britons and Germans they met, yet at every step they were made aware of profound differences. The experience left them with a sense of being somehow outside, almost unfit for participation in European civilisation. And that feeling would have dire consequences..."⁴²⁴

All kinds of pseudo-religious mysticism flooded into Russia from the West. There was, writes N. Elagin, "a veritable inundation of 'mystical' and pseudo-Christian ideas... together with the 'enlightened' philosophy that had produced the French Revolution. Masonic lodges and other secret societies abounded; books containing the Gnostic and millenarian fantasies of Jacob Boehme, Jung-Stilling, Eckhartshausen and other Western 'mystics' were freely translated into Russian and printed for distribution in all the major cities of the realm; 'ecumenical' salons spread a vague teaching of an 'inner Christianity' to the highest levels of Russian society; the press censorship was under the direction of the powerful Minister of Spiritual Affairs, Count Golitsyn, who patronized every 'mystical' current and stifled the voice of traditional

⁴²³ Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

⁴²⁴ Zamoyski, *Holy Madness: Romantics, Patriots and Revolutionaries, 1776-1871*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999, pp. 172-173.

Orthodoxy by his dominance of the Holy Synod as Procurator; the Tsar Alexander himself, fresh from his victory over Napoleon and the formation of a vaguely religious 'Holy Alliance' of Western powers, favored the new religious currents and consulted with 'prophetesses' and other religious enthusiasts; and the bishops and other clergy who saw what was going on were reduced to helpless silence in the face of the prevailing current of the times and the Government's support of it, which promised exile and disgrace for anyone who opposed it. Many even of those who regarded themselves as sincere Orthodox Christians were swept up in the spiritual 'enthusiasm' of the times, and, trusting their religious feelings more than the Church's authority and tradition, were developing a new spirituality, foreign to Orthodoxy, in the midst of the Church itself. Thus, one lady of high birth, Ekaterina P. Tatarinova, claimed to have received the gift of 'prophecy' on the very day she was received into the Orthodox Church (from Protestantism), and subsequently she occupied the position of a 'charismatic' leader of religious meetings which included the singing of Masonic and sectarian hymns (while holding hands in a circle), a peculiar kind of dancing and spinning when the 'Holy Spirit' would come upon them, and actual 'prophecy' – sometimes for hours at a time. The members of such groups fancied that they drew closer to the traditions of Orthodoxy by such meetings, which they regarded as a kind of restoration of the New Testament Church for 'inward' believers, the 'Brotherhood in Christ', as opposed to the 'outward' Christians who were satisfied with the Divine services of the Orthodox Church... The revival of the perennial 'charismatic' temptation in the Church, together with a vague 'revolutionary' spirit imported from the West, presented a danger not merely to the preservation of true Christianity in Russia, but to the very survival of the whole order of Church and State..."⁴²⁵

V.N. Zhmakin writes: "From 1812 there began with us in Russia a time of the domination of extreme mysticism and pietism... The Emperor Alexander became a devotee of many people simultaneously, from whatever quarter they declared their religious enthusiasm... He protected the preachers of western mysticism, the Catholic fathers... Among the first of his friends and counsellors was Prince A.N. Golitsyn, who was ober-procurator of the Synod from 1803... Prince Golitsyn was the complete master of the Russian Orthodox Church in the reign of Alexander I... Having received no serious religious education, like the majority of aristocrats of that time, he was a complete babe in religious matters and almost an ignoramus in Orthodoxy... Golitsyn, who understood Orthodoxy poorly, took his understanding of it only from its external manifestations... His mystical imagination inclined in favour of secrecy, fancifulness, originality... He became simultaneously the devotee of all the representatives of contemporary mysticism, such as Mrs. Krunder, the society of Quakers, Jung Schtilling, the pastors... etc. Moreover, he became the pitiful plaything of all the contemporary sectarians, all the religious utopians, the representatives of all the religious theories, beginning with the Masons and ending with the ... eunuch Selivanov and the half-mad Tatarinova. In truth, Prince Golitsyn at the same time protected the mystics and the pietists, and gave access into Russia to the English missionaries, and presented a broad field of activity to the Jesuits, who, thanks to the protection of the Minister of Religious Affairs, sowed a large part of Russia with their missions... He himself personally took part in the prayer-meetings of the Quakers and waited, together with them, for the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, he himself took

⁴²⁵ Elagin, "The Life of Countess Anna Orlova-Chesmenskaya", *The Orthodox Word*, 1977, vol. 13, № 6 (77), pp. 240-241.

part in the religious gatherings of Tatarinova, which were orgies reminiscent of the Shamans and khlysts.... Thanks to Prince Golitsyn, mystical literature received all rights of citizenship in Russia – works shot through with mystical ravings were distributed en masse... By the direct order of Prince Golitsyn all the more significant mystical works and translations were distributed to all the dioceses to the diocesan bishops. In some dioceses two thousand copies of one and the same work were sent to some dioceses... Prince Golitsyn... acted... in the name of the Holy Synod... and in this way contradicted himself;... the Synod as it were in its own name distributed works which actually went right against Orthodoxy.... He strictly persecuted the appearance of such works as were negatively oriented towards mysticism... Many of the simple people, on reading the mystical works that came into their hands, ... were confused and perplexed."⁴²⁶

Something of the atmosphere of St. Petersburg at that time can be gathered from the recollections of the future Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov), when he went there for service in the newly reformed ecclesiastical schools in 1809. "The Synod greeted him with the advice to read 'Swedenborg's *Miracles*' and learn French. He was taken to court to view the fireworks and attend a masquerade party in order to meet Prince Golitsyn..., quite literally 'amidst the noise of a ball'... This was Philaret's first masquerade ball, and he had never before seen a domino. 'At the time I was an object of amusement in the Synod,' Philaret recalled, 'and I have remained a fool'."⁴²⁷

[The Peace of Europe](#)

As Alexander pursued the remnants of the Great Army into Poland in the winter of 1812-13, he was "in a state bordering on religious ecstasy. More and more he turned to the eleventh chapter of the Book of Daniel with the apocalyptic vision of how the all-conquering King of the South is cast down by the King of the North. It seemed to him as if the prophecies, which had sustained him during the dark days of autumn and early winter, were now to be fulfilled: Easter this year would come with a new spiritual significance of hope for all Europe. 'Placing myself firmly in the hands of God I submit blindly to His will,' he informed his friend Golitsyn from Radzonow, on the Wkra. 'My faith is sincere and warm with passion. Every day it grows firmer and I experience joys I had never known before... It is difficult to express in words the benefits I gain from reading the Scriptures, which previously I knew only superficially... All my glory I dedicate to the advancement of the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ'... At Kalisch (Kalisz) on the border of the Grand-Duchy of Warsaw and Prussia the Tsar concluded a convention with Frederick William: the agreement provided for a close military alliance between Russia and Prussia, stipulating the size of their respective contingents and promising Prussia territory as extensive as in 1806; but the final clauses went beyond the normal language of diplomacy to echo Alexander's religious inspiration. 'Let all Germany join us in our mission of liberation,' the Kalisch Treaty said. 'The hour has come for obligations to be observed with that religious faith, that sacred inviolability which holds together the power and permanence of nations.'"⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ Zhmakin, "Eres' esaula Kotel'nikova" (The Heresy of Cossack Captain Kotelnikov), *Khristianskoe Chtenie* (Christian Reading), November-December, 1882, pp. 739-745.

⁴²⁷ Fr. Georges Florovsky, *The Ways of Russian Theology*, Belmont, 1979, part I, pp. 202-203.

⁴²⁸ Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-261.

But should Russia go further west into Germany and liberate the whole of Western Europe? Kutuzov and most of the senior officers were against it. "Even the most ardent Russian patriots, such as his Minister of the Interior Admiral Shishkov and the Archimandrite Filaret, were against Alexander's proposed liberation of Europe. The consensus was that Russia should help herself to East Prussia and much of Poland, providing herself with some territorial gain and a defensible western border, and leave it at that. But Alexander ignored them."⁴²⁹

Many have criticized Alexander's subsequent behaviour in the years 1813-1815. And there was indeed much to criticize. He was an indifferent general and diplomat, and at the Congress of Vienna in 1814-1815 the lack of congruence between his proclaimed principles and his actual behaviour squandered for him much of the goodwill that the great sufferings of the Russian people in 1812 had won. Nevertheless, on the critical question whether he should have stopped at the Vistula or continued all the way to Paris, in hindsight we must conclude that Alexander was right and his critics wrong.

Napoleon's power was by no means broken in 1813; and if Alexander's troops had not taken part in the great battle that did finally break it, at Leipzig in October, 1813, it is likely that the ogre would have retaken the whole of Germany and Poland up to the Vistula. True, the ever-chivalrous Alexander was unwise in giving him the island of Elba, very close to the mainland, from which he escaped in 1815, only to be finally defeated with great difficulty at Waterloo in June. However, the Tsar showed great tenacity of purpose, in contrast to his weakness at Tilsit, in pushing all the way to Paris and the complete overthrow of the antichrist-emperor, and must take the main credit for finally seeing the restoration of legitimate monarchism in France and throughout Continental Europe.

Perhaps the best measure of his victory was the Orthodox Divine Liturgy celebrated on Alexander's namesday, September 12, 1815, on seven altars on the Plaine de Vertus, eighty miles east of Paris, in the presence of the Russian army and all the leading political and military leaders of Europe. Neither before nor since in the modern history of Europe has there been such a universal witness, by all the leaders of the Great Powers, to the true King of kings and Lord of lords. And if this was just a diplomatic concession on the part of the non-Orthodox powers, it was much more than that for Alexander. His Orthodox spirit, so puzzling to the other leaders of Europe, was manifested in a letter he wrote that same evening: "This day has been the most beautiful in all my life. My heart was filled with love for my enemies. In tears at the foot of the Cross, I prayed with fervour that France might be saved..."⁴³⁰

A few days later Alexander presented his fellow sovereigns with a treaty designed to bind them in a union of faith and virtue, requiring them "to take as their sole guide the precepts of the Christian religion". The Tsar insisted on proclaiming the treaty dedicated "to the Holy and Indivisible Trinity" in Paris because it was the most irreligious of all Europe's capital cities.⁴³¹ Only the King of Prussia welcomed the idea.

⁴²⁹ Adam Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace: The Fall of Napoleon & the Congress of Vienna*, London: Harper Perennial, 2008, p. 27.

⁴³⁰ Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁴³¹ Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

The Emperor of Austria was embarrassed, and in private agreed with his chancellor, Metternich, that Alexander was mad. On the British side, the Duke of Wellington confessed that he could hardly keep a straight face; he and Castlereagh mocked it in private.⁴³²

Alexander's own supporters joined in the spirit of the enterprise in spite of its ecumenist overtones. Thus Golitsyn wrote about the Alliance in positively chiliastic terms: "This act cannot be recognized as anything other than a preparation for that promised kingdom of the Lord which will be upon the earth as in the heavens."⁴³³ And the future Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow wrote: "Finally the kingdoms of this world have begun to belong to our Lord and His Christ".⁴³⁴

The cynical attitude of the foreign statesmen was not unexpected. After all, religion had long ceased to be the basis of western political life. True, the monarchs protected religion as a foundation of monarchical power; but in the post-1815 settlement the Catholic Church received few of its lands back, which showed their true attitude to it. Nevertheless, Tsar Alexander was now the most powerful man in Europe, and the others could not afford to reject his religio-political project out of hand. So, led by Metternich, they set about discreetly editing the treaty of its more mystical elements until it was signed by the monarchs of Russia, Austria and Prussia (the British and the Turks opted out, as did the Pope of Rome) on September 26.⁴³⁵

"Conformably to the word of the Holy Scriptures," declared the signatories, "the three contracting Monarchs will remain united by the bonds of a true and indissoluble fraternity, and considering each other as fellow countrymen, they will on all occasions, and in all places lend each other aid and assistance; and regarding themselves towards their subjects and armies as fathers of families, they will lead them, in the same fraternity with which they are animated to protect religion, peace and justice."⁴³⁶

This was not only the beginning of a new, multilateral approach to politics: it was also the beginning of a kind of United Nations, with the great monarchical powers as the security council who pledged themselves not to take major decisions on the

⁴³² Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, pp. 520-522.

⁴³³ Golitsyn, quoted by Fr. Georges Florovsky, "Philaret, mitropolit Moskovskij" ("Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow"), in *Vera i Kul'tura (Faith and Culture)*, St. Petersburg, 2002, p. 265.

⁴³⁴ Philaret, quoted in Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), *Zhizn' i deiatel'nost' mitropolita Filareta (The Life and Activity of Metropolitan Philaret)*, Tula, 1994, p. 121.

Philaret appears to have been influenced by the ecumenism of his sovereign at this time. For in 1815 he wrote in his *Conversations between one testing and one convinced of the Orthodoxy of the Greco-Russian Church*: "Insofar as the one [the Eastern Church] and the other [the Western Church] confess Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh, in this respect they have a common Spirit, which 'is of God'... Know that, holding to the above-quoted words of Holy Scripture, I do not dare to call any Church which believes 'that Jesus is the Christ' false" (Snychev, *op. cit.*, pp. 402, 408). However, in defence of the holy metropolitan, it should be pointed out that in the above-quoted work he rejected the heresies of papism, and that he never served with heterodox hierarchs or sought union with the heterodox churches. And he revered his mentor, Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, who during his journey to Kiev and other Russian cities in 1804 reproached "the Russian authorities for following 'that new-fangled mode of thinking which is called tolerance' in their relations with the Jesuits, and blamed the Jews for the impoverishment of the Christian population in the areas in which they are numerous" (Papmehl, *op. cit.*, p. 81).

⁴³⁵ Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-334.

⁴³⁶ Quoted in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassell, 2004, p. 541.

international stage without consulting each other. Moreover, it was a consciously *Christian* United Nations; for the powers declared themselves to be “members of a single Christian nation” – a remarkable idea in view of the fact that of the three members of the Alliance, one, Russia, was Orthodox, another, Austria, was Catholic, and the third, Prussia, was Protestant.

The most important achievement of the Holy Alliance was the re-establishment of the monarchical principle, and in particular of *hereditary* monarchism. We have seen that even Napoleon’s regime had acquired monarchical trappings; but he had failed to make it truly hereditary. Thus when an obscure general called Malet had announced Napoleon’s death in Russia in October, 1812, the Emperor had been startled by how close the mutiny came to success. What touched a particularly raw nerve in him, writes Zamoycki, “was that the news of his death in Russia, announced by Malet, had led those who believed it to consider a change of regime, instead of making them proclaim the succession of his son, the King of Rome. ‘Our forefathers rallied to the cry: “*The King is dead, long live the King!*” he reminded them, adding that ‘These few words encompass the principal advantages of monarchy.’ That they had not been uttered on the night of 23 October revealed to him that for all its trappings, the monarchy he had created lacked consistency, and he was still just a general who had seized power, a parvenu with no title to rule beyond his ability to hold on to it. He felt this setback personally, and the sense of insecurity it induced would have a profound effect on how he behaved over the next two years, making him more aggressive and less amenable, and leading inexorably to his downfall...”⁴³⁷

A hereditary monarch may not be an admirable person, and may suffer many defeats in the field; but he is the king, and in a society that still believes in kingship, this gives his regime solidity and strength. And if he fails or dies, his son will succeed him, and command the same reverence and loyalty. But once Napoleon had been defeated, and the magical aura of invincibility surrounding him began to fade, it was the end both for him and for his upstart dynasty – as he himself recognized after Waterloo.

However, while the Congress of Vienna succeeded in re-establishing the *principle* of hereditary monarchism as the only true principle of political legitimacy, *in practice* hereditary monarchs by no means always recovered their thrones and territories. The great powers, as was to be expected, did not restore the map of Europe to what it had been before 1792. They increased their own power, and many hundreds of smaller rulers were partially or wholly dispossessed in the complex negotiations and horse-trading that took place between them in Vienna and Paris. Moreover, millions of ordinary people, especially in Germany and Italy, now found themselves under new rulers. This created almost as much disruption and discontent as had the Napoleonic invasions, which in turn created a kind of nostalgia for the Napoleonic times in some.

In addition to this, in spite of the defeat of the French revolution, there was a continuing increase in the influence of the idea of nationalism that the revolution had spawned. This was the idea that not only the rulers, but also the nations over which they ruled, had rights and privileges, and that a nation represented an organic and

⁴³⁷ Zamoycki, *Rites of Peace*, p. 5.

even moral unity that could not be simply cut up and parceled out as, for example, Poland was. The settlement of 1815, and the congresses of the great powers that took place thereafter, have been much criticized for not taking sufficient account of these new developments, and of vainly trying to resist an unstoppable development by crude police methods and repression.

An eloquent exponent of this point of view is Adam Zamoyski, who writes: "The Vienna settlement imposed an orthodoxy which not only denied political existence to many nations; it enshrined a particularly stultified form of monarchical government; institutionalised social hierarchies as rigid as any that had existed under the *ancien regime*; and preserved archaic disabilities – serfdom was not abolished in Russia until half a century after the congress. By excluding whole classes and nations from a share in its benefits, this system nurtured envy and resentment, which flourished into socialism and aggressive nationalism. And when, after the 'Concert of Europe' had fought itself to extinction in the Great War, those forces were at last unleashed, they visited on Europe events more horrific than the worst fears Metternich or any of his colleagues could have entertained.

"It would be idle to propose that the arrangements made in 1815 caused the terrible cataclysms of the twentieth century. But anyone who attempted to argue that what happened in Russia after 1917, in Italy and Germany in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, and in many other parts of central and southern Europe at various other moments of the last century had no connection with them would be exposing themselves to ridicule..."⁴³⁸

And yet, as Zamoyski admits, the peacemakers of 1815 "did face a formidable task, one that defied any ideal solution. Just because certain arrangements they made turned out to have evil consequences, it does not follow that the opposite course would have yielded more benign results."⁴³⁹

Indeed, the opposite course of giving in to the propaganda of the French revolution might well have brought the cataclysm of 1914-45 forward by several decades. The kernel of truth in Zamoyski's argument is that the great powers did not cure the disease of Europe, but only arrested or repressed it by crude measures that were often counter-productive. But the only real cure for the disease was for the peoples of Europe to accept the true faith from their liberator, Russia – a near-impossible task, since the attitude of the Europeans to Russia was one of supercilious condescension and non-comprehension, while Russia was herself struggling to contain the disease within herself. In this context, the attempt of Tsar Alexander to save Europe by preaching the faith to his fellow monarchs acquires an extra poignancy. He failed, not only because his fellow monarchs were not interested in the faith, but also because his own faith was mixed with Masonic and heterodox elements. But his failure was less his loss than that of Europe as a whole. For the only hope for a real resurrection of Christian and monarchical Europe lay in accepting the lead of Russia in both the spiritual and the political spheres...

⁴³⁸ Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p. 569.

⁴³⁹ Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p. 566.

In the final analysis, the defeat of Napoleon and the re-establishment of monarchical order in Europe, proved the viability of traditional kingship in the face of the most powerful and determined attempt to overthrow it yet seen in European history. It established an order that, in spite of many upheavals and changes, remained essentially in place until 1914, when the anti-monarchical movements of revolutionary socialism and nationalism finally destroyed the old order. That the old order survived for as long as it did was owing to no small degree to that former-freethinker-turned-Orthodox-monarchist, Tsar Alexander the Blessed...

The Polish Question

One of the most important issues faced by the Great Powers in 1815 was the settlement of Poland. As was to be expected, the Poles welcomed Napoleon after he defeated the Prussians at Jena in 1806, although they knew that he was no true champion of liberty, equality and fraternity - Polish soldiers had helped the French tyrant's attempts to crush Dominican independence. But Napoleon was the instrument, they felt, for the attainment of their own independence.⁴⁴⁰ They were doomed to disappointment, however. In 1807 Napoleon created the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and by 1812 controlled almost all the lands of the former Republic - but did not restore it to full independence. And then the Russian armies came back... Nevertheless, Polish soldiers faithfully followed Napoleon both to Elba and to St. Helena, and the cult of Napoleon remained alive in Polish hearts for a long time. Thus the poet Mickiewicz signed himself "Adam Napoleon Mickiewicz"⁴⁴¹.

But in 1818 Tsar Alexander offered the Poles more than Napoleon had ever given them - one of the most liberal constitutions in Europe, and more rights than even the Russians possessed!⁴⁴² As Lebedev writes: "Great was the joy of Emperor Alexander I in connection with the fact that in 1815 he succeeded in creating a Polish Kingdom that was free both from Prussia and from Austria and almost completely - from Russia! For he gave this Kingdom a Constitution! An unparalleled situation was created. While remaining a part of the Russian Empire, Poland was at the same time a state within a

⁴⁴⁰ Madame de Staël claimed that "the Poles are the only Europeans who can serve under the banners of Napoleon without blushing" (Zamoyski, *Holy Madness*, p. 199).

⁴⁴¹ Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

⁴⁴² As Palmer writes, the Constitutional Charter drawn up by his Polish minister Czartoryski "was a liberal instrument of government. The Polish nation was promised 'for all time to come' a bi-cameral Diet (Sejm), which would share legislative power with the Tsar-King, and a separate executive State Council of five ministers and a number of royal nominees. The Charter guaranteed to the Poles freedom of worship for the 'Christian faiths', freedom of the press, and freedom from arbitrary arrest; and it also provided for an independent judiciary... The Upper House, the Senate, was a nominated body, with preference given to the older aristocracy and the Catholic episcopate; and the right to elect to the Lower House (in which there were nominated representatives as well as deputies) was limited to the gentry in the countryside and to property-owners in the towns. Moreover the Diet met for only one month in every two years and possessed no right to initiate legislation, being permitted only to discuss laws laid before it. Nevertheless these provisions did at least give the Poles the opportunity of internal self-government with a system of tariffs and taxation of their own, and the terms of the Charter were accepted by Alexander with perfect sincerity. Whatever others at St. Petersburg might feel, the Tsar himself consciously separated in his mind the 'Kingdom of Poland' from the Empire as a whole. On more than one occasion in the following seven years he gave his advisers the impression that he was using Poland as a field for constitutional experiments which might be implemented on a larger scale in Russian proper..." (*op. cit.*, pp. 340-341). Moreover, he offered the hope of adding the other Polish lands to the Kingdom.

state, and distinct from Russia precisely because it had rights and freedoms which did not exist in Russia! But this seemed little to the proud (and therefore the *blind*) Poles! They were dreaming of recreating, then and there, the [Polish State] in that 'greatness' which, as they thought, it had had before the 'division of Poland. A revolutionary 'patriotic' movement began in which even the friend of Alexander I's youth, A. Chartoryskij, took part. Like other Polish 'pans' [nobles], he looked with haughty coldness on the actions of the Emperor in relation to Poland. The Polish gentry *did not value* them..."⁴⁴³

A complicating factor in the Polish question was Freemasonry. The Masonic historian Jasper Ridley writes: "Alexander I's attitude to Freemasonry in Russia was affected by the position in Poland. The first Freemasons' lodge in Poland was formed in 1735; but the Freemasons were immediately attacked by the Jesuits and the Roman Catholic Church, which was influential in Poland, and in 1738 King Augustus II issued a decree suppressing them. His successor, King Stanislaus Augustus Poniatovsky, was sympathetic to the Freemasons. He allowed the first Polish Grand Lodge to be formed in 1767, and ten years later he himself became a Freemason.

"The partition of Poland between Catherine the Great, Frederick the Great and Maria Theresa in 1772, was followed by the further partitions of 1793 and 1796, which eliminated Poland as a country. It was a black day for the Polish Freemasons. Only Frederick the Great and his successors in Prussia tolerated them; they were suppressed in Austrian Poland in 1795 and in Russian Poland in 1797. Some of the leaders of the Polish resistance... were Freemasons; but the most famous of all the heroes of Polish independence, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, was not a Freemason, though he was a personal friend of La Fayette."⁴⁴⁴

"When Napoleon defeated the Russians at Eylau and Friedland, and established the Grand Duchy of Warsaw under French protection in 1807, he permitted and encouraged the Freemasons, and in March 1810 the Grand Orient of Poland was established. After the defeat of Napoleon, Alexander I did not ban the Freemasons in that part of Poland which again came under Russia. When he visited Warsaw in November 1815 he was entertained at a banquet by the Polish Freemasons, and was made a member of the Polish Grand Orient. In 1816 General Alexander Rojnezky became Deputy Grand Master of the Polish Grand Orient, and he drafted a new constitution for the Freemasons which brought the organization to a considerable extent under the control of the Russian government. This aroused the resentment of patriotic Poles who did not like the Russians. In 1819 Major Victor Lukacinsky formed a rival masonic organization. It was free from Russian control and only Poles were admitted.

"The development in Poland was probably one of the factors which persuaded Tsar Alexander to change his attitude towards Freemasonry [and the Polish Kingdom]; though another was his general shift towards a reactionary [*sic*] policy which followed

⁴⁴³ Lebedev, *Velikorossia*, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

⁴⁴⁴ He was also respected by Alexander. When the Tsar visited Kosciuszko near Paris, "Kosciuszko appealed to Alexander to create a free kingdom of Poland with an English-style constitution and himself as King, and offered his services. 'Your most cherished hopes will be realised,' Alexander replied" (Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p. 196). (V.M.)

the formation of the Holy Alliance against revolution between Russia, Austria and Prussia. He asked Lieutenant General Egor Alexandrovich Kushelev, who was a senator and himself a prominent Freemason, to report to him on the masonic lodges in Russia.

“Kushelev’s report, in June 1821, stated that although true Freemasons were loyal subjects and their ideals and activities were praiseworthy, masonic lodges could be used as a cover for revolutionary activities, as they had been in the Kingdom of Naples; and the same was happening in Russia, especially in three of the St. Petersburg lodges.

“‘This is the state, Most Gracious Sovereign, in which Masonic lodges now exist in Petersburg. Instead of the Spirit of Christian mildness and of true Masonic rules and meekness, the spirit of self-will, turbulence and real anarchy acts through them.’

“Within a month of receiving Kushelev’s report, Alexander I banned the publication of Masonic songs and all other Masonic documents. On 1 August 1822 he issued a decree suppressing the Freemasons throughout Russia. In November he issued a similar decree banning the Freemasons and all other secret societies in Russian Poland. These decrees were re-enacted by his more reactionary brother, Tsar Nicholas I, when Nicholas succeeded Alexander.”⁴⁴⁵

Alexander’s attempt to combine the Russian autocracy with a Polish liberal constitution failed, as it had to fail. For monarchy and masonry do not mix. The Golden Age of Masonry was over – or so it seemed...

[The Jewish Question](#)

If the Polish problem was difficult to solve, the Jewish problem was even more intractable. The two nations had much in common: both were nations without states, distrustful of each other but united in their craving for national autonomy, both fiercely anti-Orthodox and both subjects of the same people, the Russians, whom they had both exploited in the not-so-distant past. The future of Europe, and Christian civilization in general, would to a large extent depend on how well Orthodox Russia would succeed in assimilating and neutralising this breeding-ground of the Revolution...

Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, the Jews had been forbidden to settle in Russia. From the beginning of the Muscovite kingdom, however, Jews had begun to infiltrate into Russia from Poland-Lithuania, where, as we have seen, the Polish landowners had given them considerable privileges, employing them to collect very heavy taxes, fees, tolls and produce from the Russian serfs. In some cases the Poles even handed over churches and monasteries to the Jews, who would extort fees for the celebration of sacraments.⁴⁴⁶

“In the 16th century,” writes Solzhenitsyn, quoting Yury Hessen, “‘the spiritual leadership of the Jewish world came to be concentrated in German-Polish Jewry... So

⁴⁴⁵ Ridley, *The Freemasons*, London: Constable, 1999, pp. 169-170.

⁴⁴⁶ Hieromonk Patapios, “A Traditionalist Critique of ‘The Orthodox Church’”, *Orthodox Tradition*, volume XVI, N 1, 1999, pp. 44-45.

as to prevent the possibility of the Jewish people being dissolved amidst the surrounding population, the spiritual leaders had from ages past introduced stipulations whose purpose was to isolate the people from close contact with their neighbours. Using the authority of the Talmud,... the Rabbis wrapped round the public and private life of the Jew with a complex web of prescriptions of a religio-social nature, which... prevented them getting close to people of other faiths.' Real and spiritual needs 'were brought in sacrifice to outdated forms of popular life', 'blind fulfilment of ritual was transformed for the people into the goal, as it were, of the existence of Jewry... Rabbinism, ossified in lifeless forms, continued to keep both the mind and the will of the people in fetters.'"⁴⁴⁷

In 1648, the Ukrainian Cossacks and peasants rose up against their Polish and Jewish oppressors and appealed to the Tsar for help. The Tsarist armies triumphed, and by the treaty of Andrusovo in 1667 Eastern Ukraine was ceded – together with its Jewish population – to Russia.⁴⁴⁸ For the next hundred years, writes Janet Hartley, these Jews of the Russian empire "lived mostly in the Ukraine although a small Jewish community became established in Moscow. The government legislated to contain and control the Jewish population within the empire's borders. Both Catherine I (1725-27) and Elizabeth (1741-62) attempted to ban Jews from Russia; one estimate is that 35,000 Jews were banished in 1741."⁴⁴⁹

From the second half of the eighteenth century, however, the universalism and cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment, together with the principles of human and national rights of the French revolution, led to the emancipation of the Jews, first in France, and then in most of the countries of Europe. This process was slow and accompanied by many reverses and difficulties, but inexorable. The only great power which firmly resisted it was *Russia*....

Contrary to popular myth, the myth of its being "the prison of the peoples", the record of the Russian empire in its treatment of various subject populations was in general good. We only have to look at the large number of Baltic German names among the senior officials of the empire, the very large measure of autonomy given to the Finns (and to the Poles before they rebelled), and the way in which Tatar khans and Georgian princes were fully assimilated (or rather: assimilated to the degree that *they* wanted). In fact, Russia was probably more liberal, and certainly less racist, in its treatment of its subject peoples than its contemporary rival, the supposedly "liberal" empire of Great Britain.

But the Jews presented certain intractable problems not found in the other peoples of the empire. The first problem was the sheer *number* of Jews who suddenly found themselves within its boundaries. Thus Hartley writes: "The empire acquired a further c. 250,000 Jews after the establishment of the Congress Kingdom of Poland in 1815.

⁴⁴⁷ A.I. Solzhenitsyn, *Dvesti Let Vmeste* (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, vol. 1, p. 34.

⁴⁴⁸ 1667 was the very year in which Patriarch Nikon was unjustly deposed; so the first major influx of Jews into Russia coincided with the first serious undermining of Russian Church-State relations. (L.A. Tikhomirov, "Yevrei i Rossia" ("The Jews and Russia"), *Kritika Demokratii* (A Critique of Democracy), Moscow, 1997, p. 487).

⁴⁴⁹ Hartley, *A Social History of the Russian Empire, 1650-1825*, London and New York: Longman, 1999, p. 15.

There was a substantial Jewish population in Bessarabia (11.3 per cent in 1863). In 1854, the Jewish population of the whole empire was estimated as 1,062,132."⁴⁵⁰ These numbers grew rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century. And by the beginning of the twentieth century, according to Lebedev, *about half* the number of the Jews *in the whole world* were to be found in the Russian empire.

More fundamental, however, than the administrative problem presented by these large numbers was the fact that, as David Vital writes, "there were differences... between Russia and the other European states... in respect of the place of religion generally and what were taken to be the teachings of religion on what were unquestionably the state's affairs. It was not merely that in principle Russia continued to be held by its Autocrat and its minions to be a Christian state with a particular duty to uphold its own Orthodox Church. It was that, far from the matter of the state's specifically Christian duty slowly wasting away, as in the west, it continued actively to exercise the minds of Russia's rulers as one of the central criteria by which questions of public policy were to be judged and decided. The continuous search for an effective definition of the role, quality, and ultimate purposes of the Autocracy itself was an enterprise which, considering the energy and seriousness with which it was pursued, sufficed in itself to distinguish Russia from its contemporaries. The programmes to which the state was committed and all its structures were under obligation to promote varied somewhat over time. But in no instance was there serious deviation from the rule that Russian Orthodoxy was and needed to remain a central and indispensable component of the ruling ethos. Nineteenth-century imperial Russia was therefore an ideological state in a manner and to a degree that had become so rare as to be virtually unknown in Europe and would not be familiar again for at least a century..."⁴⁵¹

Moreover, if Russia was the last ideological state in Europe, the large numbers of Ashkenazi Jews that came within the Russian empire between 1772 and 1815 constituted an ideological "state within the state" whose anti-Christian books, rabbinic leaders and *kahal* institutions caused them to be bitterly hostile to everything that Russia stood for. To put it bluntly: if the Russians worshipped Christ, the Jews hated Him. And no amount of state intervention, whether in a liberal or illiberal, emancipatory or anti-emancipatory direction, could resolve this basic contradiction or defuse the hostile sentiments it aroused on both sides. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that, unlike the Orthodox Christians, who are taught to recognise and obey secular authorities even if they are not Orthodox, and not only out of fear but for conscience's sake (Romans 13.1-4), the Jews ultimately recognised no authorities beside their own, rabbinical ones. And if they did obey the Gentile powers, it was only because they had been taught that resistance was counter-productive, not because these powers had any *moral* authority over them.

This led the Jew, writes Vital, "to be deeply sceptical of civil authority of *all* kinds... The lasting effect of such scepticism was to leave him peculiarly independent in mind and social outlook. "Having no earthly masters to whom he thought he owed unquestioning political obedience (the special case of the Hasidic *rebbe* or *zaddik* and his devotees aside), '[the European Jew's] was... a spirit that, for his times, was remarkably free. Permitted no land, he had no territorial lord. Admitted to no guild,

⁴⁵⁰ Hartley, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁴⁵¹ David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789-1939*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 86-87.

he was free of the authority of established master-craftsmen. Not being a Christian, he had neither bishop nor priest to direct him. And while he could be charged or punished for insubordination to state or sovereign, he could not properly be charged with disloyalty. Betrayal only entered into the life of the Jews in regard to their own community or, more broadly, to Jewry as a whole. It was to their own nation alone that they accepted that they owed undeviating loyalty."⁴⁵²

We have seen how important and harmful the internal Jewish authority of the *kahal* was considered to be by the enlightened Polish Jew Hourwitz. The Tsar's servants were soon to make this discovery for themselves. Tsar Paul I appointed the poet and state official Gavriil Romanovich Derzhavin to investigate why Belorussia had been afflicted by such a severe famine. After visiting Belorussia twice in 1799 and 1800, Derzhavin came to the conclusion that the main cause of the famine was the desperate poverty into which the Jewish tavern-keepers and money-lenders, in connivance with the Polish landowners, had reduced the Belorussian peasants.⁴⁵³

But more importantly, writes Oleg Platonov, Derzhavin "noted the ominous role of the *kahals* - the organs of Jewish self-rule on the basis of the bigoted laws of the Talmud, which 'a well-constructed political body must not tolerate', as being a state within the state. Derzhavin discovered that the Jews, who considered themselves oppressed, established in the Pale of Settlement a secret Israelite kingdom divided into *kahal* districts with *kahal* administrations endowed with despotic power over the Jews which inhumanly exploited the Christians and their property on the basis of the Talmud. ...⁴⁵⁴

"Derzhavin also uncovered the concept of 'herem' - a curse which the *kahal* issued against all those who did not submit to the laws of the Talmud. This, according to the just evaluation of the Russian poet, was 'an impenetrable sacrilegious cover for the most terrible crimes'.

"In his note Derzhavin 'was the first to delineate a harmonious, integral programme for the resolution of the Jewish question in the spirit of Russian statehood, having in mind the unification of all Russian subjects on common ground'.

"Paul I, after reading the note, agreed with many of its positions and decorated the author. However, the tragic death of the Tsar as the result of an international Masonic conspiracy destroyed the possibility of resolving the Jewish question in a spirit favourable for the Russian people. The new Emperor, Alexander I, being under the

⁴⁵² Vital, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

⁴⁵³ Solzhenitsyn writes, quoting Derzhavin, that "some 'landowners, giving the sale of wine on franchise to the Jews in their villages, are making agreements with them that their peasants should buy nothing that they needed from anyone else, and should take loans from nobody except these tax-farmers [three times more expensive], and should sell none of their products to anyone except these same Jewish tax-farmers... cheaper than the true price'" (*op. cit.*, p. 47).

⁴⁵⁴ In 1800, I.G. Friesel, governor of Vilna, reported: "Having established their own administrative institution, called Synagogues, Kahals, or associations, the Jews completely separated themselves from the people and government of the land. As a result, they were exempt from the operation of the statutes which governed the peoples of the several estates, and even if special laws were enacted, these remained unenforced and valueless, because the ecclesiastical and temporal leaders of the Jews invariably resisted them and were clever enough to find means to evade them." (Isaac Levitats, *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1772-1844*, New York, 1970, p. 29; quoted in Hartley, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99). (V.M.)

influence of a Masonic environment, adopted a liberal position. In 1802 he created a special Committee for the improvement of the Jews, whose soul was the Mason Speransky, who was closely linked with the Jewish world through the well-known tax-farmer Perets, whom he considered his friend and with whom he lived.

“Another member of the committee was G.R. Derzhavin. As general-governor, he prepared a note ‘On the removal of the deficit of bread in Belorussia, the collaring of the avaricious plans of the Jews, on their transformation, and other things’. Derzhavin’s new note, in the opinion of specialists, was ‘in the highest degree a remarkable document, not only as the work of an honourable, penetrating statesman, but also as a faithful exposition of all the essential sides of Jewish life, which hinder the merging of this race with the rest of the population.’

“In the report of the official commission on the Jewish question which worked in the 1870s in the Ministry of the Interior, it was noted that at the beginning of the reign of Alexander I the government ‘stood already on the ground of the detailed study of Jewry and the preparation that had begun had already at that time exposed such sides of the public institutions of this nationality which would hardly be tolerable in any state structure. But however often reforms were undertaken in the higher administrative spheres, every time some magical brake held up the completion of the matter.’ This magical brake stopped Derzhavin’s proposed reform of Jewry, which suggested the annihilation of the *kahals* in all the provinces populated by Jews, the removal of all *kahal* collections and the limitation of the influx of Jews to a certain percentage in relation to the Christian population, while the remaining masses were to be given lands in Astrakhan and New Russia provinces, assigning the poorest to re-settlement. Finally, he proposed allowing the Jews who did not want to submit to these restrictions freedom to go abroad. However, these measures were not confirmed by the government.

“Derzhavin’s note and the formation of the committee elicited great fear in the Jewish world. From the published *kahal* documents of the Minsk Jewish society it becomes clear that the *kahals* and the ‘leaders of the cities’ gathered in an extraordinary meeting three days later and decided to send a deputation to St. Petersburg with the aim of petitioning Alexander I to make no innovations in Jewish everyday life. But since this matter ‘required great resources’, a very significant sum was laid upon the whole Jewish population as a tax, refusal from which brought with it ‘excommunication from the people’ (*herem*). From a private note given to Derzhavin by one Belorussian landowner, it became known that the Jews imposed their herem also on the general procurator, uniting with it a curse through all the *kahals* ‘as on a persecutor’. Besides, they collected ‘as gifts’ for this matter, the huge sum for that time of a million rubles and sent it to Petersburg, asking that ‘efforts be made to remove him, Derzhavin, from his post, and if that was not possible, at any rate to make an attempt on his life’.”⁴⁵⁵

Not surprisingly, Tsar Alexander’s Statute for the Jews of December 9, 1804 turned out to be fairly liberal – much more liberal than the laws of Frederick Augustus in Napoleon’s Duchy of Warsaw. Its strictest provisions related to a ban on Jews’

⁴⁵⁵ Platonov, *Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia’s Crown of Thorns), Moscow, 1995, pp. 242, 243-245.

participation in the distilling and retailing of spirits. Also, “there was to be no relaxation of the ancient rule that Jews (negligible exceptions apart) were to be prevented from penetrating into ‘inner Russia’.⁴⁵⁶ Provision was made for an eventual, but determined, attack on the rabbinate’s ancient – but in the government’s view presumptuous and unacceptable – practice of adjudicating cases that went beyond the strict limits of the religious (as opposed to the civil and criminal domain), but also on rabbinical independence and authority generally....⁴⁵⁷

“But the Jews themselves could take some comfort in it being expressly stated that there was to be no question of forcible conversion to Christianity; that they were not to be oppressed or harassed in the observance of their faith and in their general social activities; that the private property of the Jews remained inviolable; and that Jews were not to be exploited or enserfed. They were, on the contrary, to enjoy the same, presumably full protection of the law that was accorded other subjects of the realm. They were not to be subject to the legal jurisdiction of the landowners on whose estates they might happen to be resident. And they were encouraged in every way the Committee could imagine – by fiscal and other economic incentives, for example, by the grant of land and loans to develop it, by permission to move to the New Russian Territories in the south – to undergo decisive and (so it was presumed) irreversible change in the two central respects which both Friezel and Derzhavin had indeed, and perfectly reasonably, regarded as vital: education and employment. In this they were to be encouraged very strongly; but they were not to be forced...”⁴⁵⁸

However, the liberal Statute of 1804 was never fully implemented, and was succeeded by stricter measures towards the end of Alexander’s reign and in the reign of his successor, Nicholas I. There were many reasons for this. Among them, of course, was Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in 1812, which, if it had been successful, would have united the Western Sephardic Jews with the Eastern Ashkenazi Jews in a single State, free, emancipated, and under their own legally convened Sanhedrin. But not only did Napoleon not succeed: the invasion of Russia was the graveyard of his empire. In 1813, and again in 1815, the Russian armies entered Paris. From now on, the chief target of the Jews’ hatred in both East and West would be the Russian Empire...

But the main reason for the tightening of Russian policy was “the Jews’ abhorrence of Christianity, the intensely negative light in which non-Jewish society had always been regarded, and the deeply ingrained suspicion and fear in which all forms of non-Jewish authority were commonly held.”⁴⁵⁹ As a result, in the whole of the 19th century only 69,400 Jews converted to Orthodox Christianity.⁴⁶⁰ If the French delegates who emancipated French Jewry could ignore this fact, the Russian Tsars could not.⁴⁶¹

The Tsars’ gradual tightening of policy had little or no effect on the basic problem of religious and social antagonism. As Platonov writes: “The statute of the Jews

⁴⁵⁶ However, the Pale of Settlement proved to be exceedingly porous!

⁴⁵⁷ The *kahal* was abolished in 1821 in Poland and in 1844 in the rest of the Russian empire.

⁴⁵⁸ Vital, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

⁴⁵⁹ Vital, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁴⁶⁰ Vladimir Gubanov (ed.), *Nikolai II-ij i novie mucheniki (Nicholas II and the New Martyrs)*, St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 698. Gubanov took this figure from the Jewish Encyclopaedia.

⁴⁶¹ Nor did the Jews receive emancipation from the great powers at the Congress of Vienna, although their situation had made it onto the agenda (Zamoyski, *Rites of Peace*, p. 568).

worked out in 1804, which took practically no account of Derzhavin's suggestion, continued to develop the isolation of the Jewish communities on Russian soil, that is, it strengthened the *kahals* together with their fiscal, judicial, police and educational independence. However, the thought of re-settling the Jews out of the western region continued to occupy the government after the issuing of the statute in 1804. A consequence of this was the building in the New Russian area (from 1808) of Jewish colonies in which the government vainly hoped to 're-educate' the Jews, and, having taught them to carry out productive agricultural labour, to change in this way the whole structure of their life. Nevertheless, even in these model colonies the kahal-rabbinic administration retained its former significance and new settlements isolated themselves from the Christian communities; they did not intend to merge with them either in a national or in a cultural sense. The government not only did not resist the isolation of the Jews, but even founded for them the so-called Israelite Christians (that is, Talmudists who had converted to Orthodoxy). A special committee existed from 1817 to 1833."⁴⁶²

The Reaction Against Masonry

Church-State relations were greatly strained in Alexander's reign by the Bible Society. "Founded in 1804 in England by Methodists and Masons, the Bible Society extended its wide activity also in Russia. The Society had large financial resources. In 1810 the monetary contributions of the Bible Society attained 150,000 rubles, and at the end of 1823 there were already 300 such societies in Russia. Under the mask of love for one's neighbour and the spreading of the word of God, the bible societies began to conduct oral propaganda and publish books directed against [the Orthodox Christian] religion and the State order. These books were published under the management of the censor, which was attached to the Ministry of Spiritual Affairs and Popular Enlightenment, which was headed by the Emperor Alexander's close friend, Prince A.N. Golitsyn. The main leaders of the Bible societies were members of the Masonic lodges, who preached the rejection of Orthodoxy, the Church and the rites of the Church. In 1819 there was published Stankevich's book, 'A conversation in the coffin of a child', which was hostile to the institution of the Orthodox Church. Then Yastrebov published a work entitled 'An appeal to men to follow the inner promptings of the Spirit of Christ'. This work was recognised to be a sermon 'of seditious elements against the Christian religion' and the good order of the State. In 1824 there appeared 'a blasphemous interpretation of the Gospel' published by the director of the Russian Bible Society. This work openly pursued the aim of stirring up people against the Church and the Throne. Besides the publication of books directed against Orthodoxy, foreign religious propaganda was conducted. Two Catholic priests from Southern Germany, Gosner and Lindl, preached Protestantism, a sect beloved by the Masons. The Methodists and other sectarians sowed their tares and introduced heresies amidst the Orthodox. At the invitation of the Mason Speransky, the very pope of Masonry, Fessler, came and took charge of the work of destroying the Orthodox Church.

"The Orthodox clergy were silent. They could not speak against the evil that was being poured out everywhere. All the powerful men of the world were obedient

⁴⁶² Platonov, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

instruments of Masonry. The Tsar, who was falsely informed about the aims and tasks of the Bible Society by Prince Golitsyn, gave the latter his protection from on high."⁴⁶³

"Golitsyn," writes Oleg Platonov, "invited to the leadership of the Bible Society only certain hierarchs of the Russian Church that were close to him. He *de facto* removed the Holy Synod from participation in this matter. At the same time he introduced into it secular and clerical persons of other confessions, as if underlining that 'the aim of the Society is higher than the interests of one, that is the Russian Church, and that it develops its activities in the interests of the whole of Christianity and the whole of the Christian world'.

"As the investigator of the Bible Society I.A. Chistovich wrote in 1873 [*Istoria perevoda Biblii na russij iazyk (A History of the Translation of the Bible into Russian)*, St. Petersburg, pp. 50-55], 'this indifferent cosmopolitanism in relation to the Church, however pure its preachers might be in their ideal simplicity of heart, was, however, an absurdity at that, as at any other time. Orthodoxy is, factually speaking, the existing form of the Christian faith of the Greco-Russian Church, and is completely in accord with the teaching and statutes of the Ancient Universal Church. Therefore Christianity in its correct ecclesiastical form only exists in the Orthodox Church and cannot have over or above it any other idea... But the Bible Society was directed precisely against such an ideal, and they sought it out or presupposed it.'

"In an official document of the Bible Society the ideas of Masonic ecumenism were openly declared. 'The heavenly union of faith and love,' it says in a report of the Russian Bible Society in 1818, 'founded by means of Bible Societies in the great Christian family, reveal the beautiful dawn of the wedding day of Christians and that time when there will be one pastor and one flock, that is, when there will be one Divine Christian religion in all the various formations of Christian confessions.'

"The well-known Russian public figure, the academic A.S. Shishkov wrote on this score: 'Let us look at the acts of the Bible Societies, let us see what they consist of. It consists in the intention to construct out of the whole human race one general republic or other and one religion - a dreamy and indiscriminating opinion, born in the minds either of deceivers or of the vainly wise... If the Bible Societies are trying only to spread piety, as they say, then why do they not unite with our Church, but deliberately act separate from her and not in agreement with her? If their intention consists in teaching Christian doctrines, does not our Church teach them to us? Can it be that we were not Christians before the appearance of the Bible Societies? And just how do they teach us this? They recruit heterodox teachers and publish books contrary to Christianity!... Is it not strange - even, dare I say it, funny - to see our metropolitans and hierarchs in the Bible Societies sitting, contrary to the apostolic rules, together with Lutherans, Catholics, Calvinists and Quakers - in a word, with all the heterodox? They with their grey hairs, and in their cassocks and klobuks, sit with laymen of all nations, and a man in a frock suit preaches to them the Word of God (of God as they call it, but not in fact)! Where is the decency, where the dignity of the church server? Where is the Church? They gather in homes where there often hang on the walls pictures of pagan gods or lascivious depictions of lovers, and these gatherings of theirs - which are without any

⁴⁶³ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

Divine services, with the reading of prayers or the Gospel, sitting as it were in the theatre, without the least reverence – are equated with Church services, and a house without an altar, unconsecrated, where on other days they feast and dance, they call the temple of God! Is this not similar to Sodom and Gomorrah?"⁴⁶⁴

At this critical moment, God raised up righteous defenders of the faith, such as Metropolitan Michael (Desnitsky) and Archimandrite Innocent (Smirnov). Metropolitan Michael protested at Golitsyn's removal of the censorship of spiritual books by the Holy Synod, which meant giving free expression to the pseudo-mystical sects. There were stormy scenes between the prince and the metropolitan.

"As a Member of the Synod, the hierarch Philaret was witness to the heated speeches of Metropolitan Michael in defence of the Church and undoubtedly approved of his actions. In his eyes the first-ranking hierarch was rightly considered to be a pillar of the Orthodox Church, restraining the onslaught of false mysticism. And when this pillar collapsed⁴⁶⁵, and the storms did not die down, Philaret, like many others, was seized by fear for the destiny of the Church. Under the influence of a vision seen by someone concerning Metropolitan Michael, a sorrowful picture of Church life, full of misery and darkness, was revealed. He believed that in such a situation only a person possessing the spirit and power of the Prophet Elijah could work with benefit for the Church. However, the holy hierarch was profoundly convinced that the Church was supported, not by people, but by the Lord. And since he saw that it was impossible to save the Church only by human efforts, without the help of God, he decided that it was better for him to withdraw himself from everything as far as he could. Evidently, Philaret preferred a different method of warfare with various kinds of heterodox preachers and sectarian societies from that employed by Metropolitan Michael. And these methods were: a correct organization of the spiritual schools throughout Russia and the spiritual enlightenment of the Russian people through the distribution of Orthodox spiritual literature..."⁴⁶⁶

However, while Philaret withdrew to concentrate on spiritual education, a man with the spirit and strength of the Prophet Elijah was found. Fr. Photius (Spassky), later archimandrite of the Yuriev monastery near Novgorod, began his open defence of Orthodoxy in 1817.

"Bureaucratic and military Petersburg were angry with the bold reprover. His first speech was unsuccessful. Photius' struggle... against the apostates from Orthodoxy, the followers of the so-called inner Church, ended with his expulsion from Petersburg.

"After the expulsion of Photius the Masons celebrated their victory. But the joy of the conquerors turned out to be short-lived. The exile was found to have followers. Photius received special support at a difficult time of his life from the great righteous woman, Countess Anna Alexeevna Orlova-Chesmenskaia, who presented a model of

⁴⁶⁴ Platonov, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-263.

⁴⁶⁵ Two weeks before he died, in March, 1821, he wrote to the Emperor: "Your Majesty, when this epistle reaches you, I will no longer be in this world. I have communicated nothing except the truth to people, especially now, when in my actions I am preparing to give an account to the Supreme Judge" (Snychev, *op. cit.*, p. 147). (V.M.)

⁴⁶⁶ Snychev, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

piety. She not only protected him, but chose him as her leader and confessor. The firmness and courage with which Photius fought against the enemies of Orthodoxy attracted the mind and heart of Countess Orlova, a woman of Christian humility and virtue. After the death of her instructor, Countess Orlova explained why it was Photius whom she chose as her spiritual director. 'He attracted my attention,' wrote Countess Orlova, 'by the boldness and fearlessness with which he, being a teacher of the law of God at the cadet corps and a young monk, began to attack the dominant errors in faith. Everybody was against him, beginning with the Court. He did not fear this. I wanted to get to know him and entered into correspondence with him. His letters seemed to me to be some kind of apostolic epistles. After getting to know him better, I became convinced that he personally sought nothing for himself.'"⁴⁶⁷

However, the struggle against Masonry was helped by other events. As we have seen, Kushelev reported to the Tsar on the revolutionary activity in the Polish and Russian lodges. And then there was the Congress of the Sacred Alliance in Verona in 1822. Lebedev writes that at this Congress "Metternich unexpectedly, on the basis of Masonic documents that had unexpectedly fallen into his possession, *demonstrated* that the secret societies of all countries, being in constant communication with each other, constituted *one common plot*, which was subject *only* to the secret leaders, and only for form's sake accepted different programmes in different countries, depending on circumstances and conditions. He was supported by the Prussian minister, Count Haugwitz, who himself had formerly been a Mason. He made a detailed report in which he showed that the 'enmity' of various unions of Masonry was only for show, to divert attention. In actual fact Masonry in its depths was one and its aim was *the subjection of the world*, and in the first place the subjection of the monarchs, so that they become weapons in the hands of the Masons. Haugwitz added that since 1777 he had *personally ruled* not only a part of the Prussian lodges, but also Masonry in Poland and Russia! We can imagine how shocked his Majesty Alexander I was as he sat in the hall. He had been born in the same year of 1777 and had entered Masonry in 1803. Everybody was stunned. The Austrian Emperor Frantz and the Russian Emperor Alexander I decided to attack this great evil. In 1822 *Masonry was forbidden in Russia* by a decree of the Tsar. The lodges were disbanded, the 'brothers'' correspondence with abroad was strictly forbidden. At the same time this was the third powerful blow that shook the soul of Alexander I with the collapse of his faith in the nobility of the Masonic ideas and strivings. Strict censorship was introduced, especially in the publication of books of a spiritual nature. *Now* his Majesty began to pay attention to the rebukes of Masonry and mysticism issuing from Archimandrite Innocent, who had suffered earlier for this, of the metropolitan of the capital Michael, Metropolitan Seraphim who succeeded him, and also of the zealous defender of Orthodoxy Archimandrite Photius (Spassky)... Seraphim and Photius, joining forces, were able to show Alexander the danger for Orthodoxy of 'fashionable' tendencies in thought, the harmfulness of the activity of Prince Golitsyn, and *return the heart of the Tsar to Holy Orthodoxy*. A visit to Valaam monastery, conversations with Vladyka Seraphim, with Elder Alexis of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra made a great impression on Alexander and showed him that what his exalted soul had sought throughout his life was contained in the experience, rules and methods of Orthodox asceticism, which was just then experiencing an unusual ascent, being armed with such books as *The Philokalia*

⁴⁶⁷ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

and others, especially on the doing of the Jesus prayer ('Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!'). This was Alexander's fourth powerful spiritual shock. It had two kinds of consequences. When, in April, 1824, after many fruitless exhortations, Archimandrite Photius publicly (in a private house) pronounced 'anathema' on Prince Golitsyn and the latter retired⁴⁶⁸, his Majesty accepted his retirement."⁴⁶⁹

Archimandrite Photius wrote: "the Masonic faith is of Antichrist, and its whole teaching and writings are of the devil"⁴⁷⁰, and "in the spring of 1824 [he] wrote two epistles to his Majesty. In one of them he said that 'in our time many books, and many societies and private people are talking about some kind of *new religion*, which is supposedly pre-established for the last times. This new religion, which is preached in various forms, sometimes under the form of a new world..., sometimes of a new teaching, sometimes of the coming of Christ in the Spirit, sometimes of the union of the churches, sometimes under the form of some renewal and of Christ's supposed thousand-year reign, sometimes insinuated under the form of a so-called new religion – is apostasy from the faith of God, the faith of the apostles and the fathers. It is faith

⁴⁶⁸ "In 1822 Prince A.N. Golitsyn became acquainted with Photius and tried to incline him to his side. The meetings of Prince Golitsyn with Archimandrite Photius made a great impression on the former, which he noted in his letters to Countess Orlova. In these letters to Countess Orlova Prince Golitsyn calls Photius 'an unusual person' and recognises that 'the edifying conversation of Photius has a power that only the Lord could give'. In one of his letters to Countess Orlova Prince Golitsyn expresses regret that he cannot enjoy the conversation of 'our Chrysostom' and that he 'wants to quench my thirst with pure water drawn up by a pure hand and not by the hand of one who communicates to others stingily.'

"Prince Golitsyn's attempt by subtle flattery to bring Archimandrite to his side was unsuccessful. A rapprochement and union between Archimandrite Photius, a pure and true zealot of Orthodoxy, with Prince Golitsyn, an enemy of the faith and the Church, was impossible.

"On April 22, 1822 Archimandrite Photius went to Petersburg. There his 'great toil' began. Every day, according to the witness of Archimandrite Photius himself, he was called to various people to talk about the Lord, the Church, the faith, and the salvation of the soul. Eminent and learned noblemen and noblewomen gathered to hear him talk about the Lord. But such conversations took place especially in the house of the virgin Anna, Abba Photius' daughter, of the noblewoman Daria Derzhavina, and sometimes in the Tauris palace.

"Without fear or hypocrisy Photius reproved the enemies of Orthodoxy.

"Once in 1822 Archimandrite Photius began to reprove Golitsyn, who could not stand it and began to leave the living-room, but Photius loudly shouted after him: 'Anathema! Be accursed! Anathema!'

"By this time the Emperor Alexander himself returned.

"Rumours about the cursing of Prince Golitsyn had reached the ears of the Emperor, and he demanded that Photius come and explain himself. At first the Emperor received the fearless reprover threateningly, but then he changed his wrath for mercy. The Emperor was struck by the bold speech of the simple monk against the lofty official, who also happened to be a close friend of the Emperor himself. Photius described Golitsyn to the Emperor as an atheist, and the Bible Society headed by him - as a nest of faithlessness that threatened to overthrow the Orthodox Church. At the end of the conversation Photius began to speak to the Emperor about what was most necessary.

"These are his remarkable words:

"The enemies of the holy Church and Kingdom have greatly strengthened themselves; evil faith and temptations are openly and boldly revealing themselves, they want to create evil secret societies that are a great harm to the holy Church of Christ and the Kingdom, but they will not succeed, there is nothing to fear from them, it is necessary immediately to put an end to the successes of the secret and open enemies in the capital itself.'

"The Emperor 'repeatedly kissed the hand that blessed him' and, when Photius was leaving, 'the Tsar fell to his knees before God and, turning to face Photius, said: 'Father, lay your hands on my head and say the Lord's prayer over me, and forgive and absolve me'. (Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-282)

⁴⁶⁹ Lebedev, *Velikorossia*, p. 289.

⁴⁷⁰ Elagin, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

in the coming Antichrist, it is propelling the revolution, it is thirsting for blood, it is filled with the spirit of Satan. Its false-prophets and apostles are Jung-Stilling, Eckartshausen, Thion, Bohme, Labzin, Fessler and the Methodists...'

"His Majesty was favourably disposed to the epistle of Archimandrite Photius in spite of the fact that it contained criticism of all his recent friends and of the people who had enjoyed his protection. Almost at the same time there appeared the book of Gosner, about whose harmful line Archimandrite Photius had reported to his Majesty on April 17, 1824.

"On April 20, 1824, Emperor Alexander received Photius, who was ordered: 'Come by the secret entrance and staircase into his Majesty's study so that nobody should know about this'. Their conversation lasted for three hours, and on May 7 Photius sent his second epistle with the title: 'Thoroughly correct the work of God. The plan for the revolution published secretly, or the secret iniquities practised by secret society in Russia and everywhere.'

"On April 29 Photius gave his Majesty another note: 'To your question how to stop the revolution, we are praying to the Lord God, and look what has been revealed. Only act immediately. The way of destroying the whole plan quietly and successfully is as follows: 1) to abolish the Ministry of Spiritual Affairs and remove two others from a well-known person; 2) to abolish the Bible Society under the pretext that there are already many printed Bibles, and they are now not needed; 3) the Synod is, as before, to supervise education, to see if there is anything against the authorities and the faith anywhere; 4) to remove Koshelev, exile Gosner, exile Fessler and exile the Methodists, albeit the leading ones. The Providence of God is now to do nothing more openly.'

"This flaming defence of Orthodoxy [by Photius] together with Metropolitan Seraphim was crowned with success: on May 15, 1824 the Ministry of Spiritual Affairs was abolished."⁴⁷¹

The Synod was now freer; it had a new over-procurator in the place of Golitsyn, and was purged of those members that had been linked with him. The Tsar had paid heed to Photius' appeal, and so had become a spiritual as well as a physical conqueror. "God conquered the visible Napoleon who invaded Russia," he said to him. "May He conquer the spiritual Napoleon through you!"

However, not everyone saw only good in the struggle against the Bible Society and the false mystics. Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, who had been Archimandrite Photius' early sponsor, had declined to enter into open warfare with them, partly because of his personal friendship with Golitsyn⁴⁷², and partly because he had another approach to the mystical ferment in Russia. "Under the cover of the mystical temptations," writes Florovsky, "Philaret was able to recognize a living religious need, a thirst for religious instruction and enlightenment. He recognized the need in Russian society for the living enchurchment of the whole of life, whatever distorted and corrupt forms it sometimes assumed. And he considered that what was necessary was not

⁴⁷¹ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-283.

⁴⁷² This, however, did not stop him from firmly refusing Golitsyn's request to distribute a work published by the Tatarinova group. See Snychev, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

rebuke, but pastoral admonishment, penetrated by the spirit of love and completed by positive teaching."⁴⁷³

As for Golitsyn, writes Snychev, "the Muscovite archpastor saw in him much that was positive and recognized him to be one of the zealots of the spiritual side of the ecclesiastical organism. One way or the other, with the support of Prince Golitsyn it had been possible to publish many useful ecclesiastical books of a mystical character, but in an Orthodox spirit. Of course, Philaret was Orthodox in his views on mysticism. He clearly understood that in mysticism the most important question is its relation to the Church and the institutions of the Church. Every form of isolation could bring only harm, not good. Philaret recognized the usefulness of mystical teaching in the spirit of Orthodoxy and was far from sympathizing with a superficial approach to the latter. In the actions of the opponents of mysticism he found excesses, while the very method of the struggle against the latter he considered to be open to criticism and of little use. What, for example, did the party of Arakcheev and Photius gain by their victory? Absolutely nothing.... First of all, mystical literature was subjected to terrible attacks, and that which was formerly considered useful was now recognized to be harmful, demonic and heretical. All books of a mystical character were ordered to be removed from the libraries of educational institutions and a veto placed on them. Terrible difficulties were placed in the way of the publication of patristic literature. Publishers were frightened, as it were, to publish, for example, the writings of St. Macarius, they were frightened to appear thereby to be supporters of mysticism. The opponents of the Bible Society did great harm also to the translation of the Holy Scriptures into Russian..."⁴⁷⁴

Philaret had been taking an active part in this translation because he saw in it the best means of diverting the often misdirected religious aspirations of Russian society in the direction of Orthodoxy. "'Let the bread not be taken away from the child'... - Metropolitan Philaret firmly believed in the renovatory power of the Word of God. He uninterruptedly bound his destiny with the work on the Bible, with the translation of the Holy Scriptures. And it is difficult properly to value his Biblical exploit. For him personally it was bound up with great trials and sorrow."⁴⁷⁵

For the work of translation was vigorously opposed by Metropolitan Seraphim, Archimandrite Photius and Admiral Shishkov, the new minister of education. Thus Shishkov "denied the very existence of the Russian language - 'as if he saw in it only baseness and meanness', 'the simple people's' dialect of the single Slavic-Russian language. He saw in [Philaret's] determination to translate the Word of God an ill-intentioned undertaking, 'a weapon of revolutionary plots', 'how can one dare to change the words which are venerated as having come from the mouth of God?'... And translate it into what? Who would read these translations, would they not pile up everywhere in torn-up copies?... From the translation of the Bible Shishkov turned to the *Catechism* of Philaret and to his *Notes on the Book of Genesis*, where the Biblical and New Testament texts were translated in a Russian 'reworking'. He was particularly disturbed by the fact that the *Catechism* was printed in a large print-run (18,000!) - he saw in this the clear manifestation of some criminal intention. Archimandrite Photius,

⁴⁷³ Florovsky, "Filaret, mitropolit moskovskij", *op. cit.*, p. 271.

⁴⁷⁴ Snychev, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-161.

⁴⁷⁵ Florovsky, "Philaret, mitropolit Moskovskij", *op. cit.*, p. 272.

on his part,... reproached the 'unhealthy and harmful' work of the Biblical translation - 'the power of the translation was such that it clearly overthrew the dogmas of Church teaching or cast doubt on the truth of the Church's teaching and traditions'. And Photius directly attacked Philaret, who, in his words, 'was struggling on behalf of a God-fighting assembly' and was supposedly 'influencing the translation of the Bible in order rather to give a new appearance to the Word of God, thereby assisting faithlessness, innovation and all kinds of ecclesiastical temptations'. He directly called Philaret's *Catechism* 'gutter water'. As Philaret was told by his disciple Gregory, who was then rector of the Petersburg Academy and many years later Metropolitan of Novgorod and Petersburg, they were saying about the Bible Society that 'it was founded in order to introduce a reformation'. They feared the translation of the Old Testament, and in particular the five books of Moses, lest it somehow seduced people to return to the Old Testament ritual law, or fall into Molokanism and Judaism (this thought was Magnitsky's). They began 'to say unpleasant things' about Philaret in Petersburg, and it was suggested that he be removed to the Caucasus as exarch of Georgia... In these years Philaret was in Moscow and took no notice of the Petersburg rumours and 'Alexandrine politics'. As before, he directly and openly defended the work on the Bible and attempted to show that 'the very desire to read the Holy Scriptures is already an earnest of moral improvement'. To the question, what was the purpose of this new undertaking in a subject so ancient and not subject to change as Christianity and the Bible, Philaret replied: 'What is the purpose of this new undertaking? But what is new here? Dogmas? Rules of life? But the Bible Society preaches none of these things, and gives into the hands of those who desire it the book from which the Orthodox dogmas and pure rules of life were always drawn by the true Church in the past and to the present day. A new society? But it introduces no novelty into Christianity, and produces not the slightest change in the Church'... They asked: 'Why is this undertaking of foreign origin?' But, replied Philaret, so much with us 'is not only of foreign origin, but also completely foreign'...

"The supposed zealots succeeded in obtaining the banning of Philaret's *Catechism* on the excuse that there were 'prayers' in it - the Symbol of faith and the Commandments - in Russian. The Russian translation of the New Testament was not banned, but the translation of the Bible was stopped. And as Metropolitan Philaret of Kiev remembered later 'with great sorrow and horror', from fear of conversions to Judaism, 'they found it necessary to commit to the flames of brick factories several thousand copies of the five books of the Prophet Moses translated into Russian in the St. Petersburg Theological Academy and printed by the Bible Society'. M. Philaret reacted sharply and sorrowfully to these actions, which were carried out bypassing the Holy Synod. [He wrote to Metropolitan Seraphim]: 'I cannot understand by whom and how and why doubt can be cast on a work as pure and approved by all, as sacred as anything on earth. It would be no small matter if the doubt threatened only the one man who was the instrument of this work; but does it not threaten the Hierarchy? Does it not threaten the Church? If the Orthodoxy of a *Catechism* that was triumphantly approved by the Most Holy Synod is in doubt, then will not the Orthodoxy of the Most Holy Synod itself not be in doubt? Will not allowing this shake the Hierarchy to its foundations, will it not disturb the peace of the Church? Will it not produce a serious temptation for the Church?' Metropolitan Seraphim calmed Philaret, saying that Orthodoxy was not in question here, that everything came down to the language, but he refused 'to reply in a satisfactory manner' 'why the Russian language must have no

place in the *Catechism*, which was, moreover, short, and intended for small children who had no knowledge whatsoever of the Slavonic language, and for that reason were not able to understand the truths of the faith which were expounded to them in that language' ... The ban on the *Catechism* (1828) was removed only when all the texts had been put into Slavonic and the Russian translation of the Symbol, the Lord's Prayer and the Commandments had been left out. M. Philaret was deeply shaken by these events. 'Smoke is eating into their eyes', he wrote to his vicar, 'and they are saying: how corrosive is the light of the sun! They can hardly breathe from the smoke and with difficulty decree: how harmful is the water from the source of life! Blessed is he who can not only raise his eyes to the mountains, but run there for the clean air, the living water!... Blessed is he who can sit in his corner and weep for his sins and pray for the Sovereign and the Church, and has no need to take part in public affairs, becoming tainted with the sins of others and multiplying his own sins!' Above all Philaret was alarmed by the un-thought-through hastiness and interference of secular people, 'people who have been called neither by God, nor by their superiors', and who rise up in bold self-opinionated fashion against the appointed teachers."⁴⁷⁶

The destruction of the Holy Scriptures simply because they were in a Russian translation, and of the official *Catechism* simply because it quoted them in Russian rather than Slavonic, would, in another age, have led to a schism. But Philaret refrained from open protest precisely because he did not want to create a schism.⁴⁷⁷ However, with heresy overwhelming so many from the left, and blind prejudice parading as traditionalism from the right, the Russian Church was in a precarious position...

The Russian Bible Society was forced to close down in 1826 by Tsar Nicholas I; its property, worth some two million roubles, was transferred to the Holy Synod. The Society re-established itself in Russia in 1990. The project for the translation of the Holy Scriptures into Russian was resumed in the reign of Alexander II...

⁴⁷⁶ Florovsky, "Philaret, mitropolit Moskovskij", pp. 273-275. And yet his main enemies, sadly, were the zealots of Church piety. Thus Fr. Photius, on reading Philaret's letter to Seraphim, wrote: "From the letters of Philaret it is not evident that he valued the faith, the Church and Orthodoxy, but only his own personality and honour" (in A.I. Yakovlev, "Sviatitel' Filaret (Drozdov) i gosudarstvennaia zhizn' Rossii v 1821-1831 godakh" (The Hierarch Philaret (Drozdov) and State life in Russia from 1821 to 1831), in Vladimir Tsurikov (ed.), *Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow 1782-1867*, Jordanville: Variable Press, 2003, p. 138.

⁴⁷⁷ Metropolitan Seraphim of St. Petersburg had threatened to retire if Philaret insisted on continuing his translation. (Snychev, *op. cit.*, p. 181)

18. TSAR NICHOLAS I

Tsar Nicholas I, had never been swayed by liberal ideas. Having tasted something of the flavour of democratic life in France during the reign of his father, he said to Golenischev-Kutuzov: "If, to our misfortune, this evil genius transferred all these clubs and meetings, which create more noise than substance, to us, then I would beseech God to repeat the miracle of the confusion of the tongues or, even better, deprive those who use their tongues in this way of the gift of speech."⁴⁷⁸ A man of strict life and strict opinions, who was venerated by Saints Seraphim of Sarov and Theophilus of the Kiev Caves, his rule was made still stricter by the fact that he came to the throne in the midst of the Decembrist rebellion and had to punish the rebels as his first task.

The Decembrist Rebellion

The wave of revolutionary violence rolling through Southern Europe reached Russia after the supposed death of Tsar Alexander I on November 19, 1825.⁴⁷⁹ During the interregnum, on December 14, a group of army officers attempted to seize power in St. Petersburg. Already in 1823 Alexander I had been given a list of the future "Decembrists". But he refused to act against them. Archpriest Lev Lebedev explains why: "'It is not for me to punish them,' said his Majesty, and cast the paper into the fire. 'I myself shared their views in my youth,' he added. That means that now, in 1823, Alexander I evaluated these diversions of his youth *as sin*, which also had to receive their retribution. Neither he nor [Grand Duke] Constantine [his brother] *had the spiritual, moral right to punish* the plotters, insofar as both of them had been guilty of *the plot* against their own father! That was the essence of the matter! Only he had the right *to punish* who had in no way been involved in the parricide and the revolutionary delusions - that is, the younger brother *Nicholas*. It was to him that the reins of the government of Russia were handed."⁴⁸⁰

The Decembrist conspirators were divided into a Northern Society based in St. Petersburg and a Southern society based in Tulchin, headquarters of the Second Army in the Ukraine. "In the ideology of the Northern Society especially," writes Andrzej Walicki, "there were certain elements reminiscent of the views of the aristocratic opposition of the reign of Catherine II. Many of the members in this branch of the Decembrist movement were descendants of once powerful and now impoverished boyar families... Nikita Muraviev claimed that the movement was rooted in the traditions of Novgorod and Pskov, of the twelfth-century Boyar Duma, of the constitutional demands presented to Anne by the Moscow nobility in 1730, and of the eighteenth-century aristocratic opposition. The poet Kondraty Ryleev painted an idealized portrait of Prince Andrei Kurbsky (the leader of the boyar revolt against Ivan the Terrible) and even devoted one of his 'elegies' to him...In his evidence before the Investigating Commission after the suppression of the revolt, Petr Kakhovsky stated

⁴⁷⁸ V.F. Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, pp. 316-317.

⁴⁷⁹ According to a rather strong tradition, his death in Taganrog was staged, and he in fact became a hermit in Siberia under the name Theodore Kuzmich until his death in 1864. See *Tainstvoennij Starets Feodor Kuzmich v Sibiri i Imperator Alexandr I* (The Mysterious Elder Theodore Kuzmich and Alexander I), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1972 (in Russian), and Alexis S. Troubetsky, *Imperial Legend. The Disappearance of Tsar Alexander I*, Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2003.

⁴⁸⁰ Lebedev, *Velikorossia*, St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 291.

that the movement was primarily a response to the high-handedness of the bureaucracy, the lack of respect for ancient gentry freedom, and the favoritism shown to foreigners. Another Northern Decembrist, the writer and literary critic Aleksandr Bestuzhev... wrote that his aim was 'monarchy tempered by aristocracy'. These and similar facts explain Pushkin's view, expressed in the 1830's, that the Decembrist revolt had been the last episode in the age-old struggle between autocracy and boyars...

"The Decembrists used the term 'republic' loosely, without appearing to be fully aware that there were essential differences between, for instance, the Roman republic, the Polish gentry republic, the old Russian city states, and modern bourgeois republics... Muraviev modelled his plan for a political system on the United States... The theorists of the Northern Society made no distinction between criticism of absolutism from the standpoint of the gentry and similar criticism from a bourgeois point of view. Hence they saw no difficulty in reconciling liberal notions taken largely from the works of Bentham, Benjamin Constant and Adam Smith with an idealization of former feudal liberties and a belief in the role of the aristocracy as a 'curb on despotism'. The theoretical premise here was the 'juridical world view' of the Enlightenment, according to which legal and political forms determined the revolution of society."⁴⁸¹

The Northern Decembrists were in favour of the emancipation of the serfs. However, they insisted that the land should remain with the gentry, thereby ensuring the continued dependence of the serfs on the gentry. "The conviction that the peasants ought to be overjoyed merely at the abolition of serfdom was shared by many Decembrists. Yakushkin, for instance, could not conceal his exasperation at his peasants' demand for land when he offered to free them. When they were told that the land would remain the property of the landlord, their answer was: 'Then things had better stay as they were. We belong to the master, but the land belongs to us.'"⁴⁸²

The Northern Decembrists worked out a new interpretation of Russian history "as an antithesis to Karamzin's theory of the beneficial role of autocracy". "An innate Russian characteristic, the Decembrists maintained – one that later developments had blunted but not destroyed – was a deep-rooted love of liberty. Autocracy had been unknown in Kievan Russia: the powers of the princes had been strictly circumscribed there and decisions on important affairs of state were taken by the popular assemblies. The Decembrists were especially ardent admirers of the republican city-states of Novgorod and Pskov. This enthusiasm was of practical significance, since they were convinced that the 'spirit of liberty' that had once imbued their forbears was still alive; let us but strike the bell, and the people of Novgorod, who have remained unchanged throughout the centuries, will assemble by the bell tower, Ryleev declared. Kakhovsky described the peasant communes with their self-governing *mir* as 'tiny republics', a living survival of Russian liberty. In keeping with this conception, the Decembrists thought of themselves as *restoring* liberty and bringing back a form of government that had sound historical precedents."⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, Walicki, pp. 58, 59, 60.

⁴⁸² Walicki, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

⁴⁸³ Walicki, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

This reinterpretation of Russian history was false. Russia was imbued from the beginning with the spirit of Orthodox autocracy and patriarchy: the “republics” of Pskov and Novgorod were exceptions to the historical rule. And if Kievan autocracy was less powerful than the Muscovite or Petersburg autocracies, this was not necessarily to its advantage. Russia succumbed to the Mongols because the dividedness of her princes precluded a united defence. And there can be little doubt that she would not have survived into the nineteenth century as an independent Orthodox nation if she had not been an autocracy.

The leader of the Southern Society, Colonel Pavel Pestel, had more radical ideas in his draft for a constitution, *Russian Justice*, which was based on two assumptions: “that every man has a natural right to exist and thus to a piece of land large enough to allow him to make a basic living; and that only those who create surplus wealth have a right to enjoy it. After the overthrow of tsarism, therefore, Pestel proposed to divide land into two equal sectors: the first would be public property (or, more accurately, the property of the communes); the second would be in private hands. The first would be used to ensure everyone a minimum living, whereas the second would be used to create surplus wealth. Every citizen was entitled to ask his commune for an allotment large enough to support a family; if the commune had more land available, he would even be able to demand several such allotments. The other sector would remain in private hands. Pestel felt that his program ensured every individual a form of social welfare in the shape of a communal land allotment but also left scope for unlimited initiative and the opportunity of making a fortune in the private sector.

“Pestel believed that his program had every chance of success since land ownership in Russia had traditionally been both communal and private. Here he obviously had in mind the Russian village commune; it should be emphasized, however, that Pestel’s commune differed essentially from the feudal *obshchina* in that it did not restrict its members’ movement or personal freedom and did not impose collective responsibility for individual members’ tax liabilities.”⁴⁸⁴

579 people arrested and brought to trial. 40 were given the death sentence and the rest – hard labour. In the end only five were executed.⁴⁸⁵ The soldiers were flogged. In August, 1826 Tsar Nicholas confirmed the ban on Masonry.

“And so for the first time in Russian history,” writes Lebedev, “a rebellion of the nobility had as its aim not the removal of one sovereign by another, but the annihilation of tsarist power altogether... It became clear that [the Decembrists’] links in ‘society’ were so significant and deep, and the sympathy for them so broad, that one could speak of a betrayal of the Throne and Church – or, at any rate, of the unreliability – of the noble class as a whole.”⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Walicki, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

⁴⁸⁵ One of those executed was Sergius Ivanovich Muraviev-Apostol, a leader of the southern society. In his *Catechesis* we find a strong Christian element, but a tirade against the tsars for having “seized the people’s freedom” and a confession that he wanted to kill the tsar (<http://decemb.hobby.ru/index.shtml?archive/pokaz5>).

⁴⁸⁶ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

V.F. Ivanov writes: “As an eyewitness put it, the rebellion in Petersburg shocked the general mass of the population of Russia profoundly. In his words, ‘the attempt to limit the Tsar’s power and change the form of government seemed to us not only sacrilege, but an historical anomaly; while the people, seeing that the plotters belonged exclusively to the upper class, considered the nobility to be traitors, and this added one more sharp feature to that secret hatred which it nourished towards the landowners. Only the progressives and the intelligentsia of the capital sympathised with the unfortunate madmen’ (Schilder).

“The best people turned away from the affair in disgust and branded the work of the Mason-Decembrists that of Cain. In the words of Karamzin: ‘Look at the stupid story of our mad liberals! Pray God that not so many real rogues are found among them. The soldiers were only victims of a deception. Sometimes a fine day begins with a storm: may it be thus in the new reign... God saved us from a great disaster on December 14...’”⁴⁸⁷

In 1826 Karamzin wrote: “Liberals! What do you want? The happiness of men? But is there happiness where there is death, illness, vices, passions?... For a moral being there is no good without freedom: but this freedom is given not by his Majesty, not by Parliament, but by each of us to ourselves, with the help of God. We must conquer freedom in our hearts by peace of conscience and trust in Providence!”⁴⁸⁸

Again, Metropolitan Philaret said : “It is becoming clearer and clearer from what horrors and iniquities God delivered us, when he strengthened His Majesty on December 14. Pray that this evil will be completely annihilated by righteousness and wisdom. But there are people who, after talking previously about the visitation of God, are now talking about the wrath of God on us.”⁴⁸⁹

The Decembrist rebellion was important not only for what it represented in itself but also for the halo of martyrdom which its exiles acquired. They were romantic dreamers rather than hardened revolutionaries. Thus one of their leaders, the poet Ryleev, mounted the scaffold with a volume of Byron in his hands,⁴⁹⁰ and another, Count Sergius Volkonsky, remained a monarchist to the end of his life, breaking down in tears on hearing of the death of Nicholas I.⁴⁹¹

But of course they were not monarchists: as Alexis Khomyakov said, they “preferred the tyranny of an armed minority to one-man rule”. And their naivety did

⁴⁸⁷ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-308.

⁴⁸⁸ A.I. Yakovlev, “Sviatitel’ Filaret (Drozdov) i gosudarstvennaia zhizn’ Rossii v 1821-1831 godakh” (The Hierarch Philaret (Drozdov) and State life in Russia from 1821 to 1831), in Vladimir Tsurikov (ed.), *Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow 1782-1867*, Jordanville: Variable Press, 2003, Yakovlev, p. 143.

⁴⁸⁹ Yakovlev, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁴⁹⁰ Benita Eisler, *Byron*, London: Penguin books, 1999, p. 753.

⁴⁹¹ Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*, London: Penguin, 2002, p. 143. He also petitioned to be serve as a private in the Crimean war, which he saw as a return to the spirit of 1812. Figes sees Volkonsky as the link between the Decembrists and the Populists of a later generation. He wrote to his son in 1857: “I gave my blessing when you went into the service of the Fatherland and the Tsar. But I always taught you to conduct yourself without lordly airs when dealing with your comrades from a different class (*op. cit.*, pp. 143-143). For more on the Decembrists and their wives (from a pro-Decembrist perspective), see Christine Sutherland, *The Princess of Siberia*, London: Quartet Books, 2001.

not diminish the evil effect of their words and deeds on succeeding generations. From now on, Russian liberals could appeal to the example of the “heroic” Decembrists in their struggle against the Orthodox autocracy...

Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality

Some have portrayed Tsar Nicholas as having been unreasonably strict and censorious. However, he wanted to abolish serfdom, and took important preparatory measures towards that great act carried out by his son. Moreover, he had the ability to convert, and not simply crush, his opponents. Thus it was after a long, sincere conversation with Pushkin that he was able to say: “Gentlemen, I present to you a new Pushkin!” “And it was truly thus,” writes Lebedev. “Not out of fear before the authorities, not hypocritically, but sincerely and truly, Pushkin, the friend of the ‘Decembrists’, the worldly skiver, in life as in poetry, after 1826 renounced his free-thinking and Masonry and created his best and greatest works!”⁴⁹²

“Having rejected a rotten support, the nobility,” writes Lebedev, Tsar Nicholas “made his supports the Orthodox Church, the system of state institutions (in which the class of bureaucrats, of officials, acquired great significance) and the Russian people which he loved! Having grasped this main direction of the Tsar’s politics, Count S. Uvarov, the minister of enlightenment expressed it [on March 21, 1833] in the remarkable formula: *Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationhood...*”⁴⁹³

“This schema,” writes Sergius Firsov, “can be called a political reincarnation of the Byzantine theory of ‘the symphony of powers’ in the changed conditions of State realities in Russia.”⁴⁹⁴ The three elements of the formula were closely linked, and there was a definite order in them. First came Orthodoxy (as opposed to Catholicism and Protestantism), then Autocracy (as opposed to Absolutism and Democracy), and then Nationhood (as opposed to Internationalism and Nationalism). The supreme value was Orthodoxy, whose first line of defence was the Autocracy, and second - national feeling. Any attempt to invert this order - as, for example, to make Orthodoxy merely a support for Autocracy, or both as supports of Nationhood, would be equivalent to idolatry and lead to the downfall of Russia.

Some, such as D.S. Khomiakov, thought that an inversion of this order, placing Autocracy as the supreme value, did indeed take place.⁴⁹⁵ However, this is not the view

⁴⁹² Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 331.

⁴⁹³ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

⁴⁹⁴ Firsov, *Russkaia Tserkov' nakanune peremen (konets, 1890-x - 1918 gg.)* (The Russian Church on the eve of the changes (the end of the 1890s to 1918), Moscow, 2002, p. 51.

⁴⁹⁵ “Orthodoxy as the everyday faith of the Russian people can be respected also by others, even by non-Christians. This is, so to speak, the inner pledge of the life of the Russian people, and it is completely possible to respect it and even make up to it while remaining in the sphere of personal conscience a complete and irreconcilable opponent of ‘ecclesiastical-dogmatic Orthodoxy’. It is hardly likely that the government of the 30s of the 19th century reasoned like that: but it seems undoubted that unconsciously it understood the matter in this way. It truly represented Orthodoxy as an ecclesiastical-everyday institution founded a long time ago for the enlightenment of the people; and as such the people got used to it completely in the sense of a cult and especially as a ‘teaching on unquestioning obedience to the civil, God-given authorities’. In this form, truly, Orthodoxy closely touches the sphere of the State and fits in well into the general picture for the programme of state education. With Orthodoxy of such a kind, strictly speaking, anyone can get on, of whatever faith he may be - since he only recognises the

of Protopriest Lev Lebedev, who writes: “Beginning already with Paul I, the rapprochement of imperial power with the Church continued under Nicholas I, being raised to a qualitatively higher level. The All-Russian Autocrat from now on did not oppose himself to the Church and did not even consider himself ‘self-sufficient’ or ‘independent’ of her. On the contrary, he saw himself as a faithful son of the Orthodox Church, completely sharing the faith of his people and bound in all his politics to be guided by the commandments of God, proceeding precisely from the *Orthodox* world-view (and not from the demands of a certain non-existent ‘religion of nature’, as under Catherine II). This was a good, grace-filled *radical change*. It made itself immediately felt also in the relations of the two powers – the tsar’s and the Church’s. From now on the over-procurators of the Synod were people who enjoyed the respect and trust of the Russian hierarchs and considered themselves faithful children of the Church. Such were Admiral Shishkov and Count Protasov. There was not always unanimity between them and the members of the Synod. Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov), for example, more than once ‘warred’ with Protasov. But these were quarrels about separate matters, where both sides were governed by the single desire to benefit Holy Orthodoxy (even if they understood this differently).”⁴⁹⁶

This beneficial change in Church-State relations was reflected in the *voluntary* reunion of the uniates in the western territories with the Orthodox Church. Favourable conditions for this change had been created by the fall of Poland in 1815, the expulsion

main part of the programme, its root – Autocracy (absolutism, according to the official understanding, also). This part was obligatory for absolutely everybody; but the first and third were meant only to serve as a certain ethnographic colouring for the middle member [of the programme’s triad]: everyone was obliged to recognise that its essence was Autocracy. Of what kind? Russian. But the concept of what is Russian falls into two parts: the Orthodox-Russian and the ethnographic-Russian. Thus for a purely Russian youth the programme had its complete significance, that is, the first and last concepts were obligatory only as defining the sole completely essential concept in it, ‘Autocracy’ (absolutism). Of course, however diluted the concept of Orthodoxy may be so as to fit into the government’s programme of civil education, it was, to a large degree, inseparable from the Church’s teaching and dogma. But in the present case we have to firmly establish the position that, without in any way rejecting the absolute significance of Orthodoxy as the expression of the faith and the ethics that flows from that, we are dealing with it here in a somewhat different sense, as it is placed at the foundation of civil education, that is, in the sense of its application to civil and cultural life, which are expressed firstly by the term ‘Autocracy’ and secondly by the term ‘Nationhood’: and this is because (to repeat) Orthodoxy in the absolute sense can stand only ‘for itself’ and excludes the possibility of a union with any state task whatever, and even with any national task. Orthodoxy is universal, it is far higher than states and peoples; it denies neither statehood nor nationalities, but it is united with nothing...

“None of these questions were clarified officially; and the Orthodoxy of Nicholas Pavlovich and Count Uvarov remained the same diffuse concept as the *liberté* of the French revolution. It in fact remained at the level only of a negative concept, as did the concept ‘Nationhood’. Only ‘Autocracy’ received a positive meaning, because, firstly, this is in essence a more concrete concept than the other two; and then mainly because it was and is a term clearly understood by those who established the formula. Autocracy for them is, both theoretically and practically, absolutism. Nobody was mistaken in this meaning and there were no misunderstandings concerning it: the more so in that it indeed revealed itself graphically. But Orthodoxy was understood only as not Roman Catholicism – a very convenient faith from the state’s point of view; and not Protestantism, which unleashed the undesirable liberty, not only in the sphere of the faith alone (if you can criticise the faith, then all the more the rest, also); and not as sectarianism – also a teaching displeasing to the police. In the same way ‘Nationhood’ did not find a concrete expression of itself; and in the absence of this it settled on language: the spread of the Russian language was respected as the spread also of the Russian spirit – its nationality...” (*Pravoslavie, Samoderzhavie, Narodnost’* (Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationhood), Minsk: Belaruskaia Gramata, 1997, pp. 13-15)

⁴⁹⁶ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

of the Jesuits from Russia in 1820 and the suppression of the Polish rebellion in 1830-1831. Then, in 1835, a secret committee on the uniate question was formed in St. Petersburg consisting of the uniate bishop Joseph Semashko, the real soul of the movement, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, the over-procurator of the Holy Synod and the minister of the interior. By 1839 1,600,000 had converted to Orthodoxy.⁴⁹⁷

In spite of these positive changes, the Tsar's relationship to the Church, which continued to fall short of true "symphony". In fact, formally speaking, the power of the Tsar over the Church was increased. Thus in 1832 a new collection of the Fundamental Laws was published that said: "The Emperor as the Christian sovereign is the supreme defender and preserver of the dogmas of the dominant faith and the supervisor of right faith and every good order in the Holy Church". In the administration of the Church, intoned articles 42 and 43, "the autocratic power acts by means of the Holy Governing Synod, which was founded by it."⁴⁹⁸

In these formulae, writes Fr. Georges Florovsky, "there is clearly and faithfully conveyed the State's consciousness of itself and self-definition: in them there is taken to its logical conclusion the thought of Peter, who considered himself to be 'the supreme judge' of the Spiritual College, and who openly derived its privileges from his own autocratic power - 'when it was established by the Monarch and under his rule'"⁴⁹⁹.

Such an overbearing attitude of the State towards the Church was bound to lead to friction. And yet when there were clashes between the Tsar and the hierarchs on matters of conscience, the Tsar showed himself ready to give way, which gives strength to Lebedev's claim that a qualitatively higher level of Church-State relations had been attained. Thus once Metropolitan Philaret refused to bless a triumphal monument because it had some pagan hieroglyphs and representations of pagan gods. The Emperor, showing a good grasp of church history, said: "I understand, but tell him [Philaret] that I am not Peter the Great and he is not St. Metrophanes." Still, he allowed Philaret not to take part in the ceremony.⁵⁰⁰ According to another account, on hearing of Philaret's disinclination to serve, the Emperor said: "Prepare the horses; I'm leaving today", so that the ceremony took place without either Tsar or metropolitan.⁵⁰¹ Afterwards, on returning to the Trinity Lavra, Philaret said to his spiritual father, Archimandrite Anthony: "Did I act well? I annoyed the Tsar. I don't have the merits of the hierarch Metrophanes." "Don't take them upon yourself," replied Fr. Anthony, "but remember that you are a Christian bishop, a pastor of the Church of Christ, to whom only one thing is terrible: to depart from the will of Jesus Christ." Then the

⁴⁹⁷ A.P. Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po Istorii Russkoj Tserkvi* (Handbook to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, pp. 654-657.

⁴⁹⁸ Nicholas entrusted this work to the Mason Speransky, because his expertise in the subject was unrivalled. However, above him he placed his former teacher Balugiansky, saying: "See that he (Speransky) does not get up to the same pranks as in 1810. You will answer for that to me" (in Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 317).

⁴⁹⁹ Florovsky, "Filaret, mitropolit Moskovskij" (Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow), in *Vera i Kul'tura* (Faith and Culture), St. Petersburg, 2002, p. 260.

⁵⁰⁰ Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), *Zhizn' i deiatel'nost' mitropolita Philareta* (The Life and Activity of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow), Tula, 1994, p. 238.

⁵⁰¹ Fr. Maximus Kozlov, introduction to *Filareta mitropolita moskovskogo i kolomenskogo Tvorenia* (The Works of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow and Kolomna), Moscow, 1994, pp. 14-15.

hierarchy revealed that the previous night St. Sergius had entered his locked room, come up to his bed, and said: "Don't be disturbed, it will all pass..."⁵⁰²

Again, in 1835 the Emperor wanted his son and heir, the Tsarevich Alexander Nikolaevich, to become a member of the Holy Synod. But Metropolitan Philaret, together with the other hierarchs, was against the idea, and on meeting the tsarevich, asked him when he had received clerical ordination. Shamed, the tsarevich henceforth refrained from attending sessions of the Holy Synod.⁵⁰³

Although the relationship between Church and State in Russia was far from ideal, particularly in the over-powerful role of the over-procurator, its faults can be exaggerated. When the Englishman William Palmer criticised the dominance of the State over the Church in Russia, Alexis Khomiakov replied: "That the Church is not quite independent of the state, I allow; but let us consider candidly and impartially how far that dependence affects, and whether it does indeed affect, the character of the Church. The question is so important, that it has been debated during this very year [1852] by serious men in Russia, and has been brought, I hope, to a satisfactory conclusion. A society may be dependent in fact and free in principle, or vice-versa. The first case is a mere historical accident; the second is the destruction of freedom, and has no other issue but rebellion and anarchy. The first is the weakness of man; the second the depravity of law. The first is certainly the case in Russia, but the principles have by no means been damaged. Whether freedom of opinion in civil and political questions is, or is not, too much restrained, is no business of ours as members of the Church (though I, for my part, know that I am almost reduced to complete silence); but the state never interferes directly in the censorship of works written about religious questions. In this respect, I will confess again that the censorship is, in my opinion, most oppressive; but that does not depend upon the state, and is simply the fault of the over-cautious and timid prudence of the higher clergy. I am very far from approving of it, and I know that very useful thoughts and books are lost in the world, or at least to the present generation.

"But this error, which my reason condemns, has nothing to do with ecclesiastical liberty; and though very good tracts and explanations of the Word of God are oftentimes suppressed on the false supposition of their perusal being dangerous to unenlightened minds, I think that those who suppress the Word of God itself should be the last to condemn the excessive prudence of our ecclesiastical censors. Such a condemnation coming from the Latins would be absurdity itself. But is the action of the Church quite free in Russia? Certainly not; but this depends wholly on the weakness of her higher representatives, and upon their desire to get the protection of the state, not for themselves, generally speaking, but for the Church. There is certainly a moral error in that want of reliance upon God Himself; but it is an accidental error of persons, and not of the Church, and has nothing to do with our religious convictions. It would be a different case, if there was the smallest instance of a dogmatic error, or

⁵⁰² Kozlov, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

⁵⁰³ Sergius and Tamara Fomin, *Rossia pered otorym prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, p. 322.

something near to it, admitted or suffered without protestation out of weakness; but I defy anybody to find anything like that..."⁵⁰⁴

The Polish Question

It was Tsar Nicholas' destiny and task to suppress the revolution not only at home, but also abroad. But he decided not to intervene in the revolutions in France and Belgium in 1830. Encouraged by this, the Poles rose against Tsarist authority in November, 1830. But this time the Tsar did act. As he wrote to his brother, who ruled the Polish Kingdom: "It is our duty to think of our security. When I say *ours*, I mean the tranquillity of Europe."⁵⁰⁵ And so the rebellion was crushed.

Europe was saved again by "the gendarme of Europe" – and again she was uncomprehending and ungrateful.

Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: "The revolutions of 1830 in France and Belgium gave an impulse to the Masonic movement in Poland. It had two basic tendencies – an extreme republican one (headed by the historian Lelevel) and a more moderate aristocratic one (headed by A. Chartovsky). At the end of 1830 there began a rebellion in Warsaw. Great Prince Constantine Pavlovich with a detachment of Russian soldiers was forced to abandon Poland. In 1831 there came there the armies of General Dibich, which had no significant success, in particular by reason of a very strong outbreak of cholera, from which both Dibich and Great Prince Constantine died. Meanwhile the revolutionaries in Warsaw created first a 'Provisional government' with a 'dictator' at its head, and then convened the Sejm. The rebels demanded first the complete independence of Poland with the addition to it of Lithuania and western Rus', and then declared the 'deposition' of the Romanov dynasty from the throne of the Kingdom of Poland. Count Paskevich of Erevan was sent to Poland. He took Warsaw by storm and completely destroyed the Masonic revolutionary armies, forcing their remnants abroad [where they played a significant role in the revolutionary movement in Western Europe]. Poland was divided into provinces and completely included into the composition of the Russian Empire. The language of business was declared to be Russian. Russian landowners received land in Poland. A Deputy was now placed at the head of the Kingdom of Poland. He became Paskevich with the new title of Prince of Warsaw. In connection with all this it became clear that the Polish magnates and landowners who had kept their land-holdings in Belorussia and Ukraine had already for some time been persecuting the Orthodox Russians and Little Russians and also the uniates, and had been occupied in polonizing education in general the whole cultural life in these lands. Tsar Nicholas I was forced to take severe measures to restore Russian enlightenment and education in the West Russian and Ukrainian land. In particular, a Russian university was opened in Kiev. The part of the Belorussian and Ukrainian population headed by Bishop Joseph Semashko which had been in a forcible unia with the Catholic Church since the end of the 16th century desired reunion with Orthodoxy. Nicholas I decided to satisfy this desire and in 1839 all the uniates (besides

⁵⁰⁴ Khomiakov, "Eighth Letter to William Palmer", in W.J. Birkbeck, *Russia and the English Church: Containing a correspondence between Mr. William Palmer, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and M. Khomiakoff, in the years 1844-1855*, London, 1895, pp. 126-127; *Living Orthodoxy*, 142, vol. XXIV, № 4, July-August, 2004, p. 26.

⁵⁰⁵ Tsar Nicholas, in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassell, 2004, p. 551.

the inhabitants of Kholm diocese) were united to 'to the ancestral Orthodox All-Russian Church', as they put it. This was a great feast of Orthodoxy! Masses of uniates were united *voluntarily*, without any compulsion. All this showed that Russia had subdued and humbled Poland not because she wished to lord it over her, and resist her independence, but only because *Poland* wanted to lord it (both politically and *spiritually*) over the ages-old Russian population, depriving it of its own life and 'ancestral' faith! With *such* a Poland as she was then striving to be, there was nothing to be done but completely subdue her and *force her to respect the rights* of other peoples! But to the Polish Catholics Russia provided, as usual, every opportunity of living in accordance with their faith and customs."⁵⁰⁶

Unfortunately, the Poles and the West did not see it like that. Thus the composer Frederick Chopin wrote: "The suburbs [of Warsaw] are destroyed, burned... Moscow rules the world! O God, do You exist? You're there and You don't avenge it. How many more Russian crimes do You want - or - are You a Russian too!?"⁵⁰⁷

Another artist who gave expression to the new Polish faith was the poet Mickiewicz. "Poland will arise," he wrote, "and free nations of Europe from bondage. *Ibi patria, ubi male*; wherever in Europe liberty is suppressed and is fought for, there is the battle for your country."⁵⁰⁸

Adam Zamoyski writes that Mickiewicz turned "the spiritual fantasies of a handful of soldiers and intellectuals into the articles of faith that built a modern nation.

"Mickiewicz had established his reputation as Poland's foremost lyric poet in the 1820s, and enhanced his political credentials by his exile in Russia, where he met several prominent Decembrists and grew close to Pushkin [who, however, did not sympathize with his views on Poland]. In 1829 Mickiewicz received permission to go to Germany to take the waters. He met Mendelssohn and Hegel in Berlin, Metternich in Marienbad, and August Schlegel in Bonn, and attended Goethe's eightieth birthday party in Weimar. Goethe kissed him on the forehead, gave him the quill with which he had worked on Faust, and commissioned a portrait of him for his collection. Mickiewicz then went to Italy where, apart from a de rigueur trip to Switzerland (Chillon and Altdorf, with Byron and Schiller's Wilhelm Tell in his hand), he spent the next year-and-a-half. It was in Rome that news of the November Rising [in Warsaw] reached him. He set off for Poland, but his attempts to cross the border were foiled by Cossack patrols, and he was obliged to watch the debacle from Dresden.

"In this tranquil Saxon city he was gripped by inspiration and wrote frantically in fits lasting up to three days, without pausing to eat or sleep. The fruit was the third part of a long poetic drama entitled *Forefathers' Eve*, which can only be described as a national passion play. Mickiewicz had also seen the significance of the holy night [of November 29, 1830], and he likened all monarchs, and Nicholas in particular, to Herod - their sense of guilty foreboding led them to massacre the youth of nations. The drama describes the transformation through suffering of the young poet and lover, Konrad, into a warrior-poet. He is a parable for Poland as a whole, but he is also something

⁵⁰⁶ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

⁵⁰⁷ Chopin, in Cohen and Major, *op. cit.*, p. 551.

⁵⁰⁸ Mickiewicz, in Cohen and Major, *op. cit.*, p. 551.

more. 'My soul has now entered the motherland, and with my body I have taken her soul: I and the motherland are one,' he declares after having endured torture. 'My name is Million, because I love and suffer for millions... I feel the sufferings of the whole nation as a mother feels the pain of the fruit within her womb.'

"In Paris in 1832 Mickiewicz published a short work entitled *Books of the Polish Nation and of the Pilgrimage of Poland*. It was quickly translated into several languages and caused a sensation. It is a bizarre work, couched in biblical prose, giving a moral account of Polish history. After an Edenic period, lovingly described, comes the eighteenth century, a time when 'nations were spoiled, so much so that among them there was left only one man, both citizen and soldier' – a reference to Lafayette. The 'Satanic Trinity' of Catherine of Russia, Frederick of Prussia and Maria Theresa of Austria decided to murder Poland, because Poland was Liberty. They crucified the innocent nation while degenerate France played the role of Pilate.⁵⁰⁹ But that was not to be the end of it. 'For the Polish nation did not die; its body lies in the tomb, while its soul has left the earth, that is public life, and visited the abyss, that is the private life of peoples suffering slavery at home and in exile, in order to witness their suffering. And on the third day the soul will re-enter the body, and the nation will rise from the dead and will liberate all the peoples of Europe from slavery.'⁵¹⁰ In a paraphrase of the Christian Creed, Liberty will then ascend the throne in the capital of the world, and judge the nations, ushering in the age of peace.

"So the Polish nation was now in Limbo, and all it had to do in order to bring about its own resurrection and that of all grieving peoples was to cleanse and redeem itself through a process of expiation which Mickiewicz saw as its 'pilgrimage'. This was to be a kind of forty days in the wilderness. The pilgrims must fast and pray on the anniversaries of the battles of Wawer and Grochow, reciting litanies to the 30,000 dead of the Confederation of Bar and the 20,000 martyrs of Praga; they must observe their ancient customs and wear national dress. One is reminded of Rousseau's admonitions in his *Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne*.

"Rousseau would have been proud of this generation. As one freedom fighter writes in his memoirs: 'Only he loves Poland with his heart and his soul, only he is a true son of his Motherland who has cast aside all lures and desires, all bad habits, prejudice and passions, and been reborn in the pure faith, he who, having recognized the reasons for our defeats and failures through his own judgement and conviction, brings his whole love, his whole – not just partial, but whole – conviction, his courage and his endurance, and lays them on the altar of the purely national future.' He had taken part in the November Rising and a conspiratorial fiasco in 1833, for which he

⁵⁰⁹ Chopin also blamed the French. For "Lafayette moved heaven and earth to make France go to war in support of Poland, but he could not move Louis Philippe. He formed a committee to help the Poles, with the participation of Victor Hugo and a string of artists and heroes" (Zamoycki, *Holy Madness: Romantics, Patriots and Revolutionaries, 1776-1871*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999, p. 278). (V.M.)

⁵¹⁰ The passage continues: "And three days have already passed; the first ending with the first fall of Warsaw; the second day with the second fall of Warsaw; and the third day cometh but it shall have no end. As at the resurrection of Christ the sacrifice of blood ceased upon the earth, so at the resurrection of the Polish Nation shall war cease in Christendom." "This," comments Neal Ascherson, "was the extraordinary doctrine of Messianism, the identification of the Polish nation as the collective reincarnation of Christ. Messianism steadily gained strength over the next century-and-a-half. History saw to that" (*Black Sea*, London: Vintage, 1995, p. 160). (V. M.)

was rewarded with fifteen years in the Spielberg and Kufstein prisons. Yet decades later he still believed that the November Rising had 'called Poland to a new life' and brought her 'salvation' closer by a hundred years. Such feelings were shared by tens of thousands, given expression by countless poets and artists, and understood by all the literate classes.

"Most of Mickiewicz's countrymen read his works and wept over them. They identified with them and learned them by heart. They did not follow the precepts laid down in them, nor did they really believe in this gospel in any literal sense. These works were a let-out, an excuse even, rather than a guiding rule. But they did provide an underlying ethical explanation of a state of affairs that was otherwise intolerable to the defeated patriots. It was an explanation that made moral sense and was accepted at the subconscious level. It was a spiritual and psychological lifeline that kept them from sinking into a Slough of Despond. It made misfortune not only bearable, but desirable..."⁵¹¹

55,000 Polish troops and 6,000 civilians who made a great exodus to the West and Paris kept this cult alive, not in Polish hearts only, but throughout Europe. Only the Russians were not seduced by its masochistic charm... Nevertheless, when Alexander II became Tsar and was crowned King of Poland, he granted a general amnesty to Polish prisoners in Russia, and about 9000 exiles returned to their homes from Siberia between 1857 and 1860.

However, they brought back with them the virus of nationalism. Thus on the day after the Tsar's brother, Grand Duke Constantine, was made viceroy of Poland, he was shot in the shoulder. Nor did a programme of "re-Polonization" – more liberal state administration and local government regulations governing the use of the Polish language, and Polish educational institutions – appease the nationalists. Even when all the other nations of Europe had settled down after the abortive revolutions of 1848, the Poles rose again.

"In January 1863," writes John van de Kiste, "they slaughtered Russian soldiers asleep in their Warsaw barracks, and national resistance turned to general uprising. This spread through the kingdom into the nine formerly Polish provinces known as Russia's Western region, where powerful landlords and Catholic clergy were ready to give vent to their hatred of Russian domination. For a while it looked as if England, France and Austria might join in on the side of Warsaw after giving their tacit blessing to the rebels, but Russia put down the unrest at no little cost to the Poles.... While the Poles butchered scores of Russian peasants including women and children, the Russians erected gibbets in the streets where rebels and civilians were hanged in their hundreds, with thousands more sent to Siberia. The insurrection was finally quelled in May 1864, when the more conservative Count Theodore Berg was sent to replace Constantine as viceroy."⁵¹²

[The Jews under Nicholas](#)

⁵¹¹ Zamoyski, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-287.

⁵¹² Van der Kiste, *The Romanovs: 1818-1959*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999, p. 35.

Tsar Alexander's project of settling the Jews as farmers on the new territories of Southern Russia had proved to be a failure, in spite of very generous terms offered to them – terms that were not offered to Russian peasants.

In spite of this failure, writes Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in his *Statute* of 1835, which replaced Alexander's of 1804, Nicholas "not only did not abandon Jewish agriculture, but even broadened it, placing in the first place in the building of Jewish life 'the setting up of the Jews on the basis of rules that would open to them a free path to the acquisition of a prosperous existence by the practice of agriculture and industry and to the gradual education of their youth, while at the same time cutting off for them excuses for idleness and unlawful trades'. If before a preliminary contribution of 400 rubles was required for each family [settling in the new territories] from the Jewish community, now without any condition 'every Jew is allowed "at any time" to pass over to agriculture', and all his unpaid taxes would immediately be remitted to him and to the community; he would be allowed to receive not only State lands for an unlimited period, but also, within the bounds of the Pale of Settlement, to buy, sell and lease lands. Those passing over to agriculture were freed from poll-tax for 25 years, from land tax for 10, and from liability to military service – for 50. Nor could any Jew 'be forced to pass over to agriculture'. Moreover, 'trades and crafts practised in their village life' were legalised.

"(150 years passed. And because these distant events had been forgotten, an enlightened and learned physicist formulated Jewish life at that time as 'the Pale of Settlement in conjunction with a ban [!] on peasant activity'. But the historian-publicist M.O. Gershenzon has a broader judgement: 'Agriculture is forbidden to the Jew by his national spirit, for, on becoming involved with the land, a man can more easily become rooted to the place'.)"⁵¹³

In general, the *Statute* of 1835 "did not lay any new restrictions on the Jews', as the Jewish encyclopaedia puts it in a restrained way. And if we look into the details, then according to the new *Statute* 'the Jews had the right to acquire any kind of real estate, including populated estates, and carry out any kind of trade on the basis of rights identical with those granted Russian subjects', although only within the bounds of the Pale of Settlement. The *Statute* of 1835 defended all the rights of the Jewish religion, and introduced awards for rabbis and the rights of the merchants of the first guild. A rational age for marriage (18 and 16 years) was established [contrary to the rabbis, who married off young Jews at much younger ages]. Measures were undertaken that Jewish dress should not be so different, separating Jews from the surrounding population. Jews were directed to productive means of employment (forbidding the sale of wine on credit and on the security of household effects), all kinds of manufacturing activity (including the farming of wine distilleries). Keeping Christians in servitude was forbidden only for constant service, but it was allowed 'for short jobs' without indication of exactly how long, and also 'for assisting in arable farming, gardening and work in kitchen gardens', which was a mockery of the very idea of 'Jewish agriculture'. The *Statute* of 1835 called on Jewish youth to get educated [up to then the rabbis had forbidden even the learning of Russian. No restrictions were placed on the entry of Jewish to secondary and higher educational institutions. Jews who had received the

⁵¹³ A.I. Solzhenitsyn, *Dvesti Let Vmeste* (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, p. 114.

degree of doctor in any branch of science... were given the right to enter government service. (Jewish doctors had that right even earlier.) As regards local self-government, the *Statute* removed the Jews' previous restrictions: now they could occupy posts in dumas, magistracies and town councils 'on the same basis as people of other confessions are elected to them'. (True, some local authorities, especially in Lithuania, objected to this: the head of the town on some days had to lead the residents into the church, and how could this be a Jew? Or how could a Jew be a judge, since the oath had to be sworn on the cross? The opposition proved to be strong, and by a decree of 1836 it was established for the western provinces that Jews could occupy only a third of the posts in magistracies and town councils.) Finally, with regard to the economically urgent question linked with cross-frontier smuggling, which was undermining State interests, the *Statute* left the Jews living on the frontiers where they were, but forbade any new settlements.

"For a State that held millions of its population in serfdom, all this cannot be characterised as a cruel system..."⁵¹⁴

This is an important point in view of the persistent western and Jewish propaganda that Nicholas was a persecutor of the Jews. And in this light even the most notorious restriction on the Jews – that they live in the Pale of Settlement – looks generous. For while a peasant had to live in his village, the Jews could wander throughout the vast territory of the Pale, an area the size of France and Germany combined; while for those who were willing to practise agriculture, or had acquired education, they could go even further afield.

Of particular importance were the Tsar's measures encouraging Jewish education, by which he hoped to remove the barriers built up around the Jews by the rabbis. "Already in 1831 he told the 'directing' committee that 'among the measures that could improve the situation of the Jews, it was necessary to pay attention to their correction by teaching... by the building of factories, by the banning of early marriage, by a better management of the *kahals*,... by a change of dress'. And in 1840, on the founding the 'Committee for the Defining of Measures for the Radical Transformation of the Jews in Russia', one of its first aims was seen to be: 'Acting on the moral formation of the new generation of Jews by the establishment of Jewish schools in a spirit opposed to the present Talmudic teaching'..."⁵¹⁵

"The masses, fearing coercive measures in the sphere of religion, did not go.

"However, the school reform took its course in... 1844, in spite of the extreme resistance of the ruling circles among the *kahals*. (Although 'the establishment of Jewish schools by no means envisaged a diminution in the numbers of Jews in the general school institutions; on the contrary, it was often pointed out that the general schools had to be, as before, open for Jews'.) Two forms of State Jewish schools ['on the model of the Austrian elementary schools for Jews'] were established: two-year schools, corresponding to Russian parish schools, and four-year schools, corresponding to *uyezd* schools. In them only Jewish subjects were taught by Jewish teachers. (As one inveterate revolutionary, Lev Deutsch, evaluated it: 'The crown-bearing monster

⁵¹⁴ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-117.

⁵¹⁵ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

ordered them [the Jews] to be taught Russian letters'.) For many years Christians were placed at the head of these schools; only much later were Jews also admitted.

“The majority of the Jewish population, faithful to traditional Jewry, on learning or guessing the secret aim of Uvarov [the minister of enlightenment], looked on the educational measures of the government as one form of persecution. (But Uvarov, in seeking possible ways of bringing the Jews and the Christian population closer together through the eradication ‘of prejudices instilled by the teaching of the Talmud’, wanted to exclude it completely from the educational curriculum, considering it to be an antichristian codex.) In their unchanging distrust of the Russian authorities, the Jewish population continued for quite a few years to keep away from these schools, experiencing ‘school-phobia’: ‘Just as the population kept away from military service, so it was saved from the schools, fearing to give their children to these seed-beds of “free thought”’. Prosperous Jewish families in part sent other, poor people’s children to the State schools instead of their own... And if by 1855 70 thousand Jewish children were studying in the ‘registered’ *heders* [rabbinic schools], in the State schools of both types there were 3,200.”⁵¹⁶

This issue of education was to prove to be crucial. For when, in the next reign, the Jews did overcome their “school-phobia”, and send their children to the State schools, these had indeed become seed-beds of “free-thinking” and revolution. It is ironic and tragic that it was the Jews’ education in Russian schools that taught them how to overthrow the Russian Orthodox Autocracy...

[The Crimea: The Last Religious War](#)

However legitimate the Tsar might consider most of European governments (except Napoleon III's), this was not how they looked at him. The 1848 revolution, while in general unsuccessful, had changed the balance of forces in Europe. Gratitude to Russia for keeping the peace by defeating the Hungarian revolutionaries, never strong, had completely disappeared with the rise of a new generation of leaders. In 1851 the exiled Hungarian revolutionary Kossuth denounced Russian "despotism" in front of a cheering crowd in London. Meanwhile, the new French Emperor Napoleon III was looking to challenge the Vienna settlement of 1815 and divide Austria and Russia.⁵¹⁷

Nevertheless, it was a remarkable turn-around for these countries to ally themselves with the Ottoman empire against a Christian state, Russia, when they were in no way threatened by Russia...

One factor making for instability was the gradual weakening of the power of Turkey, "the sick man of Europe", in the Tsar's phrase. Clearly, if Turkey collapsed, its subject peoples of Orthodox Christian faith would look to Russia to liberate them. But the Western Powers were determined to prevent this, which would threaten their hegemony in the Eastern Mediterranean and greatly increase the power of their rival Russia.

⁵¹⁶ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-124.

⁵¹⁷ Philip Mansel, *Constantinople*, London: Penguin, 1995, p. 268.

There were also religious rivalries. The Tsar, as head of the Third Rome, saw himself as the natural protector of the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman empire. But the Catholics, whose main political protector was France, were not prepared to allow him to play this role.

"The spark to the tinderbox," writes Trevor Royle, "was the key to the main door of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. By tradition, history, and a common usage which had been built up over the centuries, the great key was in the possession of the monks of the eastern, or Greek Orthodox... Church; they were the guardians of the grotto in which lay the sacred manger where Christ himself was... born. That state of affairs was contested with equal fervour by their great rivals, the monks of the Roman Catholic, or Latin, church who had been palmed off with the keys to the lesser inner doors to the narthex (the vestibule between the porch and the nave). There was also the question of whether or not a silver star adorned with the arms of France should be permitted to stand in the Sanctuary of the Nativity, but in the spring of 1852 the rivals' paramount thoughts were concentrated on the possession of the great key to the church's main west door...."

"[Alexander] Kinglake wrote: 'When the Emperor of Russia sought to keep for his Church the holy shrines of Palestine, he spoke on behalf of fifty millions of brave, pious, devoted subjects, of whom thousands for the sake of the cause would joyfully risk their lives. From the serf in his hut, even up to the great Tsar himself, the faith professed was the faith really glowing in his heart.'"⁵¹⁸

"Nicolas I had both temporal and spiritual reasons for wanting to extend his protection of the Eastern Church within the Ottoman Empire. Napoleon III's were rather different. Having dismissed the French parliament he needed all the support he could get, most especially from the Roman Catholics, before he could declare himself emperor. It suited him therefore to have France play a greater role in Palestine and 'to put an end to these deplorable and too-frequent quarrels about the possession of the Holy Places'. To that end the Marquis de Lavalette, his ambassador to the Porte - or the Sublime Porte, the court or government of the Ottoman Empire - insisted that the Turks honour the agreement made in 1740 that confirmed that France had 'sovereign authority' in the Holy Land. Otherwise, hinted de Lavalette, force might have to be used.

"On 9 February 1852 the Porte agreed the validity of the Latin claims but no sooner had the concession been made than the Turks were forced to bow once more, this time to Russian counter-claims. Basing his argument on an agreement, or firman, of 1757 which restored Greek rights in Palestine and on the Treaty of Kutchuk-Kainarji (1774) which gave Russia protection of the Christian religion within the Ottoman Empire, Nicholas's ambassador succeeded in getting a new firman ratifying the privileges of the Greek Church. This revoked the agreement made to the French who responded by backing up their demands with a show of force.

"Later that summer, much to Nicholas's fury and to Britain's irritation, Napoleon III ordered the 90-gun steam-powered battleship *Charlemagne* to sail through the Dardanelles. This was a clear violation of the London Convention of 1841 which kept

⁵¹⁸ Royle, *Crimea: The Great Crimean War 1854-1856*, London: Abacus, 1999, pp. 15, 17.

the Straits closed to naval vessels, but it also provided a telling demonstration of French sea power. It was nothing less than gunboat diplomacy and it seemed to work. Impressed by the speed and strength of the French warship, and persuaded by French diplomacy and money, Sultan Abd-el-Medjid listened ever more intently to the French demands. At the beginning of December he gave orders that the keys to the Church of the Nativity were to be surrendered to the Latins and that the French-backed church was to have supreme authority over the Holy Places. On 22 December a new silver star was brought from Jaffa and as Kinglake wrote, in great state 'the keys of the great door of the church, together with the keys of the sacred manger, were handed over to the Latins'.

"Napoleon III had scored a considerable diplomatic victory. His subjects were much gratified, but in so doing he had also prepared the ground for a much greater and more dangerous confrontation. Given the strength of Russian religious convictions Tsar Nicholas was unwilling to accept the Sultan's decision - which he regarded as an affront not just to him but to the millions of Orthodox Christians under his protection - and he was determined to have it reversed, if need be by using force himself."⁵¹⁹

In October, 1852, the Tsar arrived in Kiev and confided to the metropolitan: "I do not want to shed the blood of the faithful sons of the fatherland, but our vainglorious enemies are forcing me to bare my sword. My plans are not yet made - no! But my heart feels that the time is nearing and they will soon be brought to fulfilment."

Seeking advice, the Tsar asked if there were any holy elders in Kiev. The Metropolitan mentioned Hieroschemamonk Theophilus. They set off there immediately. On the way, they saw Blessed Theophilus lying by the side of the road in the middle of an ant-hill, not moving. His arms were folded on his chest crosswise, as in death, and his eyes were completely closed. Ants swarmed in masses all over his body and face, but he, as if feeling nothing, pretended to be dead. Puzzled, the Tsar and the Metropolitan returned to Kiev.

Russian troops moved into the Romanian Principalities, and on July 2, 1853, the Tsar proclaimed: "By the occupation of the Principalities we desire such security as will ensure the restoration of our dues [in Palestine]. It is not conquest that we seek but satisfaction for a just right so clearly infringed." As he told the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, Seymour: "You see what my position is. I am the Head of a People of the Greek religion, our co-religionists of Turkey look up to me as their natural protector, and these are claims which it is impossible for me to disregard. I have the conviction that good right is on my side, I should therefore begin a War, such as that which now impends, without compunction and should be prepared to carry it on, as I have before remarked to you, as long as there should be a rouble in the Treasury or a man in the country."⁵²⁰

Nevertheless, when the Powers drew up a compromise "Note", Nicholas promptly accepted it. However, the Turks rejected it, having been secretly assured of Franco-British support. On October 4, 1853 they delivered an ultimatum to the Russians to leave the Principalities within a fortnight. When the Tsar rejected the ultimatum, war

⁵¹⁹ Royle, *op. cit.*, 19-20.

⁵²⁰ Royle, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

broke out. On the same day A.F. Tiutcheva noted in her diary: "A terrible struggle is being ignited, gigantic opposing forces are entering into conflict with each other: the East and the West, the Slavic world and the Latin world, the Orthodox Church in her struggle not only with Islam, but also with the other Christian confessions, which, taking the side of the religion of Mohammed, are thereby betraying their own vital principle."⁵²¹

The British, the French and later the Sardinians joined the Turks. In March, 1854, the British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston in a secret memorandum prepared for the cabinet wrote of the Russian empire's "dismemberment. Finland would be restored to Sweden, the Baltic provinces would go to Prussia, and Poland would become a sizable kingdom. Austria would renounce her Italian possessions but gain the Danubian principalities and possibly even Bessarabia in return, and the Ottoman empire would regain the Crimea and Georgia."⁵²²

As A.S. Khomiakov wrote: "Whatever political bases and excuses there may be for the struggle that is convulsing Europe now, it is impossible not to notice, even at the most superficial observation, that on one of the warring sides stand exclusively peoples belonging to Orthodoxy, and on the other - Romans and Protestants, gathered around Islam." And he quoted from an epistle of the Catholic Archbishop of Paris Sibur, who assured the French that the war with Russia "is not a political war, but a holy war; not a war of states or peoples, but solely a religious war". All other reasons were "in essence no more than excuses". The true reason was "the necessity to drive out the error of Photius; to subdue and crush it". "That is the recognized aim of this new crusade, and such was the hidden aim of all the previous crusades, even if those who participated in them did not admit it."⁵²³

On February 18, 1855, the Tsar, worn out and intensely grieved by the losses in the war, died. (According to one version, he was poisoned by the medic Mandt on the orders of Napoleon III.⁵²⁴) Metropolitan Philaret of Kiev asked his valet whether he remembered the trip with the Tsar to Blessed Theophilus, and the fool-for-Christ's strange behaviour. "Up to now I could not understand his strange behaviour. Now, the prophecy of the Starets is as clear as God's day. The ants were the malicious enemies of our fatherland, trying to torment the great body of Russia. The arms folded on his chest and the closed eyes of Theophilus were the sudden, untimely death of our beloved Batiushka-Tsar."⁵²⁵

Sebastopol fell in September, 1855. In 1856 the new Tsar, Alexander II, signed the Treaty of Paris, thereby bringing the Crimean war to an end. While the Russians had lost some battles and the port of Sebastopol, they retained Kars, which (with Erzurum) they had conquered from the Turks. At the Peace Conference, both Russia and Turkey were forbidden to have fleets in the Black Sea (although Alexander II abrogated this

⁵²¹ Tiutcheva, *Pri Dvore Dvukh Imperatorov* (At the Court of Two Emperors), Moscow, 1990, p. 52; in N.Yu. Selischev, "K 150-letiu nachala Krymskoj vojny" (Towards the 150th Anniversary of the Crimean War), *Pravoslavnaiia Rus'* (Orthodox Rus'), N 24 (1741), December 15/28, 2003, p. 11.

⁵²² Palmerston, in Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, London: Penguin, 2002, p. 181.

⁵²³ Khomiakov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij* (Complete Works), Moscow, 1994, vol. II, pp. 74-75; in Selischev, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

⁵²⁴ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

⁵²⁵ *Hieroschemamonk Feofil*, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1970, pp. 108, 111.

clause in 1870), the Straits were closed for warships, and the Aland islands in the Baltic were demilitarised. On the other hand, as the Russian representative A.F. Orlov telegraphed to St. Petersburg: "The English claims on the independence of Mingrelia, the Trans-Caucasus and other demands have been completely rejected. The quarrels over Nikolaev stirred up by Lord Clarendon have been resolved by our replies."⁵²⁶ As Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow put it: "In spite of all this, in Europe we were unconquered, while in Asia we were conquerors. Glory to the Russian army!"⁵²⁷

So in purely military terms, the Crimean war was not such a disaster for Russia; and if the war had continued, might well have ended with victory as superior Russian manpower began to tell. The situation had been much more perilous for the Russians in 1812, and yet they had gone on to enter Paris in triumph. As Tsar Alexander II had written to the Russian commander Gorchakov after the fall of Sebastopol: "Sebastopol is not Moscow, the Crimea is not Russia. Two years after we set fire to Moscow, our troops marched in the streets of Paris. We are still the same Russians and God is still with us."⁵²⁸ And within a generation, Russian armies were at the gates of Constantinople...

However, the fact remained that while the war of 1812-14 had ended in the rout of Russia's enemies, this had not happened in 1854-56. Russia had "not yet been beaten half enough", in Palmerston's words; but her losses had been far greater than those of the Allies, and the war had revealed that Russia was well behind the Allies in transport and weaponry, especially rifles. Moreover, Russia's primary war-aim, the retention of her right to act as guardian of the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire, had not been achieved; she now had to share the guardianship with four other Great Powers.

Still more serious was the dispiriting effect that the war had on public opinion. Observers had noted the enthusiasm of the simple people for the war, which they considered to be a holy; the soldiers in the Crimea had shown feats of heroism; and the intercession of the Mother of God had clearly been seen in the deliverance of Odessa through her "Kasperovskaya" icon.⁵²⁹ However, examples of unbelief had been seen among the commanding officers at Sebastopol, and some of the *intelligentsy*, such as B.N. Chicherin, openly scoffed the idea of a holy war. One scoffer was a young officer who was soon to make a worldwide reputation in another field - Count Leo Tolstoy.

⁵²⁶ Orlov, in Selischev, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁵²⁷ Metropolitan Philaret, in Selischev, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁵²⁸ Oliver Figes, *Crimea*, London: Allen Lane, 2010, p. 397.

⁵²⁹ See "Zhitie sviatitelia Innokentia Khersonskogo" ("The Life of the holy Hierarch Innocent of Cherson"), in *Zhitia i Tvorenia Russikh Sviatykh* (The Lives and Works of the Russian Saints), Moscow, 2001, pp. 701-702. Archbishop Innocent of Kherson and Odessa, within whose jurisdiction the Crimea fell, had had sermons "widely circulated to the Russian troops in the form of pamphlets and illustrated prints (*lubki*). Innocent portrayed the conflict as a 'holy war' for the Crimea, the centre of the nation's Orthodox identity, where Christianity had arrived in Russia. Highlighting the ancient heritage of the Greek Church in the peninsula, he depicted the Crimea as a 'Russian Athos', a sacred place in the 'Holy Russian Empire' connected by religion to the monastic centre of Orthodoxy on the peninsula of Mount Athos in northeastern Greece. With [Governor] Stroganov's support, Innocent oversaw the creation of a separate bishopric for the Crimea as well as the establishment of several new monasteries in the peninsula after the Crimean War" (Figes, *op. cit.*, p. 423). However, in the end it was on the other side of the Black Sea, in Abkhazia, that the great monastery of New Athos was constructed shortly before the First World War.

In his *Sebastopol Sketches* he made unflattering comparisons between the western and the Russian armies. His comments on the defenders of Sebastopol were especially unjust: "We have no army, we have a horde of slaves cowed by discipline, ordered about by thieves and slave traders. This horde is not an army because it possesses neither any real loyalty to faith, tsar and fatherland - words that have been so much misused! - nor valour, nor military dignity. All it possesses are, on the one hand, passive patience and repressed discontent, and on the other, cruelty, servitude and corruption."⁵³⁰

Tolstoy was to cast his ferociously cynical eye over much more than the army in the course of his long life as a novelist and publicist. Idolized by the public, he would subject almost every aspect of Russian life and faith to his withering scorn. For, as the poet Athanasius Fet noted, he was distinguished by an "automatic opposition to all generally accepted opinions"⁵³¹; and in this way was in a real sense "the mirror of the Russian revolution".

The leading Slavophiles of the prewar period, such as Khomiakov and Kireyevsky, died soon after the war, and with their deaths the ideological struggle shifted in favour of the westerners. While the war of 1812 had united the nation behind the Tsar, the Crimean war was followed by increasing division and dissension. The conclusion drawn by Constantine Aksakov (who, in spite of his anti-statism, ardently supported the war) was as follows: "From the very beginning the reason for all our failures has lain, not in the power, strength or skill of our enemies, but *in us ourselves*; we ourselves, of course, have been our most terrible adversaries. It is no wonder that we have been overcome when we ourselves give in and retreat... Believe me, the danger for Russia is not in the Crimea, and not from the English, the French and the Turks, no, the danger, the real danger is within us, from the spirit of little faith, the spirit of doubt in the help of God, a non-Russian, western spirit, a foreign, heterodox spirit, which weakens our strength and love for our brothers, which cunningly counsels us to make concessions, to humiliate ourselves, to avoid quarrels with Germany, to wage a defensive war, and not to go on the offensive, and not go straight for the liberation of our brothers. We have protected ourselves! That is the source of our enslavement and, perhaps, of our endless woes. If we want God to be for us, it is necessary that we should be for God, and not for the Austrian or in general for the German union, for the sake of which we have abandoned God's work. It is necessary that we should go forward for the Faith and our brothers. But we, having excited the hopes of our brothers, have allowed the cross to be desecrated, and abandoned our brothers to torments... The struggle, the real struggle between East and West, Russia and Europe, is in ourselves and not at our borders."⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Tolstoy, *Sebastopol Sketches*; quoted in Figes, *op. cit.*, p. 445.

⁵³¹ Fet, in Figes, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

⁵³² C. Aksakov, in E.N. Annenkov, "'Slaviano-Khristianskie' idealy na fone zapadnoj tsivilizatsii, russkie spory 1840-1850-kh gg." ("Slavic-Christian' ideas against the background of western civilization, Russia quarrels in the 1840s and 50s"), in V.A. Kotelnikov (ed.), *Khristianstvo i Russkaia Literatura* (Christianity and Russian Literature), St. Petersburg: "Nauka", 1996, pp. 143-144. Cf. Yury Samarin: "We were defeated not by the external forces of the Western alliance, but by our own internal weakness... Stagnation of thought, depression of productive forces, the rift between government and people, disunity between social classes and the enslavement of one of them to another... prevent the government from deploying all the means available to it and, in emergency, from being able to count on mobilising the strength of the nation" ("O krepostnom sostoianii i o perekhode iz nego k

In the foreign sphere, the most important long-term consequence was the destruction of the Holy Alliance of Christian monarchist powers established by Tsar Alexander I in 1815. Russia had been the main guarantor of the integrity of both Prussia and Austria, and in 1848 had saved Austria from the revolution. But a bare seven years later, Austria had turned her against her benefactor...

“Hitherto,” writes Bernard Simms, “the Tsarist Empire had tried to stay on good terms with both Prussia and Austria, but tilted strongly towards the latter on ideological grounds. During the war, both powers had blotted their copybooks in St. Petersburg, but Austria’s humiliating ultimatum [“in December 1855, the Austrians joined the French and the British in an ultimatum to the new tsar... to end hostilities or face combined action against him”] had given far more offence than Prussia’s timid neutrality. Henceforth, the Russians saw the Austrians as the principal barrier to their Balkan ambitions, and the idea that the path to Constantinople ran through Vienna – a common slogan in later decades – began to gain currency in St. Petersburg. Even more crucially, the Russians were determined that they would never again face the full force of the German Confederation under the aegis of Austria. Vienna would have to be unbolted from the leadership of Germany. So in late August 1856 the new Russian foreign minister, Gorchakov, announced in a widely discussed circular that the tsar would no longer support his fellow monarchs. The message was clear: the Habsburgs would face the next revolutionary challenge on their own...”⁵³³

grazhdanskoj svobode” (“On serfdom and the transition from it to civil liberty”), *Sochinenia* (Works), vol. 2, Moscow, 1878, pp. 17-20; quoted in Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 317).

⁵³³ Simms, *Europe: The Struggle for Supremacy*, London: Allen Lane, 2013, pp. 223-224, 222.

19. THE EMANCIPATION OF THE SERFS

Tsar Nicholas I had long planned to emancipate the serfs, and was able to improve the lot of the State serfs considerably. Thus L.A. Tikhomirov wrote: "Under Emperor Nicholas I the government undertook a restructuring of the State peasants. The Emperor made a very good choice for the executor of his thought in Count Kiselev, one of the greatest statesmen that Russia has ever given birth to. Thus one of the most remarkable social organizations in our history was created. Lands the size of the whole of Europe were united in the hands of the State, the peasants were abundantly endowed [with them], and the system of repatriations gave an exit to new generations of the farming class. A remarkable system of national provision for the struggle against poor harvests was created. The improvement of the farming culture of 20 million peasants became the object of obligatory and conscious work on the part of the ministry. Moreover, the peasants were personally free, and their communities were ruled by men chosen by themselves. After two decades of effort this extensive organization was finally put on its feet."⁵³⁴

The great work was completed by Tsar Alexander II in 1861. An important impulse was given to it by the various inadequacies in Russian life exposed by the Crimean War. The first inadequacy, according to both Slavophiles and Westerners, was serfdom. The second, according to Westerners alone, was the autocracy...⁵³⁵ And yet it was the autocracy that would eradicate serfdom...

Serfdom arose in the sixteenth century as a result of military needs. "Before then," writes Max Hayward, peasants "had been free to leave their masters every year, by tradition, on St. George's day in November. The introduction of serfdom meant that the peasants were bound to the land in the same way and for the same reasons as their masters were bound to the czar's service. During the eighteenth century, however, just as the privileges of the landowners were made absolute, so were the rights of their serfs whittled away until they became virtually slaves who could - and, notoriously, often were - bought and sold, even if meant separating them from their families. Perhaps the worst aspect of a serf's life was that - from the time of Peter the Great - he could be sent into the army for twenty-five years..."⁵³⁶

"With the military character of the state," wrote Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, "it was impossible for the military class not to occupy the first place in the state. In particular in ancient and middle-period Russia the military element absorbed and overshadowed all other elements..."

⁵³⁴ Tikhomirov, "Pochemy ia perestal byt' revoliutsionerom" (Why I ceased to be a revolutionary), *Kritika Demokratii* (A Critique of Democracy), Moscow, 1997, p. 26.

⁵³⁵ "The failures of the Crimean war were connected by the Westerners with God's punishment striking Russia for all her vices and absurdities, by which they understood the existence in the country of serfdom and the despotic character of the State administration. Despotism and serfdom, as the Westerners noted, hindered the normal development of the country, preserving its economic, political and military backwardness." (A.I. Sheparneva, "Krymskaia vojna v osveschenii zapadnikov" (The Crimean war as interpreted by the Westerners), *Voprosy Istorii* (Questions of History), 2005 (9), p. 37).

⁵³⁶ Hayward, introduction to Chloe Obolensky, *The Russian Empire: A Portrait in Photographs*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1980, p. 13.

"The necessity of muzzling the self-will of the simple people and the impossibility of having a police force in an unorganised state forced Tsar Boris Godunov to tie the peasants to the lands. Then all the Russian peasants were turned into unfree peasants...

"From the time of Alexander I views on the subject changed: the state finally became organized, a police force consisting of officials was established everywhere, the people began to emerge from their condition of childhood, received new ideas, felt new needs. The nobility began to chafe at being guardians of the peasants, the peasants began to chafe at the restrictions on their liberty, at their patriarchal way of life. All this began to appear and express itself strongly in the second half of the reign of Emperor Nicholas I.

"Now the prosperously reigning Emperor Alexander II has found the matter already prepared and has found it necessary to change the form of administration of landowners' peasants. What is the essential significance of the improvement in the peasants' way of life? It is the change in the form of their administration. They are being given freedom, but not self-will. They are coming out from under the jurisdiction of the landowners as if from under the supervisions of educators and guardians, into a relationship of personal service to the state."⁵³⁷

The Tsar declared: "It is better to abolish serfdom from above than wait for it to abolish itself from below." For the serfs were becoming violent...⁵³⁸ This was not caused by poverty alone - as English observers noted, the Russian peasants were on the whole richer than their British counterparts.⁵³⁹

"The peasants," wrote the senator, Ya. A. Soloviev, "either were disturbed in whole regions by false rumours about freedom, or were running away from cruel landlords, or resisted the decrees of unjust landowners. The landlords feared both the government and the peasants. In a word, serfdom was beginning to shake and with each day became more and more unsuitable: both for the peasants, and for the landlords, and for the government."⁵⁴⁰

The peasants understood their relationship with their noble masters to be: "we are yours, but the land is ours", or even: "we are yours, and you are ours".⁵⁴¹ While this

⁵³⁷ *Polnoe Zhizneopisanie Sviatitelia Ignatia Brianchaninova (A Complete Biography of the Holy Hierarch Ignatius Brianchaninov)*, Moscow, 2002, pp. 317, 319-320.

⁵³⁸ Eric Hobsbawm writes: "There were 148 outbreaks of peasant unrest in 1826-34, 216 in 1835-44, 348 in 1844-54, culminating in the 474 outbreaks of the last years preceding the emancipation of 1861." (*The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848*, London: Abacus, 1962, p. 362) Ronald Seth writes: "A Russian historian, Vasily Semevsky, who died in 1916, using official records as a basis, claimed that there were 550 peasant uprisings in the sixty years of the nineteenth century prior to liberation; while a later Soviet historian, Inna Ignatovich, insists, upon equally valid records, that there were in fact 1,467 such rebellions in this period. And in addition to these uprisings serfs deserted their masters in hundreds and thousands, sometimes in great mass movement, when rumours circulated that freedom could be found 'somewhere in the Caucasus'." (*The Russian Terrorists*, London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1966, pp. 20-21) (V.M.)

⁵³⁹ M.V. Krivosheev and Yu.V. Krivosheev, *Istoria Rossijskoj Imperii 1861-1894 (A History of the Russian Empire)*, St. Petersburg 2000, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁴⁰ Soloviev, in Krivosheev and Krivosheev, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁵⁴¹ Archimandrite Constantine (Zaitsev), "Velikaia Reforma Osvobozhdenia Krestian. 1861-1961" ("The Great Reform of the Emancipation of the Serfs. 1861-1961"), *Pravoslavnij Put' (The Orthodox Way)*, Jordanville, 1961, p. 24.

was unacceptable to the Tsar, he did accept that "emancipation was, in [Prince Sergius] Volkonsky's words, a 'question of justice, a moral and a Christian obligation, for every citizen that loves his Fatherland.' As the Decembrist explained in a letter to Pushkin, the abolition of serfdom was 'the least the state could do to recognize the sacrifice the peasantry has made in the last two wars: it is time to recognize that the Russian peasant is a citizen as well'."⁵⁴²

In any case, there were major benefits to be gained from emancipation from a purely material point of view. Emancipation would pave the way for more efficient agriculture and the provision of labour for the industrialization of Russia⁵⁴³, so sorely needed in view of the relative failure of the Crimean War, by freeing the peasants from the commune as soon as they had paid their redemption payments. These would then be free to seek work in the towns and factories.

Again, as Sir Geoffrey Hosking writes, "the existence of serfdom obstructed modernization of the army and thereby burdened the treasury with huge and unproductive military expenditure. As the military reformer R.A. Fadeyev pointed [out], 'Under serfdom, anyone becoming a soldier is freed; hence one cannot, without shaking the whole social order, admit many people to military service. Therefore we have to maintain on the army establishment in peacetime all the soldiers we need in war.'"⁵⁴⁴

Philip Bobbitt confirms this judgement: "Because service in the army was rewarded by emancipation, serfs had to be recruited for long periods; otherwise, the number of those bound to the land would have plummeted. Thus recruitment provided only about 700,000 men. There was no reserve. Such measures did not fill the needs of contemporary warfare, which required universal, short-term conscription, followed by service in the reserve. An adequate system, however, would move all serfs through the army in a generation. Therefore modern conscription and reserve service meant the emancipation of the serfs. And this is precisely what happened. In 1861 the serfs were freed; universal military service followed in 1874. Six years' active service and a nine-year reserve created a total force of 1.35 million."⁵⁴⁵

Indeed, so important does Bobbitt consider Russia's defeat in the Crimean war, and the emancipation of the serfs and the introduction of universal conscription which that defeat entailed, that he described it as "completing her constitutional transition to a state-nation", a transition which all the other major powers in Europe had already made in response to the emergence of the first state-nation, Napoleonic France.

⁵⁴² Oliver Figes, *Natasha's Dream*, London: Penguin, 2002, pp. 144-145.

⁵⁴³ This applied also to the production of armaments. The Crimean war had revealed Russian rifles to be very inefficient. Therefore priority had to be given to new armaments technologies and factories. But that required a free labour force instead of the system of forced labour of serfs that was then in operation. For "in the words of a report on the Tula Armory in 1861: 'It would seem to be generally indisputable that only free men are capable of honest work. He who from childhood has been forced to work is incapable of assuming responsibility as long as his social condition remains unchanged.'" (David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, London: Abacus, 1999, p. 241). (V.M.)

⁵⁴⁴ Hosking, *Russia. People and Empire, 1552-1917*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 318.

⁵⁴⁵ Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, London: Penguin, 2002, pp. 181-182.

But there were still more advantages to the emancipation of the serfs. Thus it would save the poorer nobles from bankruptcy. For "by 1859, one-third of the estates and two-thirds of the serfs owned by the landed nobles had been mortgaged to the state and noble banks. Many of the smaller landowners could barely afford to feed their serfs. The economic argument for emancipation was becoming irrefutable, and many landowners were shifting willy-nilly to the free labour system by contracting other people's serfs. Since the peasantry's redemption payments would cancel out the gentry's debts, the economic rationale was becoming equally irresistible."⁵⁴⁶ Nor would they have to wait for the peasants to pay them: the government would immediately pay them 80% of the value of the land by wiping out their debts, while the peasants, having been given their freedom *gratis*, would be given a 49-year period within which to pay for the land at a cheap rate of interest. The remaining 20% would be paid by the peasants directly to the landowners in cash payments or labour. Moreover, they would be helped by generous loans from the government.

The question of the emancipation of the serfs tended to cut across these ideological discussions. Supporters of emancipation could be found in all camps; but among the more Slavophile and Orthodox thinkers could also be found anxieties about its possible effects on the ethnic and religious cohesion of the country. In order to understand these concerns, we need to look at the origins of the institution of the peasant commune.

"The commune," writes Professor Richard Pipes, "was an association of peasants holding communal land allotments. This land, divided into strips, it periodically redistributed among members. Redistribution (*peredely*), which took place at regular intervals - ten, twelve, fifteen years or so, according to local custom - were carried out to allow for changes in the size of household brought about by deaths, births, and departures. They were a main function of the commune and its distinguishing characteristic. The commune divided its land into strips in order to assure each member of allotments of equal quality and distance from the village. By 1900, approximately one-third of communes, mostly in the western and southern borderlands, had ceased the practice of repartitioning even though formally they were still treated as 'repartitional communes'. In the Great Russian provinces, the practice of repartition was virtually universal.

"Through the village assembly, the commune resolved issues of concern to its members, including the calendar of field work, the distribution of taxes and other fiscal obligations (for which its members were held collectively responsible), and disputes among households. It could expel troublesome members and have them exiled to Siberia; it had the power to authorize passports, without which peasants could not leave the village, and even to compel an entire community to change its religious allegiance from the official church to one of the sects. The assembly reached its decisions by acclamation: it did not tolerate dissent from the will of the majority, viewing it as antisocial behaviour."⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁶ Figes, *Natasha's Dream*, p. 144. "More than 80% of the small and middle nobility were in debt to the state on the security of their own estates, and this debt would have been unrepayable if it had not been for the reform. The value of the payments for the land cleared many debts." (Krivosheev and Krivosheev, *op. cit.* p. 20).

⁵⁴⁷ Pipes, *The Russian Revolution, 1899-1919*, London: Collins Harvill, 1990, pp. 87-98.

Now, as we have seen, for both Slavophiles and Westerners the institution of the commune was the essence of Russianness. For Slavophiles, it was a patriarchal institution of pre-Petrine Russia, while for the Westerners it was "Russian socialism". However, Fr. Lev Lebedev points out that the commune was by no means as anciently Russian as was then thought: "In ancient Rus' (Russia) the peasants possessed or used plots of land completely independently, according to the right of personal inheritance or acquisition, and the commune (*mir*) had no influence on this possession. A certain communal order obtained only in relation to the matter of taxes and obligations. To this ancient 'commune' there corresponds to a certain degree only the rule of 'collective responsibility' envisaged by the Statute of 1861 in relation to taxes and obligations. But in Rus' there was never any 'commune' as *an organization of communal land-use* with the right of the *mir* to distribute and redistribute plots among members of the 'commune'."⁵⁴⁸

Again, according to Pipes, "the origins of the Russian commune are obscure and a subject of controversy. Some see in it the spontaneous expression of an alleged Russian sense of social justice, while others view it as the product of state pressures to ensure collective responsibility for the fulfilment of obligations to the Crown and landlord. Recent studies indicate that the repartitional commune first appeared toward the end of the fifteenth century, became common in the sixteenth, and prevalent in the seventeenth. It served a variety of functions, as useful to officials and landlords as to peasants. The former it guaranteed, through the institution of collective responsibility, the payment of taxes and delivery of recruits; the latter it enabled to present a united front in dealings with external authority. The principle of periodic redistribution of land ensured (at any rate, in theory) that every peasant had enough to provide for his family and, at the same time, to meet his obligations to the landlord and state."

The reform, which was announced in a manifesto written by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow on February 19, 1861, was welcomed by many, including highly conservative churchmen such as St. Ignaty Brianchaninov, who saw it as "a most happy initiative, a majestic order amazing Europe".

He argued: "1. That both the Word of God and the Church - both the Universal Church and the Russian Church - in the persons of the Holy Fathers, has never said anything at all about the abolition of civil slavery, that there is nothing in common between spiritual and civil freedom, that both slaves and masters were constantly taught by the Church the most exact and conscientious fulfilment of their obligations, that the violators of Christ's commandment on love were subject to rebukes and exhortations.

"2. That the emancipation of slaves has always been recognized by the Church as a good deed, a deed of mercy, a deed of brotherly Christian love.

"3. The most pious Russian Autocrat has indicated to the class of the nobility the accomplishing of a great Christian work, a work of love. The Church invokes the blessing of God upon the great work of the fatherland with her warmest prayers. Her pastors invite the nobility to noble self-renunciation, to sacrifice, to the immediate

⁵⁴⁸ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 341-342.

sacrifice of material goods for the sake of moral goods, while they instruct the peasants to accept this gift of the Tsar with due veneration and humility - the true indications that the gift will be used wisely and usefully.

"But one must not think that civil liberty morally exalts only the peasants: the class of the nobility must unflinching enter onto a higher level of moral achievement in renouncing the ownership of slaves. That is the characteristic of self-sacrifice and the offering of material goods as a sacrifice for spiritual goods: it exalts, changes and perfects man."⁵⁴⁹

According to Dostoyevsky, far from undermining the traditional bonds of society, emancipation in fact strengthened the bond between the Tsar and the people, the union in faith and love which was at the very heart of Holy Russia. For the peasants had always looked to the Tsar as their father and protector against the greed of the landowners and officials. They had been expecting the Tsar to liberate them, and their expectations had been fulfilled. For Dostoyevsky, as Igor Volgin writes, "the reform of 1861 created a historical precedent of exceptional importance. It presented an example of voluntary renunciation of an age-old historical injustice, a peaceful resolution of a social conflict that threatened to have terrible consequences. In this sense the emancipation of the peasants was as it were the first step to 'the Russian resolution of the question': the action taken from above *hinted* at the possibility of the creation of a world-order that would be founded on justice - and only on justice."⁵⁵⁰

"Is the saying that 'the Tsar is their father' a mere phrase, an empty sound in Russia? He who so believes understands nothing about Russia! Nay, this is a profound and most original idea, - a live and mighty organism of the people merging with the Tsar. This idea is a force which has been moulding itself in the course of centuries, especially the last two centuries, which were so dreadful to the people, but which we so ardently eulogize for European enlightenment, forgetting the fact that this enlightenment was bought two centuries ago at the expense of serfdom and a Calvary of the Russian people serving us. The people waited for their liberator, and he came. Why, then, shouldn't they be his own, true children? The Tsar to the people is not an extrinsic force such as that of some conqueror (as were, for instance, the dynasties of the former Kings of France), but a national, all-unifying force, which the people themselves desired, which they nurtured in their hearts, which they came to love, for which they suffered because from it alone they hoped for their exodus from Egypt. To the people, the Tsar is the incarnation of themselves, their whole ideology, their hopes and beliefs.

"So recently these hopes have been completely realized. Would the people renounce their further hopes? Wouldn't the latter, on the contrary, be strengthened and reinforced, since after the peasants' reform the Tsar became the people's father not merely in hope but in reality. This attitude of the people toward the Tsar is the genuine, adamant foundation of every reform in Russia. If you wish, there is in Russia no creative, protective and leading force other than this live organic bond of the people with their Tsar, from which everything is derived. For instance, who would have

⁵⁴⁹ *Polnoe Zhizneopisanie Sviatitelia Ignatia*, pp. 335-336.

⁵⁵⁰ Volgin, *Poslednij God Dostoevskogo (Dostoyevsky's Last Year)*, Moscow, 1986, pp. 32-33.

ventured to dream about the peasants' reform without knowing and believing in advance that the Tsar was a father to the people, and that precisely this faith of the people in the Tsar as their father would save and protect everything and stave off the calamity?"⁵⁵¹

Inevitably, however, many were disappointed. Many of the peasants had not expected to pay for the land, and found the payments greater than the rents they had been paying earlier. Moreover, once liberated they lost access to timber and firewood in landowners' forests.

Again, "the Law allowed landowners considerable leeway in choosing the bits of land for transfer to the peasantry - and in setting the price for them. Overall, perhaps half the farming land in European Russia was transferred from the gentry's ownership to the communal tenure of the peasantry, although the precise proportion depended largely on the landowner's will. Owing to the growth of the population it was still far from enough to liberate the peasantry from poverty."⁵⁵²

Again, for those peasants who did not take advantage of their freedom to leave the land, and until they had paid their redemption payments, the authority of the commune over them would actually *increase* now that the authority of the landlord was removed. If one member of the commune could not contribute payments or labour, he fell into debt, as it were, to the commune.

Moreover, "during the conservative reign of Alexander III legislation was passed which made it virtually impossible for peasants to withdraw. This policy was inspired by the belief that the commune was a stabilizing force which strengthened the authority of the *bol'shak* [head of the individual peasant household], curbed peasant anarchism, and inhibited the formation of a volatile landless proletariat."⁵⁵³ So while the government genuinely wanted to free the peasant, both as a good deed in itself, and in order to exploit his economic potential, its desire to strengthen the bonds of the commune tended to work in the opposite direction...

The radicals said that the reform provided "inadequate freedom". However, the real problem was not so much "inadequate freedom" as the fact that emancipation introduced "the wrong kind of freedom". The very composer of the manifesto, Metropolitan Philaret, had doubts about emancipation.⁵⁵⁴ True freedom, according to the Metropolitan, "is Christian freedom - internal, not external freedom, - moral and spiritual, not carnal, - always doing good and never rebellious, which can live in a hut just as comfortably as in an aristocrat's or tsar's house, - which a subject can enjoy as much as the master without ceasing to be a subject, - which is unshakeable in bonds and prison, as we can see in the Christian martyrs'."⁵⁵⁵ This freedom was not lost under serfdom. Rather, it was emancipation that threatened this true Christian freedom by introducing the demand for another, non-Christian kind.

⁵⁵¹ Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, January, 1881, London: Cassell, pp. 1032-1033.

⁵⁵² Figes, *Natasha's Dream* p. 145.

⁵⁵³ Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99.

⁵⁵⁴ Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), *Zhizn' i deiatel'nost' mitropolita Filareta* (The Life and Activity of Metropolitan Philaret), Tula, 1994.

⁵⁵⁵ Philaret, in Bishop Plato, *On the Question of Freedom of Conscience*, Kiev, 1902.

In fact, as we have seen, the old order, though harsh, was never really one of traditional slavery. It had been dictated by the military situation of the time, in which Russia had vast extended borders with no natural defences. A quasi-monastic way of life was developed in which everyone from the Tsar to the humblest peasant had his "obedience". The Tsar had to obey his calling; the nobles had to obey the Tsar (by providing military service or service in the bureaucracy); and the peasants had to obey the landowners. It was a common effort for a common cause - the preservation of Orthodox Russia. Nobody literally "owned" anybody else. But there were relations of obedience enforced by law that were carried out, for the most part, in the Spirit of Orthodoxy. For, as St. John of Kronstadt said, "the varied forms of service... to the tsar and the fatherland are an image of the main service to our heavenly King, which must continue forever. Him first of all are we are obliged to serve, as fervent slaves of His by creation, redemption and providence... Earthly service is a test, a preparatory service for service in the heavens".⁵⁵⁶

Emancipation changed the relationship both between the state and the landowners, and between the landowners and the peasants. As the nobles began to lose their feeling of duty and obedience to the state, the peasants, correspondingly, began to see their obedience to the nobles as a burden that was not justified, as in the past, by the defence of the land. As such, the formal structure probably had to change in view of the change in its spiritual content. But the change in formal structure from patriarchal to civil meant that the sanctifying bonds of obedience broke down still faster than they would have done otherwise. To that extent, the reform, though rational from a politico-economic point of view, was harmful.

As Schema-Monk Boris of Optina said: "The old order was better, even though I would really catch it from the nobleman... Now it's gotten bad, because there's no authority; anyone can live however he wants."⁵⁵⁷

Fr. Lev Lebedev writes: "Later critics of the reform also justly point out that it suffered from an excessive 'slant' in one direction, being inspired most of all by the idea of the immediate emancipation of the serfs from *the landowners*, but without paying due attention to the question how and with what to substitute the guiding, restraining and, finally, educating function of 'the lords' (the landowners) for the peasants. Indeed, delivered as it were in one moment to themselves, to their own self-administration (after 100 years of the *habit* of being guided by the lord), could the Russian peasants immediately undertake their self-administration wisely and truly, to their own good and that of the Fatherland? That is the question nobody wanted to think about at the beginning, being sometimes ruled by the *illusion* of the 'innateness' of the people's wisdom!... They began to think about this, as often happens with us, 'in hindsight', after they had encountered disturbances and ferment among the peasantry. All the indicated mistakes in the reform of 1861 led to the peasantry as a whole being *dissatisfied* in various respects. Rumours spread among them that 'the lords' had again deceived them, that the Tsar had given them *not that* kind of freedom,

⁵⁵⁶ St. John of Kronstadt, *Moia Zhizn' o Khriste* (My Life in Christ), Moscow, 1894.

⁵⁵⁷ Victor Afanasyev, *Elder Barsanuphius of Optina*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 2000, pp. 216, 217. The old family retainer in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* also believed that the rot set in with "Freedom".

that the real 'will of the Tsar' had been hidden from them, while a false one had been imposed upon them. This was immediately used by the 'enlighteners' and revolutionaries of all kinds. The peasants gradually began to listen not to the state official and the former lord, but to *the student*, who promised 'real' freedom and abundant land, attracting the peasant with the idea of 'the axe', by which they themselves would win all this from the deceiver-lords... In such a situation *only the Church* remained in her capacity of educator and instructor of the people, which task she immediately began to fulfil, although it was very difficult because of the restricted and poor condition of the Church herself. Therefore there soon arose the question of the broadening and strengthening of the rights and opportunities of the Russian Church. The most powerful and influential person who completely understood this was Pobedonostsev, who did a great deal in this respect, thereby eliciting the hatred of all 'democrats'.

"But in spite of inadequacies and major mistakes, the reform of 1861, of course, exploded and transfigured the life of Great Russia. A huge mass of the population (about 22 million people) found themselves a free and self-governing estate (class), juridically *equal* to the other estates. This immediately elicited the need to build its life and activity on *new* foundations..."⁵⁵⁸

This judgement was echoed by J.M. Roberts: "In retrospect [the emancipation of the serfs] seems a massive achievement. A few years later the United States would emancipate its Negro slaves. There were far fewer of them than there were Russian peasants and they lived in a country of much greater economic opportunity, yet the effect of throwing them on the labour market, exposed to the pure theory of *laissez-faire* economic liberalism, was to exacerbate a problem with whose ultimate consequences the United State is still grappling. In Russia the largest measure of social engineering in recorded history down to this time was carried out without comparable dislocation and it opened the way to modernization for what was potentially one of the strongest powers on earth..."⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁸ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 342-343.

⁵⁵⁹ Roberts, *History of the World*, London: Helicon, 1992, p. 612.

20. THE SLAVOPHILES ON THE AUTOCRACY

With the exception of Ivan Kireyevsky, the early Slavophile philosophers had little to say about Autocracy. As Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov writes, “the greatest merit of the Slavophiles consisted not so much in their working out of a *political* teaching, as in establishing the *social* and *psychological* bases of public life.”⁵⁶⁰ They were not opposed to the autocracy; but the emphasis of their thought, especially that of Alexei Stepanovich Khomiakov, was on *the people* rather than on the autocracy.⁵⁶¹

Thus Khomiakov wrote: “The people transferred to the Emperor all the power with which it itself was endowed in all its forms. The sovereign became the head of the people in Church matters as well as in matters of State administration. The people could not transfer to its Emperor rights that it did not itself have. It had from the beginning a voice in the election of its bishops, and this voice it could transfer to its Emperor. It had the right, or more precisely the obligation to watch that the decisions of its pastors and their councils were carried out – this right it could entrust to its chosen one and his successors. It had the right to defend its faith against every hostile attack upon it, - this right it could also transfer to its Sovereign. But the Church people did not have any power in questions of dogmatic teaching, and general Church piety – and for that reason it could not transfer such power to its Emperor.”

Here we see the myth of an early pact between the Tsar and the people. For this was what the Slavophiles were above all concerned to emphasize: that the Tsar is not separated from his people, that Tsar and people form one harmonious whole and have a single ideal.

Khomiakov was also concerned to emphasize that it was not the Tsar who ruled the Russian Orthodox Church, as the Fundamental Laws of the Russian Empire might have suggested. “‘It is true,’ he says, ‘the expression “the head of the local church” has been used in the Laws of the Empire, but in a totally different sense than it is interpreted in other countries’ (II, 351). The Russian Emperor has no rights of priesthood, he has no claims to infallibility or ‘to any authority in matters of faith or even of church discipline’. He signs the decisions of the Holy Synod, but this right of proclaiming laws and putting them into execution is not the same as the right to formulate ecclesiastical laws. The Tsar has influence with regard to the appointment of bishops and members of the Synod, but it should be observed that such dependence upon secular power is frequently met with in many Catholic countries as well. In some of the Protestant states it is even greater (II, 36-38, 208).”⁵⁶²

“The whole pathos of Slavophilism lay in ‘sobornost’, ‘zemstvo’, in ‘the popular character of the monarchy, and not in its service as ‘he who restrains [the coming of the Antichrist]’. Byzantium, in which there were neither *Zemskie Sobory* nor self-

⁵⁶⁰ Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'*, St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 310.

⁵⁶¹ Fr. Georges Florovsky writes that the Slavophiles “opposed their ‘socialism’ to the statism of West European thought, both in its absolutist-monarchist and in its constitutional-democratic varieties” (“The Eternal and the Passing in the Teaching of the Russian Slavophiles”, *Vera i Kul'tura* (Faith and Culture), St. Petersburg, 2002, p. 95).

⁵⁶² N.O. Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952, pp. 35-36.

government of the land, elicited only irritation in them and was used by them to put in the shade the free 'Slavic element'. The Russian Tsar for the Slavophiles was first of all 'the people's Tsar', and not the Tsar of the Third Rome. According to the witness of Konstantin Leontiev, Tsar Nicholas Pavlovich himself noticed that under the Slavophiles' Russian caftan there stuck out the trousers of the most vulgar European democracy and liberalism."⁵⁶³

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This estimate is probably least true in relation to Ivan Kireyevsky, although of all the Slavophiles he had the most problems with the Tsarist censor. At one point he was required to give an assurance to the minister of popular enlightenment that in his thinking he did not "separate the Tsar from Russia". Offended by the very suggestion, Kireyevsky proceeded to give one of the earliest and best justifications of the Autocracy in post-Petrine Russian history...

He began from the fact that "the Russian man loves his Tsar. This reality cannot be doubted, because everyone can see and feel it. But love for the Tsar, like every love, can be true and false, good and bad – I am not speaking about feigned love. False love is that which loves in the Tsar only one's advantage; this love is base, harmful and, in dangerous moments, can turn to treachery. True love for the Tsar is united in one indivisible feeling with love for the Fatherland, for lawfulness and for the Holy Orthodox Church. Therefore this love can be magnanimous. And how can one separate in this matter love for the Tsar from the law, the Fatherland and the Church? The law is the will of the Tsar, proclaimed before the whole people; the Fatherland is the best love of his heart; the Holy Orthodox Church is his highest link with the people, it is the most essential basis of his power, the reason for the people's trust in him, the combination of his conscience with the Fatherland, the living junction of the mutual sympathy of the Tsar and the people, the basis of their common prosperity, the source of the blessing of God on him and on the Fatherland.

"But to love the Tsar separately from Russia means to love an external force, a chance power, but not the Russian Tsar: that is how the Old Ritualist schismatics and Balts love him, who were ready to serve Napoleon with the same devotion when they considered him stronger than Alexander. To love the Tsar and not to venerate the laws, or to break the laws given or confirmed by him under the cover of his trust, under the protection of his power, is to be his enemy under the mask of zeal, it is to undermine his might at the root, to destroy the Fatherland's love for him, to separate the people's concept of him from their concept of justice, order and general well-being – in a word, it is to separate the Tsar in the heart of the people from the very reasons for which Russia wishes to have a Tsar, from those good things in the hope of which she so highly venerates him. Finally, to love him without any relation to the Holy Church as a powerful Tsar, but not as the Orthodox Tsar, is to think that his rule is not the service of God and His Holy Church, but only the rule of the State for secular aims; it is to think that the advantage of the State can be separated from the advantage of Orthodoxy, or even that the Orthodox Church is a means, and not the end of the

⁵⁶³ Bishop Dionysius (Alferov), "Ob Uderzhanii i Simfonii" (On Restraining and Symphony), <http://www.monarhist-spb.narod.ru/D-ST/Dionisy-1.htm>, p. 11.

people's existence as a whole, that the Holy Church can be sometimes a hindrance and at other times a useful instrument for the Tsar's power. This is the love of a slave, and not that of a faithful subject; it is Austrian love, not Russian; this love for the Tsar is treason before Russia, and for the Tsar himself it is profoundly harmful, even if sometimes seems convenient. Every counsel he receives from such a love bears within it a secret poison that eats away at the very living links that bind him with the Fatherland. For Orthodoxy is the soul of Russia, the root of the whole of her moral existence, the source of her might and strength, the standard gathering all the different kinds of feelings of her people into one stronghold, the earnest of all her hopes for the future, the treasury of the best memories of the past, her ruling object of worship, her heartfelt love. The people venerates the Tsar as the Church's support; and is so boundlessly devoted to him because it does not separate the Church from the Fatherland. All its trust in the Tsar is based on feeling for the Church. It sees in him a faithful director in State affairs only because it knows that he is a brother in the Church, who together with it serves her as the sincere son of the same mother and therefore can be a reliable shield of her external prosperity and independence...

"He who has not despaired of the destiny of his Fatherland cannot separate love for it from sincere devotion to Orthodoxy. And he who is Orthodox in his convictions cannot not love Russia, as the God-chosen vessel of His Holy Church on earth. Faith in the Church of God and love for Orthodox Russia are neither divided nor distinguished in the soul of the true Russian. Therefore a man holding to another confession cannot love the Russian Tsar except with a love that is harmful for the Tsar and for Russia, a love whose influence of necessity must strive to destroy precisely that which constitutes the very first condition of the mutual love of the Tsar and Russia, the basis of his correct and beneficent rule and the condition of her correct and beneficent construction.

"Therefore to wish that the Russian government should cease to have the spirit and bear the character of an Orthodox government, but be completely indifferent to the confessions, accepting the spirit of so-called common Christianity, which does not belong to any particular Church and was thought up recently by some unbelieving philosophers and half-believing Protestants - to wish for this would signify for the present time the tearing up of all bonds of love and trust between the government and the people, and for the future, - that is, if the government were to hide its indifference to Orthodoxy until it educates the people in the same coldness to its Church, - it would produce the complete destruction of the whole fortress of Russia and the annihilation of the whole of her world significance. For for him who knows Russia and her Orthodox Faith, there can be no doubt that she grew up on it and became strong by it, since by it alone is she strong and prosperous."⁵⁶⁴

In a critical review of an article by the Protestant Pastor Wiener, who was defending complete tolerance and the separation of Church and State, Kireyevsky wrote: "The author says very justly that in most states where there is a dominant religion, the government uses it as a means for its own private ends and under the excuse of protecting it oppresses it. But this happens *not because* there is a dominant faith in the

⁵⁶⁴ Kireyevsky, "Ob otnoshenii k tsarskoj vlasti" (On the relationship to Tsarist power), in *Razum na puti k istine*, Moscow, 2002, pp. 51-53, 62.

state, but, on the contrary, because the dominant faith of the people *is not dominant* in the state apparatus. This unfortunate relationship takes place when, as a consequence of some chance historical circumstances, the rift opens up between the convictions of the people and of the government. Then the faith of the people is used as a means, but not for long. One of three things must unfailingly happen: either the people wavers in its faith and then the whole state apparatus wavers, as we see in the West; or the government attains a correct self-knowledge and sincerely converts to the faith of the people, as we hope; or the people sees that it is being deceived, as we fear.

“But what are normal, desirable relations between the Church and the State? The state must not agree with the Church so as to search out and persecute heretics and force them to believe (this is contrary to the spirit of Christianity and has a counter-productive effect, and harms the state itself almost as much as the Church); but it must agree with the Church so as to place as the main purpose of its existence to be penetrated constantly, more and more, with the spirit of the Church and not only not look on the Church as a means to its own most fitting existence, but, on the contrary, see in its own existence only a means for the fullest and most fitting installation of the Church of God on earth.

“The State is a construction of society having as its aim earthly, temporal life. The Church is a construction of the same society having as its aim heavenly, eternal life. If society understands its life in such a way that in it the temporal must serve the eternal, the state apparatus of this society must also serve the Church. But if society understands its life in such a way that in it earthly relationships carry on by themselves, and spiritual relations by themselves, then the state in such a society must be separated from the Church. But such a society will consist not of Christians, but of unbelievers, or, at any rate, of mixed faiths and convictions. Such a state cannot make claims to a harmonious, normal development. The whole of its dignity must be limited by a *negative* character. But there where the people is bound inwardly, by identical convictions of faith, there it has the right to wish and demand that both its external bonds – familial, social and state – should be in agreement with its religious inspirations, and that its government should be penetrated by the same spirit. To act in hostility to this spirit means to act in hostility to the people itself, even if these actions afford it some earthly advantages.”⁵⁶⁵

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One of the earliest Slavophiles openly to support the Autocracy was the novelist Nikolai Gogol in his *Selected Passages from Correspondence with My Friends* (1847). Ivan Andreyev writes: “The religio-political significance of *Correspondence* was huge. This book appeared at a time when in the invisible depths of historical life the destiny of Russia and Russian Orthodox culture was being decided. Would Russia hold out in Orthodoxy, or be seduced by atheism and materialism? Would the Russian Orthodox autocracy be preserved in Russia, or would socialism and communism triumph? These questions were linked with other, still more profound ones, that touched on the destinies of the whole world. What was to come? The flourishing and progress of

⁵⁶⁵ Kireyevsky, in L.A. Tikhomirov, “I.V. Kireyevsky”, *Kritika Demokratii (A Critique of Democracy)*, Moscow, 1997, pp. 520-521.

irreligious humanistic culture, or the beginning of the pre-apocalyptic period of world history?

“Gogol loudly and with conviction proclaimed that the Truth was in Orthodoxy and in the Russian Orthodox Autocracy, and that the historical ‘to be or not to be’ of Russian Orthodox culture, on the preservation of which there also depended the destiny of the whole world in the nearest future, was now being decided. The world was on the edge of death, and we have entered the pre-apocalyptic period of world history.

“*Correspondence* came out in 1847. Pletnev published it at Gogol’s behest.

“This book, in its hidden essence, was not understood by its contemporaries and was subjected to criticism not only on the part of enemies, but also of friends (of course, the former and the latter proceeded from completely different premises).

“The enemies were particularly disturbed and annoyed by Gogol’s sincere and convinced approval of the foundations of those social-political ordered which to so-called ‘enlightened’ people seemed completely unsustainable.”⁵⁶⁶

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Another supporter of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality who is sometimes classified as a Slavophile was the poet and diplomat Fyodor Ivanovich Tiutchev. Already at the age of 19, in his poem, *On Pushkin’s Ode on Freedom*, he had rebuked his fellow-poet for disturbing the hearts of the citizens by his call to freedom. While sharing the world-view of the Slavophiles, he took their sympathies and antipathies to their logical conclusions.⁵⁶⁷

Thus he posed the contrast between Russia and the West as a struggle between Christ and Antichrist. “The supreme power of the people,” he wrote, “is in essence an antichristian idea.” Popular power and Tsarist power mutually exclude each other. So it was not a question of two cultures living side by side with each other and complementing each other in some sense. No: it was a fight to the death between the Russian idea and the European idea, between the Rome of the Papacy and the political and social structures it evolved, and the Third Rome of the Orthodox Tsar...

Tiutchev believed in *the Empire*, whose soul was the Orthodox Church and whose body - the Slavic race. This was “the Great Greco-Russian Eastern Empire”, whose destiny was to unite the two halves of Europe under the Russian Emperor, with some Austrian lands going to Russia. There would be an Orthodox Pope in Rome and an Orthodox Patriarch in Constantinople. The Empire was a principle, and so indivisible. Western history had been a struggle between the schismatic Roman papacy and the

⁵⁶⁶ Andreyev, “Religioznoe litso Gogolia” (“The Religious Face of Gogol”), *Pravoslavnij Put’* (The Orthodox Way), 1952, pp. 173, 174.

⁵⁶⁷ As Demetrius Merezhkovsky expressed it, Tiutchev put bones into the soft body of Slavophilism, crossed its ‘t’s and dotted its ‘i’s (*Dve tajny russkoj poezii. Nekrasov i Tiutchev* (Two Mysteries of Russian Poetry. Nekrasov and Tiutchev), St. Petersburg, 1915).

usurper-empire of Charlemagne and his successors. This struggle “ended for the one in the Reformation, i.e. the denial of the Church, and for the other in the Revolution, i.e. the denial of the Empire”. The struggle between Russia and Napoleon had been the struggle “between the lawful Empire and the crowned Revolution”.⁵⁶⁸

As a diplomat Tiutchev knew much about the threat to the Orthodox autocracy posed by the 1848 revolution under the new Napoleon in Europe; and in April, 1848, just as this revolution was gathering pace, he wrote: “There have long been only two real powers in Europe – the revolution and Russia. These two powers are now opposed to each other, and perhaps tomorrow they will enter into conflict. Between them there can be no negotiations, no treaties; the existence of the one is equivalent to the death of the other! On the outcome of this struggle that has arisen between them, the greatest struggle that the world has ever seen, the whole political and religious future of mankind will depend for many centuries.

“The fact of this rivalry is now being revealed everywhere. In spite of that, the understanding of our age, deadened by false wisdom, is such that the present generation, faced with a similar huge fact, is far from completely comprehending its true significance and has not evaluated its real causes.

“Up to now they have sought for its explanation in the purely political sphere; they have tried to interpret by a distinction of concepts on the exclusively human plane. In fact, the quarrel between the revolution and Russia depends on deeper causes. They can be defined in two words.

“Russia is first of all the Christian Empire; the Russian people is Christian not only by virtue of the Orthodoxy of its convictions, but also thanks to something more in the realm of feelings than convictions. It is Christian by virtue of that capacity for self-denial and self-sacrifice which constitutes as it were the basis of her moral nature. The revolution is first of all the enemy of Christianity! Antichristian feeling is the soul of the revolution: it is its special, distinguishing feature. Those changes in form to which it has been subjected, those slogans which it has adopted in turn, everything, even its violence and crimes have been secondary and accidental. But the one thing in it that is not accidental is precisely the antichristian feeling that inspires it, it is that (it is impossible not to be convinced of this) that has acquired for it this threatening dominance over the world. He who does not understand this is no more than a blind man present at a spectacle that the world presents to him.

“The human I, wishing to depend only on itself, not recognising and not accepting any other law besides its own will – in a word, the human I, taking the place of God, - does not, of course, constitute something new among men. But such has it become when raised to the status of a political and social right, and when it strives, by virtue of this right, to rule society. This is the new phenomenon which acquired the name of the French revolution in 1789.

⁵⁶⁸ Tiutchev (1849), in Fomin S. & Fomina T., *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, p. 327.

“Since that time, in spite of all its permutations, the revolution has remained true to its nature, and perhaps never in the whole course of this development has it recognized itself as so of one piece, so sincerely antichristian as at the present moment, when it has ascribed to itself the banner of Christianity: ‘brotherhood’. In the name of this we can even suppose that it has attained its apogee. And truly, if we listen to those naively blasphemous big words which have become, so to speak, the official language of the present age, then will not everyone think that the new French republic was brought into the world only in order to fulfil the Gospel law? It was precisely this calling that the forces created by the revolution ascribed to themselves – with the exception, however, of that change which the revolution considered it necessary to produce, when it intended to replace the feeling of humility and self-denial, which constitutes the basis of Christianity, with the spirit of pride and haughtiness, free and voluntary good works with compulsory good works. And instead of brotherhood preached and accepted in the name of God, it intended to establish a brotherhood imposed by fear on the people-master. With the exception of these differences, its dominance really promises to turn into the Kingdom of Christ!

“And nobody should be misled by this despicable good will which the new powers are showing to the Catholic Church and her servers. It is almost the most important sign of the real feeling of the revolution, and the surest proof of the position of complete power that it has attained. And truly, why should the revolution show itself as hostile to the clergy and Christian priests who not only submit to it, but accept and recognize it, who, in order to propitiate it, glorify all its excesses and, without knowing it themselves, become partakers in all its unrighteousness? If even similar behaviour were founded on calculation alone, this calculation would be apostasy; but if conviction is added to it, then this is already more than apostasy.

“However, we can foresee that there will be no lack of persecutions, too. On that day when concessions have reached their extreme extent, the catholic church will consider it necessary to display resistance, and it will turn out that she will be able to display resistance only by going back to martyrdom. We can fully rely on the revolution: it will remain in all respects faithful to itself and consistent to the end!

“The February explosion did the world a great service in overthrowing the pompous scaffolding of errors hiding reality. The less penetrating minds have probably now understood that the history of Europe in the course of the last thirty three years was nothing other than a continuous mystification. And indeed with what inexorably light has the whole of this past, so recent and already so distant from us, been lit up? Who, for example, will now not recognize what a laughable pretension was expressed in that wisdom of our age which naively imagined that it had succeeded in suppressing the revolution with constitutional incantations, muzzling its terrible energy by means of a formula of lawfulness? After all that has happened, who can still doubt that from the moment when the revolutionary principle penetrated into the blood of society, all these concessions, all these reconciling formulas are nothing other than drugs which can, perhaps, put to sleep the sick man for a time, but are not able to hinder the further development of the illness itself...”⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ Tiutchev, “Rossia i revoliutsia” (Russia and the Revolution), *Politicheskie Stat'i* (Political Articles), Paris: YMCA Press, 1976, pp. 32-36.

In spite of his fervent support for the Autocracy, Tiutchev criticised the Tsarist imposition of censorship. In 1857 he wrote: "It is impossible to impose on minds an absolute and too prolonged restriction and yoke without substantial harm for the social organism.... Even the authorities themselves in the course of time are unable to avoid the disadvantages of such a system. Around the sphere in which they are present there is formed a desert and a huge mental emptiness, and governmental thought, not meeting from outside itself either control or guidance or even the slightest point of support, ends by weakening under its own weight even before it destined to fall under the blows of events."⁵⁷⁰

"Why," he wrote to his daughter Anna in 1872, "can we only oppose matriarl suppression to harmful theories and destructive tendencies? Into what have we transformed the true principle of conservatism? Why has our soul become so horribly stale? If the authorities because of an insufficiency of principles and moral convictions pass to measures of material oppression, it is thereby being turned into the most terrible helper of denial and revolutionary overthrow, but it will begin to understand this only when the evil is already incorrigible."

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Other Slavophiles, such as the Aksakov brothers, similarly combined a belief in the autocracy and the imperial mission of Russia with a belief in civil liberties. This sometimes brought them into conflict with Tsar Nicholas.

Thus in his memorandum, *The Eastern Question* (February, 1854), Constantine Aksakov hoped that the Tsar would promote "an alliance of all Slavs under the supreme patronage of the Russian Tsar... Galicia and the whole Slavonic world will breathe more easily under the patronage of Russia once she finally fulfils her Christian and fraternal duty."

Konstantin's brother Ivan was somewhat more cautious. He recognized that "The Catholicism of Bohemia and Poland constitutes a hostile and alien element" and in any case "the greater part of these Slavic peoples are already infected by the influence of Western liberalism which is contrary to the spirit of the Russian people and which can never be grafted onto it."⁵⁷¹

So Ivan was less "Pan-Slavist" than Constantine...

However, both brothers believed in the spiritual freedom of the individual within the autocratic state. Thus, as N. Lossky writes, "on the accession of Alexander II to the throne in 1855 [Constantine] Aksakov submitted to him, through Count Bludov, a report 'On the Inner Condition of Russia'. In it he reproached the Government for suppressing the people's moral freedom and following the path of despotism, which has led to the nation's moral degradation. He pointed out that this might popularise the idea of political freedom and create a striving to attain it by revolutionary means.

⁵⁷⁰ Tiutchev, "O tsenzure v Rossii" (On Censorship in Russia).

⁵⁷¹ Aksakov, in Marc Almond, *Revolution*, London: Agostino, p. 104.

To avoid these dangers he advised the Tsars to allow freedom of thought and of speech and to re-establish the practice of calling Zemski Sobors."⁵⁷²

There was some truth in this. The government's oppressive measures could be undiscerning, and its inability to develop a coherent philosophy to counteract the revolutionary propaganda limited its success in counteracting it. This was due in large part to the superficial Orthodoxy of the ruling circles, which Tiutchev expressed as follows:

*Not flesh, but spirit is today corrupt,
And man just pines away despairingly.
He strives for light, while sitting in the dark,
And having found it, moans rebelliously.
From lack of faith dried up, in fire tossed,
The unendurable he suffers now.
He knows right well his soul is lost, and thirsts
For faith – but ask for it he knows not how.
Ne'er will he say, with prayers and tears combined,
However deep before the closed door his grief:
"O let me in, my God, O hear my cry!
Lord, I believe! Help Thou mine unbelief!"⁵⁷³*

By contrast, Tiutchev continued to believe in the Orthodoxy of the common people and in the unique destiny of Russia, poor in her exterior aspect but rich in inner faith and piety:

*These poor villages which stand
Amidst a nature sparse, austere –
O beloved Russian land,
Long to pine and persevere!
The foreigner's disdainful gaze
Will never understand or see
The light that shines in secret rays
Upon your humility.
Dear native land! While carrying
The Cross and struggling to pass through,
In slavish image Heaven's King
Has walked across you, blessing you.⁵⁷⁴*

However, the successes of government measures are easily forgotten. We have already noted the conversion of Pushkin, Gogol and Dostoyevksy. Moreover, those who were urging the government to remove censorship were not supported by the leading churchmen of the age, and showed a dangerous naivety about the way in which the forces of evil could – and, in the reign of Alexander II, did – exploit this

⁵⁷² Lossky, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

⁵⁷³ Tiutchev, *Nash Vek* (Our Age).

⁵⁷⁴ Tiutchev, translated in Monk Damascene Christenson, *Not of this World: The Life and Teaching of Fr. Seraphim Rose*, Forestville, Ca.: Fr. Seraphim Rose Foundation, 1993, p. 645.

freedom. This naivety manifested itself in a certain *anti-statism*, an attempt to bypass the state as being irrelevant to the deeper life of the people, the “ancient Russian freedom” that existed in the peasant communes and the Church.

We see this particularly clearly, as Walicki writes, “in the historical writings of Konstantin Aksakov. Republican liberty, he argued, was political freedom, which presupposed the people’s active participation in political affairs; ancient Russian freedom, on the other hand, meant *freedom from politics* – the right to live according to unwritten laws of faith and tradition, and the right to full realization in a moral sphere on which the state would not impinge.

“This theory rested on a distinction the Slavophiles made between two kinds of truth: the ‘inner’ and the ‘external’ truth. The inner truth is in the individual the voice of conscience, and in society the entire body of values enshrined in religion, tradition, and customs – in a word, all values that together form an inner unifying force and help to forge social bonds based on shared moral convictions. The external truth, on the other hand, is represented by law and the state, which are essentially conventional, artificial, and ‘external’ – all the negative qualities Kireyevsky and Khomiakov ascribed to institutions and social bonds that had undergone a rationalizing and formalizing process. Aksakov went even further than the other Slavophiles in regarding *all* forms of legal and political relations as inherently evil; at their opposite pole was the communal principle embodied in the village commune, based (in Aksakov’s view) purely on truth and unanimity and not on any legal guarantees or conditions and agreements characteristic of a rational contract. For Aksakov the difference between Russia and the West was that in Russia the state had not been raised to the ‘principle’ on which social organization was largely founded. When the frailty of human nature and the demands of defense appeared to make political organization necessary, Russians ‘called’ their rulers from ‘beyond the sea’ in order to avoid doing injury to the ‘inner truth’ by evolving their own statehood; Russian tsars were given absolute powers so that the people might shun all contacts with the ‘external truth’ and all participation in affairs of state. Relations between ‘land’ (that is the common people who lived by the light of the inner truth) and state rested upon the principle of mutual non-interference. Of its own free will the state consulted the people, who presented their point of view at Land Assemblies but left the final decision in the monarch’s hands. The people could be sure of complete freedom to live and think as they pleased, while the monarch had complete freedom of action in the political sphere. This relationship depended entirely on moral convictions rather than legal guarantees, and it was this that constituted Russia’s superiority to Western Europe. ‘A guarantee is an evil,’ Aksakov wrote. ‘Where it is necessary, good is absent; and life where good is absent had better disintegrate than continue with the aid of evil.’ Aksakov conceded that there was often a wide gap between ideal and reality, but ascribed this entirely to human imperfections. He strongly condemned rulers who tried to interfere in the inner life of the ‘land’, but even in the case of Ivan the Terrible, whose excesses he condemned, he would not allow that the ‘land’ had the right to resistance and he praised its long-suffering loyalty.”⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁵ Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, pp. 96-97.

Although there is some truth in this account, it is exaggerated. Certainly, the “inner truth” of Orthodoxy was more important than the “external truth” of government and law; and it was true that the presence of this inner truth in Russia had prevented statehood becoming the “primary principle” it had become in the West, where “inner truth” had been lost. And yet the State had always taken a very active and essential role in Russian life from the beginning in *protecting and fostering* the internal freedom provided by the Orthodox way of life, and was accepted as such with gratitude by the people.

Moreover, it was inaccurate to represent the power of the tsars as being “external” to the true life of the people. For the tsars were themselves Orthodox Christians anointed by the Church and guided by the Church’s pastors.

Paradoxically, Aksakov betrays the influence of precisely that western political tradition – in its English liberal variant – which he sincerely claimed to deplore. As Walicki writes, “he subconsciously adopted and applied to Russia’s past one of the chief assumptions of Western European liberal doctrine – the principle of the total separation of the political and social spheres. At the same time he rejected both liberal constitutionalism and the very content of the liberal idea of freedom. Aksakov’s interpretation of the freedom of the ‘land’ is not to be confused with the freedom of the individual, since in his interpretation freedom only applied to the ‘land’ as a whole; it was not the freedom of the individual in the community, but the community’s freedom from outside interference in matters of faith, traditions, or customs. This non-interference had nothing to do with the liberal doctrine of *laissez-faire*, since, according to Aksakov, the moral principles of the ‘land’ rendered economic individualism out of the question. Even his call for freedom of speech was not a truly liberal postulate since it did not envisage the acceptance of pluralistic beliefs or of minority oppositions within society. While demanding freedom in the non-political sphere, Aksakov wanted every individual to submit totally to his *mir* – a submission, moreover, that was to be ‘according to conscience’ and not only ‘according to law’. His ideal was a ‘free unity’ based on a total unanimity that would reduce external constraints to a minimum but at the same time exclude individual autonomy and any departure from communal tradition.”⁵⁷⁶

With the failure of the 1848 revolution in Europe, hopes were raised in the hearts of Russian Slavophiles that the time had at last come for the fulfilment of the age-old dream of Russia the Third Rome. Tiutchev had his own idiosyncratic version of this dream, seeing Russia as the new Slavic Empire which could liberate the East Europeans, including even the Czechs and Moravians, from the false empire, church and civilization of the West. According to V. Tsimbursky, Tiutchev called on Nicholas I “to play on the revolutionary self-destruction of western civilization to place on its ruins the ‘ark’ of the new Empire: may ‘the Europe of Peter’ take the place of ‘the Europe of Charles’”. With Tiutchev, as in the fears of the West, the europeanization of Russia becomes the growth of a power called to take the place and replace Romano-German Europe. Tiutchev... in return for the Florentine unia of 1439, puts forward a

⁵⁷⁶ Walicki, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98.

project for helping the Roman papacy out of the corner it was driven into by the Italian revolution on condition of its honourable return to Orthodoxy."⁵⁷⁷

However, Nicholas did not share this vision. Alone among the rulers of Europe, he believed in the legitimacy of Europe's existing regimes, with the exception of revolutionary France, but including Austria's, in which many Slavs lived. For as K.N. Leontiev wrote, he "was a true and great 'legitimist'. He did not like even the Orthodox 'rayas' [peoples of the Ottoman Empire] permitting themselves to rebel against the Sultan, reasonably ascribing to *himself alone* the lawful right to conquer the Sultan and bring him into submission, as the right of a tsar...

"The unsuccessful and lightmindedly liberal Decembrist rebellion of the nobility had a less profound influence on his royal mind than the later events of the 1830s, which shook him and made him understand. From that time the Tsar became an opponent of all emancipation, all *equalization*, all *confusion* both in Russia and in other countries....

"Of special interest is the explanatory note which the young [I.S.] Aksakov was forced to present in reply to the questions of the Third Department in 1849. Some passages in this reply were underlined by Tsar Nicholas Pavlovich, and objections against them were made by the Tsar in his own hand. Opposite the place where Aksakov writes about 'the heartfelt sympathy of the so-called Slavophiles for the western Slavs and in general for the situation of their co-religionist and consanguineous brothers', the Emperor made the following comment: 'Under the guise of sympathy for the Slavic tribes supposedly oppressed in other states, there is hidden the criminal thought of a rebellion against the lawful authority of neighbouring and in part allied states, and of a *general union they expect to attain not through the will of God*'

"By these 'states' we must understand, of course, first of all Austria, and then in part Turkey... Nicholas Pavlovich recognized *himself* to have the right of exerting pressure on the Sultan in favour of his co-religionists, the right to war with him and even subject him to himself, but did not recognize the right of the subjects of the Sultan to carry out their own self-willed liberation....

"Nicholas Pavlovich understood *at that time* that liberationist politics beyond the bounds of one's own state is something that, while useful at the beginning, is in essence extremely dangerous and can, with the slightest incaution, turn onto the head of the liberator.

"He understood half a century ago that of which it is impossible to convince many of us even now, in spite of all the crude evidence of events, in spite of the fact that everything is simply 'bursting at the seams' both in old Europe and in the Orthodox countries of the East!

"Emperor Nicholas was called by Divine Providence to hold back for a time the general disintegration which even now nobody knows how to stop...

⁵⁷⁷ Tsimbursky, in Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 327.

“...Tsar Nicholas Pavlovich did not live to the end of the 19th century, when ‘reaction’ is beginning little by little to acquire for itself theoretical justifications and foundations. However, he felt by his political instinct not only that the West was on the path to a corruption which could be contagious for us, too, but also that our Russia herself under him *had attained its cultural-state apogee, after which living state construction would come to an end and on which it was necessary to stop as far as possible and for as long as possible, not fearing even a certain stagnation.* And all his major political actions and sympathies are explained by this conservative instinct of genius: his revulsion from the liberal monarchy of Louis Philippe; his defence of the ‘crafty’, *but necessary for some time to come, perhaps, Austria;* the Hungarian war; his helping of the Sultan against Mehmed Ali; his good disposition toward England, which was still at that time aristocratic and conservative; his desire that the Eastern Christians should not of their own will rise up against the lawful and autocratic Turkish government; and finally, his disillusionment in emancipated Greece, which was expressed in his words (legendary or historical, it doesn’t matter): ‘I will not give an inch of land to this demagogic people.’”⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁸ Leontiev, “Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenij”, *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow, 1996, pp. 542, 543-544, 545, 545-546.

21. METROPOLITAN PHILARET ON CHURCH AND STATE

Metropolitan Philaret was the outstanding hierarch of his age, a great pastor who ruled the see of Moscow for nearly half a century, a great theologian and a great defender of the Church. But he was also a great defender of the State, as was demonstrated during his conduct during December, 1825, when his wise refusal to reveal the contents of Tsar Alexander's will immediately helped to guarantee the transfer of power to his brother, Tsar Nicholas II. Of particular interest, therefore, are his views on the relationship between the Church and the State.

According to Snychev, Metropolitan Philaret said that "there had to be a close union between the ruler and the people - a union based exclusively on righteousness. The external expression of the prosperity of a state was the complete submission of the people to the government. The government in a state had to enjoy the rights of complete inviolability on the part of the subjects. And if it was deprived of these rights, the state could not be firm, it was threatened with danger insofar as two opposing forces would appear: self-will on the part of the subjects and predominance on the part of the government. 'If the government is not firm,' taught Philaret, 'then the state also is not firm. Such a state is like a city built on a volcanic mountain: what does its firmness signify when beneath it is concealed a force which can turn it into ruins at any minute? Subjects who do not recognize the sacred inviolability of the rulers are incited by hope of self-will to attain self-will; an authority which is not convinced of its inviolability is incited by worries about its security to attain predominance; in such a situation the state wavers between the extremes of self-will and predominance, between the horrors of anarchy and repression, and cannot affirm in itself obedient freedom, which is the focus and soul of social life.'

"The holy hierarch understood the rebellion [of the Decembrists] as being a rebellion against the State, against itself. 'Subjects can themselves understand,' said Philaret, 'that in destroying the authorities they are destroying the constitution of society and consequently they are themselves destroying themselves.'⁵⁷⁹

Philaret "did not doubt that monarchical rule is 'power from God' (Romans 13.1) in its significance for Russian history and statehood, and more than once in his sermons expressed the most submissively loyal feelings with regard to all the representatives of the Royal Family. But he was one of the very few archpastors who had the courage to resist the tendency - very characteristic of Russian conditions - to reduce Orthodoxy to 'glorification of the tsar'. Thus, contrary to many hierarchs, who from feelings of servility warmly accepted Nicholas I's attempt to introduce the heir among the members of the Synod, he justly saw in this a manifestation of caesaropapism..., and in the application of attributes of the Heavenly King to the earthly king - a most dangerous deformation of religious consciousness..., and in such phenomena as the

⁵⁷⁹ Metropolitan Ioann (Snychev), *Zhizn' i deiatel'nost' mitropolita Filareta* (The Life and Activity of Metropolitan Philaret), Tula, 1994, p. 177.

passing of a cross procession around statues of the emperor - a direct return to paganism."⁵⁸⁰

Metropolitan Philaret, as Fr. Georges Florovsky writes, "distinctly and firmly reminded people of the Church's independence and freedom, reminded them of the limits of the state. And in this he sharply and irreconcilably parted with his epoch, with the whole of the State's self-definition in the new, Petersburgian Russia. Philaret was very reserved and quiet when speaking. By his intense and courageous silence he with difficulty concealed and subdued his anxiety about what was happening. Through the vanity and confusion of events he saw and made out the threatening signs of the righteous wrath of God that was bound to come. Evil days, days of judgement were coming - 'it seems that we are already living in the suburbs of Babylon, if not in Babylon itself,' he feared... 'My soul is sorrowful,' admitted Metropolitan Philaret once. 'It seems to me that the judgement which begins at the house of God is being more and more revealed... How thickly does the smoke come from the coldness of the abyss and how high does it mount'... And only in repentance did he see an exit, in universal repentance 'for many things, especially in recent years'.

"Philaret had his own theory of the State, of the sacred kingdom. And in it there was not, and could not be, any place for the principles of state supremacy. It is precisely because the powers that be are from God, and the sovereigns rule by the mercy of God, that the Kingdom has a completely subject and auxiliary character. 'The State as State is not subject to the Church', and therefore the servants of the Church already in the apostolic canons are strictly forbidden 'to take part in the administration of the people'. Not from outside, but from within must the Christian State be bound by the law of God and the ecclesiastical order. In the mind of Metropolitan Philaret, the State is a moral union, 'a union of free moral beings' and a union founded on mutual service and love - 'a certain part of the general dominion of the Almighty, outwardly separate, but by an invisible power yoked into the unity of the whole'... And the foundation of power lies in the principle of service. In the Christian State Philaret saw the Anointed of God, and before this banner of God's good will he with good grace inclined his head. 'The Sovereign receives the whole of his lawfulness from the Church's anointing', that is, in the Church and through the Church. Here the Kingdom inclines its head before the Priesthood and takes upon itself the vow of service to the Church, and its right to take part in ecclesiastical affairs. He possesses this not by virtue of his autocracy and authority, but precisely by virtue of his obedience and vow. This right does not extend or pass to the organs of state administration, and between the Sovereign and the Church there cannot and must not be any dividing wall or mediation. The Sovereign is anointed, but not the State. The Sovereign enters into the Church, but the State as such remains outside the Church. And for that reason it has no rights and privileges in the Church. In her inner constitution the Church is completely independent, and has no need of the help or defence of the secular authorities - 'the altar does not fear to fall even without this protection'. For the Church is ruled by Christ Himself, Who

⁵⁸⁰ V. Shokhin, "Svt. Philaret, mitropolit Moskovskij i 'shkola veruiushchego razuma' v russkoj filosofii" ("Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow and the 'school of believing reason' in Russian philosophy"), *Vestnik Russkogo Khristianskogo Dvizhenia* (Herald of the Russian Christian Movement), 175, I-1997, p. 97.

distributes and realizes 'his own episcopacy of souls' through the apostolic hierarchy, which 'is not similar to any form of secular rule'.

"The Church has her own inviolable code of laws, her own strength and privileges, which exceed all earthly measures. 'In His word Jesus Christ did not outline for her a detailed and uniform statute, so that His Kingdom should not seem to be of this world'... The Church has her own special form of action - in prayer, in the service of the sacraments, in exhortation and in pastoral care. And for real influence on public life, for its real enchurchment, according to Metropolitan Philaret's thought, the interference of the hierarchy in secular affairs is quite unnecessary - 'it is necessary not so much that a bishop should sit in the governmental assembly of grandees, as that the grandees and men of nobles birth should more frequently and ardently surround the altar of the Lord together with the bishop'... Metropolitan Philaret always with great definiteness drew a firm line between the state and ecclesiastical orders. Of course, he did not demand and did not desire the separation of the State from the Church, its departure from the Church into the arbitrariness of secular vanity. But at the same time he always sharply underlined the complete heterogeneity and particularity of the State and the Church. The Church cannot be in the State, and the State cannot be in the Church - 'unity and harmony' must be realized between them in the unity of the creative realization of God's commandments.

"It is not difficult to understand how distant and foreign this way of thinking was for the State functionaries of the Nicolaitan spirit and time, and how demanding and childish it seemed to them. Philaret did not believe in the power of rebukes and reprimands. He did not attach great significance to the external forms of life - 'it is not some kind of transformation that is needed, but a choice of men and supervision', he used to say. And above all what was necessary was an inner creative uplift, a gathering and renewal of spiritual forces. What was needed was an intensification of creative activity, a strengthening and intensification of ecclesiastical and pastoral freedom. As a counterweight to the onslaught of the State, Metropolitan Philaret thought about the reestablishment of the living unity of the local episcopate, which would be realized in constant consultative communion of fellow pastors and bishops, and strengthened at times by small congresses and councils, until a general local Council would become inwardly possible and achievable.⁵⁸¹ Metropolitan Philaret always emphasized that 'we live in the Church militant'... And with sadness he recognized that 'the quantity of sins and carelessnesses which have mounted up in the course of more than one century almost exceeds the strength and means of correction'... Philaret was not a man of struggle, and was weighed down 'by remaining in the chatter and cares of the city and works of men'. He lived in expectation 'of that eternally secure city, from which it will not be necessary to flee into any desert', He wanted to withdraw, to run away, and beyond the storm of affairs to pray for the mercy and longsuffering of God, for 'defence from on high'.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ "Already in the reign of Alexander I the hierarch used to submit the thought of the restoration of Local Councils and the division on the Russian Church into nine metropolitan areas. At the command of Emperor Alexander he had even composed a project and given it to the members of the Synod for examination. But the Synod rejected the project, declaring: 'Why this project, and why have you not spoken to us about it?' 'I was ordered [to compose it]' was all that the hierarch could reply, 'and speaking about it is not forbidden'" (Snychev, *op. cit.*, pp. 226). (V.M.)

⁵⁸² Florovsky, "Philaret, mitropolit Moskovskij", in *Vera i Kul'tura*, St. Petersburg, 2002, pp. 261-264.

The State, wrote Philaret, is "a union of free moral beings, united amongst themselves with the sacrifice of part of their freedom for the preservation and confirmation by the common forces of the law of morality, which constitutes the necessity of their existence. The civil laws are nothing other than interpretations of this law in application to particular cases and guards placed against its violation."⁵⁸³

Philaret emphasized the rootedness of the State in the family, with the State deriving its essential properties and structure from the family: "The family is older than the State. Man, husband, wife, father, son, mother, daughter and the obligations and virtues inherent in these names existed before the family grew into the nation and the State was formed. That is why family life in relation to State life can be figuratively depicted as the root of the tree. In order that the tree should bear leaves and flowers and fruit, it is necessary that the root should be strong and bring pure juice to the tree. In order that State life should develop strongly and correctly, flourish with education, and bring forth the fruit of public prosperity, it is necessary that family life should be strong with the blessed love of the spouses, the sacred authority of the parents, and the reverence and obedience of the children, and that as a consequence of this, from the pure elements of family there should arise similarly pure principles of State life, so that with veneration for one's father veneration for the tsar should be born and grow, and that the love of children for their mother should be a preparation of love for the fatherland, and the simple-hearted obedience of domestics should prepare and direct the way to self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness in obedience to the laws and sacred authority of the autocrat."⁵⁸⁴

If the foundation of the State is the family, and each family is both a miniature State and a miniature monarchy, it follows that the most natural form of Statehood is Monarchy - more specifically, a Monarchy that is in union with, as owing its origin to, the Heavenly Monarch, God. Despotic monarchies identify themselves, rather than unite themselves, with the Deity, so they cannot be said to correspond to the Divine order of things. In ancient times, the only monarchy that was in accordance with the order and the command of God was the Israelite autocracy.

In 1851, Metropolitan Philaret preached as follows: "As heaven is indisputably better than the earth, and the heavenly than the earthly, it is similarly indisputable that the best on earth must be recognised to be that which was built on it in the image of the heavenly, as was said to the God-seer Moses: 'Look thou that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount' (Exodus 25.40). In accordance with this, God established a king on earth in the image of His single rule in the heavens; He arranged for an autocratic king on earth in the image of His almighty power; and He placed an hereditary king on earth in the image of His imperishable Kingdom, which lasts from ages to ages.

"Oh if only all the kings of the earth paid sufficient attention to their heavenly dignity and to the traits of the image of the heavenly impressed upon them, and

⁵⁸³ Metropolitan Philaret, quoted in Lev Regelson, *Tragedia Russkoj Tseroki, 1917-1945* (The Tragedy of the Russian Church, 1917-1945), Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁸⁴ Metropolitan Philaret, *Sochinenia* (Works), 1848 edition, volume 2, p. 169.

faithfully united the righteousness and goodness demanded of them, the heavenly unsleeping watchfulness, purity of thought and holiness of intention that is in God's image! Oh if only all the peoples sufficiently understood the heavenly dignity of the king and the construction of the heavenly kingdom in the image of the heavenly, and constantly signed themselves with the traits of that same image - by reverence and love for the king, by humble obedience to his laws and commands, by mutual agreement and unanimity, and removed from themselves everything of which there is no image in the heavens - arrogance, disputes, self-will, greediness and every evil thought, intention and act! Everything would be blessed in accordance with the heavenly image if it were well constructed in accordance with the heavenly image. All earthly kingdoms would be worthy of being the antechamber of the Heavenly Kingdom.

"Russia! You participate in this good more than many kingdoms and peoples. 'Hold on to that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown' (Revelation 3.11). Keep and continue to adorn your radiant crown, ceaselessly struggling to fulfil more perfectly the crown-giving commandments: 'Fear God, honour the king' (I Peter 2.17).

"Turning from the well-known to that which has perhaps been less examined and understood in the apostle's word, I direct our attention to that which the apostle, while teaching the fear of God, reverence for the king and obedience to the authorities, at the same time teaches about freedom: 'Submit', he says, 'to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether to the king, as being supreme, or to governors as being sent through him... as free'. Submit as free men. Submit, and remain free...

"But how are we more correctly to understand and define freedom? Philosophy teaches that freedom is the capacity without restrictions rationally to choose and do that which is best, and that it is by nature the heritage of every man. What, it would seem, could be more desirable? But this teaching has its light on the summit of the contemplation of human nature, human nature as it should be, while in descending to our experience and actions as they are in reality, it encounters darkness and obstacles.

"In the multiplicity of the race of men, are there many who have such an open and educated mind as faithfully to see and distinguish that which is best? And do those who see the best always have enough strength decisively to choose it and bring it to the level of action? Have we not heard complaints from the best of men: 'For to will is present in me, but how to perform that which is good I find not' (Romans 7.18)? What are we to say about the freedom of people who, although not in slavery to anybody, are nevertheless subject to sensuality, overcome by passion, possessed by evil habits? Is the avaricious man free? Is he not bound in golden chains? Is the indulger of his flesh free? Is he not bound, if not by cruel bonds, then by soft nets? Is the proud and vainglorious man free? Is he not chained, not by his hands, and not by his legs, but by his head and heart, to his own idol?

"Thus does not experience and consciousness, at least of some people in some cases, speak of that of which the Divine Scriptures speak generally: 'He who does sin is the servant of sin' (John 8. 34)?

"Observation of people and human societies shows that people who to a greater degree allow themselves to fall into this inner, moral slavery - slavery to sin, the passions and vices - are more often than others zealots for external freedom - freedom broadened as far as possible in human society before the law and the authorities. But will broadening external freedom help them to freedom from inner slavery? There is no reason to think that. With greater probability we must fear the opposite. He in whom sensuality, passion and vice has already acquired dominance, when the barriers put by the law and the authorities to his vicious actions have been removed, will of course give himself over to the satisfaction of his passions and lusts with even less restraint than before, and will use his external freedom only in order that he may immerse himself more deeply in inner slavery. Unhappy freedom which, as the Apostle explained, 'they have as a cover for their envy!' Let us bless the law and the authorities which, in decreeing and ordering and defending, as necessity requires, the limits placed upon freedom of action, hinder as far they can the abuse of natural freedom and the spread of moral slavery, that is, slavery to sin, the passions and the vices.

"I said: as far as they can, because we can not only not expect from the law and the earthly authorities a complete cutting off of the abuse of freedom and the raising of those immersed in the slavery of sin to the true and perfect freedom: even the law of the Heavenly Lawgiver is not sufficient for that. The law warns about sin, rebukes the sinner and condemns him, but does not communicate to the slave of sin the power to break the bonds of this slavery, and does not provide the means of blotting out the iniquities committed, which lie on the conscience like a fiery seal of sinful slavery. And in this consists 'the weakness of the law' (Romans 8.3), to which the Apostle witnesses without a moment's hesitation.

"Here the question again presents itself: what is true freedom, and who can give it, and - especially - return it to the person who has lost it through sin? True freedom is the active capacity of the man who has not been enslaved to sin and who is not weighed down by a condemning conscience, to choose the best in the light of the truth of God and to realize it with the help of the power of God's grace.

"Only He Who gave this freedom to sinless man at his creation can give it back to the slave of sin. The Creator of freedom Himself declared this: 'If the Son will set you free, then you will truly be free' (John 8.36). 'If you remain in My words, you will truly be My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (John 31.32). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, having suffered and died for us in the nature He received from us, by His 'Blood has cleansed our conscience from dead works' (Hebrews 9.14), and, having torn apart the bonds of death by His resurrection, has torn apart also the bonds of sin and death that bind us, and, after His ascension to heaven, has sent down the Spirit of truth, giving us through faith the light of His truth to see what is best, and His grace-filled power to do it.

"This is freedom, which is restrained neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by hell, which has as its limit the will of God, and this not to its own diminution, because it also strives to fulfil the will of God, which has no need to shake the lawful decrees of men because it is able to see in these the truth that 'the Kingdom is the Lord's and He Himself is sovereign of the nations' (Psalms 21.28), which in an unconstrained way venerates lawful human authority and its commands that are not contrary to God,

insofar as it radiantly sees the truth that 'there is no power that is not of God, the powers that be are ordained of God' (Romans 13.1). And so this is freedom, which is in complete accord with obedience to the law and lawful authority, because it itself wishes for that which obedience demands.

"I would have much to say about the freedom that is Christian and inner, and not external, which is moral and spiritual, and not carnal, which always does good and is never rebellious, which can live in a hut just as comfortably as in a noble's house or a royal palace, which a subject, without ceasing to be a subject, can enjoy as much as a master, which is inviolable in bonds and prison, as we can see in the Christian martyrs. But it is already bring our sermon to an end.

"Love Christian freedom - freedom from sin, from passion, from vice, the freedom of willing obedience to the law and the authorities, and do good for the sake of the Lord, in accordance with your faith in and love for Him. And let nobody be seduced by the people from whom the Apostolic word warns us, who 'promise freedom, being themselves the slaves of corruption' (II Peter 2.19). Amen."⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁵ Metropolitan Philaret, "Slovo v den' Blagochestivejshego Gosudaria Imperatora Nikolaia Pavlovich" (Sermon on the day of his Most Pious Majesty Emperor Nicholas Pavlovich), in Kozlov, op. cit., pp. 274-275, 277-279.

22. THE TSAR, THE SULTAN AND THE PATRIARCH

The nineteenth-century nationalist revolutions of Greece, Serbia and Romania were all ambiguous affairs, mixtures of good intentions and evil acts. The essential flaw in all of them was their inversion of the true order of values, their placing of national freedom above religious faith, the earthly kingdom above the Heavenly Kingdom. As often as not, the laudable aim of national freedom from the Turks or Austro-Hungarians was placed higher than "the one thing necessary" - true faith and love, - and therefore became corrupted by evil passions. The national movements raised the banner of political freedom, understood in the heretical sense of the French revolutionaries, and not that of spiritual freedom, that is, Orthodoxy. The result was a general decline of religious life throughout the region, even when - or rather, especially when - political freedom had been attained.

Hardly less distressing was the way in which the national movements took place in more or less complete separation from each other. There was no general, united movement of the Orthodox Balkans against oppression, but only uncoordinated insurgencies of Greeks, Serbs, Romanians, etc. There was no real unity within or between the Orthodox nations; and without such unity real success - that is, success that was pleasing to God - was impossible.

Where could Orthodox leadership be found that was not in thrall to particularist nationalist ambitions or western revolutionary ideologies? There were only two possibilities. One was the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which had jurisdiction over all the Orthodox of the Balkans and could therefore be expected to act in the interest of Orthodoxy *as a whole*. Unfortunately, however, the Patriarchate was not truly ecumenical; it was more universal in its ambitions than in its love. Though less tied to Greek nationalism than the Church of the Free State of Greece, it still aimed to subdue the whole of the Balkans to the Greeks, as it showed through its abolition of the Serbian and Bulgarian patriarchates in 1766-1767 and its support for Greek Phanariot rule in Romania. In any case, the Ecumenical Patriarch was an ecclesiastical, not a political leader. His political role as exarch of the Orthodox *millet* had been imposed upon him by the Turks, but was not, according to Orthodox teaching, consistent with his role as patriarch.

The other source of Orthodox unity was the Russian Tsar. The only Orthodox great power, Russia had steadily grown in power since she inherited the mantle of Byzantium in the fifteenth century. At great cost to herself, she had pushed the boundaries of her dominion southward, weakening the Ottomans' dominion over the Balkan Orthodox. Without Russian military, diplomatic and financial help the Balkan Orthodox would have been in a much worse situation. The trouble was: with the partial exception of the Serbs, they did not recognize this; for many of them Russia was not "the Third Rome", but just another greedy, selfish, expansionist great power - an image that western historians and diplomats encouraged then and continue to encourage now.

The Ecumenical Patriarch's political loyalties were divided between the Turkish Sultan, to whom he had sworn an oath of allegiance, the King of Greece, to whom his nationalist sympathies drew him, and the Tsar of Russia, to whom his religious

principles should have led him. After all, in 1598 Patriarch Jeremiah II had called the tsar the sovereign "of all Christians throughout the inhabited earth," and explicitly called his empire "the Third Rome". But now, centuries later, the image of Russia the Third Rome had faded from the minds of the Patriarchs; it was the image of a resurrected *New Rome*, or *Byzantium*, that attracted them and their Greek compatriots - this was the truly "great idea". The Russians were, of course, Orthodox, and their help was useful; but the Greeks would liberate themselves. To adapt a phrase of Elder Philotheus of Pskov, it was as if they said: "Constantinople is the Second Rome, and a Third Rome there will not be"...

But what of the oath of allegiance that the Patriarch had sworn to the Sultan, which was confirmed by his commemoration at the Divine Liturgy? Did not this make the Sultan his political master to whom he owed obedience? Certainly, this was the position of Patriarch Gregory V in 1821, as we have seen, and of other distinguished teachers of the Greek nation, such as the Chian, Athanasios Parios. Moreover, the Tsar who was reigning at the time of the Greek Revolution, Alexander I, also recognized the Sultan as a lawful ruler, and as lawful ruler of his Christian subjects, even to the extent of refusing them help when the Greeks rose up against the Sultan in 1821. Even his successor, Tsar Nicholas I, who did come to the rescue of the Greeks in 1827 and again in 1829, continued to regard the Sultan as a legitimate ruler. But the situation was complicated by the fact that, even if the Patriarch commemorated the Sultan at the Liturgy, almost nobody else did! Thus Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov writes: "In Mohammedan Turkey the Orthodox did not pray for the authorities during Divine services, which was witnessed by pilgrims to the Sepulchre of the Lord in Jerusalem. Skaballonovich in his *Interpreted Typicon* writes: 'With the coming of Turkish dominion, the prayers for the kings began to be excluded from the augmented and great litanies and to be substituted by: "Again we pray for the pious and Orthodox Christians" (p. 152).'⁵⁸⁶

But perhaps commemoration and obedience are different matters, so that commemoration of an authority may be refused while obedience is granted... Or perhaps the Sultan could not be commemorated by name because no heterodox can be commemorated at the Divine Liturgy, but could and should have been prayed for in accordance with the apostolic command... For St. Paul called on the Christians to pray "for all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (I Timothy 2.2), although the authorities at that time were pagans...

However, there was one important difference between the pagan authorities of St. Paul's time and the heterodox authorities of the nineteenth century. In the former case, the pagan Roman empire was the *only* political authority of the Oecumene. But in the latter case, there *was* a more lawful authority than the heterodox authorities - the Orthodox Christian authority of the Tsar.

The critical question, therefore, was: if there was a war between the Muslim Sultan, on the one side, and the Orthodox Tsar, on the other, whom were the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans to pray for and support?...

⁵⁸⁶ Zhukov, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaiia Tserkov' na Rodine i za Rubezhom* (The Russian Orthodox Church in the Homeland and Abroad), Paris, 2005, pp. 18-19.

Precisely this situation arose during the Crimean War. The Russians were fighting for a cause dear to every Orthodox Christian heart: the control of the Holy Places. And their enemies were an alliance of three of the major anti-Orthodox powers, Muslim (Turkey), Catholic (France) and Protestant (England). So the supreme loyalty inherent in faithfulness to Orthodox Christianity - a loyalty higher than an oath given to an infidel enemy of the faith under duress - would seem to have dictated that the Patriarch support the Russians. But he neither supported them, nor even prayed for the Russian Tsar at the liturgy.

Perhaps the likely terrible retribution of the Turks on the Balkan Orthodox was a sufficient reason not to support the Tsar openly. But could he not commemorate the Tsar at the liturgy, or at any rate not commemorate the Sultan as other Balkan Churches did not? For even if the Sultan was accepted as a legitimate authority to whom obedience was due in normal situations, surely his legitimacy failed when he used his authority to undermine the much higher authority of the Orthodox Christian Empire?

Certainly, the Athonite Elder Hilarion (whom we have met before as Fr. Ise, confessor of the Imeretian King Solomon II) felt that loyalty to the Tsar came first in this situation, although he was not Russian, but Georgian. He instructed his disciple, Hieromonk Sabbas, to celebrate the Divine Liturgy every day and to pray for *the Russians* during it, and to read the whole Psalter and make many prostrations for the aid of "our Russian brethren". And the rebuke he delivered to his ecclesiastical superior, the Ecumenical Patriarch, was soon shown to have the blessing of God.

"When some time had passed," witnesses Hieromonk Sabbas, "the elder said to me: 'Let's go to the monastery, let's ask the abbot what they know about the war, whether the Russians are winning or the enemies.' When we arrived at the monastery, the abbot with the protoses showed us a paper which the Patriarch and one other hierarch had sent from Constantinople, for distributing to the serving hieromonks in all the monasteries. The Patriarch wrote that they were beseeching God, at the Great Entrance in the Divine Liturgy, to give strength to the Turkish army to subdue the Russians under the feet of the Turks. To this was attached a special prayer which had to be read aloud. When the abbot, Elder Eulogius, had read us this patriarchal epistle and said to the elder: 'Have you understood what our head, our father is writing to us?', my elder was horrified and said: 'He is not a Christian,' and with sorrow asked: 'Have you read this in the monastery during the Liturgy, as he writes?' But they replied: 'No! May it not be!' But in the decree the Patriarch was threatening any monastery that did not carry out this order that it would suffer a very severe punishment. The next day we went back to our cell. A week passed. A monk came from Grigoriou monastery for the revealing of thoughts, and my elder asked him: 'Did you read this prayer which the Patriarch sent to the monasteries?' He replied: 'Yes, it was read last Sunday during the Liturgy.' The elder said: 'You have not acted well in reading it; you have deprived yourselves of the grace of Holy Baptism, you have deprived your monastery of the grace of God; condemnation has fallen on you!' This monk returned to the monastery and told his elders and abbot that 'we have deprived the monastery of the grace of God, the grace of Holy Baptism - that is what Papa Hilarion is saying.' On the same day a flood swept away the mill, and the fathers began to grumble against the

abbot: 'You have destroyed the monastery!' In great sorrow the abbot hurried to make three prostrations before the icon of the Saviour and said: 'My Lord Jesus Christ, I'm going to my spiritual father Hilarion to confess what I have done, and whatever penance he gives me I will carry it out, so that I should not suffer a stroke from sorrow.' Taking with him one hierodeacon and one monk, he set off for the cell of the Holy Apostle James, where we living at the time. When they arrived, my elder was outside the cell. The abbot with his companions, on seeing my elder, fell face downwards in prostrations to the earth and said: 'Bless, holy spiritual father.' Then they went up to kiss his hand. But my elder shouted at them: 'Go away, away from me; I do not accept heretics!' The abbot said: 'I have sinned, I have come to ask you to give me a penance.' But the elder said: 'How did you, wretched one, dare to place Mohammed higher than Christ? God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ says to His Son: "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet' (Psalm 109.1), but you ask Him to put His Son under the feet of His enemies! Get away from me, I will not accept you.' With tears the abbot besought the elder to receive him in repentance and give him a penance. But my elder said: 'I am not your spiritual father, go, find a spiritual father and he will give you a penance.' And leaving them outside his cell weeping, the elder went into it and locked the door with a key. What could we do? We went into my cell and there served an all-night vigil, beseeching God to incline the elder to mercy and give a penance to the abbot. In the morning the elder went into the church for the Liturgy, not saying a word to those who had arrived, and after the dismissal of the Liturgy he quickly left for his cell. Those who had arrived with the abbot began to worry that he would suffer a heart attack; they asked me to go in to the elder and call him; perhaps he would listen to me. I went, fell at his feet and asked him: 'Be merciful, give them a penance - the abbot may suffer a stroke in the heart attack with fatal consequences.' Then the elder asked me: 'What penance shall I give them? God on high is angry with them. What epitimia should I give them which would propitiate God?' When I said to my father: 'Elder, since I read the whole Psalter of the Prophet-King David every day, as you told me, there is one psalm there which fits this case - the 82nd: "O God, who shall be likened unto Thee? Be Thou not silent, neither be still, O God..." Command them to read this psalm tomorrow during the Liturgy, when the Cherubic hymn is being sung, at the Great Entrance; let the hieromonk who read the prayer of the Patriarch before stand under the great chandelier, and when all the fathers come together during the Great Entrance, the priest must come out of the altar holding the diskos and chalice in his hands, then let one monk bring a parchment with this psalm written on it in front, and let the hieromonk, who has been waiting under the chandelier, read the whole psalm loudly to the whole brotherhood, and while they are reading it from the second to the ninth verses let them all repeat many times: "Lord, have mercy". And when the remaining verses are being read, let them all say: "Amen!" And then the grace of God will again return to their monastery.' The elder accepted my advice and asked me to call them. When they joyfully entered the cell and made a prostration, the elder said to them: 'Carry out this penance, and the mercy of God will return to you.' Then they began to be disturbed that the exarch sent by the Patriarch, who was caring for the fulfilment of the patriarchal decree in Karyes, might learn about this and might bring great woes upon the monastery. They did not know what to do. The elder said: 'Since you are so frightened, I will take my hieromonk and go to the monastery; and if the exarch or the Turks hear about it, tell them: only Monk Hilarion the Georgian ordered us to do this, and we did it, and and you will be without sorrow.' Then the abbot said:

'Spiritual father, we are also worried and sorrowful about you, because when the Turks will learn about this, they will come here, take you, tie you up in sacks and drown you both in the sea.' My elder replied: 'We are ready, my hieromonk and I, let them drown us.' Then we all together set off in the boat for Grigoriou monastery. When the brothers of the monastery saw us, they rejoiced greatly. In the morning we arranged that the hieromonk who had read the prayer of the Patriarch should himself liturgize; they lit the chandelier during the Cherubic hymn, and when all the fathers were gathered together and the server had come out of the altar preceded by the candle and candle-holder and carrying the chalice and diskos on his head and in his hands, he declared: "May the Lord remember you all in His Kingdom", and stopped under the great chandelier. Then one monk, having in his hand the parchment with the 82nd psalm written on it, stood in front of the priest and began to read: "O God, who shall be likened unto Thee? Be Thou not silent, neither be still, O God..." - to the end. Meanwhile the fathers called out: "Lord, have mercy" until the 10th verse, and then everyone said: "Amen" many times. And they all understood that the grace of God had again come down on the monastery, and the elders from joy embraced men, thanking me that I had done such a good thing for them; and everyone glorified and thanked God.'

"All this took place under Patriarch Anthimus VI. At the end of the war he was again removed from his throne. After this he came to Athos and settled in the monastery of Esphigmenou, where he had been tonsured. Once, in 1856, on a certain feast-day, he wanted to visit the monastery of St. Panteleimon, where Fr. Hilarion was at that time. During the service the Patriarch was standing in the cathedral of the Protection on the hierarchical see. Father Hilarion passed by him with Fr. Sabbas; he didn't even look at the venerable Patriarch, which the latter immediately noticed. The Patriarch was told about the incident with the prayer in Grigoriou monastery. At the end of the service, as usual, all the guests were invited to the guest-house. The Patriarch, wanting somehow to extract himself from his awkward situation in the eyes of the Russians and Fr. Hilarion, started a conversation on past events and tried to develop the thought that there are cases when a certain 'economia' is demanded, and the care of the Church sometimes requires submission also to some not very lawful demands of the government, if this serves for the good of the Church. 'And so we prayed for the granting of help from on high to our Sultan, and in this way disposed him to mercifulness for our Church and her children, the Orthodox Christians.' When Patriarch Anthimus, under whom the schism with the Bulgarians took place, arrived on Athos after his deposition, and just stepped foot on the shore, the whole of the Holy Mountain shuddered from an underground quake and shook several times. All this was ascribed by the Athonites to the guilt of the Patriarch, and the governing body sent an order throughout the Mountain that they should pray fervently to God that He not punish the inhabitants of the Holy Mountain with His righteous wrath, but that He have mercy according to His mercy."⁵⁸⁷

Thus there was a fine line to be drawn between submission to the Sultan as the lawful sovereign, and a too-comfortable adaptation to the conditions of this Babylonian captivity. The Tsar considered that the Orthodox peoples did not have the right to rebel against the Sultan of their own will, without the blessing of himself as the Emperor of

⁵⁸⁷ Fomin & Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, pp. 331-333.

the Third Rome. But the corollary of this view was that when the Tsar entered into war with the Sultan, it was the duty of the Orthodox subjects of the Sultan to pray for victory for the Tsar. For, as Fr. Hilarion said, echoing the words of St. Seraphim of Sarov: "The other peoples' kings often make themselves out to be something great, but not one of them is a king in reality, but they are only adorned and flatter themselves with a great name, but God is not favourably disposed towards them, and does not abide in them. They reign only in part by the condescension of God. *Therefore he who does not love his God-established tsar is not worthy of being called a Christian.*"⁵⁸⁸

And yet back home, in Russia, the foundations of love for the God-established tsar were being shaken, as were all the foundations of the Christian life. As St. Macarius, the great Elder of Optina, wrote: "The heart flows with blood, in pondering our beloved fatherland Russia, our dear mother. Where is she racing headlong, what is she seeking? What does she await? Education increases but it is pseudo-education, it deceives itself in its hope. The young generation is not being nourished by the milk of the doctrine of our Holy Orthodox Church but has been poisoned by some alien, vile, venomous spirit, and how long can this continue? Of course, in the decrees of God's Providence it has been written what must come to pass, but this has been hidden from us in His unfathomable wisdom. Yes, it seems that the time approaches when, according to the prophecy of the Fathers: 'He who is working to save his soul will save it.'"⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁸ Hieromonk Anthony of the Holy Mountain, *Ocherki Zhizni i Podvoigov Startsa Ieroskhimonakha Ilariona Gruzina* (Sketches of the Life and Struggles of Elder Hieroschemamonk Hilarion the Georgian), Jordanville, 1985, p. 95.

⁵⁸⁹ St. Macarius, *Letter 165 to Monastics*, in Fr. Leonid Kavelin, *Elder Macarius of Optina*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood Press, 1995, pp. 309-310.

23. THE THIRD ROME AND THE EASTERN QUESTION

The Rise of Orthodox Nationalism

If liberalism, socialism, anarchism and other false beliefs were sapping the foundations of Holy Russia, a different, albeit related disease was corrupting the rest of the Orthodox *oikoumene*: *nationalism*. Like many in the West, the Orthodox nations of the Balkans and the Middle East were thinking of one thing: *freedom!* The Balkan Orthodox had already started to liberate themselves from the weakening Turks. And the Greeks in the Free State of Greece wanted freedom for their fellow countrymen still under the Ottoman yoke in accordance with their "great idea" of the re-establishment of the Byzantine Empire. Whether the Greek dreams of the resurrection of Byzantium were compatible with the Slav dreams of their own liberation were compatible was a moot point...

These winds of freedom were less strongly felt by the Greeks still under the Ottoman yoke. For one thing, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, together with the monks of Mount Athos over whom it had jurisdiction, stood for strict, traditional Orthodoxy, for which spiritual freedom is much more important than national freedom. As such, it resisted the liberal, westernizing trends that were gradually gaining the upper hand in Athens, Belgrade, Sophia and Bucharest. Another reason was that they already had considerable power. The Ecumenical Patriarch was the civil as well as the ecclesiastical head of all the Balkan Orthodox under the Sultan, and the rich Phanariots that supported the Patriarch were among the most privileged citizens of the Ottoman empire.

Orthodox traditionalism and anti-liberalism made the patriarchate a natural ally of the Russian government. However, after the Crimean War, Russia was no longer protector of the Christians at the Sublime Porte - and the Greeks felt the difference. And not only the Greeks. Thus in 1860 the Orthodox of Damascus were subjected to a massacre which the Russians were not able to prevent or avenge. According to Professor A.P. Lopukhin, "the Christian subjects of the Sultan, whatever oppression and humiliation they were suffering, were now unable to rely on any outside help but were obliged to rely solely on their own resources... During the last years of the reign of Abdul Mecid [1839-61],... the Greeks... not only remained in a dreadful social and economic state, but even lost many of their former rights and privileges."⁵⁹⁰

The reason for this was a series of liberal reforms that the West imposed on Turkey at the Treaty of Paris in 1856, and which the Ottomans issued in the form of an Imperial Rescript. These were seen as supplementing and strengthening the policy of reform known as *tanzimat* which Turkey had begun in 1839. Their aim was to improve the lot of the Christians under Ottoman rule.

In fact, however, they made it worse. Thus both Christians and Muslims were promised equality before the law in place of their separate legal systems - which,

⁵⁹⁰ Lopukhin, *Istoria Khristianskoj Tserkvi v XIX veke* (A History of the Christian Church in the 19th Century), St. Petersburg, 1901, vol. II, pp. 47-48.

however, both groups wanted to retain. Again, the economic reforms, which essentially involved the imposition of liberal free-trade principles on the empire, were harmful to both groups. For neither the Orthodox nor the Muslims could compete with the mass-produced products now pouring in from the West, especially Britain, while Ottoman infant industries were deprived of the protection they needed in order to survive.

As living conditions declined, and the power of the patriarch over his people weakened, national passions exploded. In 1861 rebellions broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Bulgaria, Wallachia and Moldavia. In 1866 it was the turn of the island of Crete, where in an extraordinary outburst of nationalist passion reminiscent of the Russian Old Ritualists Abbot Gabriel of the monastery of Arkadiou blew up himself and nearly a thousand other Greeks rather than surrender to the Turks. Further rebellions broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria in the 1870s.

Russia's Dilemma

These events placed the Russian government in a quandary. Russia had been looking to liberate the Balkans and Constantinople from the Turkish yoke since the seventeenth century. Thus "on April 12th, 1791," writes Roman Golicz, "a cartoon was published in London entitled 'An Imperial Stride!' depicting Catherine the Great with one foot in Russia and the other in Constantinople. The image recalls the empress's epic tour to the Crimea in 1787 when she entered Kherson through an arch inscribed 'The Way to Constantinople'."⁵⁹¹

The liberation of Constantinople would continue to be seen as an imperial aim until the very fall of the Russian Empire in 1917. But it was only at two moments in the nineteenth century, 1829-30 and 1877-78, that its achievement looked a distinct possibility, even probability. "The Eastern Question" came down to: which power was to rule Constantinople? Or: were the Orthodox nations subject to the Ottoman empire to be liberated at their own hands, at the hands of the Russians, or through the concerted pressure of the great powers on Turkey?

For most of the nineteenth century Russia had been governed in her foreign policy by two not completely compatible principles or obligations: her obligations as a member of the Triple Alliance of monarchist states (Russia, Austria and Prussia) against the revolution, and her obligations as the Third Rome and the Protector of Orthodox Christians everywhere. As a member of the Triple Alliance Russia could not be seen to support any revolution against a legitimate power. That is why Tsar Alexander I refused to support the Greek Revolution in 1821, for the monarchist powers considered the Ottoman empire to be a legitimate power. On the other hand, as the Third Rome and Protector of all Orthodox Christians, Russia naturally wished to come to the aid of the Orthodox Greeks, Serbs, Bulgars and Romanians under the oppressive Turkish yoke. That is why Tsar Nicholas I did intervene in the Greek revolution in 1829 by invading the Ottoman empire - the decisive event enabling the emergence of the Free State of Greece in 1832.

⁵⁹¹ Golicz, "The Russians Shall Not Have Constantinople", *History Today*, September, 2003, p. 39.

In spite of Nicholas I's intervention in Greece, he was in general a legitimist - that is, his priority was not primarily the protection of Orthodox Christians from the Turkish authorities but the protection of all legitimate regimes against the revolution. In practice, this meant all the major powers including Turkey but excluding France. So it was from a legitimist position that he twice crushed uprisings of the Poles against his own rule, and in 1848 crushed the Hungarian rising against Austria-Hungary. However, the quarrels between the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholics over the Holy Sepulchre led him to take a more specifically "Third Rome" stand. This led eventually to the Crimean War against Turkey, Britain and France, which, as Oliver Figes' authoritative study of the war confirms, was essentially a religious war between Orthodoxy and Islam, with the Western states supporting the Muslims.⁵⁹²

Although the Crimean War constituted a defeat for the "Third Rome" policy, it inflicted even more damage on the legitimist principle; for illegitimate France was now legitimized again (the treaty ending the war was signed in Paris), while the Tsars never again fully trusted the legitimate monarchy of Austria-Hungary, which had not supported Russia in the war. So intervention for the sake of the Orthodox again became popular, especially as a new wave of rebellions against Turkish rule began in the Balkans.

However, the Russian intervention under Alexander II was different from earlier interventions under Nicholas I. Under Nicholas, wrote the diplomat Constantine Leontiev, "there was more talk of *the rights of Russian protection, of Russian power.*" However, from the 1860s "Russian diplomacy, the Russian press and Russian society began to speak more and more loudly in favour of the Christians of the East, without relying, as in the 50s, on the right of *our power*, but much more on *the rights of the Sultan's Christian subjects themselves.*"

In other words, *human rights*, rather than *Russia's rights*. And so Turkey "was forced to make concessions to us constantly on the path of the liberal reforms that we suggested for the Christians. Because of this Turkey became weaker; the Christians became bolder and bolder, and we in the course of twenty years in all, step by step, destroyed the Turkish empire."⁵⁹³

But the paradoxical fact was that the gradual weakening of the Ottoman empire, and liberation of the Christians from under the Turkish yoke, while to be welcomed in itself, contained great spiritual dangers for the Orthodox commonwealth. For the removal of the yoke gave renewed strength to two diseases that had plagued the Orthodox since even before 1453: an inclination towards western humanist culture; and disunity among themselves on ethnic lines.

⁵⁹² Figes, *Crimea*, London: Allen Lane, 2010, p. 9.

⁵⁹³ Leontiev, "Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh - I" (Letters on Eastern Matters - I), in *Vostok, Rossia i Slaviansstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow, 1996, p. 354. Cf. Mansel, *Constantinople*, p. 248: "Wellington revealed the great truth: 'The Ottoman Empire stands not for the benefit of the Turks but of Christian Europe.' Metternich pronounced the preservation of the Ottoman Empire in Europe 'a political necessity for Austria'."

Moreover, from the time of the French revolution, and especially after the Greek revolution of 1821, the two diseases began to work on each other. Thus western ideas about freedom and the rights of individuals and nations began to interact with frictions among the Christians caused by Greek bishops' insensitivity to the needs of their Slavic, Romanian and Arabic flocks to produce a potentially revolutionary situation.

The Turkish conquest of the whole of the Balkans suppressed both diseases without completely eliminating either. On the one hand, western influence was seen as harmful by the Turks as it was by the Christians, and the Ottoman authorities acted to cut it off.⁵⁹⁴ On the other hand, the *millet* system recognised only one Orthodox nation under the Ecumenical Patriarch, thereby cutting off the possibility of inter-Orthodox wars.

These two very important benefits of the Turkish yoke outweighed its disadvantages in the form of the restrictions on missionary activity, the forced induction of Bosnian boys into the Janissaries, and intermittent persecutions; just as the advantages of the pagan *pax Romana* had outweighed its disadvantages. The Christian leaders in both Church and State - specifically, the Tsar of Russia and the Patriarch of Constantinople - understood this. So they did not try to destroy the empire, while trying to mitigate its savagery - it was not only the West that wanted to keep "the sick man of Europe" alive...

Leontiev also understood this. "It is necessary," he wrote, "as far as possible, to preserve the Porte; the Porte must be served; it must be defended. And I agree with this point of view of the Phanariots: the pasha is better than the Hellene democratic nomarch (prefect): the pasha is more monarchical, more statist, cleverer, broader."⁵⁹⁵

Pan-Hellenism versus Pan-Slavism

The Greek "great idea" (*μεγάλη ιδέα*), otherwise known as *Pan-Hellenism*, consisted in the idea that all the traditionally Greek lands not yet freed from the Turks - Crete, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, even Constantinople and the vast territory of Asia Minor - should be united under Greek suzerainty. This idea dated from well before the Greek revolution of 1821; some say it began immediately after the fall of Constantinople in 1453; but it gathered headway after the foundation of the Free State of Greece, being nourished especially by western-educated liberal thinkers in Athens. It is not to be confused with the universalist idea of *Byzantinism*, the faith and culture of Christian Rome...

⁵⁹⁴ For example, "when in the eighteenth century the Orthodox in Syria complained to the Porte of Catholic propaganda, the following decree was issued: 'Some of the devilish French monks, with evil purposes and unjust intentions, are passing through the country and are filling the Greek rayah with their worthless French doctrine; by means of stupid speeches they are deflecting the rayah from its ancient faith and are inculcating the French faith. Such French monks have no right to remain anywhere except in those places where their consuls are located; they should not undertake any journeys or engage in missionary work' (in Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963, p. 284).

⁵⁹⁵ Leontiev, "Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh" (Letters on Eastern Affairs), *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo*, op. cit., p. 362.

Unfortunately, Pan-Hellenism tended to enter into conflict with other Orthodox nationalisms, especially those of the Serbs and Bulgars. Thus in Macedonia and Thrace there were now more Slavs than Greeks - and the Slavs were not going to give up their lands to the Greeks without a fight. Moreover, Greek nationalist pressure was exerted not only in lands that had traditionally been inhabited mainly by Greeks, like Macedonia and Thrace, but also in originally Slavic (and Arab) lands, where Greek-speaking priests were imposed on non-Greek-speaking populations.

These injustices suffered by the Slavs at the hands of the Greeks elicited the sympathy of notable Russians such as Alexis Khomiakov and Bishop Theophan the Recluse. The latter, as archimandrite, was sent by the Russian government and the Holy Synod to Constantinople to gather information on the Greco-Bulgarian quarrel. On March 9, 1857 he presented his report, in which his sympathies for the Bulgarians were manifest. However, on the broader political plane he by no means rejected the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but called on "magnanimous" Russia to come to her aid - "we must not abandon our mother in the faith in this helpless situation of hers".⁵⁹⁶

The Greeks distrusted this movement in Russian society for the liberation of the Southern Slavs. Whereas earlier generations would have welcomed any incursion of Russia into the Balkans, hoping that the Tsar would liberate Constantinople and give it to the Greeks, the modern, more nationalist-minded Greeks rejected any such interference. For in Free Greece Russia was no longer seen as the liberator of the Balkans for the sake of the Orthodoxy that the Russian and Balkan peoples shared, but as the potential enslaver of the Balkans for the sake of Russian *Pan-Slavism*. More specifically, the Greeks suspected that Russia wanted to help Bulgaria take the ancient Greek lands of Thrace and Macedonia in which there was now a large Bulgarian population.

Thus Pan-Slavism was seen as the great threat to Pan-Hellenism. True, many Greeks, especially in the Ottoman Empire and on Mount Athos, cherished more charitable views of Russia, which continued to support the Christians under the Turkish yoke in many ways. But the views of the western-educated liberals in Athens were gaining ground...

A sign of the times was the court case that took place on Mount Athos in 1874-1875 between the Russian and Greek monks of the monastery of St. Panteleimon with regard to the rights of the Russian monks to stay there. "The case divided the whole of Athos into two opposing camps: the Greek monks and the Russian monks. Only a few of the Greeks had the courage to support the Russians. Thanks to the energy and insistence with which the Russian monks defended their rights to the monastery, with documents in their hands and with the strong support of the Russian consul at the Porte [Count N.P. Ignatiev], the case ended with victory for the Russians."⁵⁹⁷

The phenomenon of so-called Pan-Slavism was misunderstood and exaggerated by the Greeks. While there was some talk in Russia - for example, by Michael Katkov at

⁵⁹⁶ St. Theophan's *Life*, in Archimandrite Nikon (Ivanov) and Protopriest Nicholas (Likhomakov), *Zhitia Russkikh Sviatykh (Lives of the Russian Saints)*, Tutaev, 2000, vol. 2, p. 716.

⁵⁹⁷ Lopukhin, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-137.

the ethnographic exhibition in Moscow in 1867⁵⁹⁸ - of bringing all the Slavs together into a single polity under Russia just as the German lands were being brought together under Prussia, this was never a serious political proposition and never entertained by any of the Tsars. It existed more in the minds of the Greeks than in reality.⁵⁹⁹

Even the Pan-Slavism of a man like General Fadeyev can be called this only with major qualifications. Thus consider his *Opinion on the Eastern Question* of 1876: "The liberated East of Europe, if it be liberated at all, will require: a durable bond of union, a common head with a common council, the transaction of international affairs and the military command in the hands of that head, the Tsar of Russia, the natural chief of all the Slavs and Orthodox. Every Russian, as well as every Slav and every Orthodox Christian, should desire to see chiefly the Russian reigning House cover the liberated soil of Eastern Europe with its branches, under the supremacy and lead of the Tsar of Russia, long recognized, in the expectation of the people, as the direct heir of Constantine the Great."⁶⁰⁰

The ideology expressed here is not Pan-Slavism, but that of *Russia the Third Rome*, the idea - which goes a long way back, before the age of nationalism - that Russia, as the successor of Rome and Byzantium, is the natural protector of all Orthodox Christians. Hence the reference to "all the Slavs *and Orthodox*", and "every Slav *and every Orthodox Christian*", and to Constantine the Great - who, needless to say, was not a Slav.

For what in fact united *all* the Slavs as opposed to the Orthodox Slavic nations? Less than one might expect. Russia herself was far from being a purely Slavic empire; her aristocracy had been accepting Tatar and German nobles into its ranks for centuries. With the next largest Slavic nation, Poland, she was in a state of constant friction, as the Roman Catholic Poles did everything in their power to undermine Orthodox

⁵⁹⁸ Sir Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia. People and Empire, 1552-1917*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 369.

⁵⁹⁹ The famous Serbian Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovich) was inclined to deny the very existence of Pan-Slavism, saying that it was invented by the Germans: "Who thought up Pan-Slavism and spoke about it to the world? The Pan-Germanists! Yes, it was precisely the Pan-Germanists who thought up Pan-Slavism and sounded out about it to the whole world. Man always judges about others from himself. If Pan-Germanism exists, then why should Pan-Slavism not exist? However, this analogy, however much it may appear to represent the rule, is inaccurate in this case. Pan-Germanism existed and exists, while Pan-Slavism was not and is not now. Everybody knows that there is a Pan-German party in both Germany and Austria. We know that there exists Pan-German journalism, and pan-German clubs, and German literature, and pan-German organizations, and German banks. But in the Slavic world, by contrast, there exists nothing of the kind. As a Slav, I would have known about it, and as a free man I would have spoken about it all openly. However, in the Slavic world there exists something which is somewhat different from the Pan-Slavic spectre - a feeling, only a feeling, which is to be found more often in literature than in politics - Slavophilism. This is the same feeling of blood kinship and sympathy that exists in Italy towards the French, which is far from political Pan-Romanism, or the same feeling of kinship that exists in the United States towards the English and in England towards the Americans, although here also it is far from any kind of fantastic Pan-Anglicanism. It is a sentimental striving for kin, a nostalgia of the blood, a certain organic fear of being separated from one's own. And if in this Slavophilism the penetrating note of love is just a little more audible than in Romanophilism or Anglophilism (and I think that it is audible), then this is completely natural and comprehensible. People who suffer are closer to each other than people who are lords. We Slavs, first of all as Slavs, and secondly as oppressed slaves, love and strive towards those who suffer from the same injustice, from the same arrogant pride, from the same disdain. Who can understand a slave better than a slave? And who is more likely to help a sufferer than a sufferer?..." (*Dusha Serbii* (The Soul of Serbia), Moscow, 2007, pp. 572-573).

⁶⁰⁰ A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, London: Arrow Books, 2002, p. 395.

Russian power. With the Catholic and Protestant Slavs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire - Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes - she was on more friendly terms. But it was not in her interests to foment revolution on ethnic lines in Austria, and as recently as 1848 Russian armies had acted to bolster Austrian power against the Magyars. With the Serbs and the Bulgars, Russia had both blood and Orthodox Christianity in common. But a political union with these nations - even if they wanted it, which most did not - would have required absorbing non-Orthodox Hungary and non-Slavic Romania as well.

Nor was it in Russia's interests to support individual Slavic nationalisms. As Tom Gallagher points out, "as a multi-national empire in its own right, Russia was hostile to the pretensions of European small state nationalism."⁶⁰¹ For to support, say, Bulgarian pretensions to an independent Greater Bulgaria - as opposed to simply protecting Bulgarians suffering from Turkish cruelty - would have created conflicts with the Greeks, the Romanians and the Serbs; whereas it was in Russia's interests to see unity among all the Orthodox nations. Even supposing that Russia in the name of some mythical Pan-Slavist ideal had been willing and able to conquer the whole of the Balkans and take Constantinople, she could not have held on to her gains for long. First, the western powers, including the new rising power of Germany, would have been stirred up to launch another crusade against her. Secondly, to drive the Turks out of Constantinople would not have meant their final defeat, and further operations deep into Asia would have been necessary. But thirdly and most importantly, the union between the Tsar of Russia and the Patriarch of Constantinople, upon which the whole of the Orthodox commonwealth was based, would have been shattered. For what then would the position of the Patriarch within the Russian empire have been? Still the first hierarch of Orthodoxy, or *de facto* subordinate to the Russian Synod? How would the Greeks (not to mention the Southern Slavs) react to exchanging one form of foreign dominion for another, albeit Orthodox?

A rare true Pan-Slavist in the political sense was Nicholas Danilevsky, whose *Russia and Europe* (1869) made use of Slavophile ideas from the 1840s. Danilevsky distinguished ten types of civilization in history: (1) Egyptian, (2) Chinese, (3) Assyrian-Babylonian-Phoenician or Ancient Semitic, (4) Hindu, (5) Iranian, (6) Hebrew, (7) Ancient Greek, (8) Roman, (9) Neo-Semitic or Arabian, and (10) Romano-Germanic or European. He believed that after Russia had conquered Constantinople and liberated and united the Slavs under her rule, she would create an eleventh type of civilization or cultural type.⁶⁰²

⁶⁰¹ Gallagher, "Folly & Failure in the Balkans", *History Today*, September, 1999, p. 48. As Hosking points out, "the official Foreign Office view was that Russia should cooperate with Germany and Austria to reaffirm the legitimist monarchical principle in Eastern Europe, to counteract revolutionary movements there, whether nationalist or not, and to promote a stable balance of power. Pan-Slavism could never be consistently espoused by the Russian government, for it was a policy which would inevitably lead to war against the Ottomans and Habsburgs, if not against the European powers in general. Besides, it was in essence a revolutionary strategy, directed against legitimate sovereign states. For the Russian empire to promote the principle of insurrectionary nationalism was, to say the least, double-edged." (*op. cit.*, pp. 370-371)

⁶⁰² Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, pp. 291-293, 295-297.

Being a form of nationalist historicism, Danilevsky's theory identified the *latest* in history with the *best*. And so Slavism, being the last in the series of "historico-cultural" types was the best, in his view. "The new Slavic civilization, with its capital at Constantinople, would synthesize the highest achievements of its predecessors in religion (Israel), culture (Greece), political order (Rome) and socio-economic progress (modern Europe), and would supplement them with the Slavic genius for social and economic justice. 'These four rivers will unite on the wide plains of Slavdom into a mighty sea.'"⁶⁰³

Strictly speaking, however, "best" should not be understood here in relation to a universal scale of values, insofar as each "historico-cultural" type was *sui generis* and incommensurable, according to Danilevsky. However, this reduced the significance of Danilevsky's theory. For if no one civilization, even the Slavic, can be considered better than any other according to a universal scale of values, then there is no reason to consider it to be better in any real, objective sense.⁶⁰⁴

In spite of the existence of one or two true Pan-Slavists like Danilevsky, Mark Almond is right in asserting that "Pan-Slavism remained a minority taste in Alexander II's Russia. Although it attracted interest among journalists and academics as well as curious politicians wondering whether it might serve imperial interests abroad or undermine stability at home, even the Slavic Congress founded in 1858 or the high profile Slavic Congress in Moscow in 1867 attracted little more than interest. Cash to support the idea of Pan-Slavism was in short supply. The Slavic Committee made do with 1700 rubles a year even in 1867, at the height of public interest before the war a decade later."⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰³ Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

⁶⁰⁴ As Fr. Georges Florovsky writes, speaking of the later Slavophiles, "Significance is ascribed to this or that cultural achievement or discovery of the Slavic nationality not because we see in it the manifestation of the highest values, values which surpass those that inspired 'European' culture, but simply because they are the organic offshoots of the Slavic national genius. And so not because they are *good*, but because they are *ours*."

"The ideals and concrete tasks for action are inspired not by autonomous seeking and 'the re-evaluation of all values', but solely by 'the milieu' and 'circumstances' of one's 'chance' belonging to the given 'cultural-historical type', to the given 'ethnic group of peoples'. This nationalism should be given the epithet '*anthropological*', as opposed to the *ethnic* nationalism of the 'older Slavophiles', [since] the basis for 'idiosyncrasy' is sociological or anthropological particularity, not originality of cultural content. There individual variations are allowed on universal and eternal motifs: here they are taken to be various unshakeable and unmixed relative melodies..."

"It was on this plane, "continues Florovsky, "that the annihilating criticism to which Vladimir Soloviev subjected the imitative nationalism of the later Slavophiles lay. His words had the greater weight in that, even though he was not conscious of it, he stood squarely on the ground of the old, classical Slavophile principles. True, his criticism suffered from wordiness and 'personalities'. Too often a harsh phrase took the place of subtle argumentation. But the basic fault of 'false' nationalism was sensed by him and illumined completely correctly. *Only on the soil of universal principles that are absolutely significant to all is genuine culture possible*, and the national task of Slavdom can lie only in actively converting itself to the service of values that will be chosen for their supreme good in the free exercise of thought and faith... But the denial of the 'universal-historical' path is a step towards nihilism, to the complete dissolution of values,... in the final analysis, the abolition of the category of values altogether..." ("Vechnoe i prekhodiashee v uchenii russkikh slavianofilov" (The eternal and the passing in the teaching of the Russian Slavophiles), in *Vera i Kul'tura* (Faith and Culture), St. Petersburg, 2002, pp. 101, 102-103)

⁶⁰⁵ Almond, *Europe's Backyard War*, London: Mandarin, 1994, p. 105.

An important disciple of Danilevsky was Constantine Leontiev. However, if Leontiev had ever really been an adherent of Danilevsky's Pan-Slavism, he soon abandoned it under the influence of the holy Optina Elders, especially St. Ambrose, and a closer knowledge of the East. Thus "towards the end of his life, in the early 1890s, he finally lost his faith in Russia's ability to create a distinctive new cultural type. The future, he prophesied, belonged to socialism; possibly a Russian tsar would stand at the head of the socialist movement and would organize and discipline it just as the Emperor Constantine had 'organized' Christianity; or perhaps, he wrote in another apocalyptic prediction, a democratic and secular Russia would become the home of the Antichrist..."⁶⁰⁶

A more important enduring influence in the work of Leontiev was early Slavophilism... However, he was more appreciative than any of the Slavophiles of the continuing importance of Greek Orthodoxy. Leontiev believed that if one subtracted Byzantinism from Slavdom, very little distinctively different was left. An ardent Philhellene, he thought that narrowly *Serbian* and *Bulgarian* nationalisms were real and powerful forces, very similar in their aims and psychology to Greek nationalism, and, like contemporary Greek nationalism, sadly lacking in that exalted and spiritual form of "universalist nationalism" that he called *Byzantinism*. These petty nationalisms, argued Leontiev, were closely related to liberalism. They were all rooted in the French revolution: just as liberalism insisted on the essential equality of all men and their "human rights", so these nationalisms insisted on the essential equality of all nations and their "national rights". But this common striving for "national rights" made the nations very similar in their essential egoism⁶⁰⁷; it erased *individuality* in the name of *individualism*, *hierarchy* in the name of *egalitarianism*⁶⁰⁸.

Leontiev believed, as Walicki writes, that "nations were a creative force only when they represented a specific culture: 'naked' or purely 'tribal' nationalism was a corrosive force destroying both culture and the state, a levelling process that was, in the last resort, cosmopolitan; in fact, nationalism was only a mask for liberal and egalitarian tendencies, a specific metamorphosis of the universal process of disintegration".⁶⁰⁹ According to Leontiev, the nations' striving to be independent was based precisely on their desire to be like every other nation: "Having become politically liberated, *they are very glad, whether in everyday life or in ideas, to be like everyone else*". Therefore nationalism, freed from the universalist idea of Christianity, leads in the end to a soulless, secular cosmopolitanism. "In the whole of Europe the purely national, that is, *ethnic* principle, once released from its *religious fetters*, will at its triumph give fruits that are by no means national, but, on the contrary, in the highest degree cosmopolitan, or, more precisely, *revolutionary*."⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁶ Walicki, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-305.

⁶⁰⁷ As Leontiev put it: "The Greeks have 'the Byzantine empire', 'the Great Hellenic Idea'; while the Bulgars have 'Great Bulgaria'. Is it not all the same?" ("Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh - IV" (Letters on Eastern Matters - IV), *op. cit.*, p. 363.

⁶⁰⁸ "So much for the national development, which makes them all similar to contemporary Europeans, which spreads petty rationalism, egalitarianism, religious indifference, European bourgeois uniformity in tastes and manners: machines, pantaloons, frock-coats, top hats and demagoguery!" ("Plody natsional'nykh dvizhenij" (The Fruits of the National Movements), *op. cit.*, p. 560).

⁶⁰⁹ Walicki, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

⁶¹⁰ Leontiev, *Letter of a Hermit*.

Leontiev foresaw that state nationalism could lead to the internationalist *abolition* or *merging* of states. "A grouping of states according to pure nationalities will lead European man very quickly to the dominion of internationalism"⁶¹¹ - that is, a European Union or even a Global United Nations. "A state grouping *according to tribes and nations* is... nothing other than the preparation - striking in its force and vividness - for the transition to a cosmopolitan state, first a pan-European one, and then, perhaps, a global one, too! This is terrible! But still more terrible, in my opinion, is the fact that so far in Russia nobody has seen this or wants to understand it..."⁶¹²

[At the Gates of Constantinople](#)

On April 24, 1877 Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire... There had been many wars between Russia and Turkey in the last few centuries, as Russia slowly but steadily expanded south, first towards the northern coast of the Black Sea, and then on towards the Straits and Constantinople herself. But the aim of this war was not expansionist: its aim was to rescue the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans, who were suffering persecution at the hands of their Turkish overlords.

The conflict really began in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where, as Andrew Wheatcroft writes, "a series of disconnected incidents, beginning with strident Muslim resistance to the plan that a new Orthodox cathedral being built in Sarajevo would tower over the sixteenth-century Begova mosque, sparked violence. From 1872 onwards there was resistance to Ottoman tax-gatherers, with peasants arming themselves and taking refuge in nearby Montenegro. The local authorities responded, as they usually did, with a knee-jerk brutality: by 1876 hundreds of villages had been burned and more than 5,000 Bosnian peasants killed. Soon the contagion of rebellion began to seep into the Bulgarian provinces. The threat of a general uprising seemed imminent.

"Every piece of revolutionary propaganda and each intelligence report read served to bolster the fear. Was the government in Constantinople to disregard the terrorist threats made by the Bulgarian revolutionaries? The insurgents wrote: 'Herzegovina is fighting; Montenegro is spreading over the mountains and coming with help; Serbia is ready to put its forces on the move; Greece is about to declare war; Rumania will not remain neutral. Is there any doubt that death is hanging over Turkey?' In July 1875, at Nevesinje in Herzegovina, the clan chiefs had met and thrown down a challenge to the Turks. One declared: 'Ever since the damned day of Kosovo [Polje, in 1389] the Turk robs us of our life and liberty. Is it not a shame, a shame before all the world, that we bear the arms of heroes and yet are called Turkish subjects? All Christendom waits for us to rise on behalf of our treasured freedom... Today is our opportunity to rebel and to engage in bloody fight.' This guerilla war, in Harold Temperley's view, led directly to the revolt in Bulgaria and all that followed. It was a cruel war on both sides. The first things that the British Consul Holmes [in Sarajevo] saw as he entered Nevesinje were a Turkish boy's head

⁶¹¹ Leontiev, "On Political and Cultural Nationalism", letter 3, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

⁶¹² Leontiev, "Tribal Politics as a Weapon of Global Revolution", letter 2, in *Izbrannie Sochinenia (Selected Works)*, edited and with an introductory article by I.N. Smirnov, Moscow, 1993, p. 314.

blackening in the sun, and a bloody froth bubbling from the slit throat of a young Turkish girl..."⁶¹³

The Turks replied in kind. When the Bulgars rebelled in the town of Panagyurishte the Turkish irregulars known as "Bashi Bazouks" unleashed a savage wave of reprisals that left about 12,000 dead. Many were martyred precisely because they refused to renounce their Orthodox faith for Islam.

In July, 1876 Serbia and Montenegro declared war on the Turks... "'This time we have to avenge Kosovo!' said Montenegro's Prince Nikola. 'Under Murad I the Serbian empire was destroyed - now during the reign of Murad V it has to rise again.'"⁶¹⁴

Public opinion was also demanding action in Russia. As Sir Geoffrey Hosking writes, "Army officers, society ladies and merchants formed Slavic Benevolent Committees which called meetings, collected money, and began to send volunteers to fight for the Serbian army. Dostoevskii... preached war against the Turks as a means of achieving 'eternal peace'. The authorities decided they could not condemn these efforts out of hand, and allowed Russian officers and men to take leave and volunteer for the Serbian army: among them was Fadeyev's friend, General Mikhail Cherniaev, who soon became an emblematic hero for the Panslavs."⁶¹⁵

But Cherniaev's support was not enough to save the Serbs from defeat by the Turks.⁶¹⁶ In two months' fighting, the Serbs lost 5000 dead, 9,500 wounded and 200,000 wounded, and the road to Belgrade was left wide open... Only Russian threats to the Porte saved Serbia: in February an armistice was signed returning the situation to the status quo ante.⁶¹⁷

The Russians were now faced with a dilemma. Either they committed themselves officially to war with Turkey, or the cause of the liberation of their brothers under the Turkish yoke, for which every Russian peasant prayed in his daily prayers, would be lost. In November, 1876 the Tsar spoke of the need to defend the Slavs. And his foreign minister Gorchakov wrote that "national and Christian sentiment in Russia... impose on the Emperor duties which His Majesty cannot disregard".

⁶¹³ Wheatcroft, *Infidels*, London: Penguin Books, 2004, p. 260. As Noel Malcolm writes, "the basic cause of popular discontent was agrarian; but this discontent was harnessed in some parts of Bosnia by members of the Orthodox population who had been in contact with Serbia, and who now publicly declared their loyalty to the Serbian state. Volunteers from Serbia, Slavonia, Croatia, Slovenia and even Russia (plus some Italian Garibaldists, and a Dutch adventuress called Johanna Paulus) were flooding into the country, convinced that the great awakening of the South Slavs was at hand. The Bosnian governor assembled an army in Hercegovina, which acted with ineffective brutality during the autumn and harsh winter of 1875-6. The fiercer begs raised their own 'bashi-bazooks' (irregular troops) and, fearing a general overthrow in Bosnia, began terrorizing the peasant population. During 1876, hundreds of villages were burnt down and at least 5000 peasants killed; by the end of the year, the number of refugees from Bosnia was probably 100,000 at least, and possibly 250,000." (*Bosnia: A Short History*, London: Papermac, 1996, p. 132)

⁶¹⁴ Tim Judah, *The Serbs*, London and New York: Yale University Press, third edition, 2009, pp. 66, 67

⁶¹⁵ Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

⁶¹⁶ According to Judah, Cherniaev's troops were "often drunk and had little or no military experience" (*op. cit.*, p. 66).

⁶¹⁷ Misha Glenny, *The Balkans, 1804-1999*, London: Granta Books, 2000, p. 132.

Ivan Aksakov then took up the Tsar's words, invoking the doctrine of Moscow the Third Rome: "The historical conscience of all Russia spoke from the lips of the Tsar. On that memorable day, he spoke as the descendant of Ivan III, who received from the Paleologi the Byzantine arms and combined them with the arms of Moscow, as the descendant of Catherine and of Peter... From these words there can be no drawing back... The slumbering east is now awakened, and not only the Slavs of the Balkans but the whole Slavonic world awaits its regeneration."⁶¹⁸

On April 24, 1877 Russia declared war on Turkey, "but more", argues Hosking, "to preserve Russia's position in the European balance of power than with Panslav aims in mind. At a Slavic Benevolent Society meeting Ivan Aksakov called the Russo-Turkish war a 'historical necessity' and added that 'the people had never viewed any war with such conscious sympathy'. There was indeed considerable support for the war among peasants, who regarded it as a struggle on behalf of suffering Orthodox brethren against the cruel and rapacious infidel. A peasant elder from Smolensk province told many years later how the people of his village had been puzzled as to 'Why our Father-Tsar lets his people suffer from the infidel Turks?', and had viewed Russia's entry into the war with relief and satisfaction."⁶¹⁹

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However, the Russians had to reckon, not only with the Turks, but also with the western great powers, and especially Britain... "British interests in the Balkans," writes Roman Golicz, "derived from wider economic interests in India via the Eastern Mediterranean. In 1858 the British Government had taken direct control over Indian affairs. Since 1869 the Suez Canal had provided it with a direct route to India. Britain needed to secure the shipping routes which passed through areas, like Suez, that were nominally Turkish."⁶²¹

Or rather, that was the theory. In fact, Russia presented no threat to British interests in India. Rather, the real cause of British hostility to Russian expansion was simply visceral jealousy - the jealousy of the world's greatest maritime empire in relation to the world's greatest land-based empire. And it was expressed in a fierce, "jingoistic" spirit. As Selischev writes: "If Palmerston unleashed the Crimean war, then Disraeli was ready to unleash war with Russia in 1877-78, in order, as he wrote to Queen Victoria, to save the Ottoman state and 'cleanse Central Asia from the Muscovites and throw them into the Caspian sea.'"⁶²² Palmerston himself commented once that "these

⁶¹⁸ Almond, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

⁶¹⁹ Hosking, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

⁶²⁰ Hosking, *op. cit.*

⁶²¹ Golicz, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁶²² Selischev, "Chto neset Pravoslaviu proekt 'Velikoj Albanii'?" (What will the project of a 'Greater Albania' bring for Orthodoxy), *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), N 2 (1787), January 15/28, 2005, p. 10.

half-civilized governments such as those of China, Portugal, Spanish America require a Dressing every eight or ten years to keep them in order". "And no one who knew his views on Russia," writes Dominic Lieven, "could doubt his sense that she too deserved to belong to this category."⁶²³

Western governments at first dismissed reports of atrocities against the Orthodox populations, preferring to believe their ambassadors and consuls rather than *The Daily Telegraph*. Disraeli dismissed public concern about the Bulgarian atrocities as "coffee-house babble". And when a conference was convened in Constantinople by the Great Powers, it failed to put any significant pressure on the Turks.

Opposition to Disraeli's policy of inaction was now mounting. In September, 1876 Gladstone, his great rival, published *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*: "Let the Turks now carry off their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and their Mindirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbachis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, shall I hope to clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned."

Disraeli, on the other hand, ascribed the violence to the activities of the secret societies, which he said were on the side of Serbia. "Serbia declared war on Turkey, that is to say, the secret societies of Europe declared war on Turkey, societies which have regular agents everywhere, which countenance assassination and which, if necessary, could produce massacre." Then Disraeli and his cabinet, supported by Queen Victoria, decided that if the Russians succeeded in taking Constantinople, this would be a *casus belli*.

In the spring of 1877 the Russian armies crossed the River Prut into the Romanian Principalities. Then they crossed the Danube, scaled the Balkans and after a ferocious campaign with great losses on both sides conquered Bulgaria. Finally, they seized Adrianople (Edirne), only a short march from Constantinople. The Russians were now in a similar position to where they had been in the war of 1829-31, when Tsar Nicholas I had reached Adrianople but held back from conquering Constantinople because he did not have the support of the Concert of Europe. Now, however, the Concert no longer existed, and the commander-in-chief of the Russian armies and brother of the Tsar, Grand Duke Nikolas, wrote to the Tsar: "We must go to the centre, to Tsargrad, and there finish the holy cause you have assumed."

He was not the only one who clamoured for the final, killer blow: "'Constantinople must be ours,' wrote Dostoyevsky, who saw its conquest by the Russian armies as nothing less than God's own resolution of the Eastern Question and as the fulfilment of Russia's destiny to liberate Orthodox Christianity.

"It is not only the magnificent port, not only the access to the seas and oceans, that binds Russia as closely to the resolution... of the this fateful question, nor is it even the unification and regeneration of the Slavs. Our goal is more profound, immeasurably more profound. We, Russia, are truly essential and unavoidable both for the whole of Eastern Christendom and for the whole fate of future Orthodoxy on the earth, for its

⁶²³ Lieven, *Empire*, London: John Murray, 2000, p. 213.

unity. This is what our people and their rulers have always understood. In short, this terrible Eastern Question is virtually our entire fate for years to come. It contains, as it were, all our goals and, mainly, our only way to move out into the fullness of history."⁶²⁴

However, there were powerful reasons that made the Russians hesitate on the eve of what would have been their greatest victory. First, and most obviously, there was the fierce opposition of the western great powers, and especially Britain. The entire British Mediterranean Squadron was steaming towards the Dardanelles, dispatched by Disraeli as British public opinion turned "jingoistic":

*We don't want to fight, but by jingo if we do,
We've got the ships, we've got the men, and we've got the money too;
We've fought the bear before, and while we're Britons true,
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.*

Under the influence of this threat, the Russians agreed not to send troops into Constantinople if no British troops were landed on either side of the Straits...

Then, on March 3, at the village of San Stefano, just outside Constantinople, they signed a treaty with the Turks, whereby the latter recognized the full independence of Romania, Serbia and Montenegro.

"The Treaty also constituted Bulgaria as a tributary principality of Russia; it required a heavy financial indemnity from Turkey; it gave to Russia the right to select a port on the Black Sea; it opened up the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus at all times to Russian vessels; it obtained full rights for all Christians remaining under Turkish rule; and it gave Bessarabia to Russia in exchange for the corner of Bulgaria known as Dobruja."⁶²⁵

In little more than 20 years the Russian defeat in the Crimean war had been avenged. It was a great victory for the Orthodox armies...

However, the Great Powers were determined to rob Russia of the fruits of her victory by diplomatic means. As Disraeli demanded that the Russians surrendered their gains, Bismarck convened a congress in Berlin in June, 1878. It was agreed that all troops should be withdrawn from the area of Constantinople, and Greater Bulgaria was cut down to two smaller, non-contiguous areas, the smaller of which, Eastern Rumelia, remained under Turkish suzerainty while the larger, the Kingdom of Bulgaria, was autonomous rather than fully independent. Meanwhile, Britain added Cyprus to her dominions; Serbia, Montenegro and Romania were recognised as independent States (on condition that they gave full rights to the Jews); the Greeks were given Thessaly; and Serbia gained Pirot and Niš. But the Russians were deeply unhappy...

The western powers' *diktat* imposed on the Orthodox at Berlin even succeeded in setting the Orthodox against each other. Thus southern Bessarabia was given to Russia

⁶²⁴ Dostoyevsky, in Orlando Figes, *Crimea*, London: Allen Lane, 2010, p. 462.

⁶²⁵ Golicz, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

as a kind of consolation prize, which angered the Romanians, who regarded it as theirs. Then the Romanians were given northern Dobrudja, which the Bulgarians regarded as theirs.

Still more importantly, writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "Bosnia and Herzegovina [and the Panzhak] were for some reason handed over to *Austria* for her 'temporary' use in order to establish 'normal government'. In this way a *mine* was laid which, according to the plan of the Masons, was meant to explode later in a new Balkan war with the aim of ravaging and destroying Russia. At the congress Bismarck called himself an 'honest broker'. But that was not how he was viewed in Russia. Here the disturbance at his behaviour was so great that Bismarck considered it necessary secretly (in case of war with Russia) to conclude with Austria, and later with Italy, the famous 'Triple Union'.⁶²⁶

Disraeli, the Jewish leader of the Western Christian world, had triumphed; he had succeeded in keeping the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans in bondage to the Muslim Turks, although that yoke was now weaker. And then the Jews proceeded to punish Russia again. "In 1877-1878 the House of Rothschild, by agreement with Disraeli, first bought up, and then threw out onto the market in Berlin a large quantity of Russian securities, which elicited a sharp fall in their rate."⁶²⁷

⁶²⁶ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 349.

⁶²⁷ V. Zombardt, in O.A. Platonov, *Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia's Crown of Thorns), Moscow, 1998, p. 275.

24. DOSTOYEVSKY AND THE LATER SLAVOPHILES ON RUSSIA

The Treaty of Berlin (1878) represented an unprecedented interference of the western Great Powers in the Balkans at the expense of Russia and the Christian Balkan States. It also reignited tension between Russia and the West, as a partial result of which, as Misha Glenny writes, "the 1870s saw another very dangerous development in great-power attitudes to the region. France, Britain and Russia had, in their dealings over Greece in the 1830s, acted in harmony with one another to protect their strategic interests. From the Congress of Berlin onwards, cooperation was replaced by competition, harmony by discord. The peoples of the Balkans would pay dearly for this transformation."⁶²⁸

The last three years in Dostoyevsky's life, 1878-1881, are notable for and intensification and deepening of his thought on Russia and her destiny. It was triggered particularly by Russia's failure to conquer Constantinople and unite the Orthodox peoples under the Tsar, which was a great blow to the Slavophiles. Thus "at a Slavic Benevolent Society banquet in June 1878 Ivan Aksakov furiously denounced the Berlin Congress as 'an open conspiracy against the Russian people, [conducted] with the participation of the representatives of Russia herself!'"⁶²⁹

Pan-Humanity

Dostoyevsky was also disillusioned. But he was also hopeful: Russia, he believed, had only temporarily been checked at the Gates of Constantinople, and would one day conquer it and hand it back to the Greeks, even if it took a hundred years and more. Moreover, his disillusionment was not the product of the failure of his "Pan-Slavist" dreams, as some have made out. For Dostoyevsky's dreams were not "Pan-Slavist", but "Pan-Human", genuinely universalist. His dream was the conversion of the whole world to Christ, and thereby to real fraternity – that fraternity which the revolutionaries had promised, but had not delivered, and would never be able to deliver. A major step on the road to this dream was to be the liberation and unification of the Orthodox peoples of the East under the Russian tsar through the planting of the Cross on the dome of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople by the Russian armies. Dostoyevsky found real brotherhood only in the Orthodox Church, and in that Orthodox nation which, he believed, had most thoroughly incarnated the ideals of the Gospel – Russia.

"The moral idea is Christ. In the West, Christ has been distorted and diminished. It is the kingdom of the Antichrist. We have Orthodoxy. As a consequence, we are the bearers of a clearer understanding of Christ and a new idea for the resurrection of the world... There the *disintegration*, atheism, began earlier: with us, later, but it will begin certainly with the entrenchment of atheism... The whole matter lies in the question: can one, being civilized, that is, a European, that is, believe absolutely in the Divinity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ? (for all faith consists in this)... You see: either everything is contained in faith or nothing is: we recognize the importance of the world

⁶²⁸ Glenny, *The Balkans, 1804-1999*, London: Granta Books, pp. 133-134.

⁶²⁹ Sir Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People & Empire*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, pp. 372-373.

through Orthodoxy. And the whole question is, can one believe in Orthodoxy? If one can, then everything is saved: if not, then, better to burn... But if Orthodoxy is impossible for the enlightened man, then... all this is hocus-pocus and Russia's whole strength is provisional... It is possible to believe seriously and in earnest. Here is *everything*, the burden of life for the Russian people and their entire mission and existence to come..."⁶³⁰

It was for the sake of Orthodoxy, the true brotherhood, that the Russians had sacrificed, and would continue to sacrifice themselves. Nor was this universalist love confined to Russia's brothers in the faith: it extended even to her enemies in Western Europe – that "graveyard of holy miracles". The lost half of Europe, immersed in Catholicism and its child, Protestantism, and its grandchild, atheism, would be converted from Russia: "The whole destiny of Russia lies in Orthodoxy, in the light from the East, which will suddenly shine forth to the mankind of the West, which has become blinded and has lost its faith in Christ. The cause of the whole misfortune of Europe, all of its ills, everything without exception, hearkens back to its loss of Christ with the establishment of the Roman Church, followed by its subsequent decision that it could manage just fine without Christ at all."⁶³¹

But in the meantime, what sorrows lay in store for Europe, and first of all for Russia, whose ruling classes were already Orthodox only in name! It was all the fault of the misguided idealism that sought, on the basis of science and rationalism, to *force* men to be happy – or rather, to give them happiness of a kind in exchange for their freedom. This rationalist-absolutist principle was common both to the most believing (Catholic) and most unbelieving (Socialist) factions in Western political life, and was typified in the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*, who "in his last remaining years... comes to the clear conviction that it is only the advice of the great and terrible spirit that could bring some sort of supportable order into the life of the feeble rebels, 'the unfinished experimental creatures created as a mockery'. And so, convinced of that, he sees that one has to follow the instructions of the wise spirit, the terrible spirit of death and destruction. He therefore accepts lies and deceptions and leads men consciously to death and destruction. Keeps deceiving them all the way, so that they should not notice where they are being led, for he is anxious that those miserable, blind creatures should at least on the way think themselves happy. And, mind you, the deception is in the name of Him in Whose ideal the old man believed so passionately all his life! Is not that a calamity?..."⁶³²

Since so many in Russia's educated classes thought like Ivan Karamazov and the Grand Inquisitor (although much less seriously and systematically, for the most part), it was premature to think of the unification of the Orthodox peoples – still less, of the

⁶³⁰ Dostoyevsky, in K. Mochulsky, *Dostoyevsky: His Life and Work*, Princeton, 1967.

⁶³¹ Dostoyevsky, "Letter to A. N. Maikov", 1870. V. Weidle writes: "'Europe is a mother to us, as is Russia, she is our second mother; we have taken much from her and shall do so again, and we do not wish to be ungrateful to her.' No Westernizer said this; it is beyond Westernizers, as it is beyond Slavophiles. Dostoyevsky wrote it at the height of his wisdom, on the threshold of death... His last hope was Messianism, but a Messianism which was essentially European, which developed out of his perception of Russia as a sort of better Europe, which was called upon to save and renew Europe" (*The Task of Russia*, New York, 1956, pp. 47-60; in Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963, p. 338).

⁶³² Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Penguin Magarshack translation, p. 307.

whole of Europe - under the leadership of Russia. The first need was to unite Russia *within* herself. And that meant uniting the educated classes with the bulk of the population, the peasant *narod*, whose lack of education and poverty, and attachment to the Orthodox Tsar and Church, repelled the proud, self-appointed guardians of the nation's conscience. In fact, populism had been an underlying theme of that generation of liberals, most notably in the attempt of the young revolutionary *narodniki* to "go out to the people". Dostoyevsky took it upon himself to show them a surer, because *humbler* way of being united with the people...

In his youth Dostoyevsky had been converted from the socialist ideas of his youth to the official slogan of Nicholas I's Russia, "Orthodoxy, Autocracy and *Narodnost'*".⁶³³ But he wrote little directly about Orthodoxy or Autocracy, probably because this would immediately have put off his audience.⁶³⁴ A generation earlier, Slavophiles such as Khomiakov and Kireyevsky had been able to speak more or less openly in support of the Church and the Tsar. But the years 1860-1880 had entrenched liberalism and positivism firmly in the hearts and minds of the intelligentsia. So Dostoyevsky had to approach the subject more indirectly, through the third element of the slogan - *Narodnost'*, Nationhood.

Such an approach had the further advantage that it was the way Dostoyevsky himself had returned to the faith: since his imprisonment in Siberia, his eyes had slowly been opened to the reality of the people, their spiritual beauty and their Orthodox faith. At the same time, a whole pleiad of artists, the so-called *pochvenniki*, "lovers of the soil", were coming to a similar discovery, giving a kind of second wind to Slavophilism. For example, in 1872, during the celebrations of the bicentenary of that most "anti-*pochvennik*" of tsars, Peter the Great, the young composer Modest Mussorgsky wrote to his closest friend: "The power of the black earth will make itself manifest when you plough to the very bottom. It is possible to plough the black earth with tools wrought of alien materials. And at the end of the 17th century they ploughed Mother Russia with just *such* tools, so that she did not immediately realize what they were ploughing with, and, like the black earth, she *opened up* and began to *breathe*. And she, our beloved, received the various state bureaucrats, who never gave her, the long-suffering one, time to collect herself and to think: '*Where are you pushing me?*' The ignorant and confused were executed: *force!*... But the times are out of joint: the state bureaucrats are not letting the black earth *breathe*."

"*'We've gone forward!* - you lie. '*We haven't moved!*' Paper, books have gone forward - we *haven't moved*. So long as the people cannot verify *with their own eyes* what is being cooked out of them, as long as they do not *themselves* will what is or is not to be *cooked out of them* - till then, we *haven't moved!* Public benefactors of every kind will seek to glorify themselves, will buttress their glory with documents, but the people groan, and

⁶³³ Archpriest Lev Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 331.

⁶³⁴ Among his few sayings on the subject is the following: "Our constitution is mutual love. Of the Monarch for the people and of the people for the Monarch." (cited in Lossky, N.O., *Bog i mirovoe zlo* (God and World Evil), 1994, Moscow: "Respublika", pp. 234-35).

so as not to groan they drink like the devil, and groan worse than ever: *haven't moved!*"⁶³⁵

Mussorgsky composed in *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanschina* two "popular" dramas which evoked the spirit of Mother Russia and the Orthodox Church as no other work of secular art had done. Dostoyevsky was to do the same in *The Brothers Karamazov*. He hoped, through the beauty of his artistic creations, to open the eyes of his fellow *intelligenty* to the people's beauty, helping them thereby to "bow down before the people's truth" – Orthodoxy. In this way, as the Prince said in *The Idiot*, "beauty" – the beauty of the people's truth, the Russian God – "will save the world".

However, Dostoyevsky's concept of the people has been widely misunderstood, and needs careful explication. Some have seen in it extreme chauvinism, others – sentimentalism and cosmopolitanism. The very diversity of these reactions indicates a misunderstanding of Dostoyevsky's antinomical way of reasoning.

Let us consider, first, the following words of Shatov in *The Devils*: "Do you know who are now the only 'God-bearing' people on earth, destined to regenerate and save the world in the name of a new god and to whom alone the keys of life and of the new word have been vouchsafed?"⁶³⁶ The "people" here is, of course, the Russian people. And the God they bear is Christ, Who is "new" only in the sense that the revelation of the truth of Christ in Orthodoxy is something new for those other nations who were once Christian but who have lost the salt of True Christianity. Not that the Russians are considered *genetically* or *racially* superior to all other nations; for "Russianness" is a spiritual concept closely tied up with confession of the one true faith, which may exclude many people of Russian blood (for example, the unbelieving intelligentsia), but include people of other nations with the same faith.

Thus Shatov agrees with Stavrogin that "an atheist can't be a Russian". And again, "an atheist at once ceases to be a Russian". And again: "A man who does not belong to the Greek Orthodox faith cannot be a Russian."⁶³⁷ It follows that "the Russian people" is a concept with a universalist content insofar as her Orthodox faith is universal; it is virtually equivalent to the concept of "the Orthodox Christian people", in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither barbarian nor Scythian" (Colossians 3.11). For "if," writes M.V. Zyzykin, "it is possible to call the fact that Christianity has become the content of a certain people's *narodnost'* the national property of that people, then such a property belongs also to the Russian people. But we should rather add the term 'universal' here, because the very nationality is expressed in universality, *universality has become the content of the narodnost'*."⁶³⁸ It was for this reason, as Archbishop Anthony Khrapovitsky once pointed out, that the Russian peasants considered the apostles to have been Russians: for them "Russian" and "Christian" were more or less equivalent terms.

⁶³⁵ Mussorgsky, quoted in Richard Taruskin, "The Power of Black Earth: Notes on *Khovanschina*", *Classic FM Magazine*. May, 2006. In *Boris Godunov* Mussorgsky tried to "view the people as one giant being, inspired by one idea" (Julian Haylock, "Mussorgsky", *Classic FM Magazine*, May, 2006, p. 31).

⁶³⁶ Dostoyevsky, *The Devils*, p. 253.

⁶³⁷ Dostoyevsky, *The Devils*, p. 255.

⁶³⁸ Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931.

Shatov continues: "The purpose of the whole evolution of a nation, in every people and at every period of its existence, is solely the pursuit of God, their God, their very own God, and faith in Him as the only true one... The people is the body of God. Every people is a people only so long as it has its own particular god and excludes all other gods in the world without any attempt at reconciliation; so long as it believes that by its own god it will conquer and banish all the other gods from the world. So all believed from the very beginning of time – all the great nations, at any rate, all who have been in any way marked out, all who have played a leading part in the affairs of mankind. It is impossible to go against the facts. The Jews lived only to await the coming of the true God, and they left the true God to the world. The Greeks deified nature and bequeathed the world their religion – that is, philosophy and art. Rome deified the people in the State and bequeathed the State to the nations. France throughout her long history was merely the embodiment and development of the idea of the Roman god, and if she at last flung her Roman god into the abyss and gave herself up to atheism, which for the time being they call socialism, it is only because atheism is still healthier than Roman Catholicism. If a great people does not believe that truth resides in it alone (in itself alone and in it exclusively), if it does not believe that it alone is able and has been chosen to raise up and save everybody by its own truth, it is at once transformed into ethnographical material, and not into a great people..."⁶³⁹

It follows that what we would now call "ecumenism" – the belief that other nations' gods or religions are as good as one's own – is the destruction of the nation. And indeed, this is what we see today. For the ecumenist nations who recognize each other's gods have become mere "ethnographical material", members of the United Nations but not nations in the full sense of entities having a spiritual principle and purpose for their independent existence.

Therefore, according to this logic, any nation that asserts its own truth in the face of other supposed truths must be "nationalist", and steps must be taken to reduce or destroy its power. Universalism is declared to be good and nationalism bad. However this fails to recognize the possibility – a possibility that Dostoyevsky insisted upon as a fact in the case of Russia – that a nation's particular, *national* faith may have a *universalist* content.

And yet this is precisely what Dostoyevsky insisted on for Russia... "Dostoyevsky," wrote Florovsky, "was a faithful follower of the classical Slavophile traditions, and he based his faith in the great destiny marked out for the God-bearing People, not so much on historical intimations, as on that Image of God which he saw in the hidden depths of the Russian people's soul, and on the capacities of the Russian spirit for 'pan-humanity'. Being foreign to a superficial disdain and impure hostility towards the West, whose great 'reposed' he was drawn to venerate with gratitude, he expected future revelations from his own homeland because only in her did he see that unfettered range of personal activity that is equally capable both of the abyss of sanctity and the abyss of sin..., because he considered only the Russian capable of becoming 'pan-human'."⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁹ Dostoyevsky, *The Devils*, pp. 256, 257-258.

⁶⁴⁰ Florovsky, *Puti Russkogo Bogoslovia* (Paths of Russian Theology), Paris, 1937, pp. 105-106.

The Pushkin Speech

This, Dostoyevsky's fundamental insight on Russia was summarized and most eloquently expressed in his famous *Pushkin Speech*, delivered at the unveiling of the Pushkin Monument in Moscow on June 8, 1880.

In this speech, writes Andrzej Walicki, Dostoyevsky presents Pushkin as the supreme embodiment in art "of the Russian spirit, a 'prophetic' apparition who had shown the Russian nation its mission and its future.

"In the character of Aleko, the hero of the poem *Gypsies*, and in Evgeny Onegin, Dostoyevsky suggested, Pushkin had been the first to portray 'the unhappy wanderer in his native land, the traditional Russian sufferer detached from the people....' For Dostoyevsky, the term 'wanderer' was an apt description of the entire Russian intelligentsia - both the 'superfluous men' of the forties and the Populists of the seventies. 'The homeless vagrants,' he continued, 'are wandering still, and it seems that it will be long before they disappear'; at present they were seeking refuge in socialism, which did not exist in Aleko's time, and through it hoped to attain universal happiness, for 'a Russian sufferer to find peace needs universal happiness - exactly this: nothing less will satisfy him - of course, as the proposition is confined to theory.'

"Before the wanderer can find peace, however, he must conquer his own pride and humble himself before 'the people's truth'. 'Humble thyself, proud man, and above all, break thy pride,' was the 'Russian solution' Dostoyevsky claimed to have found in Pushkin's poetry. Aleko failed to follow this advice and was therefore asked to leave by the gypsies; Onegin despised Tatiana - a modest girl close to the 'soil' - and by the time he learned to humble himself it was too late. Throughout Pushkin's work, Dostoyevsky declared, there were constant confrontations between the 'Russian wanderers' and the 'people's truth' represented by 'positively beautiful' heroes - men of the soil expressing the spiritual essence of the Russian nation. The purpose of these confrontations was to convince the reader of the need for a 'return to the soil' and a fusion with the people.

"Pushkin himself was proof that such a return was possible without a rejection of universal ideals. Dostoyevsky drew attention to the poet's 'universal susceptibility', his talent for identifying himself with a Spaniard (Don Juan), an Arab ('Imitations of the Koran'), an Englishman ('A Feast During the Plague'), or an ancient Roman ('Egyptian Nights') while still remaining a national poet. This ability Pushkin owed to the 'universality' of the Russian spirit: 'to become a genuine and complete Russian means... to become brother of all men, an all-human man.'

"In his speech Dostoyevsky also spoke about the division into Slavophiles and Westernizers, which he regretted as a great, though historically inevitable, misunderstanding. The impulse behind Peter's reform had been not mere utilitarianism but the desire to extend the frontiers of nationality to include a genuine 'all-humanity'. Dreams of serving humanity had even been the impulse behind the political policies of the Russian state: 'For what else has Russia been doing in her policies, during these two centuries, but serving Europe much more than herself? I do

not believe that this took place because of the mere want of aptitude on the part of our statesmen.'

"'Oh the peoples of Europe,' Dostoyevsky exclaimed in a euphoric vein, 'have no idea how dear they are to us! And later - in this I believe - we, well, not we but the Russians of the future, to the last man, will comprehend that to become a genuine Russian means to seek finally to reconcile all European controversies, to show the solution of European anguish in our all-human and all-unifying Russian soil, to embrace in it with brotherly love all our brothers, and finally, perhaps, to utter the ultimate word of great, universal harmony, of the fraternal accord of all nations abiding by the law of Christ's Gospel!'

"Before delivering his 'Address', Dostoyevsky was seriously worried that it might be received coldly by his audience. His fears proved groundless. The speech was an unprecedented success: carried away by enthusiasm, the crowd called out 'our holy man, our prophet', and members of the audience pressed around Dostoyevsky to kiss his hands. Even Turgenev, who had been caricatured in *The Possessed* [*The Devils*], came up to embrace him. The solemn moment of universal reconciliation between Slavophiles and Westernizers, conservatives and revolutionaries, seemed already at hand..."⁶⁴¹

The Slavophile Ivan Aksakov "ran onto the stage and declared to the public that my speech was not simply a speech but an historical event! The clouds had been covering the horizon, but here was Dostoyevsky's word, which, like the appearing sun, dispersed all the clouds and lit up everything. From now on there would be brotherhood, and there would be no misunderstandings."⁶⁴²

It was indeed an extraordinary event. And while the enthusiasm was short-lived, the event represented in a real sense an historic turning-point: the point at which the unbelieving intelligentsia had the Gospel preached to them in a language and in a context that they could understand and respond to. For a moment it looked as if the "the Two Russias" created by Peter the Great's reforms might be united. With the advantage of hindsight one may pour scorn on such an idea. But, as Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) writes: "However accustomed people are to crawling in the dust, they will be grateful to every one who tears them away from the world below and bears them up on his powerful wings to the heavens. A man is ready to give up everything for a moment of pure spiritual joy and bless the name of him who is able to strike on the best strings of his heart. It is here that one must locate the secret of the amazing success won by the famous speech of Dostoyevsky at the Pushkin festival in Moscow. The genius writer himself later described the impression produced by him upon his listeners in a letter to his wife: 'I read,' he writes, 'loudly, with fire. Everything that I wrote about Tatiana was received with enthusiasm. But when I gave forth at the end about the universal union of men, the hall was as it were in hysterics. When I had finished, I will not tell you about the roars and sobs of joy: people who did not know each other wept, sobbed, embraced each other and swore to be better, not to hate each other from then on, but to love each other. The order of the session was interrupted:

⁶⁴¹ Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, pp. 323-325.

⁶⁴² Dostoyevsky, in Igor Volgin, *Poslednij God Dostoevskogo* (Dostoyevsky's Last Year), Moscow, 1986, p. 267.

grandes dames, students, state secretaries – they all embraced and kissed me.’ How is one to call this mood in the auditorium, which included in itself the best flower of the whole of educated society, if not a condition of spiritual ecstasy, to which, as it seemed, our cold intelligentsia was least of all capable? By what power did the great writer and knower of hearts accomplish this miracle, forcing all his listeners without distinction of age or social position to feel themselves brothers and pour together in one sacred and great upsurge? He attained it, of course, not by the formal beauty of his speech, which Dostoyevsky usually did not achieve, but the greatness of the proclaimed idea of universal brotherhood, instilled by the fire of great inspiration. This truly prophetic word regenerated the hearts of people, forcing them to recognize the true meaning of life; the truth made them if only for one second not only free, but also happy in their freedom.”⁶⁴³

[Critics of the Pushkin Speech: Katkov](#)

June 8, 1880 was the last date on which the deep divisions in Russian society might have been healed, and the slide to revolution halted. However, the opportunity was lost. Disillusion and criticism set in almost immediately from all sides.⁶⁴⁴ This was less surprising from the liberals, who were looking for another, leftist answer to the question: "What is to be done?" from Dostoyevsky. They forgot that, as Chekhov wrote in 1888, an artist does not attempt to solve concrete social, political or moral problems, but only to place them in their correct context...⁶⁴⁵ Somewhat more surprising was the less than ecstatic reaction of the right-wing *litterati*. Thus M.N. Katkov was very happy to publish the Speech in his *Moskovskie Vedomosti* (*Moscow Gazette*) - but laughed at it in private.⁶⁴⁶ Perhaps for him, too, the Speech offered too little in the form of concrete political solutions or advice - an open endorsement of the monarchy, for example.

And yet Katkov was not far from Dostoyevsky in his views. "M.N. Katkov wrote that the opposition between Russia and the West consists in the fact that there everything is founded on contractual relations, and in Russia - on faith. If western society is ruled by law, then Russian society is ruled by the idea& There is no question that good principles can be laid at the base of any state, but they are deprived of a firm foundation by the absence of religious feeling and a religious view of the world. Good principles are then held either on instinct, which illumines nothing, or on considerations of public utility. But instinct is an unstable thing in a reasoning being, while public utility is a conventional concept about which every person can have his own opinion."⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴³ Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky), *Besedy so svoim sobstvennym serdtsem* (Conversations with my own Heart), Jordanville, 1948, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁴⁴ The only person who retained his enthusiasm for the Speech for years to come was Ivan Aksakov. As Dostoyevsky wrote: "Aksakov (Ivan) ran onto the stage and declared to the public that my speech was not simply a speech but an historical event! The clouds had been covering the horizon, but here was Dostoyevsky's word, which, like the appearing sun, dispersed all the clouds and lit up everything. From now on there would be brotherhood, and there would be no misunderstandings" (in Volgin, op. cit., p. 267).

⁶⁴⁵ Volgin, op. cit., p. 266.

⁶⁴⁶ Volgin, op. cit., p. 271.

⁶⁴⁷ K.V. Glazkov, "Zashchita ot liberalizma" ("A Defence from Liberalism"), *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (*Orthodox Russia*), N 15 (1636), August 1/14, 1999, pp. 9, 10, 11.

Like Dostoyevsky, Katkov was striving to build bridges, and especially a bridge between the Tsar and the People (he had been a liberal in his youth). “Russia is powerful,” he wrote, “precisely in the fact that her people do not separate themselves from their Sovereign. Is it not in this alone that the sacred significance that the Russian Tsar has for the Russian people consists?”⁶⁴⁸ “Only by a misunderstanding do people think that the monarchy and the autocracy exclude ‘the freedom of the people’. In actual fact it guarantees it more than any banal constitutionalism. Only the autocratic tsar could, without any revolution, by the single word of a manifesto liberate 20 million slaves.”⁶⁴⁹ “They say that Russia is deprived of political liberty. They say that although Russian subjects have been given legal civil liberty, they have no political rights. Russian subjects have something more than political rights: they have political obligations. Each Russian subject is obliged to stand watch over the rights of the supreme power and to care for the benefit of the State. It is not so much that each one only has the right to take part in State life and care for its benefits: he is called to this by his duty as a loyal subject. That is our constitution. It is all contained, without paragraphs, in the short formula of our State oath of loyalty...”⁶⁵⁰

This was all true, and Dostoyevsky undoubtedly agreed with it in principle. However, he was doing something different from Katkov, and more difficult: not simply *state the truth* before an audience that was in no way ready to accept it in this direct, undiluted form, but *bring them closer to the truth, and inspire them with the truth*.

And with this aim he did not call on his audience to unite around the Tsar. In any case, he had certain reservations about the Tsardom that made him in some ways closer to his liberal audience than Katkov. In particular, he did not support the “paralysis” that the Petrine system had imposed on the Church, whereas Katkov’s views were closer to the official, semi-absolutist position.⁶⁵¹

[Critics of the Pushkin Speech: Leontiev](#)

If Katkov may have preferred more on the monarchy in Dostoyevsky’s speech, Constantine Leontiev was scandalised by the lack of mention of *the Church*. Volgin writes that “at the end of the Pushkin festival Pobedonostev in a restrained way, without going into details, congratulated Dostoyevsky on his success. And then

⁶⁴⁸ Katkov, *Moskovskie Vedomosti* (Moscow Gazette), 1867, N 88; in L.A. Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 31.

⁶⁴⁹ Katkov, *Moskovskie Vedomosti* (Moscow Gazette), 1881, N 115; in Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

⁶⁵⁰ Katkov, *Moskovskie Vedomosti* (Moscow Gazette), 1886, N 341; in Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

⁶⁵¹ For example: “The whole labour and struggle of Russian History consisted in taking away the power of each over all, in the annihilation of many centres of power. This struggle, which in various forms and under various conditions took place in the history of all the great peoples, was with us difficult, but successful, thanks to the special character of the Orthodox Church, which renounced earthly power and never entered into competition with the State. The difficult process was completed, everything was subjected to one supreme principle and there had to be no place left in the Russian people for any power not dependent on the monarch. In his one-man-rule the Russian people sees the testament of the whole of its life, on him they place all their hope” (*Moskovskie Vedomosti* (Moscow Gazette), № 12, 1884; in Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, p. 312). Again, “[the Tsar] is not only the sovereign of his country and the leader of his people: he is the God-appointed supervisor and protector of the Orthodox Church, which does not recognize any earthly deputy of Christ above it and has renounced any non-spiritual action, presenting all its cares about its earthly prosperity and order to the leader of the great Orthodox people that it has sanctified” (in Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, p. 313).

immediately after his congratulations he sent him 'Warsaw Diary' with an article by Constantine Leontiev. This article was angry and crushing. C. Leontiev not only annihilated the Speech point by point from the point of view of his ascetic... Christianity, but compared it directly with another public speech that had taken place at almost the same time as the Moscow festivities, in Yaroslavl diocese at a graduation ceremony in a school for the daughters of clergymen. 'In the speech of Mr. Pobedonostev (the speaker was precisely him - I.V.),' writes Leontiev, 'Christ is known in no other way that through the Church: "love the Church first of all". In the speech of Mr. Dostoyevsky Christ... is so accessible to each of us in bypassing the Church, that we consider that we have the right... to ascribe to the Saviour promises that He never uttered concerning "the universal brotherhood of the peoples", "general peace" and "harmony"..."⁶⁵²

We will recall that Leontiev wrote much about the invasion of the twin spirits of liberal cosmopolitanism and nationalism into the Orthodox world. So when he writes that Dostoyevsky "extracted out of the spirit of Pushkin's genius the prophetic thought of the 'cosmopolitan' mission of the Slavs"⁶⁵³, it is with scarcely concealed irony. This irony becomes crushing when he speaks about waiting for "the fulfilment of the prophecy of Dostoyevsky, 'until the Slavs teach the whole of humanity this pan-human love', which neither the Holy Fathers nor the Apostles nor the Divine Redeemer Himself was able to confirm absolutely in the hearts of men".⁶⁵⁴

But was he being fair? Dostoyevky was not looking to the fusion of the races into one liberal-ecumenist conglomerate, but to their union in spirit through the adoption of the Orthodox faith, the essential condition of true brotherhood among both individuals and nations. Nor was he a chauvinist, but simply believed that the Russian people was the bearer of a truly universal content, the Orthodox Christian Gospel, which it would one day preach to all nations; for "this Kingdom of the Gospel shall be preached to all nations, and *then* shall the end come" (Matthew 24.14).

As he wrote in another place: "You see, I've seen the Truth. I've seen it, and I know that men can be happy and beautiful without losing the ability to live on earth. I cannot - I refuse to believe that wickedness is the normal state of men. And when they laugh at me, it is essentially at that belief of mine."⁶⁵⁵

Leontiev returned to his criticism of this romantic, cosmopolitan or "chiliast" faith of Dostoyevsky's, as he considered it, in an article entitled "On Universal Love", in which he supported the liberal writer A.D. Gradovsky's claim that Dostoyevsky was ignoring the prophecies of the Antichrist. "The prophecy of the general reconciliation of people in Christ," he wrote, "is not an Orthodox prophecy, but some kind of general-humanitarian [prophecy]. The Church of this world does not promise this, and 'he who disobeys the Church, let him be unto thee as a pagan and a publican'"⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵² Volgin, op. cit., pp. 269-270.

⁶⁵³ Leontiev, "G. Katkov i ego vrugi na prazdnike Pushkina" (G. Katkov and his enemies at the Pushkin festivities), in *Vostok, Rossia i Slaviansstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavdom), op. cit., p. 279.

⁶⁵⁴ Leontiev, op. cit., p. 282.

⁶⁵⁵ Dostoyevsky, *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*.

⁶⁵⁶ Leontiev, "O vseмирnoj ljubvi", op. cit., p. 315.

Dostoyevsky replied: "In your triumphant irony concerning the words in my Speech to the effect that we may, perhaps, utter a word of 'final harmony' in mankind, you seize on the Apocalypse and venomously cry out:

"By a word you will accomplish that which has not been foretold in the Apocalypse! On the contrary, the Apocalypse foretells, not "final agreement", but final "disagreement" with the coming of the Antichrist. But why should the Antichrist come if we utter a word of "final harmony".'

"This is terribly witty, only you have cheated here. You probably have not read the Apocalypse to the end, Mr. Gradovsky. There it is precisely said that during the most powerful disagreements, not the Antichrist, but Christ will come and establish His Kingdom on earth (do you hear, on earth) for 1000 years. But it is added at this point: blessed is he who will take part in the first resurrection, that is, in this Kingdom. Well, it is in that time, perhaps, that we shall utter that word of final harmony which I talk about in my Speech."⁶⁵⁷

Leontiev counters by more or less accusing Dostoyevsky of the heresy of chiliasm: "It is not the complete and universal triumph of love and general righteousness on *this* earth that is promised to us by Christ and His Apostles; but, on the contrary, something in the nature of a seeming *failure* of the evangelical preaching on the earthly globe, for *the nearness of the end* must coincide with the last attempts to make everyone good Christians... Mr. Dostoyevsky introduces too *rose-coloured* a tint into Christianity in this speech. It is an *innovation* in relation to the Church, which expects nothing specially beneficial from humanity in the future..."⁶⁵⁸

However, of one thing the author of *The Devils*, that extraordinary prophecy of the collective Antichrist, cannot be accused: of underestimating the evil in man, and of his capacity for self-destruction. The inventor of Stavrogin and Ivan Karamazov did not look at contemporary Russian society with rose-tinted spectacles. Dostoyevsky's faith in a final harmony before the Antichrist did not blind him to where the world was going in his time.

"Europe is on the eve of a general and dreadful collapse," he wrote. "The ant-hill which has been long in the process of construction without the Church and Christ (since the Church, having dimmed its ideal, long ago and everywhere reincarnated itself in the state), with a moral principle shaken loose from its foundation, with everything general and absolute lost - this ant-hill, I say, is utterly undermined. The fourth estate is coming, it knocks at the door, and breaks into it, and if it is not opened to it, it will break the door. The fourth estate cares nothing for the former ideals; it rejects every existing law. It will make no compromises, no concessions; buttresses will not save the edifice. Concessions only provoke, but the fourth estate wants everything. There will come to pass something wholly unsuspected. All these parlamentarisms, all civic theories professed at present, all accumulated riches, banks, sciences, Jews -

⁶⁵⁷ Dostoyevsky, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij* (Complete Works), Leningrad, 1984, vol. 26, p. 323; in Leontiev, *op. cit.*, p. 717.

⁶⁵⁸ Leontiev, *op. cit.*, pp. 315, 322.

all these will instantly perish without leaving a trace - save the Jews, who even then will find their way out, so that this work will even be to their advantage."⁶⁵⁹

However, Leontiev accuses him also, and still more seriously, of distorting the basic message of the Gospel. Dostoyevsky's "love" or "humaneness" (*gumannost'*) is closer to the "love" and "humaneness" of Georges Sand than that of Christ. Christian love and humaneness is complex; it calls on people to love, not simply as such, without reference to God, but "in the name of God" and "for the sake of Christ". Dostoyevsky's "love", on the other hand, is "simple and 'autonomous'; step by step and thought by thought it can lead to that dry and self-assured utilitarianism, to that epidemic madness of our time, which we can call, using psychiatric language, *mania democratica progressiva*. The whole point is that we claim *by ourselves*, without the help of God, to be either very good or, which is still more mistaken, useful... "True, in all spiritual compositions there is talk of love for people. But in all such books we also find that *the beginning of wisdom* (that is, religious wisdom and the everyday wisdom that *proceeds from it*) is "the fear of God" - a simple, *very simple fear* both of torments beyond the grave and of other punishments, in the form of earthly tortures, sorrows and woes."⁶⁶⁰

However, far from espousing a "dry and self-assured utilitarianism", Dostoyevsky was one of its most biting critics, satirising the rationalist-humanist-utilitarian worldview under the images of "the crystal palace" and "the ant-hill". Nor did he in any way share in *mania democratica progressiva*.

Again, Leontiev rejects Dostoyevsky's call to the intelligentsia to humble themselves before the people. "I don't think that the family, public and in general *personal* in the narrow sense qualities of our simple people would be so worthy of imitation. It is hardly necessary to imitate their dryness in relation to the suffering and the sick, their unmerciful cruelty in anger, their drunkenness, the disposition of so many of them to cunning and even thievery... Humility before the people... is nothing other than *humility before that same Church which Mr. Pobedonostsev advises us to love*."⁶⁶¹

However, "one must know," wrote Dostoyevsky, "how to segregate the beauty of the Russian peasant from the layers of barbarity that have accumulated over it... Judge the people not by the abominations they so frequently commit, but by those great and sacred things for which, even in their abominations, they constantly yearn. Not all the people are villains; there are true saints, and what saints they are: they are radiant and illuminate the way for all!... Do not judge the People by what they are, but by what they would like to become."⁶⁶²

"I know that our educated men ridicule me: they refuse even to recognize 'this idea' in the people, pointing to their sins and abominations (for which these men themselves are responsible, having oppressed the people for two centuries); they also emphasize the people's prejudices, their alleged indifference to religion, while some of them imagine that the Russian people are simply atheists. Their great error consists of the fact that they refuse to recognize the existence of the Church as an element in the life

⁶⁵⁹ Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, Haslemere: Ianmead, 1984, p. 1003.

⁶⁶⁰ Leontiev, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

⁶⁶¹ Leontiev, *op. cit.*, pp. 326, 327.

⁶⁶² Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*; in Figes, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

of the people. I am not speaking about church buildings, or the clergy. I am now referring to our Russian 'socialism', the ultimate aim of which is the establishment of an oecumenical Church on earth in so far as the earth is capable of embracing it. I am speaking of the unquenchable, inherent thirst in the Russian people for great, universal, brotherly fellowship in the name of Christ. And even if this fellowship, as yet, does not exist, and if that church has not completely materialized, - not in prayers only but in reality - nevertheless the instinct for it and the unquenchable, oftentimes unconscious thirst for it, indubitably dwells in the hearts of the millions of our people.

"Not in communism, not in mechanical forms is the socialism of the Russian people expressed: they believe that they shall be finally saved *through the universal communion in the name of Christ*. This is our Russian socialism! It is the presence in the Russian people of this sublime unifying 'church' idea that you, our European gentlemen, are ridiculing."⁶⁶³

So Dostoyevsky's "theology" was by no means as unecclesiastical as Leontiev and Pobedonostsev thought. The idea of universal communion in the name of Christ may be considered utopian by some, but it is not heretical. And even if some of his phrases were not strictly accurate as ecclesiological theses, it is quite clear that the concepts of "Church" and "people" were much more closely linked in his mind than Leontiev and Pobedonostsev gave him credit for. Indeed, according to Vladimir Soloviev, on a journey to Optina in June, 1878, Dostoyevsky discussed with him his plans for his new novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and "the Church as a positive social ideal was to constitute the central idea of the new novel or series of novels".⁶⁶⁴

In some ways, in fact, Dostoyevsky was more inoculated against Westernism than Leontiev. Thus Leontiev complained to his friend Vasily Rozanov that Dostoyevsky's views on Papism were too severe. And he was so fixated on the evils of liberalism and cosmopolitanism that he could be called an ecumenist in relation to medieval and contemporary Papism - an error that Dostoyevsky, with his penetrating analysis of the kinship between Papism and Socialism, was not prone to.

Fr. Georges Florovsky points out that "of particular importance was the fact that Dostoyevsky reduced all his searching for vital righteousness to the reality of the Church. In his dialectics of living images (rather than only ideas), the reality of *sobornost'* becomes especially evident... Constantine Leontiev sharply accused Dostoyevsky of preaching a new, 'rose-coloured' Christianity (with reference to his Pushkin speech). 'All these hopes on earthly love and on earthly peace one can find in the songs of Béranger, and still more in Georges Sand many others. And in this connection not only the name of God, but even the name of Christ was mentioned more than once in the West.'... It is true, in his religious development Dostoyevsky proceeded precisely from these impressions and names mentioned by Leontiev. And he never renounced this 'humanism' later because, with all its ambiguity and insufficiency, he divined in it the possibility of becoming truly Christian, and strove to

⁶⁶³ Dostoyevsky, "The Pushkin Speech", in *The Diary of a Writer*, January, 1881, p. 1029.

⁶⁶⁴ Soloviev, in David Magarshack's introduction to his Penguin translation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. xi-xii.

enchurch (*otserkovit'*) them. Dostoyevsky saw only insufficiency where Leontiev found the complete opposite..."⁶⁶⁵

This is a penetrating remark, and reveals the difference in what we might call "pastoral" gifts between Dostoyevsky and Leontiev. Dostoyevsky started where his audience were – outside the Church, in the humanist-rationalist-utopian morass of westernism, and tried to build on what was still not completely corrupted in that world-view in order to draw his audience closer to Christ and the Church. In this way, he imitated St. Paul in Athens, who, seeing an altar with the inscription "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD", gave the Athenians the benefit of the doubt, as it were, and proceeded to declare: "He Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him I declare unto you" (Acts 17.23). Constantine Leontiev would perhaps have objected that the Athenians, as pagans, were certainly not worshipping the True God at this altar. And he would have been formally right... And yet St. Paul saw the germ of true worship in this inchoate paganism, and, building upon it, led at any rate a few to the truth. This was also the method of Dostoyevsky with his semi-pagan Russian audience. And he, too, made some converts...

Again, if Dostoyevsky emphasised certain aspects of the Christian teaching such as compassionate love, humility before your neighbour and the humble bearing of insults, more than others such as the fear of God, fasting, sacraments, obedience to authorities, this is not because he did not think the latter were important, but because he knew that his audience, being spiritually infants, could not take this "hard" food, but had to begin on the "milk" of those teachings which were not so distasteful to their spoiled palates. And the results proved him right from a pragmatic, missionary point of view. For the unbelieving intelligentsia of several subsequent generations have been stimulated to question their unbelief far more by the writings of Dostoyevsky than by those of Leontiev and Pobedonostev, undoubtedly Orthodox though the latter are.

An admirer of Leontiev, V.M. Lourié, has developed Leontiev's line of criticism. Analysing Dostoyevsky's remarks about "that rapture which most of all binds us to [God]", Lourié concludes that "'deification' is interpreted [by Dostoyevsky] as a psychological and even natural condition – a relationship of man to Christ, in Whom he believes as God. From such 'deification' there does not and cannot follow the deification of man himself. On the contrary, man remains as he was, 'on his own', and with his own psychology... In such an – unOrthodox – soteriological perspective, the patristic 'God became man, so that man should become God' is inevitably exchanged for something like 'God became man, so that man should become a good man'; ascetic sobriety turns out to be simply inadmissible, and it has to be squeezed out by various means of eliciting 'that rapture'."⁶⁶⁶

And yet what is more significant: the fact that there is a certain inaccuracy in Dostoyevsky's words from a strictly theological point of view, or the fact that Dostoyevsky talks about deification at all as the ultimate end of man? Surely the latter... Even among the Holy Fathers we find inaccuracies, and as Lourié points out

⁶⁶⁵ Florovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-301.

⁶⁶⁶ Lourié, "Dogmatika 'religii ljubvi'. Dogmaticheskie predstavlenia pozdnego Dostoevskogo" (The Dogmatics of 'the religion of love'. The Dogmatic ideas of the late Dostoyevsky), in V.A. Kotelnikov (ed.), *Khristianstvo i Russkaia Literatura* (Christianity and Russian Literature), St. Petersburg, 1996, p. 305.

in other places, the Palamite ideas of uncreated grace and the deification of man through grace had almost been lost even among the monasteries and academies of nineteenth-century Russia. Which makes Dostoyevsky's achievement in at least placing the germs of such thoughts in the mind of the intelligentsia, all the greater. For in what other non-monastic Russian writer of the nineteenth century do we find such a vivid, profound and above all *relevant* (to the contemporary spiritual state of his listeners) analysis of the absolute difference between becoming "god" through the assertion of self (Kirillov, Ivan Karamazov) and becoming god through self-sacrificial love and humility (Bishop Tikhon, Elder Zosima)?

Leontiev also asserted (followed by Lourié) that Dostoyevsky's monastic types are not true depictions of monastic holiness. "In his memoirs, Leontiev wrote: '*The Brothers Karamazov* can be considered an Orthodox novel only by those who are little acquainted with true Orthodoxy, with the Christianity of the Holy Fathers and the Elders of Athos and Optina.' In Leontiev's view (he himself became an Orthodox monk and lived at Optina for the last six months of his life), the work of Zola (in *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*) is 'far closer to the spirit of true personal monkhood than the superficial and sentimental inventions of Dostoyevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*.'"⁶⁶⁷

There is some truth in this criticism, and yet it misses more than one important point. The first is that Dostoyevsky was not intending to make a literal representation of anyone, but "an artistic tableau". And for that reason, as he wrote to Pobedonostsev in August, 1879, he was worried whether he would be understood. The "obligations of artistry... required that I present a modest and majestic figure, whereas life is full of the comic and is majestic only in its inner sense, so that in the biography of my monk I was involuntarily compelled by artistic demands to touch upon even the most vulgar aspects so as not to infringe artistic realism. Then, too, there are several teachings of the monk against which people will simply cry out that they are absurd, for they are all too ecstatic; of course, they are absurd in an everyday sense, but in another, inward sense, I think they are true."⁶⁶⁸

Again, as Fr. Georges Florovsky writes: "To the 'synthetic' Christianity of Dostoyevsky Leontiev opposed the contemporary monastic way of life or ethos, especially on Athos. And he insisted that in Optina *The Brothers Karamazov* was not recognized as 'a correct Orthodox composition', while Elder Zosima did not correspond to the contemporary monastic spirit. In his time Rozanov made a very true comment on this score. 'If it does not correspond to the type of Russian monasticism of the 18th-19th centuries (the words of Leontiev), then perhaps, and even probably, it corresponded to the type of monasticism of the 4th to 6th centuries'. In any case, Dostoyevsky was truly closer to Chrysostom (and precisely in his social teachings) than Leontiev... Rozanov adds: 'The whole of Russia read *The Brothers Karamazov*, and believed in the representation of the Elder Zosima. "The Russian Monk" (Dostoyevsky's term) appeared as a close and fascinating figure in the eyes of the whole of Russia, even her unbelieving parts.'... Now we know that the Elder Zosima was not drawn from nature, and in the given case Dostoyevsky did not proceed from Optina figures. It was an 'ideal' or 'idealised' portrait, written most of all from Tikhon of Zadonsk, and it was precisely Tikhon's works that inspired Dostoyevsky,

⁶⁶⁷ Magarshack, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.

⁶⁶⁸ Magarshack, *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

constituting the 'teachings' of Zosima... By the power of his artistic clairvoyance Dostoyevsky divined and recognized this seraphic stream in Russian piety, and prophetically continued the marked-out line..."⁶⁶⁹

Whatever the truth about the relationship between Dostoyevsky's fictional characters and real life, one thing is certain: both Dostoyevsky and the Optina Elders believed in the same remedy for the schism in the soul of Russian society - a return to Orthodoxy and the true Christian love that is found only in the Orthodox Church. There was no substantial difference between the teaching of Elder Ambrose and Dostoyevsky (whom Ambrose knew personally and commended as "a man who repents!"). Dostoyevsky would not have disagreed, for example, with this estimate of Elder Ambrose's significance for Russia: "Fr. Ambrose solved for Russian society its long-standing and difficult-to-solve questions of *what to do*, how to live, and for what to live. He also solved for Russian society the fatal question of how to unite the educated classes with the simple people. He said to Russian society that the meaning of life consists of love - not that humanistic, irreligious love which is proclaimed by a certain portion of our intelligentsia, and which is expressed by outward measures of improvement of life; but that true, profound Christian love, which embraces the whole soul of one's neighbour and heals by its life-giving power the very deepest and most excruciating wounds. Fr. Ambrose also solved the question of the blending of the intelligentsia with the people, uniting them in his cell in one general feeling of repentant faith in God. In this way he indicated to Russian society the one saving path of life, the true and lasting foundation of its well-being - in the first place spiritual and then, as a result, material..."⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁹ Florovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-302.

⁶⁷⁰ Fr. Sergius Chetverikov, *Elder Ambrose of Optina*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1997, p. 437

25. THE TSAR AND THE CONSTITUTION

The great reforms of Tsar Alexander's reign, and especially those of the zemstva, which had given the nobility a taste of administration, stimulated demands for the introduction of a constitutional monarchy. The initiative here came from the Moscow nobility, who in January, 1865, as Ivanov writes, "agitated for the convening of the people's representatives, thanking the Tsar for his wise beginnings. The Moscow nobility, who always strove for the good of the State, asked him not to stop on his chosen path and bring to completion the state building begun by him 'through the convening of a general assembly of elected delegates from the Russian land for the discussion of the needs that are common to the whole state'. Emperor Alexander did not accept this appeal. He underlined that 'not one assembly can speak in the name of the other classes' and that the right to care for what is useful and beneficial for the State belonged to him as emperor.

"Alexander thought and wisely foresaw that the granting of a constitution for Russia would be disastrous for the latter.

"In a private conversation with one of the composers of the appeal (Golokhvostov), Alexander said: 'What do you want? A constitutional form of administration? I give you my word, at this table, that I would be ready to sign any constitution you like if I were convinced that it was useful for Russia. *But I know that if I do this today, tomorrow Russia will disintegrate into pieces.*'

"The Tsar's forebodings had solid foundations.

"On April 4, 1868 Karakozov made an attempt on the life of the Tsar.

"It was necessary to speak, not about a constitution, but about the salvation of the State..."⁶⁷¹

As Dominic Lieven writes, Alexander "explained to Otto von Bismarck, who was then Prussian minister in Petersburg, that 'the idea of taking counsel of subjects other than officials was not in itself objectionable and that great participation by respectable notables in official business could only be advantageous. The difficulty, if not impossibility, of putting this principle into effect lay only in the experience of history that it had never been possible to stop a country's liberal development at the point beyond which it should not go. This would be particularly difficult in Russia, where the necessary political culture, thoughtfulness and circumspection were only to be found in relatively small circles. Russia must not be judged by Petersburg, of all the empire's towns the least Russian one... The revolutionary party would not find it easy to corrupt the people's convictions and make the masses conceive their interests to be divorced from those of the dynasty. The Emperor continued that 'throughout the interior of the empire the people still see the monarch as the paternal and absolute Lord set by God over the land; this belief, which has almost the force of a religious sentiment, is completely independent of any personal loyalty of which I could be the

⁶⁷¹ S. P. Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, p. 340.

object. I like to think that it will not be lacking too in the future. To abdicate the absolute power with which my crown is invested would be to undermine the aura of that authority which has dominion over the nation. The deep respect, based on innate sentiment, with which right up to now the Russian people surrounds the throne of its Emperor cannot be parcelled out. I would diminish without any compensation the authority of the government if I wanted to allow representatives of the nobility or the nation to participate in it. Above all, God knows what would become of relations between the peasants and the lords if the authority of the Emperor was not still sufficiently intact to exercise the dominating influence.'...

"... After listening to Alexander's words Bismarck commented that if the masses lost faith in the crown's absolute power the risk of a murderous peasant war would become very great. He concluded that 'His Majesty can still rely on the common man both in the army and among the civilian masses but the "educated classes", with the exception of the older generation, are stoking the fires of a revolution which, if it comes to power, would immediately turn against themselves.' Events were to show that this prophecy was as relevant in Nicholas II's era as it had been during the reign of his grandfather..."⁶⁷²

The revolutionaries did not rest. In 1876 in London, the Jewish revolutionaries Liberman, Goldenburg and Zuckerman worked out a plan for the murder of the Tsar. Goldenburg was the first to offer his services as the murdered, but his suggestion was refused, "since they found that he, as a Jew, should not take upon himself this deed, for then it would not have the significance that was fitting for society and, the main thing, the people."⁶⁷³

"On April 2, 1879 the village teacher Alexander Soloviev fired at the Emperor Alexander near the Winter palace while he was going for his morning walk.

"On May 28, 1879 Soloviev was hanged, while three weeks later a secret congress of revolutionaries in Lipetsk took the decision to kill the Tsar.

"The propaganda of socialism, they argued, was impossible in Russia under the existing form of government, and for that reason it was necessary to strive for its overthrow, for the limitation of autocratic power, for the bestowal of political freedoms and the convening of the people's representatives. The means for the attainment of this goal had to be terror, by which the plotters understood the murder of people in [high] positions, and first of all the Tsar.

"On November 19, 1879 the terrorists tried to blow up the Emperor's train."⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷² Lieven, *Nicholas II*, pp. 142, 143.

⁶⁷³ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

⁶⁷⁴ "The participation of the Masons in this deed," writes Selyaninov, "cannot be doubted. This was discovered when the Russian government turned to the French government with the demand that it hand over Hartman, who was hiding in Paris under the name Meyer. Scarcely had Hartman been arrested at the request of the Russian ambassador when the French radicals raised an unimaginable noise. The Masonic deputy Engelhardt took his defence upon himself, trying to prove that Meyer and Hartman were different people. The Russian ambassador Prince Orlov began to receive threatening letters. Finally, the leftist deputies were preparing to raise a question and bring about the fall of the ministry. The latter took fright, and, without waiting for the documents promised by Orlov that could

“In 1880 a mine was laid and exploded under the Tsar’s dining room in the Winter palace.

“On February 12, 1880, on the insistence of the Tsarevich-heir, a ‘Supreme Investigative Commission’ was founded and Loris-Melikov was given dictatorial powers.

“From February 12 to August 6, 1880 there was established the so-called ‘dictatorship of the heart’ of Count Loris-Melikov.

“The liberals from the *zemstva* and the professors were demanding a constitution, for this was the only way to struggle with the insurrection. The terrorists were attacking the government with bombs, daggers and revolvers, while the government replied with freedoms and constitutions.

“Count Loris-Melikov was, as was only to be expected, a humanist and a liberal and was under the direct influence of the Mason Koshelev.

“Count Loris-Melikov entered into close union with the *zemstva* and the liberal organs of the press.

“The liberal Abaza was appointed to the ministry of finance⁶⁷⁵; Tolstoy was retired.

“Count Loris-Melikov conducted a subtle intrigue and suggested the project for a State structure that received the name of ‘the constitution of Loris-Melikov’ in society.

“He suggested stopping the creation in St. Petersburg of ‘temporary-preparatory commissions’ so that their work should be subjected to scrutiny with the participation of people taken from the *zemstva* and ‘certain significant towns’, taken, as Tatischev put it, ‘from the elected people’.

“Lev Tikhomirov, the penitent revolutionary and former terrorist, being well acquainted with the events and people of the reign of Alexander II Nikolaevich, affirmed that Count Loris-Melikov was deceiving his Majesty and by his ‘dictatorship of the heart’ was creating a revolutionary leaven in the country.

have established the identity of Hartman-Meyer, hastily agreed with the conclusions of Brother Engelhardt and helped Hartman to flee to England... In London Hartman was triumphantly received into the Masonic lodge ‘The Philadelphia.’” (in Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 346).

“In this connection an interesting correspondence took place between two high-ranking Masons, Felix Pia and Giuseppe Garibaldi. Pia wrote: ‘The most recent attempt on the life of the All-Russian despot confirms your legendary phrase: “The Internationale is the sun of the future!”’, and speaks about the necessity of defending ‘our brave friend Hartman’. In reply, Garibaldi praised Hartman, and declared: ‘Political murder is the secret of the successful realization of the revolution.’ And added: ‘Siberia is the not the place for the comrades of Hartman, but for the Christian clergy.’ In 1881 Hartman arrived in America, where he was received with a storm of ovations. At one of the workers’ meetings he declared that he had arrived in the USA (!) with the aim of... helping the Russian people (!) to win freedom.” (in Archpriest Lev Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 356).

⁶⁷⁵ Abaza argued in favour of a constitution as follows: “The throne cannot rest exclusively on a million bayonets and an army of officials” (quoted in Figes, *A People’s Tragedy*, p. 41).

“Emperor Alexander II confirmed the report of his minister on the constitution on February 17, 1881, and on the morning of March 1 also confirmed the text announcing this measure, so that before its publication it should be debated at the session of the Council of Ministers on March 4.

“On the same day that the report of Count Loris-Melikov was signed, a bomb thrown by terrorists, cut short the life of the Sovereign.”⁶⁷⁶

Ironically, since Alexander III rejected the project for a constitution, Russia had been saved from a constitution by the bombs of the terrorists...

"The murder of Alexander II," writes G.P. Izvestieva, "was seen by monarchical Russia as the culmination of the liberal 'inebriation' of earlier years, as the shame and guilt of all, God's judgement and a warning."⁶⁷⁷ As St. Ambrose of Optina wrote on March 14: "I don't know what to write to you about the terrible present times and the pitiful state of affairs in Russia. There is one consolation in the prophetic words of St. David: 'The Lord scattereth the plans of the heathens, He setteth aside the devices of the peoples, and He bringeth to nought the plans of princes' (Psalm 32.10). The Lord allowed Alexander II to die a martyric death, but He is powerful to give help from on high to Alexander III to catch the evildoers, who are infected with the spirit of the Antichrist. Since apostolic times the spirit of the Antichrist has worked through his forerunners, as the apostle writes: 'The mystery of iniquity is already working, only it is held back now, until it is removed from the midst' (II Thessalonians 2.7). The apostolic words 'is held back now' refer to the powers that be and the ecclesiastical authorities, against which the forerunners of the Antichrist rise up in order to abolish and annihilate them upon the earth. Because the Antichrist, according to the explanation of the interpreters of Holy Scripture, must come during a time of anarchy on earth. But until then he sits in the bottom of hell, and acts through his forerunners. First he acted through various heretics who disturbed the Orthodox Church, and especially through the evil Arians, educated men and courtiers; and then he acted cunningly through the educated Masons; and finally, now, through the educated nihilists, he has begun to act blatantly and crudely, beyond measure. But their illness will turn back upon their heads, as it is written in the Scriptures. Is it not the most extreme madness to work with all one's might, not sparing one's own life, in order to be hung on the gallows, and in the future life to fall into the bottom of hell to be tormented forever in Tartarus? But desperate pride pays no attention, but desires in every way to express its irrational boldness. Lord, have mercy on us!"⁶⁷⁸

It was not only the holy elders who saw in Russia the main obstacle to the triumph of "the mystery of iniquity". "The same withholding role in Russia," writes Mikhail Nazarov, "was seen by the founders of Marxism: '... It is clear to us that the revolution

⁶⁷⁶ Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 344-345. In broad daylight, a bomb was thrown at the Tsar's carriage. It injured some of the guards but left him unhurt. Disregarding his personal safety, he left his carriage and was attending to the injured when a second bomb was thrown, fatally wounding him and many others. He was rushed to the Winter Palace where he died in the presence of his grief-stricken family. Both his son and heir, the future Tsar Alexander III, and his grandson, the future Tsar Nicholas II, were present.

⁶⁷⁷ Izvestieva, "Dmitrij Andreevich Tolstoj", *Voprosy Istorii (Questions of History)*, 2006 (3), p. 84.

⁶⁷⁸ St. Ambrose, in Sergius Fomin & Tatiana Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem (Russia before the Second Coming)*, Moscow: "Rodnik", 1994, vol. II, p. 350.

has only one truly terrible enemy – Russia’; the role of Russia is ‘the role predestined from on high of the saviour of order’.

“In those years Marx wrote in the *New Rhine Newspaper* (the organ of the ‘League of Communists’): ‘Russia has become a colossus which does not cease to elicit amazement. Russia is the one phenomenon of its kind in history: the terrible power of this huge Empire... on a world scale’. ‘In Russia, in this despotic government, in this barbaric race, there is such energy and activity as one would look for in vain in the monarchies of the older States’. ‘The Slavic barbarians are innate counter-revolutionaries’, ‘particular enemies of democracy’.

“Engels echoed Marx: what was necessary was ‘a pitiless struggle to the death with Slavdom, which has betrayed... the revolution... a war of destruction and unrestrained terror’. ‘A general war will pay back the Slavic barbarians with a bloody revenge.’ ‘Yes, the world war that is to come will sweep off the face of the earth not only the reactionary classes and dynasties, but also whole reactionary peoples – and this will be progress!’”⁶⁷⁹

The elders saw signs of the coming Antichrist not only in specific acts of terrorism, such as the murder of Alexander II, but also in the general weakening and softening of the power of the Orthodox Autocracy. Thus Constantine Leontiev, a disciple of Elder Ambrose of Optina, wrote: “One great spiritual elder said: ‘It is true that morals have become much softer. But on the other hand most people’s self-opinion has grown, and pride has increased. They no longer like to submit to any authorities, whether spiritual or secular: they just don’t want to. The gradual weakening and abolition of the authorities is a sign of the approach of the kingdom of the antichrist and the end of the world. It is impossible to substitute a mere softening of morals for Christianity.’”⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁹ Nazarov, “Krovavaia mest’ slavianskim varvaram” (Bloody revenge on the Slavic barbarians), address to the international scientific conference, ‘The Jewish-Bolshevik coup of 1917 as the precondition of the red terror and forced starvations’, <http://www.livejournal.com/users/rocornews/174447.html>.

⁶⁸⁰ Leontiev, in Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 350.

26. SOLOVIEV AND POBEDONOSTSEV ON CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS

The philosopher Vladimir Soloviev was, for good and for ill, the most influential thinker in Russia until his death in 1900, and for some time after. In 1874, at the age of 23, he defended his master's thesis, "The Crisis of Western Philosophy", at the Moscow Theological Academy. Coming at a time when the influence of western positivism was at its peak, this bold philosophical vindication of the Christian faith drew the attention of many; and his lectures on Godmanhood in St. Petersburg were attended by Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. Unfortunately, his philosophy of "pan-unity" contained pantheistic elements; there is evidence that his lectures on Godmanhood were plagiarized from the works of Schelling⁶⁸¹; and his theory of Sophia, the Wisdom of God, was both heretical in itself and gave birth to other heresies.⁶⁸²

As regards his social and political teaching, we find in Soloviev a mixture of Slavophilism and Westernism. On the one hand, he believed fervently, with the Slavophiles, in the Divine mission of Russia. But on the other, as we have seen, he was fiercely critical of the nationalism of the later Slavophiles, he admired Peter the Great and did not admire Byzantium. He felt drawn to Roman Catholic universalism and became an early "prophet" of Orthodox-Catholic ecumenism. The main problem with the Slavs and the Orthodox, Soloviev believed, was their nationalism. Thus in 1885 he wrote with regard to the Bulgarian schism: "Once the principle of nationality is introduced into the Church as the main and overriding principle, once the Church is recognized to be an attribute of the people, it naturally follows that the State power that rules the people must also rule the Church that belongs to the people. The national Church is necessarily subject to the national government, and in such a case a special church authority can exist only for show..."⁶⁸³

Generally speaking, Soloviev was most convincing and Orthodox in his earlier articles. Thus in "Three Forces" (1877), he identified three basic forces as having determined the whole of world history, which were at present incarnate especially in Islam, Democracy and the Orthodox Autocracy. Soloviev characterized Islam as being under the dominating influence of what he called the first force, which he defined as "the striving to subject humanity in all its spheres and at every level of its life to one supreme principle which in its exclusive unity strives to mix and confuse the whole variety of private forms, to suppress the independence of the person and the freedom of private life." Democracy he characterized as being under the dominating influence of the second force, which he defined as "the striving to destroy the stronghold of dead unity, to give freedom everywhere to private forms of life, freedom to the person and his activity; ... the extreme expression of this force is general egoism and anarchy and a multitude of separate individuals without an inner bond." The third force, which Soloviev believed was incarnate especially in the Slavic world, is defined as "giving a

⁶⁸¹ Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky), *Zhizneopisanie Blazhenneishago Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago* (Biography of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), New York, 1971, volume 1, pp. 103-104.

⁶⁸² For Soloviev Sophia was the feminine principle of God, His 'other'. For some of his heretical followers, such as Protopriest Sergius Bulgakov, it was the Mother of God.

⁶⁸³ Soloviev, V. "Golos Moskvyy" (The Voice of Moscow), 14 March, 1885; quoted in S. Fomin, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad, 1993.

positive content to the two other forces, freeing them from their exclusivity, and reconciling the unity of the higher principle with the free multiplicity of private forms and elements."⁶⁸⁴

As N.O. Lossky writes, expounding Soloviev: "The relation between free theocracy and the past history of mankind can be established if we examine the 'three fundamental forces' which govern human evolution. One of these forces is *centripetal*: its purpose is to subordinate humanity to one supreme principle, to do away with all the manifoldness of particular forms, suppressing the freedom of personal life. The second force is *centrifugal*; it denies the importance of general unifying principles. The result of the exclusive action of the first force would be 'one master and a dead multitude of slaves': the extreme expression of the second force would be, on the contrary, 'general egoism and anarchy, a multitude of separate units without any inner bond.' The third force 'lends the positive content to the first two, relieves them of their exclusiveness, reconciles the unity of the supreme principle with the free multiplicity of particular forms and elements and thus creates the wholeness of the universal human organism giving it a peaceful inner life.'

"The third force, which is called upon to give the human evolution its absolute content, can only be a revelation of the higher divine world; the nation which is to manifest this force must only serve as an *intermediary* between mankind and the world and be its free and conscious instrument. Such a nation must not have any specific limited task; it is not called upon to work out the forms and elements of human existence, but only to impart a living soul, to give life and wholeness to disrupted and benumbed humanity through its union with the eternal divine principle. Such a people has no need for any special prerogatives, any particular powers or outward gifts, for it does not act of its own accord, it does not fulfil a task of its own. All that is required of the people which is the bearer of the third divine force is that it should be free from limitedness and one-sidedness, should elevate itself over the narrow specialized interests, that it should not assert itself with an exclusive energy in some particular lower sphere of activity and knowledge, that it should be indifferent to the whole of this life with its petty interests. It must wholly believe in the positive reality of the higher world and be submissive to it. These qualities undoubtedly belong to the racial character of the Slavs, and in particular to the national character of the Russian people.'

"Soloviev hopes, therefore, that the Slavs and especially Russia, will lay the foundations of a free theocracy. He also tries to prove this by the following arguments of a less general nature. 'Our people's outer form of a servant, Russia's miserable position in the economic and other respects, so far from being an argument against her calling, actually confirms it. For the supreme power to which the Russian people has to introduce mankind is not of this world, and external wealth and order are of no moment for it. Russia's great historical mission, from which alone her immediate tasks derive importance, is a religious mission in the highest sense of this word.'"⁶⁸⁵

Moving still more in a westernizing direction, Soloviev feared that Russia's political ambitions in the Balkans and the Middle East were crudely imperialist and did not serve her own deepest interests, but rather the petty nationalisms of other nations.

⁶⁸⁴ Soloviev, "Tri Sily" ("Three Forces"), reprinted in *Novy Mir* (New World), N 1, 1989, pp. 198-199.

⁶⁸⁵ Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952, pp. 114-115.

Thus in "The Russian Idea" (1888) he wrote: "The true greatness of Russia is a dead letter for our pseudo-patriots, who want to impose on the Russian people a historical mission in their image and in the limits of their own understanding. Our national work, if we are to listen to them, is something that couldn't be more simple and that depends on one force only - the force of arms. To beat up the expiring Ottoman empire, and then crush the monarchy of the Habsburgs, putting in the place of these states a bunch of small independent national kingdoms that are only waiting for this triumphant hour of their final liberation in order to hurl themselves at each other. Truly, it was worth Russia suffering and struggling for a thousand years, and becoming Christian with St. Vladimir and European with Peter the Great, constantly in the meantime occupying its unique place between East and West, and all this just so as in the final analysis to become the weapon of the 'great idea' of the Serbs and the 'great idea' of the Bulgarians!

"But that is not the point, they will tell us: the true aim of our national politics is Constantinople. Apparently, they have already ceased to take the Greeks into account - after all, they also have their 'great idea' of pan-hellenism. But the most important thing would to know: with what, and in the name of what can we enter into Constantinople? What can we bring there except the pagan idea of the absolute state and the principles of caesaropapism, which were borrowed by us from the Greeks and which have already destroyed Byzantium? In the history of the world there are mysterious events, but there are no senseless ones. No! It is not this Russia which we see now, the Russia which has betrayed its best memories, the lessons of Vladimir and Peter the Great, the Russia which is possessed by blind nationalism and unfettered obscurantism, it is not this Russia that will one day conquer the second Rome and put an end to the fateful eastern question..."⁶⁸⁶

In 1889, in his work *Russia and the Universal Church*⁶⁸⁷, Soloviev argued in favour of a union between the Russian empire and the Roman papacy (he himself became a Catholic, but returned to Orthodoxy on his deathbed). The Roman papacy was to be preferred to the Orthodox Church as the partner to the Russian empire because, in Soloviev's opinion, the Orthodox Church had become a group of national Churches, rather than the Universal Church, and had therefore lost the right to represent Christ.

The Orthodox Church had a wealth of mystical contemplation, which must be preserved. "In Eastern Christendom for the last thousand years religion has been identified with personal piety, and prayer has been regarded as the one and only religious activity. The Western church, without disparaging individual piety as the true germ of all religion, seeks the development of this germ and its blossoming into a social activity organized for the glory of God and the universal good of mankind. The Eastern prays, the Western prays and labours."

However, only a supernational spiritual power independent of the State could be a worthy partner of the State, forming the basis of a universal theocracy. For "here below, the Church has not the perfect unity of the heavenly Kingdom, but nevertheless she must have a certain real unity, a bond at once organic and spiritual which

⁶⁸⁶ Soloviev, in N.G. Fyodorovsky, *V poiskakh svoego puti: Rossia mezhdru Evropoj i Aziej* (In Search of her own Path: Russia between Europe and Asia), Moscow, 1997, pp. 334-335.

⁶⁸⁷ Published in French as *La Russie et l'Eglise universelle*.

constitutes her a concrete institution, a living body and a moral individual. Though she does not include the whole of mankind in an actual material sense, she is nevertheless *universal* insofar as she cannot be confined exclusively to any one nation or group of nations, but must have an international centre from which to spread throughout the whole universe...

“Were she not one and universal, she could not serve as the foundation of the positive unity of all peoples, which is her chief mission. Were she not infallible, she could not guide mankind in the true way; she would be a blind leader of the blind. Finally were she not independent, she could not fulfil her duty towards society; she would become the instrument of the powers of this world and would completely fail in her mission...”

“If the particular spiritual families which between them make up mankind are in reality to form a single Christian family, a single Universal Church, they must be subject to a common fatherhood embracing all Christian nations. To assert that there exist in reality nothing more than national Churches is to assert that the members of a body exist in and for themselves and that the body itself has no reality. On the contrary, Christ did not found any particular Church. He created them all in the real unity of the Universal Church which He entrusted to Peter as the one supreme representative of the divine Fatherhood towards the whole family of the sons of Man.

“It was by no mere chance that Jesus Christ specially ascribed to the first divine Hypostasis, the heavenly Father, that divine-human act which made Simon Bar-Jona the first social father of the whole human family and the infallible master of the school of mankind.”

For Soloviev, wrote Lossky, “the ideal of the Russian people is of [a] *religious* nature, it finds its expression in the idea of ‘Holy Russia’; the capacity of the Russian people to combine Eastern and Western principles has been historically proved by the success of Peter the Great’s reforms; the capacity of national self-renunciation, necessary for the recognition of the Pope as the Primate of the Universal Church, is inherent in the Russian people, as may be seen, among other things, from the calling in of the Varangians [?]. Soloviev himself gave expression to this characteristic of the Russian people when he said that it was ‘better to give up patriotism than conscience’, and taught that the cultural mission of a great nation is not a *privilege*: it must not dominate, but *serve* other peoples and all mankind.

“Soloviev’s Slavophil messianism never degenerated into a narrow nationalism. In the nineties he was looked upon as having joined the camp of the Westernizers. In a series of articles he violently denounced the epigons of Slavophilism who had perverted its original conception. In the article ‘Idols and Ideals’, written in 1891, he speaks of ‘the transformation of the lofty and all-embracing Christian ideals into the coarse and limited idols of our modern paganism... National messianism was the main idea of the old Slavophiles; this idea, in some form or other, was shared by many peoples; it assumed a pre-eminently religious and mystical character with the Poles (Towianski) and with some French dreamers of the thirties and forties (Michel, Ventra, etc.). What is the relation of such national messianism to the true Christian idea? We will not say that there is a contradiction of principle between them. The true Christian

ideal can assume this national messianic form, but it becomes then very *easily pervertible* (to use an expression of ecclesiastical writers); i.e., it can easily change into the corresponding idol of anti-Christian nationalism, which did happen in fact.' ...

"Soloviev struggled in his works against every distortion of the Christian ideal of general harmony; he also struggled against all the attempts made by man to satisfy his selfishness under the false pretence of serving a noble cause. Such are for instance the aims of chauvinistic nationalism. Many persons believe, Soloviev tells us, that in order to serve the imaginary interests of their people, 'everything is permitted, the aim justifies the means, black turns white, lies are preferable to truth and violence is glorified and considered as valor... This is first of all an insult to that very nationality which we desire to serve.' In reality, 'peoples flourished and were exalted only when they did not serve their own interests as a goal in itself, but pursued higher, *general* ideal goods.' Trusting the highly sensitive conscience of the Russian people, Soloviev wrote in his article, 'What is Demanded of a Russian Party?': 'If instead of doping themselves with Indian opium, our Chinese neighbors suddenly took a liking to the poisonous mushrooms which abound in the Siberian woods, we would be sure to find Russian jingos, who in their ardent interest in Russian trade, would want Russia to induce the Chinese government to permit the free entry of poisonous mushrooms into the Celestial empire... Nevertheless, every plain Russian will say that no matter how vital an interest may be, Russia's honor is also worth something; and, according to Russian standards, this honor definitely forbids a shady deal to become an issue of national politics.'

"Like Tiutchev, Soloviev dreamed of Russia becoming a Christian world monarchy; yet he wrote in a tone full of anxiety: 'Russia's life has not yet determined itself completely, it is still torn by the struggle between the principle of light and that of darkness. Let Russia become a Christian realm, even without Constantinople, a Christian realm in the full sense of the word, that is, one of justice and mercy, and all the rest will be surely added unto this.'"⁶⁸⁸

Soloviev was undoubtedly right in his critique of chauvinist nationalism – although it applied more to the Balkan Orthodox than to Russia. But in his admiration for Rome he went too far in the opposite direction.

Dostoyevsky disagreed with his friend on this point, considering the papacy to be, not so much a Church as a State. Nor did he agree with the doctrine of papal infallibility, which Soloviev also supported. As Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) wrote in 1890, in his review of Soloviev's book: "If a sinful man cannot be accepted as the supreme head of the Universal Church without this bride of Christ being completely dethroned, accepting the compatibility of the infallibility of religious edicts with a life of sin, with a wicked will, would amount to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of wisdom by admitting His compatibility with a sinful mind. Khomiakov very justly says that besides the holy inspiration of the apostles and prophets, Scripture tells us of only one inspiration – inspiration of the obsessed. But if this sort of inspiration was going on in Rome, the Church would not be the Church of Christ, but the Church of His enemy. And this is exactly how Dostoyevsky defines it in his 'Grand Inquisitor'

⁶⁸⁸ Lossky, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-117.

who says to Christ: 'We are not with Thee, but with him'... Dostoyevsky in his 'Grand Inquisitor' characterised the Papacy as a doctrine which is attractive exactly because of its worldly power, but devoid of the spirit of Christian communion with God and of contempt for the evil of the world..."⁶⁸⁹

As a warning against the dangers of a Russian nationalism lacking the universalist dimension of the early Slavophiles and Dostoyevsky, Soloviev's critique had value. But his attempt to tear Russia away from Constantinople and towards Rome was misguided. And it had an unhealthy influence on other writers, such as D.S. Merezhkovsky. Thus Merezhkovsky, according to Sergius Firsov, "found it completely normal to compare Roman Catholicism headed by the Pope and the Russian kingdom headed by the Autocrat. Calling these theocracies (that is, attempts to realise the City of God in the city of man) false, Merezhkovsky pointed out that they came by different paths to the same result: the western - to turning the Church into a State, and the eastern - to engulfing the Church in the State. 'Autocracy and Orthodoxy are two halves of one religious whole,' wrote Merezhkovsky, 'just as the papacy and Catholicism are. The Tsar is not just the Tsar, the head of the State, but also the head of the Church, the first priest, the anointed of God, that is, in the final, if historically not yet realised, yet mystically necessary extent of his power - 'the Vicar of Christ', the same Pope, Caesar and Pope in one.'"⁶⁹⁰

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Merezhkovsky's comparison of the Pope and the Tsar, though greatly exaggerated, had a certain basis in fact; in the fact, namely, that the relationship between Church and State in Russia since Peter the Great had not been canonical, but leaned in a caesaropapist direction, with the Tsar having too great a control over the decisions of the Church hierarchy. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this question became increasingly topical, with general agreement on the nature of the problem, but much less on its solution.

The debate centred especially on the personality and policies of Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev, who from April, 1880 to October, 1905 was over-procurator of the Russian Holy Synod and whose policy of Orthodox conservative nationalism was dominant in Russia until the publication of the October manifesto in 1905.

Pobedonostsev was one of the most far-sighted prophets of the revolution. Thus as early as 1873, Dostoyevsky's journal *Grazhdanin* published a series of articles of his entitled "Russian Leaflets from Abroad", in which he wrote: "A cloud can be seen on the horizon that will make things terrible, because we did not see it before. This is the fanaticism of unbelief and denial. It is not simple denial of God, but denial joined to mad hatred for God and for everyone who believes in God. May God grant that nobody lives to the time when fanaticism of this type gains power and receives the power to bind and to loose the human conscience."

⁶⁸⁹ Khrapovitsky, "The Infallibility of the Pope according to Vladimir Soloviev", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 37, N 4, July-August, 1987, pp. 37, 43.

⁶⁹⁰ Firsov, *Russkaia Tserkov' nakanune peremen (konets 1890-kh - 1918 g.)* (The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes, 1890s -1918), Moscow, 2002, pp. 39-40.

And again: "There is no doubt that if the atheists of our time ever come to the triumph of the Commune and the complete removal of Christian services, they will create for themselves some kind of pagan cult, will raise some kind of statue to themselves or their ideal and will begin to honour it, while forcing others to do the same."⁶⁹¹³⁸⁴

Since Pobednostsev personified this policy of the supremacy of the Orthodox Autocracy perhaps even more than the tsars whom he served, and since his influence extended far beyond his role as over-procurator, he was reviled more than any other figure by the liberal press. He was portrayed as standing for the complete, tyrannical domination by the State of every aspect of Russian life; and among the epithets the press gave him were "prince of darkness, hatred and unbelief", "state vampire", "the great inquisitor" and "the greatest deicide in the whole of Russian history".⁶⁹²

These were vile slanders; for Pobedonostev was a pious man who believed in the Church, and educated the future Tsar Nicholas on the necessity of his being a servant of the Church. And although he never tried to correct the uncanonical state of Church-State relations, and even expressed the view that Peter the Great's removal of the patriarchate was "completely lawful", his work as over-procurator was in fact very beneficial. Thus he did a great deal for the development of parish schools, an essential counter-measure to the spread of liberal and atheist education in the secular schools, for the spread of the Word of God in various languages throughout the empire, for the improvement in the lot of the parish priest and for an enormous (fourfold) increase in the number of monks over the previous reign.⁶⁹³

At the same time, it cannot be denied that the power that the tsars wielded over the Church through the over-procurators was anti-canonical. In the 16th and 17th centuries there had been something like real "symphony" between Church and State. However, the eighteenth century tsars from Peter the Great onwards succeeded, through the lay office of over-procurator, in making the Church dependent on the State to a large degree. Finally, through his decrees of November 13, 1817 and May 15, 1824 Alexander I made the Holy Synod into a department of State. Fortunately, the over-procurators of the 19th century were in general more Orthodox than those of the 18th century. But this did not change the essentially uncanonical nature of the situation...⁶⁹⁴

Some of the complaints about the State's interference in Church affairs were exaggerated - for example, the Petrine decree that priests should report the contents of

⁶⁹¹ Pobedonostev, in Protopriest Michael Ardov, "Arkhi-Kontrevoliutsioner", *Nasha Strana*, N 2929, December 3, 2011, p. 3.

⁶⁹² A.I. Peshkov, "Kto razoriaet - mal vo Tsarstvii Khristovym" (He who destroys is least in the Kingdom of Christ), in K.P. Pobedonostev, *Sochinenia* (Works), St. Petersburg, p. 3.

⁶⁹³ Firsov, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁹⁴ Peshkov provides a certain, not very convincing correction to this point of view: "It is necessary to take into account that even in the Synod he did not have that *direct* administrative power which any minister in Russia's Tsarist government possessed in the department subject to him, since the Most Holy Synod was a collegial organ, whose decision-making required the unanimity of its members. As Pobedonostev himself emphasised, '*juridically* I have no power to issue orders in the Church and the department. You have to refer to the Synod.' In particular, when Metropolitan Isidore of St. Petersburg expressed himself against the publication in Russia of the New Testament in the translation of V.A. Zhukovsky, K.P. Pobedonostev had to publish it abroad, in Berlin..." (Peshkov, *op. cit.*, p. 7)

confession if they were seditious. As Pobedonostsev himself pointed out, this had long been a dead letter. Others, however, were serious and had major consequences – as, for example, the tendency of over-procurators to move bishops from one diocese to another.

Firsov writes: “While C.P. Pobedonostsev was over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod, the transfer of hierarchs from see to see was finally turned into a kind of ‘educational’ measure. The paradox consisted in the fact that ‘while exalting the position of bishops from an external point of view, he [Pobedonostsev] at the same time had to increase his control over them’. The over-procurator was quite unable to square this circle: he wanted an intensification of Episcopal activity and at the same time did not want to present the hierarchs with the freedom of action that was necessary for this. State control over the Church had to be kept up. It was precisely for this reason that the over-procurator so frequently moved Vladykos from see to see. According to the calculations of a contemporary investigator, ‘out of 49 diocesan bishops moved in 1881-1894, eight were moved twice and eight – three times. On average in one year three diocesan bishops were moved and three vicars; four vicars received appointments to independent sees’. In 1892-1893 alone 15 diocesan bishops and 7 vicar bishops were moved, while 14 vicar-bishops were raised to the rank of diocesan. At times the new place of their service and the composition of their flock differed strikingly from the former ones. In 1882, for example, a hierarch was transferred to Kishinev from Kazan, then in his place came the bishop of Ryazan, and he was followed by the bishop of Simbirsk.

“One can understand that this ‘shuffling’ could not fail to affect the attitude of hierarchs to their archpastoral duties: they were more interested in smoothing relations with the secular authorities and in getting a ‘good’ diocese. One must recognise that serious blame for this must attach to the long-time over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod, C.P. Pobedonostsev...”⁶⁹⁵

Nevertheless, the theoretical works of Pobedonostsev demonstrate a profound understanding of the importance of the Church in Russian life and indicate that, whether his views on Church-State relations were correct or not, he knew, as few others, what was truly in the Church’s interests, considering that the State could not without profound damage to itself and the nation as a whole touch upon the religious consciousness of the people, upon which its own power depended; for the people will support only that government which tries to incarnate its own “idea”.

Thus in an article attacking the doctrine of the complete separation of Church and State that was becoming popular in Europe and Russia he wrote: “However great the power of the State, it is confirmed by nothing other than the unity of the spiritual self-consciousness between the people and the government, on the faith of the people: the power is undermined from the moment this consciousness, founded on faith, begins to divide. The people in unity with the State can bear many hardships, they can concede and hand over much to State power. Only one thing does the State power have no right to demand, only one thing will they not hand over to it – that in which every believing soul individually and all together lay down as the foundation of their

⁶⁹⁵ Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

spiritual being, binding themselves with eternity. There are depths which State power cannot and must not touch, so as not to disturb the root sources of faith in the souls of each and every person..."⁶⁹⁶

But in recent years a division has opened up between the faith of the people and the ideology of the State. "Political science has constructed a strictly worked out teaching on the decisive separation of Church and State, a teaching in consequence of which, according to the law that does not allow a division into two of the central forces, the Church unfailingly turns out to be in fact an institution subject to the State. Together with this, the State as an institution is, according to its political ideology, separated *from every faith* and indifferent to faith. Naturally, from this point of view, the Church is represented as being nothing other than an institution satisfying one of the needs of the population that is recognised by the State – the religious need, and the State in its most recent incarnation turns to it with its right of authorisation, of supervision and control, with no concern for the faith. For the State as for the supreme political institution this theory is attractive, because it promises it complete autonomy, a decisive removal of every opposition, even spiritual opposition, and the simplification of the operations of its ecclesiastical politics."⁶⁹⁷

"If the issue consists in a more exact delineation of civil society from religious society, of the ecclesiastical and spiritual from the secular, of a direct and sincere separation, without cunning or violence – in this case everybody will be for such a separation. If, coming to practical matters, they want the State to renounce the right to place pastors of the Church and from the obligation to pay for them, this will be an ideal situation... When the question matures, the State, if it wishes to make such a decision, will be obliged to return to the person to whom it belongs the right to choose pastors and bishops; in such a case it will no longer be possible to give to the Pope what belongs to the clergy and people by historical and apostolic right..."

"But they say that we must understand separation in a different, broader sense. Clever, learned people define this as follows: the State must have nothing to do with the Church, and the Church – with the State, and so humanity must revolve in two broad spheres in such a way that in one sphere will be the body and in the other the spirit of humanity, and between the two spheres will be a space as great as between heaven and earth. But is that really possible? It is impossible to separate the body from the spirit; and spirit and body live one life."

"Can we expect that the Church – I'm not talking just about the Catholic, but any Church – should agree to remove from its consciousness civil society, familial society, human society – everything that is understood by the word 'State'? Since when has it been decreed that the Church exists in order to form ascetics, fill up monasteries and express in churches the poetry of its rites and processions? No, all this is only a small part of that activity which the Church sets as her aim. She has been given another calling: *teach all nations*. That is her business. The task set before her is to form people on earth so that people of the earthly city and earthly family should be made not quite unworthy to enter the heavenly city and the heavenly community. At birth, at

⁶⁹⁶ Pobedonostev, *Moskovskij Sbornik: Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo* (Moscow Anthology: Church and State), op. cit., p. 264.

⁶⁹⁷ Pobedonostsev, op. cit., p. 266.

marriage, at death – at the most important moments of human existence, the Church is there with her three triumphant sacraments, but they say that the family is none of her business! She has been entrusted with inspiring the people with respect for the law and the authorities, and to inspire the authorities with respect for human freedom, but they say that society is none of her business!

“No, the moral principle is one. It cannot be divided in such a way that one is a private moral principle, and the other public, one secular and the other spiritual. The one moral principle embraces all relationships – private, in the home and political; and the Church, preserving the consciousness of her dignity, will never renounce her lawful influence in questions relations both to the family and to civil society. And so in demanding that the Church have nothing to do with civil society, they only give her greater strength.”⁶⁹⁸

“The most ancient and best known system of Church-State relations is the system of the established or State Church. The State recognises one confession out of all as being the true confession of faith and supports and protects one Church exclusively, to the prejudice of all other churches and confessions. This prejudice signifies in general that all remaining churches are not recognised as true or completely true; but it is expressed in practice in various forms and a multitude of all manner of variations, from non-recognition and alienation to, sometimes, persecution. In any case, under the influence of this system foreign confessions are subject to a certain more or less significant diminution in honour, in law and in privilege by comparison with the native, State confession. The State cannot be the representative only of the material interests of society; in such a case it would deprive itself of spiritual power and would renounce its spiritual unity with the people. The State is the stronger and more significant the clearer its spiritual representation is manifested. Only on this condition is the feeling of legality, respect for the law and trust in State power supported and strengthened in the midst of the people and in civil life. Neither the principle of the integrity or the good of the benefit of the State, nor even the principle of morality are sufficient in themselves to establish a firm bond between the people and State power; and the moral principle is unstable, shaky, deprived of its fundamental root when it renounces religious sanction. A State which in the name of an unbiased relationship to all beliefs will undoubtedly be deprived of this central, centrifugal force and will itself renounce every belief – whatever it may be. The trust of the people for their rulers is based on faith, that is, not only on the identity of the faith of the people and the government, but also on the simple conviction that the government has faith and acts according to faith. Therefore even pagans and Mohammedans have more trust and respect for a government which stands on the firm principles of belief, whatever it may be, than for a government which does not recognise its own faith and has an identical relationship to all beliefs.

“That is the undeniable advantage of this system. But in the course of the centuries the circumstances under which this system received its beginning changed, and there arose new circumstances under which its functioning became more difficult than before. In the age when the first foundations of European civilisation and politics were laid, the Christian State was a powerfully integral and unbroken bond with the one

⁶⁹⁸ Pobedonostsev, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-269.

Christian Church. Then in the midst of the Christian Church itself the original unity was shattered into many kinds of sects and different faiths, each of which began to assume to itself the significance of the one true teaching and the one true Church. Thus the State had to deal with several different teachings between which the masses of the people were distributed. With the violation of the unity and integrity in faith a period may ensue when the dominant Church, which is supported by the State, turns out to be the Church of an insignificant minority, and herself enjoys only weak sympathy, or no sympathy at all, from the masses of the people. Then important difficulties may arise in the definition of the relations between the State and its Church and the churches to which the majority of the people belong.

“From the beginning of the 18th century there begins in Western Europe a conversion from the old system to the system of the *levelling* of the Christian confessions in the State – with the removal, however, of sectarians and Jews from this levelling process. [However, it continues to be the case that] the State recognises Christianity as the essential basis of its existence and of the public well-being, and belonging to this or that church, to this or that *belief* is obligatory for every citizen.

“From 1848 this relationship of the State to the Church changes essentially: the flooding waves of liberalism break through the old dam and threaten to overthrow the ancient foundations of Christian statehood. The freedom of the State from the Church is proclaimed – it has nothing to do with the Church. The separation of the State by the Church is also proclaimed: every person is free to believe as he wants or not believe in anything. The symbol of this doctrine is the *fundamental principles* (*Grundrechte*) proclaimed by the Frankfurt parliament in 1848/1849. Although they soon cease to be considered valid legislation, they served and serve to this day as the ideal for the introduction of liberal principles into the most recent legislation of Western Europe. Legislation in line with these principles is everywhere now. Political and civil law is dissociated from faith and membership of this or that church or sect. The State asks nobody about his faith. The registration of marriage and acts of civil status are dissociated from the Church. Complete freedom of mixed marriages is proclaimed, and the Church principle of the indissolubility of marriage is violated by facilitating divorce, which is dissociated from the ecclesiastical courts...

“Does it not follow from this that the unbelieving State is nothing other than a utopia that cannot be realized, for lack of faith is a direct denial of the State. Religion, and notably Christianity, is the spiritual basis of every law in State and civil life and of every true culture. That is why we see that the political parties that are the most hostile to the social order, the parties that radically deny the State, proclaim before everyone that religion is only a private, personal matter, of purely private and personal interest.

“[Count Cavour’s] system of ‘a free Church in a free State’ is based on abstract principles, theoretically; at its foundation is laid not the principle of faith, but the principle of religious indifferentism, or indifference to the faith, and it is placed in a necessary bond with doctrines that often preach, not tolerance and respect for the faith, but open or implied contempt for the faith, as to a bygone moment in the psychological development of personal and national life. In the abstract construction of this system, which constitutes a fruit of the newest rationalism, the Church is represented as also

being an abstractly constructed political institution..., built with a definite aim like other corporations recognised in the State...

“... In fact, [however,] it is impossible for any soul that has preserved and experienced the demands of faith within its depths can agree without qualification, for itself personally, with the rule: ‘all churches and all faiths are equal; it doesn’t matter whether it is this faith or another’. Such a soul will unfailingly reply to itself: ‘Yes, all faiths are equal, but my faith is better than any other for myself.’ Let us suppose that today the State will proclaim the strictest and most exact equality of all churches and faiths before the law. Tomorrow signs will appear, from which it will be possible to conclude that the relative power of the faiths is by no means equal; and if we go 30 or 50 years on from the time of the legal equalisation of the churches, it will then be discovered in fact, perhaps, that among the churches there is one which in essence has a predominant influence and rules over the minds and decisions [of men], either because it is closer to ecclesiastical truth, or because in its teaching or rites it more closely corresponds to the national character, or because its organisation and discipline is more perfect and gives it more means for systematic activity, or because activists that are more lively and firm in their faith have arisen in its midst...

“And so a *free State* can lay down that it has nothing to do with a *free Church*; only the free Church, if it is truly founded on faith, will not accept this decree and will not adopt an indifferent attitude to *the free State*. The Church cannot refuse to exert its influence on civil and social life; and the more active it is, the more it feels within itself an inner, active force, and the less is it able to adopt an indifferent attitude towards the State. The Church cannot adopt such an attitude without renouncing its own Divine calling, if it retains faith in it and the consciousness of duty bound up with it. On the Church there lies the duty to teach and instruct; to the Church there belongs the performance of the sacraments and the rites, some of which are bound up with the most important acts and civil life. In this activity the Church of necessity enters ceaselessly into touch with social and civil life (not to speak of other cases, it is sufficient to point to questions of marriage and education). And so to the degree that the State, in separating itself from the Church, retains for itself the administration exclusively of the civil part of all these matters and removes from itself the administration of the spiritual-moral part, the Church will of necessity enter into the function abandoned by the State, and in separation from it will little by little come to control completely and exclusively that spiritual-moral influence which constitutes a necessary, real force for the State. The State will retain only a material and, perhaps, a rational force, but both the one and the other will turn out to be insufficient when the power of faith does not unite with them. And so, little by little, instead of the imagined equalisation of the functions of the State and the Church in political union, there will turn out to be inequality and opposition. A condition that is in any case abnormal, and which must lead either to the real dominance of the Church over the apparently predominant State or to revolution.

“These are the real dangers hidden in the system of complete Church-State separation glorified by liberal thinkers. The system of the dominant or established Church has many defects, being linked with many inconveniences and difficulties, and does not exclude the possibility of conflicts and struggle. But in vain do they suppose that it has already outlived its time, and that Cavour’s formula alone gives the key to

the resolution of all the difficulties of this most difficult of questions. Cavour's formula is the fruit of political doctrinairism, which looks on questions of faith as merely political questions about the equalisation of rights. There is no depth of spiritual knowledge in it, as there was not in that other famous political formula: *freedom, equality and brotherhood*, which up to now have weighed as a fateful burden on credulous minds. In the one case as in the other, passionate advocates of freedom are mistaken in supposing that there is *freedom in equality*. Or is our bitter experience not sufficient to confirm the fact that freedom does not depend on equality, and that equality is by no means freedom? It would be the same error to suppose that the very *freedom* of belief consists in the *levelling* of the churches and faiths and depends on their levelling. The whole of recent history shows that here, too, freedom and equality are *not* the same thing."⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁹ Pobedonostsev, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-275, 276-277.

27. THE REIGN OF TSAR ALEXANDER III

“On the Unshakeableness of the Autocracy”

The conservative views of such men as Pobedonostsev were protected and nurtured during the 1880s by the Tsar, who quietly reversed the main direction of his father's reforms. Once he received a letter from the executive committee of “The People's Will”, in which they called on him to give “a general amnesty for all political crimes of the past”, and “to summon representatives from the whole of the Russian people to review the existing forms of state and social life and reconstruct them in accordance with the people's desires”. As if in answer to this letter, the tsar, in his manifesto, “On the Unshakeableness of the Autocracy”, of April 29, 1881, wrote: “We call on all our faithful subjects to serve us and the state in faith and righteousness, to the uprooting of the abominable rebellion that is devastating the Russian land, to the confirmation of faith and morality, to the good education of children, to the destruction of unrighteousness and theft, to the instilling of order and righteousness in the acts of the institutions given to Russia by her benefactor, our beloved parent.” Although the new tsar promised to work within the institutions created by his father, there was no promise of any new ones, let alone a constitution - the project of Leris-Melikov, which Alexander II was about to sign at the time of his death, was quietly dropped. And when his new minister of the interior, Count N.P. Ignatiev, proposed convening a *Zemsky Sobor* before his coronation, the tsar said that he was “too convinced of the ugliness of the electoral representative principle to allow it at any time in Russia in that form in which it exists throughout Europe”.⁷⁰⁰

His world-view was expressed in the advice he gave his heir, the Tsarevich Nicholas Alexandrovich: “You are destined to take from my shoulders the heavy burden of State power and bear it to the grave exactly as I have borne it and our ancestors bore it. I hand over to you the kingdom entrusted by God to me. I received it thirteen years ago from my blood-drenched father... Your grandfather from the height of the throne introduced many important reforms directed to the good of the Russian people. As a reward for all this he received a bomb and death from the Russian revolutionaries... On that tragic day the question arose before me: on what path am I to proceed? On that onto which I was being pushed by ‘progressive society’, infected with the liberal ideas of the West, or that which my own conviction, my higher sacred duty as Sovereign and my conscience indicated to me? I chose my path. The liberals dubbed it reactionary. I was interested only in the good of my people and the greatness of Russia. I strove to introduce internal and external peace, so that the State could freely and peacefully develop, become stronger in a normal way, become richer and prosper. The Autocracy created the historical individuality of Russia. If - God forbid! - the Autocracy should fall, then Russia will fall with it. The fall of the age-old Russian power will open up an endless era of troubles and blood civil conflicts. My covenant to you is to love everything that serves for the good, the honour and the dignity of Russia. Preserve the Autocracy, remembering that you bear responsibility for the destiny of your subjects before the Throne of the Most High. May faith in God and the holiness of your royal duty be for you the foundation of your life. Be firm and courageous, never show weakness. Hear out everybody, there is nothing shameful in

⁷⁰⁰ M.V. Krivosheev and Yu.V. Krivosheev, *Istoria Rossijskoj Imperii 1861-1894 (A History of the Russian Empire)*, St. Petersburg 2000, pp. 91, 90, 88.

that, but obey only yourself and your conscience. In external politics adopt an independent position. Remember: Russia has no friends. They fear our enormous size. Avoid wars. In internal politics protect the Church first of all. She has saved Russia more than once in times of trouble. Strengthen the family, because it is the foundation of every State."⁷⁰¹

Tsar Alexander succeeded in most of the tasks he set himself. He avoided war, while gaining the respect of the European rulers. He suppressed the revolution, giving emergency powers to local governors in troubled areas, and checked the power of the *zemstva* and the press. He increased the prosperity of all classes. And he strengthened the Church and the family.

The Rise of Social Democratism

The Tsar was helped by the fact that "the public reacted with horror," as Richard Pipes, to the murder of his father, "and the radical cause lost a great deal of popular support. The government responded with a variety of repressive measures and counter-intelligence operations which made it increasingly difficult for the revolutionaries to function. And the 'people' did not stir, unshaken in the belief that the land which they desired would be given them by the next Tsar.

"There followed a decade of revolutionary quiescence. Russians who wanted to work for the common good now adopted the doctrine of 'small deeds' – that is, pragmatic, unspectacular activities to raise the cultural and material level of the population through the *zemstva* and private philanthropic organizations.

"Radicalism began to stir again in the early 1890s in connection with the spurt of Russian industrialization and a severe famine. The Socialists-Revolutionaries of the 1870s had believed that Russia would follow a path of economic development different from the Western because she had neither the domestic nor the foreign markets that capitalism required. The Russian peasantry, being poor and heavily dependent on income from cottage industries (estimated at one-third of the peasant total income), would be ruined by competition from the mechanized factories and lose that little purchasing power it still possessed. As for foreign markets, these had been pre-empted by the advanced countries of the West. Russia had to combine communal agriculture with rural (cottage) industry. From these premises Socialist-Revolutionary theoreticians developed a 'separate path' doctrine according to which Russia would proceed directly from 'feudalism' to 'socialism' without passing through a capitalist phase.

"This thesis was advanced with the help of arguments drawn from the writings of Marx and Engels. Marx and Engels initially disowned such an interpretation of their doctrine, but they eventually changed their minds, conceding that there might be more

⁷⁰¹ Alexander III, in Fomin, S. & Fomin, T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1998, vol. 1, p. 354. Prince Sergius Trubetskoy illustrated the link between family feeling and feeling for the monarchy during his childhood under the same Tsar Alexander: "Father and mother, grandfathers and grandmothers were for us in childhood not only sources and centres of love and unquestioned authority; they were enveloped in our eyes by a kind of aura which the modern generation does not know... Our fathers and grandfathers were in our children's eyes both patriarchs and family monarchs, while our mothers and grandmothers were family tsaritsas."

than one model of economic development. In 1877, in an exchange with a Russian, Marx rejected the notion that every country had to repeat the economic experience of Western Europe. Should Russia enter the path of capitalist development, he wrote, then, indeed, nothing could save her from its 'iron laws', but this did not mean that Russia could not avoid this path and the misfortunes it brought. A few years later Marx stated that the 'historical inevitability' of capitalism was confined to Western Europe, and that because Russia had managed to preserve the peasant commune into the era of capitalism, the commune could well become the 'fulchrum of Russia's social rejuvenation'. Marx and Engels admired the terrorists of the People's Will, and, as an exception to their general theory, Engels allowed that in Russia the revolution could be made by a 'handful of people'.

"Thus, before a formal 'Marxist' or Social-Democratic movement had emerged in Russia, the theories of its founders were interpreted, with their sanction, when applied to an autocratic regime in an agrarian country, to mean a revolution brought about, not by the inevitable social consequences of matured capitalism, but by terror and coup d'état.

"A few Russians, led by George Plekhanov, dissented from this version of Marxism. They broke with the People's Will, moved to Switzerland, and there immersed themselves in German Social-Democratic literature. From it they concluded that Russia had no alternative but to go through full-blown capitalism. They rejected terrorism and a coup d'état on the grounds that even in the unlikely event that such violence succeeded in bringing down the tsarist regime, the outcome would not be socialism, for which backward Russia lacked both the economic and cultural preconditions, but a 'revived tsarism on a Communist base'.

"From the premises adopted by the Russian Social-Democrats there followed certain political consequences. Capitalist development meant the rise of a bourgeoisie committed, from economic self-interest, to liberalization. It further meant the growth of the industrial 'proletariat', which would be driven by its deteriorating economic situation to socialism, furnishing the socialist movement with revolutionary cadres. The fact that Russian capitalism developed in a country with a pre-capitalist political system, however, called for a particular revolutionary strategy. Socialism could not flourish in a country held in the iron grip of a police-bureaucratic regime: it required freedom of speech to propagate its ideas and freedom of association to organize its followers. In other words, unlike the German Social-Democrats, who, since 1890, were able to function in the open and run in national elections, Russian Social-Democrats confronted the prior task of overthrowing autocracy.

"The theory of a two-stage revolution, as formulated by Plekhanov's associate, Paul Akselrod, provided for the 'proletariat' (read: socialist intellectuals) collaborating with the bourgeoisie for the common objective of bringing to Russia 'bourgeois democracy'. As soon as that objective had been attained, the socialists would rally the working class for the second, socialist phase of the revolution. From the point of view of this strategy, everything that promoted in Russia the growth of capitalism and the interests of the

bourgeoisie was - up to a point - progressive and favourable to the cause of socialism."⁷⁰²

These various strands of socialist thinking had little influence in Russia during the reign of Alexander III. And it was not from bomb-throwing *raznochintsy* and peasants that the real threat to the regime came - at this time. The real threat came, not from socialists, but from liberals, and not from the lower classes, but from the nobility who dominated local government.

Oliver Figes explains: "The power of the imperial government effectively stopped at the eighty-nine provincial capitals where the governors had their offices. Below that there was no real state administration to speak of. Neither the *uezd* or district town nor the *volost* or rural townships had any standing government officials. There was only a series of magistrates who would appear from time to time on some specific mission, usually to collect taxes or sort out a local conflict, and then disappear once again. The affairs of peasant Russia, where 85 per cent of the population lived, were entirely unknown to the city bureaucrats. 'We knew as much about the Tula countryside,' confessed Prince Lvov, leader of the Tula *zemstvo* in the 1890s, 'as we knew about Central Africa.'

"The crucial weakness of the tsarist system was the *under-government* of the localities. This vital fact is all too often clouded by the revolutionaries' mythic image of an all-powerful regime. Nothing could be further from the truth. For every 1,000 inhabitants of the Russian Empire there were only 4 state officials at the turn of the century, compared with 7.3 in England and Wales, 12.6 in Germany and 17.6 in France. The regular police, as opposed to the political branch, was extremely small by European standards. Russia's expenditure on the police *per capita* of the population was less than half of that in Italy or France and less than one quarter of that in Prussia. For a rural population of 100 million people, Russia in 1900 had no more than 1,852 police sergeants and 6,874 police constables. The average constable was responsible for policing 50,000 people in dozens of settlements stretched across nearly 2000 square miles. Many of them did not even have a horse and cart. True, from 1903 the constables were aided by the peasant constables, some 40,000 of whom were appointed. But these were notoriously unreliable and, in any case, did very little to reduce the mounting burdens on the police. Without its own effective organs in the countryside, the central bureaucracy was assigning more and more tasks to the local police: not just the maintenance of law and order but also the collection of taxes, the implementation of government laws and military decrees, the enforcement of health and safety regulations, the inspection of public roads and buildings, the collection of statistics, and the general supervision of 'public morals' (e.g. making sure that the peasants washed their beards). The police, in short, were being used as a sort of catch-all executive organ. They were often the only agents of the state with whom the peasants ever came into contact.

"Russia's general backwardness - its small tax-base and poor communications - largely accounts for this under-government. The legacy of serfdom also played a part. Until 1861 the serfs had been under the jurisdiction of their noble owners and,

⁷⁰² Pipes, *The Russian Revolution, 1899-1919*, London: Collins Harvill, 1990, pp. 143-145.

provided they paid their taxes, the state did not intervene in the relations between them. Only after the Emancipation – and then very slowly – did the tsarist government come round to the problem of how to extend its influence to its new ‘citizens’ in the villages and of how to shape a policy to help the development of peasant agriculture.

“Initially, in the 1860s, the regime left the affairs of the country districts in the hands of the local nobles. They dominated the *zemstvo* assemblies and accounted for nearly three-quarters of the provincial *zemstvo* boards. The noble assemblies and their elected marshals were left with broad administrative powers, especially at the district level (*uezd*) where they were virtually the only agents upon whom the tsarist regime could rely. Moreover, the new magistrates (*mirovye posredniki*) were given broad judicial powers, not unlike those of their predecessors under serfdom, including the right to flog the peasants for minor crimes and misdemeanours.

“It was logical for the tsarist regime to seek to base its power in the provinces on the landed nobility, its closest ally. But this was a dangerous strategy, and the danger grew as time went on. The landed nobility was in severe economic decline during the years of agricultural depression in the late nineteenth century, and was turning to the *zemstvos* to defend its local agrarian interests against the centralizing and industrializing bureaucracy of St. Petersburg. In the years leading up to 1905 this resistance was expressed in mainly liberal terms: it was seen as the defence of ‘provincial society’, a term which was now used for the first time and consciously broadened to include the interests of the peasantry. This liberal *zemstvo* movement culminated in the political demand for more autonomy for local government, for a national parliament and a constitution. Here was the start of the revolution: not in the socialist or labour movements but – as in France in the 1780s – in the aspirations of the regime’s oldest ally, the provincial nobility...”⁷⁰³

[The Volga Famine](#)

The government’s lack of support at the local level was glaringly revealed during the Volga famine of summer, 1891, which was caused by severe frosts in the winter followed by drought in the spring. Covering an area twice the size of France, the famine together with the consequent cholera and typhus killed half a million people by the end of 1892. Unfortunately, the government made several blunders, and on November 17, while appointing the Tsarevich Nicholas as president of a special commission to provide help to the suffering, it was forced to appeal to the public to form voluntary organizations.

At the height of the crisis, in October, 1891, Elder Ambrose of Optina died; and with his passing it seemed as if the revolutionary forces, which had been restrained for a decade, came back to life. They were led now by a privileged noble, the writer Count Lev Tolstoy, whom St. Ambrose had called “very proud” and who now joined the relief campaign. Under his influence the lawful expression of compassion for the poor in response to the state’s appeal was turned into an unlawful attack on the very foundations of that state.

⁷⁰³ Figes, *A People’s Tragedy*, London: Pimlico, 1997, pp. 46-47.

“With his two eldest daughters,” writes Figes, “he organized hundreds of canteens in the famine region, while Sonya, his wife, raised money from abroad. ‘I cannot describe in simple words the utter destitution and suffering of these people,’ he wrote to her at the end of October 1891. According to the peasant Sergei Semenov, who was a follower of Tolstoy and who joined him in his relief campaign, the great writer was so overcome by the experience of the peasants’ sufferings that his beard went grey, his hair became thinner and he lost a great deal of weight. The guilt-ridden Count blamed the famine crisis on the social order, the Orthodox Church and the government. ‘Everything has happened because of our own sin,’ he wrote to a friend in December. ‘We have cut ourselves off from our own brothers, and there is only one remedy – by repentance, by changing our lives, and by destroying the walls between us and the people.’ Tolstoy broadened his condemnation of social inequality in his essay ‘The Kingdom of God’ (1892) and in the press. His message struck a deep chord in the moral conscience of the liberal public, plagued as they were by feelings of guilt on account of their privilege and alienation from the peasantry. Semenov captured this sense of shame when he wrote of the relief campaign: ‘With every day the need and misery of the peasants grew. The scenes of starvation were deeply distressing, and it was all the more disturbing to see that amidst all this suffering and death there were sprawling estates, beautiful and well-furnished manors, and that the grand old life of the squires, with its jolly hunts and balls, its banquets and its concerts, carried on as usual.’ For the guilt-ridden liberal public, serving ‘the people’ through the relief campaign was a means of paying off their ‘debt’ to them. And they now turned to Tolstoy as their moral leader and their champion against the sins of the old regime. His condemnation of the government turned him into a public hero, a man of integrity whose word could be trusted as the truth on a subject which the regime had tried so hard to conceal.

“Russian society had been activated and politicized by the famine crisis, its social conscience had been stung, and the old bureaucratic system had been discredited. Public mistrust of the government did not diminish once the crisis had passed, but strengthened as the representatives of civil society continued to press for a greater role in the administration of the nation’s affairs. The famine, it was said, had proved the culpability and incompetence of the old regime, and there was now a growing expectation that wider circles of society would have to be drawn into its work if another catastrophe was to be avoided. The *zemstvos*, which had spent the past decade battling to expand their activities in the face of growing bureaucratic opposition, were now strengthened by widespread support from the liberal public for their work in agronomy, public health and education. The liberal Moscow merchants and industrialists, who had rallied behind the relief campaign, now began to question the government’s policies of industrialization, which seemed so ruinous for the peasantry, the main buyers of their manufactures. From the middle of the 1890s they too supported the various projects of the *zemstvos* and municipal bodies to revive the rural economy. Physicians, teachers and engineers, who had all been forced to organize themselves as a result of their involvement in the relief campaign, now began to demand more professional autonomy and influence over public policy; and when they failed to make any advances they began to campaign for political reforms. In the press, in the ‘thick journals’, in the universities, and in learned and philanthropic societies, the debates on the causes of the famine – and on reforms needed to prevent its recurrence – continued to rage throughout the 1890s, long after the immediate crisis had passed.

“The socialist opposition, which had been largely dormant in the 1880s, sprang back into life with a renewed vigour as a result of these debates. There was a revival of the Populist movement (later rechristened Neo-Populism), culminating in 1901 with the establishment of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Under the leadership of Viktor Chernov (1873-1952), a law graduate from Moscow University who had been imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress for his role in the student movement, it embraced the new Marxist sociology whilst still adhering to the Populist belief that all the workers and peasants alike - what it called the ‘labouring people’ - were united by their poverty and their opposition to the regime. Briefly, then, in the wake of the famine, there was growing unity between the Marxists and the Neo-Populists as they put aside their differences about the development of capitalism (which the SRs now accepted as a fact) and concentrated on the democratic struggle...

“Marxism as a social science was fast becoming the national creed: it alone seemed to explain the causes of the famine. Universities and learned societies were swept along by the new intellectual fashion. Even such well-established institutions as the Free Economic Society fell under the influence of the Marxists, who produced libraries of social statistics, dressed up as studies of the causes of the great starvation, to prove the truth of Marx’s economic laws. Socialists who had previously wavered in their Marxism were now completely converted in the wake of the famine crisis, when, it seemed to them, there was no more hope in the Populist faith in the peasantry. Petr Struve (1870-1944), who had previously thought of himself as a political liberal, found his Marxist passions stirred by the crisis: it ‘made much more of a Marxist out of me than the reading of Marx’s *Capital*’. Martov also recalled how the crisis had turned him into a Marxist: ‘It suddenly became clear to me how superficial and groundless the whole of my revolutionism had been until then, and how my subjective political romanticism was dwarfed before the philosophical and sociological heights of Marxism.’ Even the young Lenin only became converted to the Marxist mainstream in the wake of the famine crisis.⁷⁰⁴

“In short, the whole of society had been politicized and radicalized as a result of the famine crisis. The conflict between the population and the regime had been set in motion...”⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰⁴ But Lenin was not moved with compassion for the starving. Then, as later in the Volga famine of 1921-22, he saw the suffering of the peasants as an opportunity for revolution. (V.M.)

⁷⁰⁵ Figes, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-162.

28. TSAR NICHOLAS II: RESTORER OF THE ORTHODOX AUTOCRACY

The title “Restorer of the Orthodox Autocracy” has been ascribed to Tsar Paul I, and not without reason. After the extreme westernization of the eighteenth-century Tsars, he began to restore Russia, and the Russian autocracy, to her Byzantine and Orthodox roots. He acted to humble the nobility and army officers, and brought the throne closer to the peasantry, improving their lot in many ways. He gave the Holy Synod the right to vote on who should be the over-procurator... However, some of these gains were lost in the next reign. Moreover, the importing of the western doctrines of liberalism and socialism after 1812 served to undermine the autocracy even more profoundly than the absolutist theories of the eighteenth century. It was left to the last and greatest of the Tsars (the phrase belongs to Blessed Pasha of Sarov) to fight the democratic contagion and, still more significantly, to present an image of what an Orthodox autocrat should be that would survive the inter-regnum of the Soviet period and give hope of a restoration of the Orthodox autocracy on a truly solid foundation.

Tsar Nicholas looked for his model of the truly Orthodox autocrat to the Muscovite Tsars of the seventeenth century, and especially to Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich. This choice tells us much about Nicholas himself. First, Alexis was an exceptionally pious tsar who spent a great deal of time in prayer and fasting. Secondly, Alexis chose Metropolitan Nikon of Novgorod as Patriarch, and by his initial voluntary submission to him in all spiritual matters showed what the symphony of Church and State could really be. From his admiration for Tsar Alexis, therefore, we may presume that Tsar Nicholas believed that a tsar should be first of all a pious man himself, and then be prepared to enter into a close relationship with the Church on a truly filial basis.

The irony, however, is that the relationship between Tsar Alexis and Patriarch Nikon later broke down in a way that led, in the reign of Tsar Peter the Great, to the uncanonical, caesaropapist submission of the Church to the State – a submission that almost all the Church intelligentsia of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, - with the notable exception of C.P. Pobedonostsev, - roundly condemned. So in looking back to the reign of Tsar Alexis, Nicholas was also looking forward to the task that lay ahead of him: the restoration of the relationship between the Church and State in Russia to that almost ideal condition that it had enjoyed in the time of Alexis Mikhailovich before the rift with Nikon. Indeed, we may see this as the main task of Nicholas’ reign, the task upon whose successful completion depended the very survival of both Church and State.

The tragedy of Tsar Nicholas’ reign was that whereas the achievement of his goal of restored Church-State “symphony” required both partners to believe in the goal and work zealously for its attainment, in the last analysis only one of the partners actually believed and worked in this way, leading to the abdication of Tsar Nicholas and the fall of the Russian autocracy.

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Not that the Church formally rejected the symphonic ideal: on the contrary, in the period 1904-1906 it worked diligently with the Tsar to prepare for the convening of a

Sobor – the first since the seventeenth century - that would elect a Patriarch and a patriarchal administration to realize the Church’s administrative independence, without which any talk of a “symphony” with the Tsar on even approximately equal terms was simply wishful thinking. Moreover, the fact that the Sobor was never convened in Tsar Nicholas’ reign was not the Church’s fault, but rather the result of the continuing atmosphere of revolutionary violence... However, “ecclesiastical administrative independence” and “Church-State symphony” are not the same thing; and most Church leaders and activists were much more interested in the former than in the latter. Many wanted Church-State separation on the western model; while others were frankly opposed to any kind of cooperation with the Tsar because they were against the Tsar and Tsarism in general...

Of course, the Church remained officially monarchist until the fall of the Empire in 1917. But already in the revolution of 1905, as a result of which the Tsar was forced to transfer some power to the Duma in the October Manifesto, the Church was divided. Thus some of the lower clergy spoke out against the Tsar.⁷⁰⁶ And when the revolutionary Peter Schmidt was shot in 1906, Archbishop Sergius (Stragorodsky) of Finland served a pannikhida at his grave. Sergius also gave refuge in his hierarchical house to the revolutionaries Michael Novorussky and Nicholas Morozov. Having such sympathies, it is not surprising that he was not liked by the Royal Family: in 1915 the Empress wrote to the Emperor that Sergius “must leave the Synod”. After the revolution he joined the renovationist heretics, and then, in 1943, became the first “patriarch” of the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate.

However, the great majority of the clergy showed themselves to be monarchists and patriots in the wake of the 1905 revolution. Many clergy joined the monarchist “Union of the Russian People”, the so-called “black-hundredists”. True, Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovsky) of St. Petersburg, who was suspected by many of being a closet liberal⁷⁰⁷, opposed the Union. But Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow⁷⁰⁸, Archbishop

⁷⁰⁶ D.E. Leonov, “Antimonarkhicheskie vystuplenia pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva v period Pervoj russkoj revoliutsii” (Antimonarchist speeches of the Orthodox clergy in the period of the first Russian revolution), <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=lib&id=2389>.

⁷⁰⁷ Metropolitan Anthony was said to be an enemy of St. John of Kronstadt and even a Freemason. See Fomin & Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishesviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, pp. 391-392; M.B. Danilushkin (ed.), *Istoria Russkoj Tserkvi ot Vosstanovlenia Patriarshestva do nashikh dnei* (A History of the Russian Church from the Restoration of the Patriarchate to our Days), vol. I, St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 78-80, 771-783; Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, chapter 7.

⁷⁰⁸ Monk Anempodist writes: “Metropolitan Vladimir went on to take part in the movement of the right conservative forces of Russia that was being formed. Thus in 1907 he took part in the work of the All-Russian congress of ‘The Union of the Russian People’. In 1909, while taking part in the work of the First Monarchist congress of Russian People, Metropolitan Vladimir was counted worthy of the honour of passing on a greeting to the congress from his Majesty the Emperor Nicholas II in the following telegram:

“To his Eminence Vladimir, Metropolitan of Moscow. I entrust to you, Vladyko, to pass on to all those assembled in the first capital at the congress of Russian people and members of the Moscow Patriotic Union My gratitude for their loyal feelings. I know their readiness faithfully and honourably to serve Me and the homeland, in strict observance of lawfulness and order. St. Petersburg. 30 September. Nicholas.” (Riasophor-Monk Anempodist, “Sviaschennomuchenik mitropolit Vladimir (Bogoiavlenskij) i bor’ba s revoliutsii” (Hieromartyr Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoiavlensky) and the struggle against the revolution), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn’* (Orthodox Life), 53, N 1 (636), January, 2003, pp. 2-10).

Tikhon (Bellavin) of Yaroslavl, Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Volhynia, Bishop Hermogen of Saratov, St. John of Kronstadt, Elder Theodosius of Minvody, Fr. John Vostorgov and many others joined it without doubting.

However, the Union was plagued by poor leadership that gave it a bad name. It was led by A. Dubronin, who was only superficially Orthodox. Thus he was for the tsar - but against hierarchy! And he wanted to rid the empire of "the Germans", that is, that highly efficient top layer of the administration which proved itself as loyal to the empire as any other section of the population. When interviewed years later by the Cheka, Dubronin declared: "By conviction I am a communist monarchist, that is, [I want] there to be monarchist government under which those forms of government [will flourish] which could bring the people an increase in prosperity. For me all kinds of cooperatives, associations, etc. are sacred."

Fr. John Vostorgov, one of the founders of the Union, considered Dubronin an enemy of the truth... And in general he stressed that true patriotism can only be founded on true faith and morality. "Where the faith has fallen," he said, "and where morality has fallen, there can be no place for patriotism, there is nothing for it to hold on to, for everything that is the most precious in the homeland then ceases to be precious."⁷⁰⁹

The major problem for the monarchists was the paradoxicality of the idea of a monarchical party within a monarchy. Tsarism has the major advantage over other political systems of standing above the various interests and classes, being in thrall to the interests of no single party and reconciling them all in obedience to the tsar. But the October manifesto had appeared to many to divide ultimate power between the Tsar and the Duma. And this made party politics inevitable. So the monarchists were forced to conduct party politics in favour of the idea that the state should not be the product of party politics, but incarnate in the tsar who was above all party politics...

There could be no real unity between those who ascribed ultimate power in the State to the Tsar and those who ascribed it to the Duma. Moreover, the struggle between the "reds" and the "blacks" was not simply a struggle between different interpretations of the October manifesto, or between monarchists and constitutionalists, but between two fundamentally incompatible world-views - the Orthodox Christian and the Masonic-Liberal-Ecumenist. It was a struggle between two fundamentally opposed views of where true authority comes from - God or the people; it was a struggle for the very heart of Russia.

As Bishop Andronicus, the future hieromartyr, wrote: "It is not a question of the struggle between two administrative regimes, but of a struggle between faith and unbelief, between Christianity and antichristianity. The ancient antichristian plot, which was begun by those who shouted furiously to Pilate about Jesus Christ: 'Crucify Him, crucify Him: His blood be on us and on our children' - continued in various branches and secret societies. In the 16th century it poured into the special secret antichristian order of the Templars, and in the 18th century it became more definite in the Illuminati, the Rosecrucians and, finally, in Freemasonry it merged into a universal

⁷⁰⁹ Vostorgov, in Fomin S. & Fomina T., *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, p. 400.

Jewish organization. And now, having gathered strength to the point where France is completely in the hands of the Masons, it – Masonry – already openly persecutes Christianity out of existence there. In the end Masonry will be poured out into one man of iniquity, the son of destruction – the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2). In this resides the solution of the riddle of our most recent freedoms: their aim is the destruction of Christianity in Rus'. That is why what used to be the French word 'liberal', which meant among the Masons a 'generous' contributor to the Masonic aims, and then received the meaning of 'freedom-loving' with regard to questions of faith, has now already passed openly over to antichristianity. In this resides the solution of the riddle of that stubborn battle for control of the school, which is being waged in the *zemstvo* and the State Duma: if the liberal tendency gains control of the school, the success of antichristianity is guaranteed. In this resides the solution of the riddle of the sympathy of liberals for all kinds of sects in Christianity and non-Christian religions. And the sectarians have not been slumbering – they have now set about attacking the little children... And when your children grow up and enter university – there Milyukov and co. will juggle with the facts and deceive them, teaching them that science has proved man's origin from the apes. And they will really make our children into beasts, with just this difference, that the ape is a humble and obedient animal whereas these men-beasts will be proud, bold, cruel and unclean...."⁷¹⁰

Tragically, the new generation that grew up between the first revolution of 1905 and the February revolution of 1917 was largely liberal in faith, and so "the success of antichristianity was guaranteed" ...

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In spite of the gathering momentum of revolutionary sentiment in the Church and the nation as a whole, the Tsar continued to manifest the image of the true Christian ruler, giving the lie to the liberals' and revolutionaries' portrayal of him as "Blood Nicholas". He was especially distinguished for his mercifulness. He pardoned criminals, even revolutionaries, and gave away vast quantities of his own land and money to alleviate the plight of the peasants. It is believed that he gave away the last of his personal wealth during the Great War, to support the war effort. Even as a child he often wore patched clothing while spending his personal allowance to help poor students to pay for their tuition.

The reign of the meek and gentle Tsar Nicholas II gave an unparalleled opportunity to tens of millions of people both within and outside the Russian empire to come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved. Moreover, the strength of the Russian Empire protected and sustained Orthodoxy in other parts of the world, such as the Balkans and the Middle East. The Tsar considered it his sacred duty to restore to Russia her ancient traditional culture, which had been abandoned by many of the "educated" classes in favour of modern, Western styles. He encouraged the building of churches and the painting of icons in the traditional Byzantine and Old Russian styles. In the words of Archpriest Michael Polsky, "In the person of the Emperor Nicholas II the believers had the best and most worthy representative of the Church, truly 'The Most

⁷¹⁰ Bishop Andronicus, "Russkij grazhdanskij stroj zhizni pered sudom khristianina" (The Russian civil order before the judgement of the Christian), Fryazino, 1995, pp. 24-25.

Pious' as he was referred to in church services. He was a true patron of the Church, and a solicitor of all her blessings."⁷¹¹

During the reign of Nicholas II, the Church reached her fullest development and external power. "By the outbreak of revolution in 1917... it had between 115 and 125 million adherents (about 70 per cent of the population), around 120,000 priests, deacons and other clergy, 130 bishops, 78,000 churches [up by 10,000], 1,253 monasteries [up by 250], 57 seminaries and four ecclesiastical academies."⁷¹² Traditional church arts were encouraged, and old churches were renovated. The Emperor himself took part in the laying of the first cornerstones and the consecration of many churches. He visited churches and monasteries in all parts of the country, venerating their saints. Moreover, he took a very active part in the glorification of new ones, sometimes urging on an unwilling Holy Synod. Among those glorified during his reign were: St. Theodosius of Chernigov (in 1896), St. Isidore of Yuriev (1897), St. Seraphim of Sarov (1903), St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk (1909), St. Anna of Kashin (1910), St. Joasaph of Belgorod (1911), St. Hermogenes of Moscow (1913), St. Pitirim of Tambov (1914), St. John (Maximovich) of Tobolsk (1916) and St. Paul of Tobolsk (1917).

The Emperor stressed the importance of educating the peasant children within the framework of church and parish and, as a result, the number of parish schools, which were more popular among the peasants than the state, *zemstvo* schools, grew to 37,000. Moreover, Christian literature flourished; excellent journals were published, such as *Soul-Profiting Reading*, *Soul-Profiting Converser*, *The Wanderer*, *The Rudder*, *The Russian Monk*, *The Trinity Leaflets* and the ever-popular *Russian Pilgrim*. The Russian people were surrounded by spiritual nourishment as never before.

Nor did the Emperor neglect the material condition of his people. Under his leadership Russia made vast strides in economic development. He changed the passport system introduced by Peter I and thus facilitated the free movement of the people, including travel abroad. The poll tax was abolished and a voluntary programme of hospitalisation insurance was introduced, under which, for a payment of one rouble per year, a person was entitled to free hospitalisation. The parity of the rouble was increased greatly on the international markets during his reign. In 1897, a law was enacted to limit work hours; night work was forbidden for women and minors under seventeen years of age, and this at a time when the majority of the countries in the West had almost no labour legislation at all. As William Taft commented in 1913, "the Russian Emperor has enacted labour legislation which not a single democratic state could boast of".

The young Tsar Nicholas was a peacemaker by nature, and early in his reign he suggested that all nations come together in order to cut their military forces and submit to general arbitration on international disputes. "The preservation of universal peace,"

⁷¹¹ Polsky, *The New Martyrs of Russia*, Wildwood, Alberta: Monastery Press, 2000, p. 117.

⁷¹² Mikhail V. Shkarovskii, "The Russian Orthodox Church", in Edward Action, Vladimir Cherniaev, William Rosenberg (eds.), *A Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, p. 416. On December 1, 1901 the Tsar decreed that every military unit having its own clergy should have its own church in the form of a separate building (A.S. Fedotov, "Khramy vo imia svyatogo blagovernago velikago kniazia Aleksandra Nevskago v XIX-XX vv.", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, N 5 (1818), March 1/14, 2007, p. 13).

he wrote, "and the reduction in weapons that weigh on all the peoples is, in the present situation, a goal to which the efforts of all governments should strive." Military expenses were an ever-increasing burden on the peoples, disrupting their prosperity. "Hundreds of millions are spent on the acquisition of terrible means of destruction which, while considered the last word in science today, must lose all value tomorrow in view of new inventions... Thus as the weapons of each state grow, they answer less and less to the goals put forward by governments."

As a result of the Tsar's proposal, the Hague Peace Conference was convened on May 18, 1899, and was attended by representatives of 26 nations. Several useful resolutions were passed. In 1921, the American President, Warren Harding, officially acknowledged the Tsar's noble efforts towards the limitation of armaments by way of binding agreements among the Powers.

The First World War broke out in 1914 despite the best efforts of the Tsar to avert it. In the end, he could not turn away from what he felt was his moral duty, as Emperor of the Third Rome, the Orthodox Christian commonwealth, to march to the aid of an Orthodox country, Serbia, that was being unjustly attacked by an heretical nation. In August, 1915 he assumed the post of commander-in-chief of the Russian armies, and immediately secured some important victories. On the eve of the February revolution, as has been recognized by many Russian and foreign historians, the Russian armies were better equipped than ever before and in a good position to turn the tide of war against the Germans in a spring offensive. Such a glorious triumph, which would have secured the Tsar's reputation as one of the great warrior kings of history, was snatched from him by the treason of the leading elites, especially of the generals, and by the indifference of the Church and nation as a whole, as a result of which he was forced to abdicate...

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If we compare the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917 with that of the British King Edward VIII in 1936 (who happened to be his godson), then we immediately see the superiority, not only of Tsar Nicholas over King Edward, but also of the system of the Orthodox autocracy over that of the constitutional monarchy.

Constitutionalists - of whom there were very many among the plotters of 1917 - criticized the Orthodox autocracy mainly on the grounds that it presented a system of absolute, uncontrolled power, and therefore of tyranny. They quoted the saying of the historian Lord Acton: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". But this was a serious misunderstanding. The Orthodox autocracy is based on the anointing of the Church and on the faith of the people; and if it betrays either - by disobeying the Church, or by trampling on the people's faith, - it loses its legitimacy, as we see in the Time of Troubles, when the people rejected the false Dmitri. It is therefore limited, not absolute, and must not be confused with the system of absolutist monarchy that we see in, for example, the French King Louis XIV, or the English King Henry VIII, who felt limited by nothing and nobody on earth.

Tsar Nicholas perfectly understood the nature of his autocratic power, which is why he never went against the Church or violated Orthodoxy, but rather upheld and

championed both the one and the other. Moreover, he demonstrated in his personal life a model of Christian humility and love. If he had been personally ambitious, he would have fought to retain his throne in 1917, but he abdicated, as we have seen, in order to avoid the bloodshed of his subjects. What a contrast with Edward VIII, who lived a life of debauchery, and then abdicated because he could not have both the throne and a continued life of debauchery at the same time. He showed no respect for Church or faith, and perished saying: "What a wasted life!"

Whereas the abdication of Edward VIII only demonstrated his unfitness to rule, the abdication of Tsar Nicholas, by contrast, saved the monarchy for the future. For in abdicating he resisted the temptation to apply force and start a civil war in a cause that was just from a purely juridical point of view, but which could not be justified from a deeper, eschatological point of view. In this he followed the example of first canonized saints of Russia, the Princes Boris and Gleb, and the advice of the Prophet Shemaiah to King Rehoboam and the house of Judah as they prepared to face the house of Israel: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Return every man to his house..." (I Kings 12.24).

The Tsar-Martyr resisted the temptation to act like a Western absolutist ruler, thereby refuting those in both East and West who looked on his rule as just that – a form of absolutism. He showed that the Orthodox Autocracy was not a form of absolutism, but something completely *sui generis* – the external aspect of the self-government of the Orthodox Church and people on earth. He refused to treat his power as if it were *independent* of the Church and people, but showed that it was a form of *service* to the Church and the people *from within* the Church and the people, in accordance with the word: "I have raised up one chosen out of My people... with My holy oil have I anointed him" (Psalms 88.18, 19). So not "government by the people and for the people" in a democratic sense, but "government by one chosen out of the people of God for the people of God and responsible to God alone"...

Immediately after the abdication, on March 11 and 12, 1917, the Council of the Petrograd Religio-Philosophical Society attempted to deny the very concept of the Orthodox autocracy by resolving that the Synod's acceptance of the Tsar's abdication "does not correspond to the enormous religious importance of the act, by which the Church recognized the Tsar in the rite of the coronation of the anointed of God. It is necessary, for the liberation of the people's conscience and to avoid the possibility of a restoration, that a corresponding act be issued in the name of the Church hierarchy abolishing the power of the Sacrament of Royal Anointing, by analogy with the church acts abolishing the power of the Sacraments of Marriage and the Priesthood."

Fortunately, the Church hierarchy rejected this demand. For not only can the Royal Anointing not be abolished, since it is of God: even the last Tsar still remained the anointed Tsar after his abdication. As Shakespeare put it in *Richard II* (III, ii, 54-7):

*Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.*

As such, Nicholas remained an anointed tsar to the end of his life.

For since the power of the anointed autocrat comes from God, not the people, it cannot be removed by the people. The converse of this fact is that if the people attempt to remove the autocrat from power for any other reason than his renunciation of Orthodoxy, then they themselves sin against God and deprive themselves of His Grace. That is why St. John of Kronstadt had said that if Russia were to be deprived of her tsar, she would become a "stinking corpse". And so it turned out: as a strictly logical and moral consequence, "from the day of his abdication," as St. John Maximovich wrote, "everything began to collapse. It could not have been otherwise. The one who united everything, who stood guard for the truth, was overthrown..."⁷¹³ For, as St. John said in another place: "The Tsar was the embodiment of the Russian people's... readiness to submit the life of the state to the righteousness of God: therefore do the people submit themselves to the Tsar, because he submits to God. Vladyka Anthony [Khrapovitsky] loved to recall the Tsar's prostration before God and the Church which he makes during the coronation, while the entire Church, all its members, stand. And then, in response to his submission to Christ, all in the Church make a full prostration to him."⁷¹⁴

In agreement with this, the philosopher Ivan Alexandrovich Ilyin wrote: "Faithfulness to the monarchy is a condition of soul and form of action in which a man unites his will with the will of his Sovereign, his dignity with his dignity, his destiny with his destiny... The fall of the monarchy was the fall of Russia herself. A thousand-year state form fell, but no 'Russian republic' was put in its place, as the revolutionary semi-intelligentsia of the leftist parties dreamed, but the pan-Russian disgrace foretold by Dostoyevsky was unfurled, and a failure of spirit. And on this failure of spirit, on this dishonour and disintegration there grew the state Anchar of Bolshevism, prophetically foreseen by Pushkin – a sick and unnatural tree of evil that spread its poison on the wind to the destruction of the whole world. In 1917 the Russian people fell into the condition of *the mob*, while the history of mankind shows that the mob is always muzzled by *despots* and *tyrants*... The Russian people unwound, dissolved and ceased to serve the great national work – and woke up under the dominion of internationalists. History has as it were proclaimed a certain law: *Either one-man rule or chaos* is possible in Russia; Russia is not capable of a republican order. Or more exactly: the existence of Russia demands *one-man rule* – either a religiously and nationally strengthened one-man rule of honour, fidelity and service, that is, a *monarchy*, or one-

⁷¹³ St. John Maximovich, "Homily before a Memorial Service for the Tsar-Martyr", in *Man of God*, Redding, Ca.: Nikodemos Publishing Society, p. 133. Cf. Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev): "There is no need to say how terrible a 'touching' of the Anointed of God is the overthrow of the tsar by his subjects. Here the transgression of the given command of God reaches the highest degree of criminality, which is why it drags after it the destruction of the state itself" (*Russkaia Ideologia (The Russian Ideology)*), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 50-51). And so, insofar as it was the disobedience of the people that compelled the Tsar to abdicate, leading inexorably to his death, "we all," in the words of Archbishop Averky, "Orthodox Russian people, in one way or another, to a greater or lesser degree, are guilty of allowing this terrible evil to be committed on our Russian land" (*Istinnoe Pravoslavie i Sovremennij Mir (True Orthodoxy and the Contemporary World)*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1971, p. 166.

⁷¹⁴ St. John Maximovich, "The Nineteenth Anniversary of the Repose of His Beatitude Metropolitan Anthony", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, N 19, 1955, pp. 3-4.

man rule that is atheist, conscienceless and dishonourable, and moreover *anti-national and international*, that is, a *tyranny*..."⁷¹⁵

The Russian constitutionalists demanded of Tsar Nicholas that he give them a "responsible" government, by which they meant a government under their control. But the rule of Tsar Nicholas was already responsible in the highest degree – to God. For this is the fundamental difference between the Orthodox autocrat and the constitutional monarch, that whereas the first is responsible to God alone, the latter, while claiming to rule "by the Grace of God", in fact is in thrall to the people and fulfils their will rather than God's.

So we have three kinds of king: the Orthodox autocrat, who strives to fulfil the will of God alone, and is responsible to Him alone; the absolute monarch, who fulfils only his own will, and is responsible to nobody; and the constitutional monarch, who fulfils the will of the people, and can be ignored or deposed by them as they see fit.

The significance of the reign of Tsar Nicholas II lies in the fact that he demonstrated, in his life and death, what a true Orthodox autocrat – as opposed to an absolutist despot or a constitutional monarch – really is. This knowledge had begun to fade in the minds of the people, and with its fading the autocracy itself became weaker and eventually collapsed. But Tsar Nicholas restored the image of the autocracy to its full glory, and thereby preserved the possibility of its complete restoration in a future generation...

March 2/15, 2011.

⁷¹⁵ Ilyin, *Sobranie Sochinenij* (Collected Works), Moscow, 1994, volume 4, p. 7; in Valentina D. Sologub, *Kto Gospoden' – Ko Mne!* (He who is the Lord's – to me!), Moscow, 2007, p. 53.

29. RUSSIAN AUTOCRACY AND ENGLISH MONARCHY: A COMPARISON

Appearances can be deceptive. There is a famous photograph of the Russian Tsar Nicholas II and the English King George V standing together, looking as if they were twins (people often confused them) and wearing almost identical uniforms. Surely, one would think, these were kings of a similar type, even brothers in royalty? After all, they called each other "Nicky" and "Georgie", had very similar tastes, had ecumenical links (Nicky was godfather of Georgie's son, the future Edward VIII, and their common grandmother, Queen Victoria, was invited to be godmother of Grand Duchess Olga⁷¹⁶), and their empires were similar in their vastness and diversity (Nicholas was ruler of the greatest land empire in history, George – of the greatest sea power in history). Moreover, the two cousins never went to war with each other, but were allies in the First World War. They seem to have been genuinely fond of each other, and shared a mutual antipathy for their bombastic and warmongering "Cousin Willy" – Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany. To crown it all, when Tsar Nicholas abdicated in 1917, Kerensky suggested that he take refuge with Cousin Georgie in England, a suggestion that the Royal Family did not reject...

But Cousin Georgie betrayed Cousin Nicky, withdrawing his invitation for fear of a revolution in England, with the result that the Tsar and his family were murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918.⁷¹⁷ Nor was this the only betrayal: in a deeper sense English constitutionalism betrayed Russian autocracy. For it was a band of constitutionalist Masons headed by Guchkov, and supported by the Grand Orient of France and the Great Lodge of England, that plotted the overthrow of the Tsar in the safe haven of the English embassy in St. Petersburg. Thus it was not Jewish Bolsheviks or German militarists who overthrew the Russian autocracy, but monarchists – but monarchists who admired the English constitutionalist model. The false kingship that was all show and no substance betrayed the true kingship that died in defence of the truth in poverty and humiliation – but in true imitation of Christ the King, Who said: "You say rightly that I am a king: for this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth!" (John 18.37).

The main difference between true and false kinship is that a true king rules in consultation with his subjects, but not in thrall to them, whereas the false kind "*reigns but does not govern*", as Adolphe Thiers put it in 1830. Not that the false kingship has no power of any kind: the recent 60th jubilee celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II of

⁷¹⁶ Miranda Carter, *The Three Emperors*, London: Penguin, 2011, p. 177.

⁷¹⁷ In view of the failure of rescue attempts from within Russia, "the future of the Tsar and his family grew ever more precarious. It was the [British] Prime Minister who initiated the meeting with George V's private secretary at which, for a second time, 'it was generally agreed that the proposal we should receive the Emperor in this country... could not be refused'. When Lloyd George proposed that the King should place a house at the Romanovs' disposal he was told that only Balmoral was available and that it was 'not a suitable residence at this time of year'. But it transpired that the King had more substantial objections to the offer of asylum. He 'begged' (a remarkably unregal verb) the Foreign Secretary 'to represent to the Prime Minister that, from all he hears and reads in the press, the residence in this country of the ex-Emperor and Empress would be strongly resented by the public and would undoubtedly compromise the position of the King and Queen'. It was the hereditary monarch, not the radical politician, who left the Russian royal family to the mercy of the Bolsheviks and execution in Ekaterinburg" (Roy Hattersley, *The Great Outsider: David Lloyd George*, London: Abacus, 2010,, p. 472).

England, which were watched by hundreds of millions around the world on television, witnessed in a remarkable way to the emotional power even of the false, constitutional monarchism. But this is the power of a religious symbol, not of a major political reality. Queen Elizabeth reigns, but she does not govern – in fact, unlike the humblest of her citizens, she is not allowed to express any political opinion. Therefore, she is both the most privileged and most enslaved person in the realm, a paradox that only the English, it appears, think is normal...

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Let us look briefly at the origins of English constitutionalism... England was ruled by Orthodox autocrats for approximately four-and-a half centuries until 1066. In that year, however, the last Orthodox king, Harold II, was killed in battle against the Catholic Duke William of Normandy, while his only child, Gytha, fled to Kiev, where she married the Russian Great Prince Vladimir Monomakh. In this way the English autocracy was merged into the Russian autocracy, just as, in 1472, the Byzantine autocracy was merged into the Russian autocracy through the marriage of the niece of the last Byzantine autocrat, Sophia Palaeologus, to Great Prince Ivan III of Moscow.

Under the Normans and during the time of the heretical popes, the English monarchy was transformed into a totalitarian despotism. Thus William the Conqueror seized control of the Church and most of the land and wealth of the kingdom, reducing the consultative, judicial and legislative organs of the English state to mere reflections of his personal will. But then, slowly, attempts to claw back power from the despotic Norman kings began. The first, famously, was *Magna Carta* (1215), a contract between the English barons and King John, which succeeded to some degree in limiting the power of the king. But this benefited only the barons, not the people, who rebelled in 1381, were crushed by King Richard II, and continued in subjection to their aristocratic landlords.

A more determined and successful attempt to limit the power of the monarchy was made during the English revolution. The fledgling parliament of medieval times had now been transformed into a more powerful organ controlled by the leading landowners, who in turn controlled the king's purse-strings. When parliament refused to give money to King Charles I for a war against Scotland, civil war broke out. In 1649 Cromwell tried and executed King Charles, the first ideologically motivated and judicially executed regicide in history. Before then, kings had been killed in abundance, and many Popes had presumed to depose them by ecclesiastical decrees. But Charles I was not deposed by any Pope; nor was he the victim of a simple coup. He was charged with treason against the State by his own subjects...

Treason *by* a king rather than *against* him?! This was a contradiction in terms which implied that the real sovereign ruler was not the king, but the people – or rather, those rebels against the king who chose to speak in the name of the people. As Christopher Hill writes: “high treason was a personal offence, a breach of personal loyalty to the King; the idea that the King himself might be a traitor to the realm was novel”⁷¹⁸, to

⁷¹⁸ Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, London: Faber & Faber, 1997, p. 172.

say the least. The king himself articulated the paradoxicality of the revolution during his trial, declaring: "A King cannot be tried by any superior jurisdiction on earth."

At his trial Charles had said that the king was the guarantor of his people's liberties: "Do you pretend what you will, I will stand for their liberties - for if a power without law may make laws, may alter the fundamental laws of the kingdom, I do not know what subject can be sure of his life, or of anything that he calls his own." As for the people, "truly I desire their liberty and freedom, as much as anybody whomsoever; but I must tell you that their liberty and their freedom consists in having of government those laws by which their life and their goods may be most their own. It is not for having share in government, sir, that is nothing pertaining to them. A subject and a sovereign are clean different things..."

Charles presented his case well; he went, as he put it, "from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown" with great courage and dignity. Thereby he acquired more genuine monarchist followers in his death than he had possessed during his life. Very soon, moreover, the leader of the Revolution, Oliver Cromwell, came to realize that if you kill the king, then any Tom, Dick or Harry will think he has the right to kill *you*. In particular, he realized that he could not possibly give in to the demands of the Levellers, proto-communists who wanted to "level" society to its lowest common denominator. And so in May, 1649, only four months after executing the king, he executed some mutinous soldiers who sympathised with the Levellers. And four years later he was forced to dissolve the fractious Parliament and seize supreme power himself (although he refused the title of King, preferring that of "Protector"). So England went from monarchy to dictatorship in the shortest possible time...

Earlier, just after his victory over the King at Naseby in 1645, he had declared: "God hath put the sword in the Parliament's hands, - for the terror of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well. If any plead exemption from that, - he knows not the Gospel". But when anarchy threatened, he found an exemption to the law of the Gospel: "Necessity hath no law," he said to the dismissed representatives of the people. Napoleon had a similar rationale when he dismissed the Directory and the elected deputies in 1799.⁷¹⁹ As did Lenin when he dismissed the Constituent Assembly in 1918... "Necessity" in one age becomes the "revolutionary morality" of the next - in other words, the suspension of all morality. This is the first law of the revolution which was demonstrated for the first time in the English revolution.

The English revolution, writes Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky), "bore within itself as an embryo all the typically destructive traits of subsequent revolutions". Nevertheless, "the religious sources of this movement, the iron hand of Oliver Cromwell, and the immemorial good sense of the English people, restrained this stormy element, preventing it from achieving its full growth. Thenceforth, however, the social spirit of Europe has been infected with the bacterium of revolution..."⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁹ As Guizot wrote, Cromwell "was successively a Danton and a Buonaparte" (*The History of Civilization in Europe*, London: Penguin Books, 1847, 1997, p. 221).

⁷²⁰ Metropolitan Anastasy, "The Dark Visage of Revolution", *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XVII, no. 5, September-October, 1996, p. 10.

Another revolutionary leader from the gentry was the poet John Milton. He set himself the task of justifying the revolution (Engels called him “the first defender of regicide”) in theological terms. For unlike the later revolutions, the English revolution was still seen as needing justification in terms of Holy Scripture.⁷²¹ Milton began, in his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, with a firm rejection of the Divine Right of Kings. “It is lawful and hath been held so through all ages for anyone who has the power to call to account a Tyrant or wicked King, and after due conviction to depose and put him to death.” Charles I was to be identified with the Antichrist, and in overthrowing him the English people had chosen God as their King. Moreover, it was now the duty of the English to spread their revolution overseas (Cromwell had begun the process in Scotland and Ireland in 1649-51), for the saints in England had been “the first to overcome those European kings which receive their power not from God but from the Beast”.⁷²²

“No man who knows aught,” wrote Milton, “can be so stupid as to deny that all men naturally were born free”. Kings and magistrates are but “deputies and commissioners of the people”. “To take away from the people the right of choosing government takes away all liberty”.⁷²³ Of course, the bourgeois Milton agreed, “the people” did not mean *all* the people, or even the majority: the “inconstant, irrational and image-doting rabble”, could not have the rule; the better part – i.e. the gentry, people like Milton himself – must act on their behalf. This raised the problem, as Filmer argued against Milton, that even if we accept that “the sounder, the better and the uprighter part have the power of the people... how shall we know, or who shall judge, who they can be?” But Milton brushed this problem aside...⁷²⁴

Another problem that Milton had to face was the popular (and Orthodox) conception that the king was “the image of God” - within a week of the king’s execution, *Eikon Basilike* (Royal Icon) was published by the royalists, being supposedly the work of Charles himself. This enormously popular defence of the monarchy was countered by Milton’s *Eikonoklastes*, in which the destruction of the icon of the king was seen as the logical consequence of the earlier iconoclasm of the English Reformation. For, as Hill explains: “An ikon was an image. Images of saints and martyrs had been cleared out of English churches at the Reformation, on the ground that the common people had worshipped them. Protestantism, and especially Calvinism... encouraged lay believers to reject any form of idolatry.”⁷²⁵ Thus did the anti-papist iconoclasm of the English Reformation reap its fruits in the anti-monarchist iconoclasm of the English Revolution... The transition from rebellion against the Church to rebellion against the king was inevitable. Luther had tried to resist it, but

⁷²¹ For, as Sir Edmund Leach writes, “at different times, in different places, Emperor and Anarchist alike may find it convenient to appeal to Holy Writ” (“Melchisedech and the Emperor: Icons of Subversion and Orthodoxy”, *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Society*, 1972, p. 6).

⁷²² Quoted in Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁷²³ Quoted in Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 101. Milton attributed the dominance of bishops and kings to the Norman Conquest, and he bewailed men’s readiness “with the fair words and promises of an old exasperated foe... to be stroked and tamed again into the wonted and well-pleasing state of their true Norman villeinage” (Hill, *op. cit.*, 169). This was wildly unhistorical, for the Norman Conquest actually destroyed both the Orthodox monarchy and episcopate of Anglo-Saxon England, replacing it with a Catholic king and episcopate.

⁷²⁴ Quoted in Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁷²⁵ Quoted in Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-174.

the Calvinists were less afraid to cross the Rubicon by ascribing *all* authority, both ecclesiastical and secular, to the people. For “if a purer religion, close to the one depicted in the gospel, was attainable by getting rid of superiors in the church, a better social and economic life, close to the life depicted in the gospels, would follow from getting rid of social and political superiors.”⁷²⁶

As time passed, however, the English tired of their revolution. It was not only that so traditionalist a nation as the English could not live forever without Christmas and the “smells and bells” of traditional religion (not to speak of drinking and dancing), which Cromwell banned. “As the millenium failed to arrive,” writes Christopher Hill, “and taxation was not reduced, as division and feuds rent the revolutionaries, so the image of his sacred majesty loomed larger over the quarrelsome, unsatisfactory scene... The mass of ordinary people came to long for a return to ‘normality’, to the known, the familiar, the traditional. Victims of scrofula who could afford it went abroad to be touched by the king [Charles II] over the water: after 1660 he was back, sacred and symbolic. *Eikonoklastes* was burnt by the common hangman together with *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*... The men of property in 1659-60 longed for ‘a king with plenty of holy oil about him’...”⁷²⁷

And yet the king’s holy oil was not the main thing about him from their point of view. Far more important was that he should suppress the revolutionaries, preserve order and let them make money in peace. A Divine Right ruler was not suitable because he might choose to touch their financial interests, as Charles I had done. For, as Ian Buruma writes, “there is a link between business interests – or at least the freedom to trade – and liberal, even democratic, politics. Money tends to even things out, is egalitarian and blind to race or creed. As Voltaire said about the London stock exchange: Muslims, Christians and Jews trade as equals, and bankrupts are the only infidels. Trade can flourish if property is protected by laws. That means protection from the state, as well as from other individuals.”⁷²⁸

A constitutional ruler was the answer, that is, a ruler who would rule within strict limitations imposed by the men of property (who packed the Houses of Parliament) and drawn up in a constitution that was never written down, but was enforced by the power of tradition and precedent and the occasional mini-mutiny. And so even when, in 1660, after the failure of Cromwell’s republican experiment, King Charles’ son, Charles II, was allowed to occupy the throne, it was only on certain conditions, conditions imposed by the men of property. And after the “Glorious Revolution” in 1688, the English monarchy became officially constitutional – that is, subject in the last resort to the will of parliament.

The paradoxical result is that, in England today, while everyone is a subject of the Queen, and the Queen is far more popular than any elected politician, she is also bound as none of her subjects is bound, being strictly forbidden from expressing any political opinions in public and being forced to sign all the laws that parliament sets before her...

⁷²⁶ Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence, 1500 to the Present*, New York: Perennial, 2000, p. 265.

⁷²⁷ Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁷²⁸ Buruma, “China and Liberty”, *Prospect*, May, 2000, p. 37.

And not only in England. For if, before 1914, the family of European constitutional monarchs still had some power to influence the politicians' decisions – although not their decision to go to war⁷²⁹ – since then their power has dwindled to almost nil, with the very rare exception only proving the point more clearly. Thus “in 1990, when a law submitted by Roger Lallemand and Lucienne Herman-Michielsens, liberalising Belgium's abortion laws, was approved by Parliament, [King Baudouin of Belgium] refused to give Royal Assent to the bill. This was unprecedented; although Baudouin was nominally Belgium's chief executive, Royal Assent has long been a formality (as is the case in most constitutional and popular monarchies). However, due to his religious convictions, Baudouin asked the Government to declare him temporarily unable to reign so that he could avoid signing the measure into law. The Government under Wilfried Martens complied with his request on 4 April 1990. According to the provisions of the Belgian Constitution, in the event the King is temporarily unable to reign, the Government as a whole fulfils the role of Head of State. All members of the Government signed the bill, and the next day (5 April 1990) the Government declared that Baudouin was capable of reigning again.”⁷³⁰ So King Baudouin, a pious Catholic, became a true king for one day (April 4, 1990), when he spoke in defence of God's truth in defiance of the godless Belgian government. But precisely on that day and for that reason the godless declared him to be no king at all. Such is the absurdity entailed by the self-contradictory concept of constitutional monarchy...

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And so the English constitutional monarchy is not monarchical in its origins at all, but actually arises from the first successful European revolution *against* the monarchy (if we except Pope Gregory VII's revolution against monarchism in general in the late eleventh century). Very different was the Russian autocracy. Founded in its Christian form by St. Olga of Kiev and her grandson St. Vladimir in the late tenth century, its origins were in the Byzantine autocracy, to which it was bound by faith, baptism and marriage (St. Olga was baptized by the Byzantine emperor, and St. Vladimir was married to the sister of the Byzantine emperor). Indeed, from a juridical-symbolical point of view, the Russian Great Princes were subjects of the Byzantine emperor until the very fall of Constantinople in 1453. *De facto*, however, they were true autocrats (“autocratic” means “self-governing”) who both ruled and governed the Russian people from the beginning.

The Russian autocrats were supreme in their own, political sphere: the only limitation on their power was *the Orthodox Church*, which could excommunicate them if they defied Church law (as it excommunicated Tsar Ivan the Terrible for his seven

⁷²⁹ As Niall Ferguson writes: “The monarchs, who still dreamed that international relations were a family affair, were suddenly as powerless as if revolutions had already broken out” (*The War of the World*, London: Penguin, 2007, p. 107). The only monarch who made the decision to enter the war on his own authority and regardless of the (very real) threat of revolution was Tsar Nicholas; although weakened by the constitution forced on him in the abortive revolution of 1905, he could still declare war by himself (in 1914), take over the command of the armed forces by himself (in 1915) and reject overtures for a separate peace by himself (in 1916). But his cousin, the English King George V, had absolutely nothing to do with the conduct of his country in the war, while his other cousin, the German Kaiser Wilhelm, while theoretically entitled to order his generals to stop, in practice was simply ignored by them...

⁷³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baudouin_of_Belgium

marriages) or even call for a war of national liberation if they betrayed the Orthodox Faith (as St. Hermogen did when the false Dmitri proclaimed his status as a Catholic). This “symphony of powers” was another feature of the Russian autocracy inherited from Byzantium... Only the Russians embodied the symphony much more successfully than the Byzantines. For, on the one hand, the Byzantines far more often committed the most serious sin of regicide (“in Byzantium out of 109 reigning emperors 74 ascended onto the throne by means of regicide”⁷³¹). On the other hand, many Byzantine emperors were heretics who were permitted to occupy the throne without hindrance (all the last Byzantine emperors from John V to Constantine XI were Catholics).

The first tsar who showed weakness in relation to the idea of democracy was Boris Godunov. He had been a member of the dreaded *oprichnina* from his youth, and had married the daughter of the murderer of St. Philip of Moscow, Maliuta Skouratov.⁷³² He therefore represented that part of Russian society that had profited from the cruelty and lawlessness of Ivan the Terrible. Moreover, although he was the first Russian tsar to be crowned and anointed by a full patriarch (on September 1, 1598), and there was no serious resistance to his ascending the throne, he acted from the beginning as if not quite sure of his position, or as if seeking some confirmation of his position from the lower ranks of society. This was perhaps because he was not a direct descendant of the Rurik dynasty (he was brother-in-law of Tsar Theodore), perhaps because (according to the *Chronograph* of 1617) the dying Tsar Theodore had pointed to his mother’s nephew, Theodore Nikitich Romanov, the future patriarch, as his successor, perhaps because he had some dark crime on his conscience...

In any case, Boris decided upon an unprecedented act. He interrupted the liturgy of the coronation, as Stephen Graham writes, “to proclaim *the equality of man*. It was a striking interruption of the ceremony. The Cathedral of the Assumption was packed with a mixed assembly such as never could have found place at the coronation of a tsar of the blood royal. There were many nobles there, but cheek by jowl with them were merchants, shopkeepers, even beggars. Boris suddenly took the arm of the holy Patriarch in his and declaimed in a loud voice: ‘Oh, holy father Patriarch Job, I call God to witness that during my reign there shall be neither poor man nor beggar in my realm, but I will share all with my fellows, even to the last rag that I wear.’ And in sign he ran his fingers over the jewelled vestments that he wore. There was an unprecedented scene in the cathedral, almost a revolutionary tableau when the common people massed within the precincts broke the disciplined majesty of the scene to applaud the speaker.”⁷³³

How different was this democratism from the self-confidence of Ivan the Terrible: “I perform my kingly task and consider no man higher than myself.” And again he said: “The Russian autocrats have from the beginning had possession of all the kingdoms, and not the boyars and grandees.”⁷³⁴ And again, this time to the (elected) king of Poland: “We, humble Ivan, tsar and great prince of all Rus’, by the will of God,

⁷³¹ Ivan Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (The People’s Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, p. 81.

⁷³² Archpriest Lev Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 105.

⁷³³ Graham, *Boris Godunov*, London: Ernest Benn, 1933, p. 116.

⁷³⁴ Quoted in Archbishop Seraphim (Soloviev), *Russkaia Ideologia*, St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 64.

and not by the stormy will of man...."⁷³⁵ In fact, Ivan the Terrible's attitude to his own power, at any rate in the first part of his reign, was much closer to the attitude of the Russian people as a whole than was Boris Godunov's. For, as St. John Maximovich writes, "the Russian sovereigns were never tsars by the will of the people, but always remained Autocrats by the Mercy of God. They were sovereigns in accordance with the dispensation of God, and not according to the 'multimutinous' will of man."⁷³⁶

Monarchy by the Grace of God and monarchy by the will of the people are incompatible principles. The very first king appointed by God in the Old Testament, Saul, fell because he tried to combine them; he listened to the people, not God. Thus he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, together with the best of his livestock, instead of killing them all, as God had commanded. His excuse was: "because I listened to the voice of the people" (I Kings 15.20). In other words, he abdicated his God-given authority and *became, spiritually speaking, a democrat*, listening to the people rather than to God.

Sensing this weakness in Tsar Boris, the people paid more heed to the rumours that he had murdered the Tsarevich Demetrius, the Terrible one's youngest son, in 1591. But then came news that a young man claiming to be Demetrius Ivanovich was marching at the head of a Polish army into Russia. If this man was truly Demetrius, then Boris was, of course, innocent of his murder. But paradoxically this only made his position more insecure; for in the eyes of the people the hereditary principle was higher than any other – an illegitimate but living son of Ivan the Terrible was more legitimate for them than Boris, even though he was an intelligent and experienced ruler, the right-hand man of two previous tsars, and fully supported by the Patriarch, who anathematized the false Demetrius and all those who followed him. Support for Boris collapsed, and in 1605 he died, after which Demetrius, who had promised the Pope to convert Russia to Catholicism, swept to power in Moscow.

"As regards who had to be tsar," writes St. John Maximovich, "a tsar could hold his own on the throne only if the principle of legitimacy was observed, that is, the elected person was the nearest heir of his predecessor. The legitimate Sovereign was the basis of the state's prosperity and was demanded by the spirit of the Russian people."⁷³⁷ The people were never sure of the legitimacy of Boris Godunov, so they rebelled against him. However, even if these doubts could excuse their rebellion against Boris (which is doubtful, since he was an anointed Tsar recognized by the Church), it did not excuse the cruel murder of his son, Tsar Theodore Borisovich, still less their recognition of a series of usurpers in the next decade.

Moreover, the lawless character of these rebellions has been compared, not without justice, to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.⁷³⁸ First they accepted a real imposter, the false Demetrius – in reality a defrocked monk called Grishka Otrepev. Then, in May,

⁷³⁵ Quoted in Archbishop Seraphim, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁷³⁶ St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie Zakona o Prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia), Shanghai, 1936; quoted in "Nasledstvennost' ili Vybory?" ("Hereditary or Elections?"), *Svecha Pokaiania* (Candle of Repentance), № 4, February, 2000, p. 12.

⁷³⁷ St. John Maximovich, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁷³⁸ Bishop Dionysius (Alferov), "Smuta" (The Time of Troubles), http://catacomb.org.ua/modlues.php?=&Pages&go=print_page&pid=642.

1606, Prince Basil Shuisky led a successful rebellion against Demetrius, executed him and expelled the false patriarch Ignatius. He then called on Patriarch Job to come out of his enforced retirement, but he refused by reason of his blindness and old age.⁷³⁹ Another Patriarch was required; the choice fell of Metropolitan Hermogen of Kazan, who anointed Tsar Basil to the kingdom...But the people also rejected Tsar Basil... Finally, in 1612, coming to their senses, they besought Michael Romanov, who was both legitimate and Orthodox, to be their tsar, promising to obey him and his descendants forever, under pain of anathema. The appointment of Tsar Michael's father as patriarch underlined the filial relationship between Church and State in the restored Russian autocracy.

The Russian autocracy of the seventeenth century presents one of the most balanced examples of Church-State symphony in history. While the autocrats were supreme in the secular sphere, any attempt they might make to dictate to the Church, or corrupt her role as the conscience of the nation, was firmly rebuffed, as we see in the life of Patriarch Nikon of Moscow. The people did not strive to limit the tsar's authority; but their voice was respectfully listened to in the *Zemskie Sobory*, or "Councils of the Land"; and there was a degree of local popular representation at the lower levels of administration.

Early in the eighteenth century, however, Peter the Great disturbed the balance by trying to subject the Church to his own will, introducing the western theory of Divine Right absolutism into the government of the country, together with many other Protestant innovations. But gradually, in the nineteenth century from the time of Paul I to Nicholas II, the balance began to be restored. In 1901 Tsar Nicholas removed from the Basic Laws the phrase designating the Tsar as "Supreme Judge" of the Church, and then prepared the way for the convening of the first genuine Church Council since the middle of the seventeenth century. The Local Russian Council of 1917-18 may be counted as a fruit of the Tsar's reign, even if was convened after he had abdicated. And after he was murdered in July, 1918, the Red Terror began, showing that the freedom of Orthodoxy and the Church was guaranteed by the autocracy and disappeared with its fall.

It is striking how, with the fall of true autocracy, the structure of European monarchy, being built, not on the rock of true faith and the Grace of God, but on the porous sand of the "multitudinous will" of the people (Tsar Ivan IV), began to collapse completely. For in 1917-18 the dynasties of all the defeated nations: Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria (temporarily) collapsed. And within a decade monarchy had more or less disappeared in several other nations, such as Turkey, Italy and Greece.

The first to go was Russia; for the one true monarchy had to be destroyed violently before the pseudo-monarchies could be peacefully put out to grass. The abortive revolution of 1905 had imposed a kind of constitution on the Tsar. But then he, summoning the last of his political strength, effectively defied the will of the Masons

⁷³⁹ According to Lebedev, Patriarch Job's blindness and expulsion from his see were his punishment for lying during the Council of 1598 that Ivan the Terrible had "ordered" that Boris Godunov be crowned in the case of the death of his son Theodore, and for lying again in covering up Boris' guilt in the murder of the Tsarevich Demetrius (*Velikorossia*, p. 112).

(but not that of the people) until 1917 – and even then he did not give them their “responsible government”, but abdicated in favour of other members of the dynasty. Thus the Russian autocracy went out with a bang, undefeated in war and defying the traitors and oath-breakers who opposed it. The latter, however, went out with a whimper, losing the war and after only nine months’ rule fleeing in all directions (Kerensky fled in women’s clothes to Paris).

The only major monarchies to survive were those of England and Serbia. But the Serbian King Alexander, for his over-zealous defence of Orthodoxy and traditional monarchism (he had reigned together with a parliament until 1929, but then took over the reins of government himself), was assassinated in 1934, and the dynasty was forced into exile in 1941. (The monarchy has now returned to Serbia in a meekly constitutional form.) As for England, King George V, as we have seen, bought time by casting “Cousin Nicky” to the Bolshevik wolves, while his granddaughter has bought still more time by opening Hindu temples and honouring anti-monarchist rulers such as Ceaușescu and Putin... Prince Charles, meanwhile, has said that when he ascends the throne he will no longer be “the Defender of the Faith”, i.e. Christianity, like all English monarchs before him, but “the defender of *all* faiths...”

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Democracy, of course, claims to guarantee the freedom and equality of its citizens. But even if we accept that “freedom” and “equality” are too often equated by liberals with licence and an unnatural levelling of human diversity, and that they had little to do with *spiritual* freedom or *moral* equality, England in 1914 was probably a less free and less equal society than Russia. As the call-up for the Boer war in 1899-1902 revealed, a good half of British conscripts were too weak and unhealthy to be admitted to active service. And things were no better in 1918, when the tall, well-fed American troops seemed giants compared with the scrawny, emaciated Tommies - the monstrously rich English factory-owners and aristocratic landlords had seen to it that the workers’ lot remained as harsh as it had been when Marx and Engels first wrote about it. But in Russia in 1914 greatly increased prosperity, rapidly spreading education among all classes, liberal labour laws and a vast increase in a free, independent peasantry (especially in Siberia) were transforming the country.

The idea that autocracy is necessarily inimical to freedom and equality was refuted by the monarchist Andozerskaya in Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s novel, “October, 1916”: “Under a monarchy it is perfectly possible for both the freedom and the equality of citizens to flourish. First, a firm hereditary system delivers the country from destructive disturbances. Secondly, under a hereditary monarchy there is no periodic upheaval of elections, and political disputes in the country are weakened. Thirdly, republican elections lower the authority of the power, we are not obliged to respect it, but the power is forced to please us before the elections and serve us after them. But the monarch promised nothing in order to be elected. Fourthly, the monarch has the opportunity to weigh up things in an unbiased way. The monarchy is the spirit of national unity, but under a republic divisive competition is inevitable. Fifthly, the good and the strength of the monarch coincide with the good and the strength of the whole country, he is simply forced to defend the interests of the whole country if only in order

to survive. Sixthly, for multi-national, variegated countries the monarch is the only tie and the personification of unity..."⁷⁴⁰

For these reasons Nicholas II was completely justified in his firm attachment to the autocratic principle.⁷⁴¹ And his choice was vindicated by his own conduct: no autocrat conducted himself with more genuine humility and love for his subjects, and a more profound feeling of responsibility before God. He was truly an autocrat, and not a tyrant. He did not sacrifice the people for himself, but himself for the people. The tragedy of Russia was that she was about to exchange the most truly Christian of monarchs for the most horrific of all tyrannies – all in the name of freedom!

The constitutionalists criticize the Orthodox autocracy mainly on the grounds that it presents a system of absolute, uncontrolled power, and therefore of tyranny. They quote the saying of the historian Lord Acton: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". But this is and was a serious misunderstanding. The Russian autocracy was based on the anointing of the Church and on the faith of the people; and if it betrayed either – by disobeying the Church, or by trampling on the people's faith, - it lost its legitimacy, as we see in the Time of Troubles, when the people rejected the false Dmitri. It was therefore limited, not absolute, being limited, not by parliament or any secular power, but by the teachings of the Orthodox Faith and Church, and must not be confused with the system of absolutist monarchy that we see in, for example, the French King Louis XIV, or the English King Henry VIII, who felt limited by nothing and nobody on earth. Just as the Tsar had earlier rejected the temptation of becoming an English-style constitutionalist monarch, so now he resisted the opposite temptation of becoming a western-style absolutist ruler, thereby refuting the constitutionalists who looked on his rule as just that – a form of absolutism. Like Christ in Gethsemane, he told his friends to put up their swords, and surrendered himself into the hands of his enemies; "for this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22.53). He showed that the Orthodox Autocracy was not a form of western-style absolutism, whose right is in its might, but something completely *sui generis*, whose right is in its faithfulness to the truth of Christ. He refused to treat his power as if it were *independent of or over* the Church and people, but showed that it was a form of *service to* the Church and the people *from within* the Church and the people. So if the people and the Church did not want him, he would not impose himself on them. He would not fight a ruinous civil war in order to preserve his power. Instead he chose to *die*, because in dying he proclaimed the truth of Christ, thereby imitating again the King of kings, Who said: "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." (John 18.37). Moreover, he imitated the example of the first canonized saints of Russia, the Princes Boris and Gleb, and followed the advice of the Prophet Shemaiah to King Rehoboam and the house of Judah: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Return every man to his house..." (I Kings 12.24).

If we compare the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917 with that of his godson, the British King Edward VIII in 1936, we immediately see the superiority, not only of the

⁷⁴⁰ Solzhenitsyn, *The Red Wheel*, "October, 1916", uzel 2, Paris: YMCA Press, pp. 401-408.

⁷⁴¹ As he said to Count Witte in 1904: "I will never, in any circumstances, agree to a representative form of government, for I consider it harmful for the people entrusted to me by God." (Fomin & Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem*, Moscow, 1994, vol. 1, p. 376).

Tsar over the King personally, but also of Orthodox autocracy over constitutional monarchy generally. Edward VIII lived a life of debauchery, flirted with the German Nazis, and then abdicated, not voluntarily, for the sake of the nation, but because he could not have both the throne and a continued life of debauchery at the same time. He showed no respect for Church or faith, and perished saying: "What a wasted life!" While the abdication of Edward VIII placed the monarchy in grave danger, the abdication of Tsar Nicholas, by contrast, saved the monarchy for the future. For by his example of selfless sacrifice for the faith and the people, he showed what a true king is, preserving the shining image of true monarchy shining and unsullied for future generations of Orthodox Christians...

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One of the greatest threats to Russia and Orthodoxy in the world today are the plans to introduce a constitutional monarchy into Russia. The best-known candidate is George Romanov, a great-grandson of Great Prince Kyril Vladimirovich, who betrayed the autocracy in 1917 and whose son, Vladimir Kyrillovich, apostasized from the True Church in 1992 in order to join the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate. If the present neo-Soviet regime of Putin begins to feel insecure at some time in the future, it may well "restore the monarchy" in the person of George Romanov in order to gain the support of traditionalists – while keeping the real power in their own hands.

Archimandrite Kyril Zaitsev of Jordanville once said that the greatest "achievement" of the Russian revolution was its creation of a fake Orthodox Church, which looks like the real thing, but destroys souls rather than saving them. However, perhaps the real "crown" of the revolution that destroyed the Russian autocracy would be its fake restoration of the Romanov dynasty, the creation of a "constitutional autocracy" with all the external trappings of Russianness and Orthodoxy, and even genuinely Romanov genes, but none of the real autocracy's internal, spiritual essence...

"Do not judge according to appearance," said the Lord, "but judge with righteous judgement" ([John 7.24](#)).

June 12/25, 2012.

30. NICHOLAS II AND THE 1905 REVOLUTION

The end of the Russo-Japanese War came with the final defeat of the Russian navy at Tsushima in May, 1905. It markedly increased the political tensions in Russia: a meeting in Moscow of representatives from the *zemstva*, the nobility and the municipal councils called for the convocation of a national representative body elected on a secret, equal, universal and direct ballot. On June 6 a delegation from the meeting led by Prince Sergius Trubetskoj was received by the Tsar, and on August 6 what became known as the Bulygin Constitution was published: a proposal for a consultative parliamentary body called the Duma.

Now the Tsar was never against *consultative* bodies. He welcomed every opportunity to find out more about the opinions and attitudes of his subjects. But he said: "I shall never in any circumstances agree to a representative form of government, for I consider it harmful for the people entrusted to me by God".⁷⁴² The Bulygin Constitution was far from being a representative form of government in the full western sense: its powers were limited, and "the inviolability of autocratic power" was retained. Nevertheless, it was seen as a major concession by the government to the liberal opposition.

On August 27 the government made another unexpected concession: university faculties were allowed to elect rectors and students to hold assemblies. Moreover, the police were told to keep out of the universities, making them in effect "no-go" areas. Soon workers and other non-students joined the student meetings, and, as Richard Pipes writes, "academic work became impossible as institutions of higher learning turned into 'political clubs': non-conforming professors and students were subjected to intimidation and harassment... In Witte's view, the university regulations of August 27 were a disaster: 'It was the first breach through which the Revolution, which had ripened underground, emerged into the open.'"⁷⁴³

At the end of September a wave of strikes, economic in origin, but politicised by the Union of Unions and the radical students, hit Central Russia. They culminated in a vast general strike in mid-October. The country was descending into anarchy.

Both Witte and D.F. Trepov, the Governor-General of St. Petersburg, were in favour of the creation of a constitutional monarchy along the lines of the resolution of the *Zemstvo* Congress held in Moscow the month before. The Tsar was not convinced. He saw himself as having to choose between two courses: the first, as Oldenburg writes, was to "appoint an energetic military man and try by all means to suppress the rebellion; then there would be a pause, and again in a few months one would have to act by force again; but this would mean torrents of blood and in the end would lead to the present situation, that is, the authority of the power would have been demonstrated, but the result would remain the same... The other path is to present the

⁷⁴² Yana Sedova, "V Plenu Mifov i Stereotipov" (In Captivity to Myths and Stereotypes), *Nasha Strana* (Our Country), 17 July, 2010, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁴³ Pipes, *The Russian Revolution 1899-1919*, London: Collins Harvill, 1990, pp. 36-37.

population with civil rights... Among other things, that would imply the obligation of passing every bill through the State Duma. This, in essence, is a constitution."⁷⁴⁴

These words of the Tsar would seem to indicate that he did not believe in the use of force to suppress the rebellion. Nevertheless, he did think of making the reliable and loyal Trepov a kind of military dictator.

However, writes S.S. Oldenburg, "to the question whether he [Trepov] could restore order in the capital without risking a massacre, he answered that 'he could give no such guarantee either now or in the future: rebellion [*kramola*] has attained a level at which it is doubtful whether [bloodshed] could be avoided. All that remains is faith in the mercy of God.'

"Still unconvinced, Nicholas asked Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich to assume dictatorial powers. The Grand Duke is said to have responded that the forces for a military dictatorship were unavailable and that unless the Tsar signed the manifesto he would shoot himself..."⁷⁴⁵

With "Nikolasha's" rejection, the Tsar gave in: if he could not impose a dictatorship, he would have to allow a constitution.

In his Manifesto of October 17, 1905, which was entitled "On the Improvement of Order in the State", the Tsar declared: "The disturbances and unrest in St Petersburg, Moscow and in many other parts of our Empire have filled Our heart with great and profound sorrow. The welfare of the Russian Sovereign and His people is inseparable and national sorrow is His too. The present disturbances could give rise to national instability and present a threat to the unity of Our State. The oath which We took as Tsar compels Us to use all Our strength, intelligence and power to put a speedy end to this unrest which is so dangerous for the State. The relevant authorities have been ordered to take measures to deal with direct outbreaks of disorder and violence and to protect people who only want to go about their daily business in peace. However, in view of the need to speedily implement earlier measures to pacify the country, we have decided that the work of the government must be unified. We have therefore ordered the government to take the following measures in fulfilment of our unbending will:

1. Fundamental civil freedoms will be granted to the population, including real personal inviolability, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association.
2. Participation in the Duma will be granted to those classes of the population which are at present deprived of voting powers, insofar as is possible in the short period before the convocation of the Duma, and this will lead to the development of a universal franchise. There will be no delay to the Duma elect already been organized.
3. It is established as an unshakeable rule that no law can come into force without its approval by the State Duma and representatives of the people will be given

⁷⁴⁴ Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II* (The Reign of Emperor Nicholas II), Belgrade, 1939, pp. 312-313.

⁷⁴⁵ Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

the opportunity to take real part in the supervision of the legality of government bodies.

We call on all true sons of Russia to remember the homeland, to help put a stop to this unprecedented unrest and, together with this, to devote all their strength to the restoration of peace to their native land."⁷⁴⁶

The revolutionaries saw the Manifesto as a capitulation to their demands – and continued with their revolution. However, the attitude of most people in the provinces was: “Thank God, now there will be an end to the strikes and disturbances – ‘the Tsar has given liberty’, there is nothing more to demand. This liberty was understood in different ways, and in a very woolly way: but the popular masses came out onto the streets with portraits of the Tsar and national flags; they celebrated the publication of the manifesto and did not protest against it.”⁷⁴⁷

Witte was invited to chair the Council of Ministers, whom he, and not the Tsar, now selected. His position under the constitution was now critical – and critically ambiguous. Was he still primarily a servant of the Tsar – or a lackey of the Masons in the Duma?

Fr. Lev Lebedev writes: “When some time had passed, Witte began to praise his Majesty with sweet words for ‘the people’s representation’ in which the Tsar would find support. Nicholas II interrupted him: ‘Sergius Yulyevich: I very well understand that I am creating for myself *not a helper*, but *an enemy*, but I comfort myself with the thought that I will succeed in bringing up a state force which will turn out to be useful for providing Russia in the future with a path of peaceful development, without sharp undermining of those supports on which she has lived for so long.’ In the new order the old State Council, composed of high-ranking dignitaries appointed by the Tsar was preserved, as a kind of ‘higher chamber’. However, all this together with the Duma *was not a parliament*, since his Majesty was not intending to renounce his autocratic power. He made a public declaration about this during a reception of a monarchist organization: ‘The reforms I announced on October 17 will be realized unfailingly, and the freedoms given by me in the same way to the whole of the population are inalienable. But my Autocracy will remained *what it was of old*.’ ...”⁷⁴⁸

But could the Autocracy remain what it was when there was now a mainly liberal Duma with not merely consultative, but also legislative powers? Although the Manifesto made no mention of the word “constitution”, many thought that the Tsar had committed himself to a constitution that permanently limited his autocratic powers. Of course, the Tsar’s power had never been unlimited in an absolutist sense – as Protopriest John Vostorgov said, “The supreme power in a pure, true monarchy is unlimited, but not absolute, for it is limited morally by the content of its ideal”⁷⁴⁹ – which is the Law of God. It was because he always saw himself as under God’s law

⁷⁴⁶ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoi Imperii* (A Complete Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire), 3rd series, vol. XXV/I, N 26803).

⁷⁴⁷ Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

⁷⁴⁸ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 424-425.

⁷⁴⁹ Vostorgov, in Fomin & Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad, 1998, p. 403.

that when the Tsar came to review the Basic Laws of the Empire in April, 1906, he removed the word “unlimited” from Article 1 to describe the nature of his power, while retaining the word “autocratic”. However, the Tsar remained above all *human* (as opposed to Divine, Church) laws in his realm, since he was the source of them, so that if he bestowed a law, or manifesto, or even a constitution, he was entitled to change it or remove it altogether. Moreover, his subjects were bound by their oath of allegiance to accept such a change, whatever they might think privately of the Tsar’s inconsistency. As N. Rodzevich wrote in *Moskovskie Vedomosti*: “Let us assume that the Tsar is not knowledgeable on military affairs. Well, he selects an experienced general and declares that without the agreement of this general no military question may be decided. A time comes and the Tsar realizes that the general selected by him gives bad advice; can he really not change his previous order and dismiss the general? Of course he may do so. Similarly, if the Duma does not warrant the Tsar’s confidence, would he not be justified in dissolving the Duma and then creating a new one or refusing to convoke one at all? This depends on the Autocrat’s will.”⁷⁵⁰

This was true. And yet we must remember that the date of the October Manifesto, October 17, was also the date of the creation of the St. Petersburg Soviet, or “the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies” to give it its official name, which was controlled by the socialists (they had twenty-one out of fifty seats on the Executive Committee). In other words, whatever kind of state Russia remained in theory, in practice a great change had taken place – the public creation of a revolutionary institution inexorably opposed both to God and the Autocracy that would have been unthinkable in an earlier age. And if this revolution was eventually crushed, it left a general feeling of malaise in the people, and a weakness and uncertainty in state administration (in spite of the efforts of the excellent prime minister, Peter Arkadievich Stolypin), that made 1917 inevitable.

And so if the Russian revolution was born in October, 1917, it was conceived twelve years before, in 1905...

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The Manifesto, far from calming political passions, excited them to the utmost. Anarchy increased as young revolutionaries rampaged in the cities; the press, freed from all restraints and almost exclusively owned by Jews, raged against the government; and the police, overstretched and unsure of their rights under the new constitution, hesitated to apply strong measures. However, in Petersburg there was a new phenomenon: demonstrations in favour of the Tsar, the so-called “Black Hundreds”, or monarchist counter-revolution...

1905 is famous particularly for its pogroms. But the truth was different from the view generally accepted in the West that the “Black Hundreds” simply slaughtered masses of Jews. The general pattern was as follows. First the revolutionaries, usually led by young Jews, would call on the population to strike and free prisoners from the prisons, and would themselves tear down the symbols of tsarist authority, although, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn writes, “undoubtedly both Russians and Jews took part in the destruction of portraits and monograms”.⁷⁵¹ Then, a day or two later, when it was

⁷⁵⁰ Rodzevich, in A. Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, Stanford University Press, 1992, p. 12.

⁷⁵¹ Solzhenitsyn, *Dvesti Let Vmeste* (Two Hundred Years Together), 2001, p. 375.

clear that the authorities were unwilling or unable to restore order, the anti-Jewish pogrom would begin.

Thus in Kiev the pogrom began on October 18. "A crowd of Jews seized the building of the City Duma, tore down national flags and mocked the portraits of the Tsar. One of the Jews cut the head out of a portrait [of the Tsar], put his own [in the hole] and shouted: 'Now I'm the Tsar!' Others declared to the stunned Kievans: 'Soon your St. Sophia cathedral will become our synagogue!'"⁷⁵²

"In its initial stage the pogrom undoubtedly had the character of revenge taken for the offence to national feeling. Subjecting the Jews they met on the street to blows, smashing shops and trampling the goods they took out of them into the dirt, the pogromists would say: "There's your freedom, there's your constitution and revolution; there are your tsarist portraits and crown". And then on the following morning, the 19th, a thousand-strong crowd made its way from the Duma to St. Sophia square carrying the empty frames from the broken portraits of the tsar, the tsarist monogram and smashed mirrors. They went to the university, repaired the damaged portraits and served a *moleben*, while 'Metropolitan Flavian exhorted the crowd not to behave badly and to disperse to their homes'. 'But at the same time that the people constituting the centre of the patriotic demonstration... maintained exemplary order in it, people joining it from the street allowed themselves to commit all kinds of violence in relation to the Jews they met and to people wearing the uniforms of academic institutions [students].' Then the demonstrators were joined by 'black workers, homeless inhabitants of the flea market and bare-footed people from the river-bank', 'groups of pogromists smashed up Jewish flats and stalls and threw out property and goods onto the street. Then they would be partly destroyed and partly stolen.'... The pogromists passed by the stalls of the Karaite Jews without touching them, and also 'those Jewish flats where they were shown portraits of the emperor'. [On the 19th the wealthiest Jewish shops in the centre were looted.] Proceeding from the fact that 'almost two thirds of all the trade in the city was in the hands of the Jews', [Senator] Turau calculates the losses, including the homes of the rich, 'at several million roubles'. They set out to destroy not only Jewish houses, but also the flats of well-known liberal social activists...

"In all during the days of the pogrom, according to the approximate estimate of the police (some of those who suffered were taken away by the crowd), 47 people were killed, including 12 Jews, while 205 were wounded, one third of them Jews.

"Turau concludes his report with the conclusion that 'the main cause of the Jewish pogrom in Kiev was the long-existing enmity between the Little Russian and Jewish population, based on the difference in their world-views. The immediate cause was the insult to national feeling by the revolutionary manifestations, in which a prominent role belonged to Jewish youth.' The simple people saw 'the Jews alone as being to blame for the insults and imprecations against everything that was holy and dear to it. It could not understand the revolutionary movement after the concessions given it, and explained it by the striving of the Jews to gain "their own Yiddish freedom".' 'The failures of the war, at which Jewish youth always openly expressed its most lively joy,

⁷⁵² Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 428.

their avoidance of military service, their participation in the revolutionary movement, in a series of violent acts and murders of high-ranking people, and undoubtedly the irritation of the simple people against the Jews – that is why there were incidents in Kiev when many Russians openly gave refuge in their houses to poor Jews hiding from the violence, while sharply refusing to give it to young Jews.'

"The newspaper *Kievlianin* also wrote about this. 'Unfortunate Jews! What were these thousands of families guilty of?... To their own woe and misfortune the Jews have not been able to restrain their madmen... But, you know, there are madmen among us Russians, too, and we have not been able to restrain them.'

"The revolutionary youth went mad – and it was the elderly and peaceful Jews who had to pay for it..."⁷⁵³

Indeed, the older generation of Jewry did not support the young. "[Jewish] orthodoxy was in a struggle, not always open, but hidden, against the Jewish intelligentsia. It was clear that orthodoxy, in condemning the liberation movement in Jewry, was striving to win the goodwill of the government.' But it was already late. By 1905 the autocracy had generally lost control in the country. While traditional Jewry by that year had completely lost a whole, and already not the first, *generation*, which had departed into Zionism, into secular liberalism, rarely into enlightened conservatism, and – the most significant in its consequences – into the revolutionary movement."⁷⁵⁴

"It is not surprising," continues Solzhenitsyn, "that 'in many places... an active struggle of prosperous religious elements in Jewry against the revolution was noticed. They helped the police to catch Jewish revolutionaries, and to break up demonstrations, strikes, etc.' Not that it was nice for them to be on the side of the government. But... they not want to accept the revolutionary law, for they honoured *their own*. While for many young revolutionaries the religious 'Union of the Jews' in Bialystok and other places was 'Blackhundredist'."⁷⁵⁵

It must also be emphasized that the main motivation for this flood of Jews into the revolutionary movement was not the restrictions placed by the government on the civil rights of Jewry (which were in any case being quickly whittled down), but infection with the same liberal and revolutionary ideas as infected so many contemporary Russians. "The participation of Jews in the general Russian revolutionary movement can only to a very small degree be explained by their inequality... The Jews only shared the general mood' of the struggle against the autocracy. Is that to be wondered at? The young members of *intelligent* families, both Russian and Jewish, had for years heard at home [such phrases as]: 'the crimes of the authorities', 'a government of murderers'. They then rushed into revolutionary action with all their energy and ardour."⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵³ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 379-380, 383-384.

⁷⁵⁴ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

⁷⁵⁵ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 367-368.

⁷⁵⁶ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

In Odessa, the Manifesto was published on the 17th. The next day, "General Kauldbars, the commander of the Odessa military district, in order to 'give the population the unhindered opportunity to use the freedom given by the Manifesto in all its forms', ordered all the soldiers not to appear on the streets, 'so as not to spoil the joyful mood in the population'. However, 'this mood did not last for long. From all sides individual groups, mainly of Jews and young students, streamed towards the centre of the city' with red flags of shouts of "Down with the autocracy!" and "Down with the police!" And orators summoned them to the revolution. From a metallic image on the Duma of the words 'God save the Tsar!', the first two words were broken off. They rushed into the Duma hall, 'a huge portrait of his Majesty the Emperor was torn to pieces, while in the Duma the national flag was replaced with the red flag. They removed the hats from a protopriest, deacon and reader who were passing by in a cab to a pannikhida, and then later at the burial they stopped the procession 'and interrupted the singing of "Holy God" with shouts of "Hurrah!"'. 'They dragged along a dead cat and a scarecrow without its head and with the inscription "This is the autocracy", and collected money on the spot "for killing the Tsar" or "for the death of Nicholas"'. 'The young people, and especially the Jews, with an evident consciousness of their superiority began to point out to the Russians that freedom had not been given voluntarily, but had been snatched away from the government by the Jews... They openly said to the Russians: "Now we will rule you"', and also: 'We gave you God, we will also give you a tsar'."⁷⁵⁷ Prophetic words when we remember that it was little more than twelve years to the Jewish Soviet "tsardom" ...

Soon the students were forcing workers to take off their hats in front of the red flag. When the workers refused, they were shot at. But though unarmed, they succeeded in dispersing the crowd. Then, however, another thousand-strong crowd of Jews began to fire at the workers, killing four. Thus "in various places there began fights and armed confrontations between Russians and Jews: Russian workers and people without fixed occupations, the so-called hooligans, began to catch and beat up Jews. They went on to break into and destroy Jewish houses, flats and stalls."⁷⁵⁸

The next day the "counter-pogrom" of the Russians against the Jews began in earnest. Crowds of Russians of all classes carrying icons and portraits of the tsar, and singing "Save, O Lord, Thy people" marched into the centre of the town. There the revolutionaries shot at them, a boy carrying an icon was killed, bombs were thrown...

Open warfare between Jews and Russians now began.

"On October 31 [21?] a crowd of Jews destroyed state emblems and seized the Duma, proclaiming a 'Danubian-Black Sea Republic' headed by the Jew Pergament. It was suggested that the Don and Kuban lands should be 'cleansed' of Cossacks and handed over to Jewish settlers. Moreover, Jewish organizations *armed* from four to five thousand warriors, and not a little blood was shed in conflicts with soldiers. All this was described by the correspondent of the [London] *Times*, who was a witness of the events, in an article entitled 'A Regime of Terror' (Jewish terror was meant). Then in London the chief rabbi of the Spanish communities Gasper came out in print denying *everything* ('Not one Jew insulted the Majesty' of the Tsar) and affirming that that

⁷⁵⁷ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 390-391.

⁷⁵⁸ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

Tsarist troops and police had killed four thousand completely innocent Jews! The *Times* correspondent from Odessa refuted this fabrication: in general there had not been thousands of Jews killed. During the Odessa disorders only 293 Jews had been buried, of whom many died a natural death.⁷⁵⁹ The Englishman also pointed out that the provocation had been arranged by the 'central Jewish organization in Switzerland which sent its emissaries from Poland to Odessa'. He quoted L.Ya. Rabinovich on how the transfer of arms had taken place. But such witnesses from objective foreign observers were extremely rare! On the other hand, the whole of the world's press was filled with descriptions of the horrors of the Jewish pogroms, which rolled in an especially powerful wave from October 18 to 21 in the cities of Orel, Kursk, Simferopol, Rostov-on-Don, Ryazan, Velikie Luki, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kaluga, Kazan, Novgorod, Smolensk, Tula, Ufa, Tomsk, Warsaw, many others and in all the cities of the 'Pale of Settlement'. Of course, nothing was said about how these pogroms had been *provoked by the Jews themselves* (especially often by firing at Russians from the windows of *well-known Jewish houses*). In our days it has become clearer that at that time *social-democratic* organizations led by Jews deliberately spread leaflets among the people calling on them to [start] *Jewish pogroms*."⁷⁶⁰

The wrath of the people was directed not only against the Jews but against leftists generally. Thus in Tver a crowd set fire to the theatre in which the leftists were sitting – 200 perished. Another crowd threatened to do the same thing in Balashov, but thanks to the courageous actions of the governor, Peter Arkadyevich Stolypin, there were no victims.

And yet, considering the scale of the disturbances, there were far fewer victims than might have been expected – 1000 dead and several thousand wounded, according to one Jewish source. Again, the Jew G. Sliozberg, a contemporary witness who was in possession of all the information, wrote: "Fortunately, all these hundreds of pogroms did not bring in their wake significant violence against the persons of Jews, and in the vast majority of places the pogroms were not accompanied by murders."⁷⁶¹

For in 1905 faith and morality still held the great majority of the Orthodox people back from taking revenge against their persecutors. It would be a different story during the Civil War...

On October 27 the Tsar wrote to his mother "that the *pogromshchiki* represented 'a whole mass of loyal people', reacting angrily to 'the impertinence of the Socialists and revolutionaries... and, because nine-tenths of the trouble-makers are Jews, the People's whole anger turned against them.' This analysis was accepted by many foreign observers, notably British diplomats like the ambassador at St. Petersburg, Sir Charles Hardinge, his councillor, Cecil Spring Rice, and the Consul-General in Moscow, Alexander Murray."⁷⁶² It was also supported by Senator Kuzminsky, who concluded that "the October disturbances and disorders were caused by factors of an undeniably

⁷⁵⁹ "According to information provided by the police, those killed numbered more than 500, of whom 400 were Jews, while the wounded registered by the police numbered 289... of whom 237 were Jews" (Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 397). (V.M.).

⁷⁶⁰ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 428-429.

⁷⁶¹ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

⁷⁶² Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World*, London: Penguin Books, 2006, p. 68.

revolutionary character and were crowned by a pogrom of Jews exclusively as a result of the fact that it was the representatives of this nationality who took the dominant part in the revolutionary movement".⁷⁶³

Alexander Solzhenitsyn has shown by extensive quotations from Jewish sources that the Jews were well aware of the true state of affairs. Even the more honest Jews had to admit that 1905 was in essence "a Jewish revolution". "Thus in November, 1905 a certain Jacob de Haas in an article entitled 'The Jewish Revolution' in the London Zionist journal *Maccabee* wrote directly: 'The revolution in Russia is a Jewish revolution, for it is the turning point in Jewish history. This situation stems from the fact that *Russia is the fatherland of about half of the overall number of Jews inhabiting the world...*'"⁷⁶⁴

But the revolution was not just a Russian-Jewish affair: it also involved other nationalities within the empire, that in turn threatened intervention by foreign countries. For example, there was anarchy in the Baltic provinces, and "William II promised Professor Theodore Schliemann, a leading spokesman for the Baltic Germans in Berlin, that if the Russian monarchy fell, Germany would not abandon the Balts..."⁷⁶⁵ There is no question that the 1905 revolution was a very close-run thing...

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As the disturbances spread through the country and the regions, the government under Witte, to the Tsar's disgust, showed itself completely devoid of courage and ideas, and of necessity it was the Tsar himself who reassumed power and gradually reintroduced order. He decided to make concessions in Finland, restoring the old constitution there. But in Poland and the Baltic region he imposed martial law, and he sent loyal troops to quell disturbances in many other parts of the country.

Some 15 per cent of Russia's manor houses were destroyed during the 1905 revolution.⁷⁶⁶ For "the peasantry," as Pipes writes, "completely misunderstood the October Manifesto, interpreting it in its own manner as giving the communes licence to take over the countryside. Some rural disorders occurred in the spring of 1905, more in the summer, but they exploded only after October 17. Hearing of strikes and pogroms [both anti-Christian and anti-Jewish] in the cities going unpunished, the peasants drew their own conclusions. Beginning on October 23, when large-scale disorders broke out in Chernigov province, the wave of rural disorders kept on swelling until the onset of winters, re-emerging in the spring of 1906 on an even vaster scale. It would fully subside only in 1908 following the adoption of repressive measures by Prime Minister Stolypin.

"... The principal aim of the *jacquerie* was neither inflicting physical harm nor even appropriating land, but depriving landlords and other non-peasant landowners of the opportunity to earn a livelihood in the countryside - 'smoking them out', as the saying went. In the words of one observer: 'The [peasant] movement was directed almost

⁷⁶³ Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-399.

⁷⁶⁴ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

⁷⁶⁵ Lieven, *Towards the Flame. Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia*, London: Allen Lane, 2015, p. 190.

⁷⁶⁶ Macmillan, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

exclusively against landed properties and not against the landlord: the peasants had no use whatever for landlords but they did need the land.' The notion was simple: force the landlords to abandon the countryside and to sell their land at bargain prices. To this end, the peasants cut down the landlord's forests, sent cattle to graze on his pasture, smashed his machinery, and refused to pay rent. In some places, manors were set on fire...

"In an effort to stem the agrarian unrest, the government in early November reduced the due instalments of the redemption payments (payments for the land given the emancipated serfs in 1861) and promised to abolish them altogether in January 1907, but these measures did little to calm the rural districts.

"In 1905 and 1906 peasants by and large refrained from seizing the land they coveted from fear that they would not be allowed to keep it. They still expected a grand national repartition of all the non-communal land, but whereas previously they had looked to the Tsar to order it, they now pinned their hopes on the Duma. The quicker they drove the landlords out, they reasoned, the sooner the repartition would take place...

"The government faced one more trial of strength, this time with the radical left. In this conflict, there was no room for compromises, for the socialists would be satisfied with nothing less than a political and social revolution.

"The authorities tolerated the St. Petersburg Soviet, which continued to sit in session although it no longer had a clear purpose. On November 26, they order the arrest of Nosar, its chairman. A three-man Presidium (one of whose members was Leon Trotsky) which replaced Nosar resolved to respond with an armed uprising. The first act, which it was hoped would bring about a financial collapse, was an appeal to the people (the so-called Financial Manifesto), issued on December 2, urging them to withhold payments to the Treasury, to withdraw money from savings accounts, and to accept only bullion or foreign currency. The next day, [the Interior Minister] Durnovo arrested the Soviet, putting some 260 deputies (about one-half of its membership) behind bars. Following these arrests a surrogate Soviet assembled under the chairmanship of Alexander Helphand (Parvus), the theoretician of 'permanent revolution'. On December 6, the St. Petersburg Soviet issued a call for a general strike to being two days later. The call went unheeded, even though the Union of Unions gave it its blessing.

"The socialists were more successful in Moscow. The Moscow Soviet, formed only on November 21 by intellectuals of the three principal socialist parties, decided to press the revolution beyond its 'bourgeois' phase. Their followers consisted of semi-skilled workers, many of them employed in the textile industry, professionally and culturally less mature than their counterparts in the capital. The principal force behind this effort was the Moscow Bolshevik Committee. The Moscow rising was the first occasion in the 1905 Revolution when the socialists took the lead. On December 6, the Moscow Soviet voted to begin the following day an armed insurrection for the purpose of overthrowing the tsarist government, convoking a Constituent Assembly, and proclaiming a democratic republic.

“On December 7, Moscow was paralyzed: the strike was enforced by Soviet agents who threatened with violence anyone who refused to cooperate. Two days later, government forces launched an attack on the insurgents; the latter responded with urban guerrilla tactics. The arrival of the Semeonovskii Regiment, which used artillery to disperse the rioters, settled the issue. On December 18 the Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet capitulated. Over 1,000 people lost their lives in the uprising and whole areas of the ancient capital were gutted...”⁷⁶⁷

In Moscow an important role was played by the future hieromartyr Metropolitan Vladimir, who powerfully raised his archpastoral voice, rebuking the rebels and exposing the essence of the revolution.

Thus on October 16, after the liturgy in the Kremlin Dormition cathedral, he said: “The heart bleeds when you see what is happening around us... It is no longer the Poles, or external enemies, but our own Russian people, who, having lost the fear of God, have trusted the rebels and are holding our first capital as it were in a siege. Even without this we have been having a hard time because of our sins: first harvest failures [in 1891, 1897, 1898 and 1901], then illnesses, then an unsuccessful war [the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05], and now something unheard of is taking place in Rus’: it is as if God has deprived Russian people of their minds. By order of underground revolutionaries, strikes have begun everywhere, in the factories, in the schools, on the railways... Oh if only our unfortunate workers knew who is ruling them, who is sending them trouble-maker-agitators, then they would have turned from them in horror as from poisonous snakes! You know these are the so-called social-democrats, these are the revolutionaries, who have long ago renounced God in their works. They have renounced Him, and yet it may be that they have never known the Christian faith. They denounce her servants, her rites, they mock her holy things. Their main nest is abroad: they are dreaming of subduing the whole world to themselves; in their secret protocols they call us, the Christians, animals, to whom God, they say, has given a human face only in order that it should not be repulsive to them, His chosen ones, to use our services... With satanic cunning they catch light-minded people in their nets, promising them paradise on earth, but they carefully hide from them their secret aims, their criminal dreams. Having deceived the unfortunate, they drag him to the most terrible crimes, as if for the sake of the common good, and, in fact they make him into an obedient slave. They try in every way to cast out of his soul, or at any rate to distort, the teaching of Christ. Thus the commandments of Christ say: do not steal, do not covet what belongs to another, but they say: everything is common, take from the rich man everything you like. The commandments of Christ say: share your last morsel, your last kopeck with your neighbour, but they teach: take from others everything that you need. The commandments of Christ say: give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, fear God, venerate the Tsar, but they say: we don’t need any Tsar, the Tsar is a tyrant... The commandments of God say: in patience possess your souls, but they say: in struggle acquire your rights. The commandment of Christ orders us to lay down our souls for our friends, but they teach to destroy people who are completely innocent, to kill them only for the fact they do not agree with them, and do not embark on robbery, but just want to work honourably and are ready to stand for the law, for the Tsar, for the Church of God...”

⁷⁶⁷ Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-50.

“The sermon of Metropolitan Vladimir elicited the annoyance of the liberal-democratic press, and also of the liberal clergy. The latter either read the sermon in a shortened version, or did not read it at all. In the leftist newspaper *Russkoe Slovo* 76 priests published a declaration regarding their ‘complete non-solidarity’ with ‘the “Word” of Metropolitan Vladimir...’

“As a result of the actions of the priests quarrels also arose amidst their flock. The Synod, in response to this, unfortunately saw in the epistle of Metropolitan Vladimir, not a call to defend the Faith and the Fatherland, but ‘a call to the local population to defend themselves in the sphere of political convictions’, and in their ‘Resolution of October 22, 1905 N 150’ instructed the diocesan bishops and the clergy subject to them to make efforts ‘to remove quarrels in the population’, which, to a large extent, were continuing because of the opposition of the liberal priests to their metropolitan.

“But nothing could devalue or undermine the influence of the epistle of Metropolitan Vladimir on the Muscovites, and the true Russian people responded to it. The day after the publication of the ‘Word’, the workers began to serve *molebens* and return to work; the city water-supply began to work, the trams began to run, etc. Metropolitan Vladimir himself went to the factories and, after prayer, conducted archpastoral discussions with the workers.

“Later, in evaluating the labours of the holy hierarch Vladimir in overcoming the disturbances of 1905, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) said the following notable words about him: ‘Meek and humble, never seeking anything for himself, honourable and a lover of righteousness, Vladyka Vladimir gradually and quietly ascended the hierarchical ladder and was immediately exalted by his authority, drawing the hearts of ecclesiastical and patriotic Russia to himself during the days of general instability and treachery, when there were few who remained faithful to their duty and their oath, firm in the defence of the Orthodox Church, the Tsar-Autocrat and the Homeland... when everything began to shake in our Rus’, and many pillars began to waver...’ (speech of Archbishop Anthony of Zhitomir and Volhynia at the triumphal dinner given by Metropolitan Vladimir in honour of Patriarch Gregory of Antioch who was visiting Russia, 22 February, 1913).

“By ‘pillars’ Vladyka Anthony probably had in mind the liberal members of the Most Holy Synod, who did not support their brother, Metropolitan Vladimir...”⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁸ Riasophor-Monk Anempodist, “Sviaschennomuchenik mitropolit Vladimir (Bogoiavlenskij) i bor’ba s revoliutsii” (Hieromartyr Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoiavlensky) and the struggle against the revolution), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn’* (Orthodox Life), 53, N 1 (636), January, 2003, pp. 2-10.

Metropolitan Vladimir’s strong monarchist convictions were apparent already at his ordination, when he said: “A priest who is not a monarchist is unworthy to stand at the Holy Altar. A priest who is republican is always of little faith. A monarch is consecrated to his power by God, a president receives power from the pride of the people; a monarch is powerful through his carrying out of the commandments of God, a president holds on to power by pleasing the mob; a monarch leads his faithful subjects to God, a president leads them away from God.” (Valentina Sologub, *Kto Gospoden – Ko Mne!* (He who is the Lord’s – Come to me!), Moscow, 2007, p. 45)

Among these, many suspected the most senior member of the Synod, Metropolitan Anthony of St. Petersburg.⁷⁶⁹

Another under suspicion was Bishop Sergius (Stragorodsky), whose political sympathies were clearly leftist. Thus “when in 1905 the revolutionary professors began to demand reforms in the spiritual schools, then, in the words of Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), ‘his Grace Sergius... wavered in faith.’”⁷⁷⁰

Again, when the revolutionary Peter Schmidt was shot in 1906, Archbishop Sergius, who was at that time rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, served a pannikhida at his grave; and he also gave refuge in his hierarchical house in Vyborg to the revolutionaries Michael Novorussky and Nicholas Morozov (a participant in the attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II). Having such sympathies, it is not surprising that he was not liked by the Royal Family...⁷⁷¹

Bishop Sergius was to betray the Church after the revolution and become the first Soviet patriarch...

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And so the 1905 revolution was crushed. But the revolutionary spirit remained alive, and the country remained divided. The Empire had struck back; but the bell was tolling for the Empire...

The disturbances, particularly in the countryside, continued well into 1906, and only gradually died down thereafter. Thus in January the Tsar was forced to emphasize to a peasant delegation from Kursk province that the private property of the landlords, no less than that of the peasants themselves, was inviolable.⁷⁷² And even after the revolution had been defeated, “between January 1908 and May 1910, 19,957 terrorist attacks and revolutionary robberies were recorded; 732 government officials and 3,052 private citizens were killed, and nearly another 4,000 wounded.”⁷⁷³ The

⁷⁶⁹ Metropolitan Anthony was said to be an enemy of St. John of Kronstadt and even a Freemason. See Fomin & Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad, 1998, pp. 391-392; M.B. Danilushkin (ed.), *Istoria Russkoj Tserkvi ot Vosstanovlenia Patriarshestva do nashikh dnei* (A History of the Russian Church from the Restoration of the Patriarchate to our Days), vol. I, St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 78-80, 771-783; Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, chapter 7.

⁷⁷⁰ “Preemstvennost’ Grekha”, publication of the parish of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, Tsaritsyn, p. 7.

⁷⁷¹ In 1915 the Empress wrote to the Emperor that Sergius “must leave the Synod” (A. Paryae, “Mitropolit Sergij Stragorodskij: Neizvestnaia Biographia”, *Suzdal’skie Eparkhial’nie Vedomosti*, N 1, September, 1997, pp. 12-15).

⁷⁷² S.S. Oldenburg, *Tsarstvoovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II*, Belgrade, 1939, vol. I, p. 337.

⁷⁷³ Douglas Smith, *Former People: The Last Days of the Russian Aristocracy*, London: Macmillan, 2012, p. 58. Fr. Raphael Johnston writes: “Alexander III came to the throne over the corpse of his father. The revolutionaries, emboldened, as they always are, by liberal pacification, the communist and other far left groups were becoming increasingly violent. From the reign of Alexander II to 1905, the total number of people – both innocent civilians and government officials (including lowly bureaucratic clerks) – murdered by the Herzenian “New Men” came roughly to 12,000. From 1906-1908, it rose by 4,742 additional, with 9,424 attempts to murder. On the other hand, the Russian government’s attitude towards the “New Men” was mixed. Generally, the monarchy was lenient. Exile to Siberia was often not a punishment. Siberia is not entirely a massive, frozen wasteland, but is possessed of great natural

revolutionary parties disappeared temporarily into the underground. But the liberals formed a new political party, the Constitutional Democrats, or Cadets, and in the elections to the first Duma in March, they triumphed convincingly over their more rightist opponents.

The Duma simply continued the revolution by other means. After the Tsar had opened its first session with a fine speech on April 27, the deputies began fiercely attacking him and his ministers, and voted to give an amnesty to all political prisoners, “punishing them by forgiveness” in the words of F.I. Rodichev.⁷⁷⁴ The deputies also made political demands: the formation of a ministry responsible to themselves and not to the Tsar and the abrogation of the State Senate. They voted for the forcible appropriation of the estates of the landowners – a measure that only incited the peasants to further violence. But at the same time they voted to reduce credit for the starving from 50 million rubles to 15 million!⁷⁷⁵

On July 8 the Tsar dissolved the Duma on the grounds of its open call to disobey the authorities. The deputies were caught by surprise, and many of them travelled to Vyborg in Finland, where they issued an openly revolutionary declaration, calling on the people not to pay taxes, to refuse military service and not to recognize loans concluded with the government during the conflict. However, the governor of Vyborg asked them to cut short their session, fearing that it would lead to restrictions on Finland’s autonomy. The deputies returned to Petersburg having achieved nothing; nobody paid any attention to them... On June 3, 1907 the Second Duma was dissolved and a new electoral law introduced. The Third Duma that resulted was much more rightist, with an important role being played by the “*Octobrists*” under Guchkov, who decided to work with the government. This was the signal for a significant shift to the right in society as a whole: terrorist acts continued around the country, but for the time being the wind had been taken out of the sails of the revolutionaries...

So great was the change in mood that a conference of the Cadets in Helsingfors at the end of September even decided to abandon the Vyborg manifesto. The students returned to their studies. The revolutionaries ceased to be lionized...

Although the revolution had been crushed, monarchist thinkers felt that the concessions that the Tsar had given in his October Manifesto should be rescinded. True, in his new version of the Basic Laws published on April 23, 1906, just before the opening of the First Duma, the Tsar appeared to claw back some power: “4. The All-Russian Emperor possesses the supreme autocratic power. Not only fear and conscience, but God himself, commands obedience to his authority... 8. The sovereign emperor possesses the initiative in all legislative matters. The Fundamental Laws may be subject to revision in the State Council and State Duma only on His initiative. The sovereign emperor ratifies the laws. No law can come into force without his approval.

beauty, mountains and rivers. It is cold, but it is not the locale of the popular imagination. Local people, not knowing who the deportees were, received them with hospitality; they became part of town life, and the deportees were given much personal freedom. This sort of “imprisonment” was far superior to the American penal system, which can be – at its maximum security level – considered merely a gang war between various minority groups.” (The Third Rome)

⁷⁷⁴ Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

⁷⁷⁵ Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

. . 9. The Sovereign Emperor approves laws; and without his approval no legislative measure can become law."

However, there were other parts of the law that suggested that the Duma still had considerable power: "7. The sovereign emperor exercises power in conjunction with the State Council and the State Duma... 86. No new law can come into force without the approval of the State Council and State Duma and the ratification of the sovereign emperor."⁷⁷⁶

In any case, even if it was conceded that the Tsar had surrendered some of his autocratic powers to the Duma, he was clearly not going to take them back again. So what was to be done? The answer, in the minds of many monarchists, was the creation of a grass-roots monarchist party - "The Union of the Russian People", or "the Black Hundreds", as it was called by its opponents, who reviled it as being the mainstay, not only of monarchism, but also of "anti-semitism" in the Russian people.

The Unions first became an important force during the successful counter-revolution of 1906-07, when they had about 11,000 local sections, and their members comprised several hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life.⁷⁷⁷ Their continued to be important in the following period. They were not so much anti-semitic as anti-Judaist, anti-revolutionary and, of course, pro-monarchical.⁷⁷⁸

A great organizer of the Unions who emerged into the spotlight at this time was the missionary, future hieromartyr and great friend of St. John of Kronstadt, Fr. John Vostorgov.

On Great Friday, March 31, 1906 he said the following in the cathedral of Christ the Saviour: "Our homeland has entered upon a new path of life, before and ahead of us is - a new Russia.

"Forgive us, forgive us, old, thousand-year-old Russia! Before our eyes they have judged you, condemned you and sentenced you to death... Threatening and merciless judges have spat in your face and have found nothing good in you. The judgement was strict, implacable and merciless. Everything has merged into the cry: 'Take her, crucify her!'

"We also know that nothing human was alien to you; we know that you had many faults. But we also know and see that you made Russia holy, and her people - a God-bearing people, if not in actuality, at any rate in the eternal, undying ideal of the people's soul; you gave birth to and raised a mighty people, preserving it in its bitter fate, in the crucible of its historical trials through a whole series of centuries; you gave birth to and raised an array of saints and righteous ones; you did not perish under the

⁷⁷⁶ *Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* (The Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire), 3rd series, vol. 1, pt. 1. St Petersburg, 1912, pp. 5-26.

⁷⁷⁷ S. Anikin, "Budushee prinadlezhit trezvym natsiam" (The Future Belongs to Sober Nations), *Vernost'*, 142, March, 2010, <http://metanthonymemorial.org/VernostNo142.html>.

⁷⁷⁸ It is ironic that the "anti-semites" were helped in these years by a large loan secured in France by Witte through the mediation of one of the Rothschilds - for which the Alliance Israélite Universelle labelled Rothschild a traitor.

blows, the heavy blows of destiny, but became stronger under them, strong in faith; with this faith, this great power of spirit, you endured all the burdens, and yet you created, and entrusted to us and left behind, a great kingdom. For all this we bow down to the earth in gratitude...

“The monarchist Unions,” wrote Fr. John, “... foresaw the terrible dangers that threatened the Russian religious and popular-state structure and way of life. Others arose in their hundreds after the danger had already appeared, so as to protect the religious and state ideals of Russia and defend the integrity and indivisibility of Russia. Their essence consists in the fact that they are a storehouse of the religiosity and patriotism of the Russian people. At a fateful moment of history, when the ship of the Russian State was listing so far to the left that disaster seemed inevitable, the monarchist patriotic Unions leaned with all their strength to the right side of the ship and saved it from capsizing. The distinguished activists of the right-wing Unions came out onto the field of public work at a time when they could expect nothing except bullets and bombs, killings from round the corner, persecutions from the newspapers, mockery and disdain from the disoriented intelligentsia and even the government itself – that of Witte of sorrowful memory and his comrades and helpers...”⁷⁷⁹

In 1906-07 the higher ranks of the clergy were divided about the Union. Thus Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovsky) of St. Petersburg opposed it. But Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow⁷⁸⁰, Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin) of Yaroslavl, Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Volhynia, Bishop Hermogen of Saratov, St. John of Kronstadt, Elder Theodosius of Minvody, Fr. John Vostorgov and many others joined it without doubting.

Archbishop Makary (Parvitsky-Nevsky) of Tomsk explained the nature of the struggle: “‘For Faith, Tsar and Fatherland!’ – that is the inscription on the banner of the Union of the Russian People. It calls, evidently, for Russian people to be united, so as to stand up for the foundations of the Russian Land. But the banner of unification has at the same time become a banner of altercation. Against the band standing with the banner ‘For Faith, Tsar and Fatherland!’ there stands a horde of people with the red banner, on which is written: ‘Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood’. On this latter banner there remain traces of blood, blood that has already darkened with time. This is not our Russian banner, but has been brought from another country, where it was once

⁷⁷⁹ Vostorgov, in Valentina Sologub (ed.), *Kto Gospoden' – ko mne!* (He who is of the Lord – to me!), Moscow, 2007, p. 115.

⁷⁸⁰ Monk Anempodist writes: “Metropolitan Vladimir went on to take part in the movement of the right conservative forces of Russia that was being formed. Thus in 1907 he took part in the work of the All-Russian congress of ‘The Union of the Russian People’. In 1909, while taking part in the work of the First Monarchist congress of Russian People, Metropolitan Vladimir was counted worthy of the honour of passing on a greeting to the congress from his Majesty the Emperor Nicholas II in the following telegram:

“‘To his Eminence Vladimir, Metropolitan of Moscow. I entrust to you, Vladyko, to pass on to all those assembled in the first capital at the congress of Russian people and members of the Moscow Patriotic Union My gratitude for their loyal feelings. I know their readiness faithfully and honourably to serve Me and the homeland, in strict observance of lawfulness and order. St. Petersburg. 30 September. Nicholas.’” Riasophor-Monk Anempodist, “Sviaschennomuchenik mitropolit Vladimir (Bogoiavlenskij) i bor'ba s revoliutsii” (Hieromartyr Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoiavlensky) and the struggle against the revolution), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 53, N 1 (636), January, 2003, pp. 2-10.

steeped in blood. It appeared amongst us only recently. With its inscription, which speaks of freedom, equality and brotherhood, it has drawn the attention of many, not only foreigners who live in the Russian Land, but also Russians, who have not suspected that under this visible inscription there is hidden another meaning, that by this freedom we must understand violence, by equality – slavery, and by pan-brotherhood – fratricide. Between the horde of freedom, equality and brotherhood and the band for Faith, Tsar and Fatherland a struggle for dominance is taking place.”⁷⁸¹

In general, however, the Union was plagued by schisms and by poor leadership that gave it a bad name. The “Union of the Archangel Michael”, led by the deputy V.M. Purishkevich, separated from the “Union of the Russian People” led by A. Dubronin. Another major problem was that the monarchist parties turned out to be “more royal than the king”: in the provinces they often criticized the governors for being liberal, while in the Duma they remained in opposition to the government of Stolypin – who, of course, had the confidence of the Tsar.⁷⁸²

Dubronin was only superficially Orthodox. Thus he was for the tsar - but against hierarchy! And he wanted to rid the empire of “the Germans”, that is, that highly efficient top layer of the administration which proved itself as loyal to the empire as any other section of the population. When interviewed years later by the Cheka, Dubronin declared: “By conviction I am a *communist monarchist*, that is, [I want] there to be monarchist government under which those forms of government [will flourish] which could bring the people an increase in prosperity. For me all kinds of cooperatives, associations, etc. are sacred.” Fr. John Vostorgov, one of the founders of the Union, considered Dubronin an enemy of the truth... He stressed that true patriotism can only be founded on true faith and morality. “Where the faith has fallen,” he said, “and where morality has fallen, there can be no place for patriotism, there is nothing for it to hold on to, for everything that is the most precious in the homeland then ceases to be precious.”⁷⁸³

The major problem for the monarchists was the paradoxicality of the idea of a monarchical party within a monarchy. The Tsar was seen as standing above party and class interests, reconciling them all in obedience to himself. But the October manifesto appeared to many to divide power between the Tsar and the Duma. So the monarchists were forced to conduct party politics in favour of the idea that the state should not be the product of party politics, but incarnate in the tsar who was above all party politics...

In spite of these contradictions, the monarchist parties played an essential role in shoring up support for the Tsar and Tsarism at a critical time. And that is why the best churchmen of the time supported them, entering into open battle with the leftists. For there could be no real unity between those who ascribed ultimate power to the Tsar and those who ascribed it to the Duma. Moreover, the struggle between the “reds” and the “blacks” was not simply a struggle between different interpretations of the October manifesto, or between monarchists and constitutionalists, but between two

⁷⁸¹ Tatiana Groyan, *Tsariu Nebesnomu i Zemnomu Vernij* (Faithful to the Heavenly and Earthly Kings), Moscow, 1996, p. CXI.

⁷⁸² Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 60.

⁷⁸³ Vostorgov, in Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 400. My italics (V.M.)

fundamentally incompatible world-views - the Orthodox Christian and the Masonic-Liberal-Ecumenist. It was a struggle between two fundamentally opposed views of where true authority comes from – God or the people.

As Bishop Andronicus, the future hieromartyr, wrote: “It is not a question of the struggle between two administrative regimes, but of a struggle between faith and unbelief, between Christianity and antichristianity. The ancient antichristian plot, which was begun by those who shouted furiously to Pilate about Jesus Christ: ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him: His blood be on us and on our children’ - continued in various branches and secret societies. In the 16th century it poured into the special secret antichristian order of the Templars, and in the 18th century it became more definite in the Illuminati, the Rosecrucians and, finally, in Freemasonry it merged into a universal Jewish organization. And now, having gathered strength to the point where France is completely in the hands of the Masons, it – Masonry – already openly persecutes Christianity out of existence there. In the end Masonry will be poured out into one man of iniquity, the son of destruction – the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2). In this resides the solution of the riddle of our most recent freedoms: their aim is the destruction of Christianity in Rus’. That is why what used to be the French word ‘liberal’, which meant among the Masons a ‘generous’ contributor to the Masonic aims, and then received the meaning of ‘freedom-loving’ with regard to questions of faith, has now already passed openly over to antichristianity. In this resides the solution of the riddle of that stubborn battle for control of the school, which is being waged in the *zemstvo* and the State Duma: if the liberal tendency gains control of the school, the success of antichristianity is guaranteed. In this resides the solution of the riddle of the sympathy of liberals for all kinds of sects in Christianity and non-Christian religions. And the sectarians have not been slumbering – they have now set about attacking the little children... And when your children grow up and enter university – there Milyukov and co. will juggle with the facts and deceive them, teaching them that science has proved man’s origin from the apes. And they will really make our children into beasts, with just this difference, that the ape is a humble and obedient animal whereas these men-beasts will be proud, bold, cruel and unclean....”⁷⁸⁴

Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) put the monarchist case in February, 1907 as follows: “Perhaps there are countries which are best ruled not by tsars, but by many leaders. But our kingdom, which consists of a multitude of races, various faiths and customs that are hostile to each other, can stand only when at its head there stands one Anointed of God, who gives account to nobody except God and His commandments. Otherwise all the races that inhabit the Russian land would go against each other with knives, and would not be pacified until they had themselves destroyed each other, or had submitted to the power of the enemies of Russia. Only the White Tsar is venerated by all the peoples of Russia; for his sake they obey the civil laws, go into the army and pay their taxes. Our tsars are the friends of the people and preservers of the holy faith, and the present Sovereign Nicholas Alexandrovich is the meekest and quietest of all the kings of the whole world. He is the crown of our devotion to our native land and you must stand for him to your last drop of blood, not allowing anybody to diminish his sacred power, for with the fall of this power, Russia also will fall...

⁷⁸⁴ Bishop Andronicus, “Russkij grazhdanskij stroj zhizni pered sudom khristianina” (The Russian civil order before the judgement of the Christian), Fryazino, 1995, pp. 24-25. In 1918 Bishop Andronicus would suffer martyrdom at the hands of these men-beasts by being buried alive...

“Russian man, lend your ear to your native land: what does it tell you? ‘From the righteous Princess Olga, from the equal-to-the-apostles Vladimir until the days of Seraphim of Sarov and to the present day and to future ages all the wise leaders of my people think and say the same,’ that is what the land will reply to you... ‘They taught their contemporaries and their descendants one and the same thing: both the princes, and the tsars, and the hierarchs who sat on the Church sees, and the hermits who hid amidst the forest and on the islands of the sea, and the military commanders, and the warriors, and the boyars, and the simple people: they all taught to look on this life as the entrance courtyard into the future life, they all taught to use it in such a way as not to console the flesh, but to raise the soul to evangelical virtue, to preserve the apostolic faith unharmed, to keep the purity of morals and truthfulness of speech, to honour the tsars and those placed in authority by them, to listen to and venerate the sacred monastic order, not to envy the rich, but to compete with the righteous ones, to love to work the land as indicated by God to our race through Adam and Noah, and to turn to other crafts only out of necessity or because of a special talent; not to borrow the corrupt habits of foreigners, their proud, lying and adulterous morals, but to preserve the order of the fatherland, which is fulfilled through chastity, simplicity and evangelical love; to stand fearlessly for your native land on the field of battle and to study the law of God in the sacred books.’ That is what our land teaches us, that is what the wise men and righteous ones of all epochs of our history entrusted to us, in which there was no disagreement between them, but complete unanimity. The whole of Rus’ thinks in the same way. But she knows that only the Anointed of God must preserve this spirit and defend it from enemies visible and invisible by his mighty right hand. And look he hardly stepped back from life when his popular privileges were snatched from him by deception and violence by his enemies and the enemies of the people. Yes, the Russian people thinks and feels one thing: in its eyes public life is a general exploit of virtue, and not the realm of secular pleasures, it is the laborious increase of the Kingdom of God amongst us ourselves and its implanting in the unenlightened tribes, and not the equalisation of all faiths and superstitions. The Orthodox people knows and feels this. It feels that without one ruling royal right hand it is impossible for our land of many tribes to exist. In it are 102 different faiths, 102 tribes that will now nourish malicious enmity against each other immediately they cease to feel the ruling right hand of the White Tsar above them. Let him hear out the reports of the people’s delegates, let him allow them to express their opinions on various matters of the kingdom. But the final decision will be made by him himself, and he will give an account for this only through his conscience before the Lord God. One only submission, one only limitation of his power is necessary to the people: that openly on the day of his crowning he should confess his Orthodox faith to God and the people in accordance with the Symbol of the Fatherland – so that he should not have human arbitrariness, but the evangelical law of God as his unfailing guide in his sovereign decisions and undertakings. That is the kingdom we need, and this is understood not only by Russian people, but also by people other faiths who live in our land with a healthy people’s reasoning, and not through lies and deceit: both Tatars and Kirgiz and the old Jews who believe in their own way, and the distant Tunguz. All of them know that shaking the Tsar’s Autocracy means beginning the destruction of the whole of Russia, which has been confirmed in the last three years...”⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸⁵ Rklitsky, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 173, 175-177.

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In 1911 an interesting debate took place between the revolutionary-turned-monarchist Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov and Stolypin. Tikhomirov considered the new order in Russia after 1906 to be “unprincipled” and “neither monarchy nor democracy” “Being ambiguous in concept and deviating from a clear attitude to any Supreme Power, it was formed in such a way that in it everyone can get in everyone else’s way but there is no one who could force the institutions of state to collaborate. His Majesty the Emperor himself can independently only not allow a law to be enforced, but he cannot independently create a law that is necessary for the country. But... the state, on the contrary, has the task of working, and especially in a country that has been so disturbed during the preceding years of woes and troubles.

“This order, which is extremely bad from the point of view of its apparatus, is, in addition to that, complete antinational, that is, it does not correspond either to the character of the nation or to the conditions of the general situation of the Empire. As a result of this, disorganization in the country is being engendered on all sides. Unifying elements are weakening. A friable, bored, discontented mood has appeared. The Russians are losing their spirit, their faith in themselves, they are not inspired by patriotism. Moreover, class and inter-racial quarrels are necessarily becoming sharper.

“Russia constitutes a nation and a state that are great in instincts and means, but also surrounded by great dangers. It was created by Russians and is preserved only by Russians. Only Russian power brings the remaining elements to some solidarity amongst themselves and with the Empire. ... We have a huge non-Russian population... The strongest of the other races are foreign to our patriotism. They are eternally quarrelling amongst themselves, but are inclined to rebel against the dominion of the Russians. The unifying element, the general bond is we, the Russians. Without us the Empire will disintegrate, and these other races will perish. Therefore we must remember our mission and support the conditions of our strength. We must remember that our state is a matter not simply of national egoism, but a global duty. We occupy a post that is necessary for all. But in order to keep this post we need a one-person Supreme Power, that is, the Tsar, not as the adornment of a pediment, but as a real state power.

“No combinations of popular representation or elective laws can guarantee the supremacy of the Russians. We must understand ourselves. As a people that is essentially statist, the Russians are not suited to petty political struggles, they can do politics only wholesale, not retail, by contrast with the Poles, the Jews, etc. The aims of the supremacy of such a people (as with the Romans) are attainable only by a one-person Supreme Power that realizes its ideals. With such a power we become stronger and more skilful than all, for no Poles can compare with the Russians in the capacity for discipline and solidarity around a one-person power endowed with a moral character.

“But if it has no centre of unity, the Russian people loses its head and particularist peoples begin to obstruct it. Historical practice has created a Supreme Power in accordance with the Russian character. The Russian people has grown for itself a Tsar

in union with the Church. [But] since 1906 that which was proper to the people has been undermined, and it is being forced to live in a way that it is not able to and does not want. This was undoubtedly a huge constitutional mistake, for whatever theoretical preferences there may be, practically speaking state reason requires institutions that conform to the character of the people and the general conditions of its supremacy. In destroying that, 1906 deprived us of that without which the Empire cannot exist – the possibility of creating a dictatorship immediately. Such a possibility was given first of all by the presence of a Tsar having the right to engage in the situation with all his unlimited Supreme Power.

“The consciousness alone of the possibility of an immediate concentration [of power] filled the Russians with confidence in their strength, while inspiring our rivals with fear and dread. Now that has been taken away. And without our watchfulness there is nobody to keep the remaining races in unity...”⁷⁸⁶

Stolypin replied on July 9: “All these fine theoretical considerations would in practice have turned out to be a malicious provocation and the beginning of a new revolution...”⁷⁸⁷

Both men were right. Tikhomirov was right that the post-1906 order in Russia was no longer a true autocracy in the full sense, and that it contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction. But Stolypin was right that there was no real practical alternative, and that through him and his government the Tsar could at any rate carry out a part of his autocratic will.

*May 3/16, 2016.
St. Theodosius of the Kiev Caves.*

⁷⁸⁶ Tikhomirov, “Poslednee pis’mo Stolypinu”, in *Petr Stolypin*, Moscow, 1998, pp. 235-237.

⁷⁸⁷ Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 76.

31. NICHOLAS II, WORLD WAR ONE AND THE ORTHODOX COMMONWEALTH

By the summer of 1914 the Orthodox commonwealth of nations had reached its zenith from an external, political and economic point of view. The great Russian empire, in which the majority of Orthodox Christians lived, stretched from the Baltic to the Pacific, and its influence spread more widely still, from the *de facto* protectorate it exercised over the Orthodox of the Balkans and the Middle East, to its important ecclesiastical missions in Persia, China, Japan, and the United States. It was making mighty strides economically, and was modernizing and strengthening its military capacity to a significant degree. Meanwhile, the Orthodox Balkan states had just driven the Turks out of Europe (almost), and Serbia, Romania and Greece had reached their greatest territorial extent since their foundation as states in the previous century. Serbia's population growth, in particular, was remarkable: from 2.9 million subjects before the Balkan Wars to 4.4 million after them.

However, this was a bubble that was about to burst. All the Orthodox states had very serious internal problems. Anti-monarchism had taken over the minds and hearts of the wealthier classes in Russia and other Orthodox countries, and western heresies, spiritualism and even atheism were making deep inroads into the Church. In the Balkans, the recent victories over the Turks caused over-confidence and an increase in militarism and nationalism, with the military establishments ascendant over the civil administrations. In Serbia, in particular, the military contested control with the government over the newly-acquired territories in Macedonia, and "Apis", Colonel Dragutin Dmitrijevich, the leading regicide of 1903 and inspirer of the terrorist "Black Hand" organization, was in charge of military intelligence...

In June, 1914 the Austro-Hungarians were holding military manoeuvres in Bosnia, and Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who in addition to being heir to the Habsburg throne was also Inspector General of the Armed Forces of the Empire, came to observe them with his wife. "With overwhelming stupidity," as Noel Malcolm writes, "his visit to Sarajevo was fixed for 28 June, the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo and therefore the most sacred day in the mystical calendar of Serb nationalism."⁷⁸⁸ As Christopher Clark writes, "the commemorations across the Serb lands were set to be especially intense in 1914, because this was the first St. Vitus's Day since the 'liberation' of Kosovo during the Second Balkan War in the previous year. 'The holy flame of Kosovo, which has inspired generations [of Serbs] has now burst into a mighty fire,' the Black Hand journal *Pijemont* announced on 28 June 1914. 'Kosovo is free! Kosovo is avenged!' For Serb ultra-nationalists, both in Serbia itself and across the Serbian irredentist network in Bosnia, the arrival of the heir apparent in Sarajevo on this of all days was a symbolic affront that demanded a response."⁷⁸⁹

Seven assassins from *Mlada Bosna* were waiting for the Archduke and his wife. The first attempt to kill them failed, but the second, by Gavrilo Princip, was successful. By an extraordinary coincidence, on the very same day Rasputin was stabbed in the stomach by a mad woman and so separated from the Russian Tsar for the rest of the

⁷⁸⁸ Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, London: Papermac, 1996, p. 155.

⁷⁸⁹ Clark, *Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914*, London: Penguin, 2013, pp. 368-369.

summer. Thus were the two men who might have prevented their respective emperors from going to war removed from the scene. Evidently it was God's will: exactly one month later, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, followed soon after by Russia's mobilization in defence of her ally. And a few days after that, all the Great Powers of Europe were at war...

Many thought that war would be averted as it had been averted at similar moments of crisis several times in recent years. But it was different this time, because Austria-Hungary *wanted* war this time. "In October 1913," writes Dominic Lieven, "the Austro-Hungarian Common Ministerial Council had agreed that Serbia had to be destroyed as an independent state in order to restore Austria's position in the Balkans and stop the danger which South Slav nationalism's undermining Habsburg authority within the empire's borders. As Berchtold explained at that time, the key difficulty was to obtain German support for this policy. The Austrian premier, Count Karl von Stürgkh, added that the precondition for success had to be 'that we have been clearly injured by Serbia, because that can lead to a conflict which entails Serbia's execution'. Without such a pretext and without Berlin's support, military action against Serbia was impossible, which explains why in early June 1914 the Austrian Foreign Ministry's key 'strategy paper' outlining future short-term policy in the Balkans confined itself to advocating not military but purely diplomatic measures. But the circumstances surrounding Franz Ferdinand's assassination provided exactly the scenario that the October 1913 ministerial conference had desired..."⁷⁹⁰

As David Stevenson writes: "... Although in summer 1914 international tension was acute, a general war was not inevitable and if one had not broken out then it might not have done so at all. It was the Habsburg monarchy's response to Sarajevo that caused a crisis. Initially all it seemed to do was order an investigation. But secretly the Austrians obtained a German promise of support for drastic retaliation [on 6 July]. On 23 July they presented an ultimatum to their neighbour, Serbia. Princip and his companions were Bosnians (and therefore Habsburg subjects), but the ultimatum alleged they had conceived their plot in Belgrade, that Serbian officers and officials had supplied them with their weapons, and that Serbian frontier authorities had helped them across the border. It called on Serbia to denounce all separatist activities, ban publications and organizations hostile to Austria-Hungary, and co-operate with Habsburg officials in suppressing subversion and conducting a judicial inquiry. The Belgrade government's reply, delivered just within the forty-eight hours deadline, accepted nearly every demand but consented to Austrian involvement in a judicial inquiry only if that inquiry was subject to Serbia's constitution and to international law. The Austrian leaders in Vienna seized on this pretext to break off relations immediately, and on 28 July declared war. The ultimatum impressed most European governments by its draconian demands..."⁷⁹¹

The Serbs had some plausible alibis. Though a Great Serbian nationalist, the Serbian Prime Minister Pašić, as Max Hastings writes, "was an inveterate enemy of Apis, some of whose associates in 1913 discussed murdering him. The prime minister and many of his colleagues regarded the colonel as a threat to the country's stability and even existence; internal affairs minister Milan Protić spoke of the Black Hand to a visitor on

⁷⁹⁰ Lieven, *Towards the Flame. Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia*, London: Allen Lane, 2015, p. 316.

⁷⁹¹ Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War*, London: Penguin, 2005, pp. 10-11.

14 June as 'a menace to democracy'. But in a society riven by competing interests, the civilian government lacked authority to remove or imprison Apis, who was protected by the patronage of the army chief of staff."⁷⁹²

Although there is evidence that Pašić was trying to control the Black Hand, he had not succeeded by 1914. Moreover, being himself a Great Serbian nationalist, at no point in his career did he make a determined effort to quench that nationalist-revolutionary *mentality* which ultimately led to the shots in Sarajevo. The very fact that he warned the Austrians about the plot shows that he knew what Apis was planning. As for Apis himself, besides taking part in the regicide of 1903, he confessed to participation in plots to murder King Nicholas of Montenegro, King Constantine of Greece, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany and King Ferdinand of Bulgaria!⁷⁹³ That such a murderous fanatic should be in charge of Serbia's military intelligence tells us much about the influence within Serbia of the nationalist-revolutionary heresy.

"In fact," as Stevenson writes, "Serbia's army and intelligence service were out of control"⁷⁹⁴ – at least until 1917, when Apis was shot...

The terrorists were given four pistols and six bombs by Major Vojin Tankosić of the Black Hand, and were guided into Bosnia by "a Serbian government informer, who passed word about their movements, and about the bombs and pistols in their luggage, to the Interior Ministry in Belgrade. His report, which the prime minister read and summarized in his own hand, made no mention of a plot against Franz Ferdinand. Pašić commissioned an investigation, and gave orders that the movement of weapons from Serbia to Bosnia should be stopped; but he went no further. A Serbian minister later claimed that Pašić told the cabinet at the end of May or the beginning of June that some assassins were on their way to Sarajevo to kill Franz Ferdinand. Whether or not this is true – no minutes were taken of cabinet meetings – Pašić appears to have instructed Serbia's envoy in Vienna to pass on to the Austrian authorities only a vague general warning, perhaps because he was unwilling to provide the Habsburgs with a fresh and extremely serious grievance against his country."⁷⁹⁵ According to Margaret Macmillan, Pašić "got wind of what was up but was either unable or unwilling to do anything. In any case it was probably too late; the conspirators had arrived safely in Sarajevo and linked up with local terrorists..."⁷⁹⁶

As Malcolm writes, while "many theories still circulate about Apis's involvement and his possible political motives, ... the idea that the Serbian government itself had planned the assassination can be firmly rejected.

"Even the Austro-Hungarian government did not accuse Serbia of direct responsibility for what had happened. Their ultimatum of 23 July complained merely that the Serbian government had 'tolerated the machinations of various societies and associations directed against the monarchy, unrestrained language on the part of the

⁷⁹² Hastings, *Catastrophe: Europe goes to War 1914*, London: William Collins, 2014, p. xxxv.

⁷⁹³ West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006, p. 369.

⁷⁹⁴ Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁷⁹⁵ Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. xxxvi.

⁷⁹⁶ Macmillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, London: Profile, 2014, p. 515.

press, glorification of the perpetrators of outrages, participation of officers and officials in subversive agitation' – all of which was essentially true."⁷⁹⁷

The Austrians saw the assassination as a good reason or excuse for dealing with the Serbian problem once and for all. As Stevenson admits, "the summary time limit gave the game away, as did the peremptory rejection of Belgrade's answer. The ultimatum had been intended to start a showdown..."⁷⁹⁸

"The Serbian evidence," continues Stevenson, "confirms that Austria-Hungary had good grounds for rigorous demands. But it also shows that the Belgrade government was anxious for a peaceful exit from the crisis whereas the Austrians meant to use it as the pretext for violence. Austria-Hungary's joint council of ministers decided on 7 July that the ultimatum should be so stringent as to 'make a refusal almost certain, so that the road to a radical solution by means of a military action should be opened'. On 19 July it agreed to partition Serbia with Bulgaria, Albania, and Greece, leaving only a small residual state under Habsburg economic domination. Yet previously Vienna had been less bellicose: the chief of the general staff, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorff, had pressed for war against Serbia since being appointed in 1906, but his appeals had been rejected. The Emperor Franz Joseph was a cautious and vastly experienced ruler who remembered previous defeats. He and his advisers moved to war only because they believed they faced an intolerable problem for which peaceful remedies were exhausted."⁷⁹⁹

Austria's aggressiveness was reinforced by Germany; on July 6 the Kaiser gave the Austrians the famous "blank cheque" promising them support whatever they did. As the German historian Fritz Fischer wrote: "The official documents afford ample proof that during the July crisis the emperor, the German military leaders and the foreign ministry were pressing Austria-Hungary to strike against Serbia without delay, or alternatively agree to the dispatch of an ultimatum to Serbia couched in such sharp terms as to make war between the two countries more than probable, and that in doing so they deliberately took the risk of a continental war against Russia and France."⁸⁰⁰

On this reading, the primary responsibility for the outbreak of war would seem to belong to the two German-speaking nations, especially Germany. As David Fromkin writes: "The generals in Berlin in the last week of July were agitating for war – not Austria's war, one aimed at Serbia, but Germany's war, aimed at Russia... Germany deliberately started a European war to keep from being overtaken by Russia..."⁸⁰¹ Malcolm confirms this verdict: "it is now widely agreed that Germany was pushing hard for a war, in order to put some decisive check on the growing power of Russia".⁸⁰²

As J.M. Roberts points out, it was Germany that first declared war on France and Russia when neither country threatened her. And by August 4 Germany had "acquired

⁷⁹⁷ Malcolm, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.

⁷⁹⁸ Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁷⁹⁹ Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

⁸⁰⁰ Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, 1961, chapter 2.

⁸⁰¹ Fromkin, *Europe's Last Summer*, London: Vintage, 2005, pp. 272, 273.

⁸⁰² Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

a third great power [Britain] as an antagonist, while Austria still had none... In the last analysis, the Great War was made in Berlin..."⁸⁰³

As for Russia, according to Lieven, her rulers "did not want war. Whatever hankering Nicholas II may ever have had for military glory had been wholly dissipated by the Japanese war. That conflict had taught the whole ruling elite that war and revolution were closely linked. Though war with Germany would be more popular than conflict with Japan had been, its burdens and dangers would also be infinitely greater. Russian generals usually had a deep respect for the German army, to which on the whole they felt their own army to be inferior. Above all, Russian leaders had every reason to feel that time was on their side. In strictly military terms, there was good reason to postpone conflict until the so-called 'Great Programme' of armaments was completed in 1917-18. In more general terms, Russia already controlled almost one-sixth of the world's land surface, whose hitherto largely untapped potential was now beginning to be developed at great speed. It was by no means only Petr Stolypin who believed that, given 20 years of peace, Russia would be transformed as regards its wealth, stability and power. Unfortunately for Russia, both the Germans and the Austrians were well aware of all the above facts. Both in Berlin and Vienna it was widely believed that fear of revolution would stop Russia from responding decisively to the Austro-German challenge: but it was also felt that war now was much preferable to a conflict a decade hence.

"In fact, for the Russian government it was very difficult not to stand up to the Central Powers in July 1914. The regime's legitimacy was at stake, as were the patriotism, pride and self-esteem of the key decision-makers. Still more to the point was the conviction that weakness would fatally damage Russia's international position and her security. If Serbia became an Austrian protectorate, that would allow a very significant diversion of Habsburg troops from the southern to the Russian front in the event of a future war. If Russia tamely allowed its Serbian client to be gobbled up by Austria, no other Balkan state would trust its protection against the Central Powers. All would move into the latter's camp, as probably would the Ottoman Empire. Even France would have doubts about the usefulness of an ally so humiliatingly unable to stand up for its prestige and its vital interests. Above all, international relations in the pre-1914 era were seen to revolve around the willingness and ability of great powers to defend their interests. In the age of imperialism, empires that failed to do this were perceived as moribund and ripe for dismemberment. In the judgement of Russian statesmen, if the Central Powers got away with the abject humiliation of Russia in 1914 their appetites would be whetted rather than assuaged. At some point in the near future vital interest would be threatened for which Russia would have to fight, in which case it made sense to risk fighting now, in the hope that this would deter Berlin and Vienna, but in the certainty that if war ensued Serbia and France would fight beside Russia, and possibly Britain and certain other states as well."⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰³ Roberts, *The Penguin History of Europe*, London: Penguin, 1997, pp. 510-511. See also Keith Wilson, "Hamlet - With and Without the Prince: Terrorism at the Outbreak of the First World War", *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2007.

⁸⁰⁴ Lieven, "Russia, Europe and World War I", in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, William Rosenberg (eds.), *A Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, pp. 42-43.

Not only most European governments at the time, but also most historians since then, have accepted the account outlined in the last section. But there are some “revisionists” who would spread the blame more evenly. Among these is Professor Christopher Clark (like Dominic Lieven, a historian of Cambridge University), who points out, first, that the news of the assassination of the Archduke was greeted with jubilation in Serbia. Nor did the Serbian government led by Pašić do anything to calm Serbian passions or reassure Austrian opinion – quite the reverse.⁸⁰⁵ So whatever judgement one forms of the Austrian actions, there is no doubt that they were sorely provoked... The Russians also – with the partial exception of the Tsar himself – incurred guilt at this point in that they did little to rein in the nationalist passions of the Serbs, but rather supported them...⁸⁰⁶

Secondly, Clark argues that the Germans’ famous “blank cheque” of July 6 was based on the false assumption that the Russians would not intervene on the side of the Serbs – first of all, because they were not yet ready for war (their military programme was not due for completion until 1917), and secondly because, as the Kaiser repeatedly said, he could not imagine that the Tsar would side “with the regicides” against two monarchical powers. The other possibility considered by the Germans was that the Russians *wanted* to mobilize and start a European war. If that was the case, thought the Germans (there was some evidence for the hypothesis in the French and Russian newspapers), then so be it – better that the war begin now rather than later, when the advantage would be with the Russians.⁸⁰⁷ So an element of *miscalculation* entered into the German decision of July 6.

Thirdly, the Germans blessed the Austrians to invade Serbia – but not start a world war. In fact, both of the German-speaking nations wanted to *localize* the conflict. This is not to deny the weighty evidence that the German military had been planning a preventive war against Russia and France for years. But in July, 1914, the German civilian leadership, and in particular the Chancellor Bethmann – and even the Kaiser himself – were counting on the Austrians dealing with the Serbs and *leaving it at that*. They wanted them to act *quickly* in the hope that a quick Austrian victory would present the other Great Powers with a *fait accompli* that would deter them from further military action. Unfortunately, the Austrians for various reasons dithered and delayed...

The fact that the Austro-Serbian conflict did not remain localized, but spread to engulf the whole of Europe was the result, according to Clark, of the structure of the alliance between Russia and France, in which an Austrian attack on Serbia was seen as a “tripwire” triggering Russian intervention on the side of Serbia, followed immediately by French intervention on the side of Russia. (Britain was also in alliance with France and Russia, but more loosely. For Britain, as it turned out, the tripwire was not Austria’s invasion of Serbia but Germany’s invasion of Belgium.) Clark produces considerable evidence to show that important figures in both the French, the Russian and the British leadership did not want the conflict to be localized, but *wanted* the

⁸⁰⁵ Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 387-391.

⁸⁰⁶ Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 407-412.

⁸⁰⁷ Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 415-423.

trigger to be pulled because they thought war was inevitable and/or that this was the only way to deal with the perceived threat of German domination of Europe. This was particularly the position of the French President Poincaré, who travelled to Russia in the fourth week of July in order to stiffen the resolve of the Russians, but was also true of Russian Agriculture Minister Krivoshein and British First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, who rejoiced on hearing that the Austrians had declared war on the Serbs on July 28.⁸⁰⁸

In fact, Russia was not fully committed to the tripwire scenario. In 1912 Tsar Nicholas had been playing a waiting game – that is, waiting for the death of the Emperor Franz Josef, after which, it was believed, Austrian power would decline. And as recently as October, 1913 “St. Petersburg had been willing to leave Belgrade to its own devices... when the Austrians had issued an ultimatum demanding [the Serbs’] withdrawal from northern Albania.”⁸⁰⁹ However, some important personnel changes had taken place in the intervening months. First, Prime Minister Kokovtsov, an opponent of intervention in the Balkans, had been forced out by the nationalists in the government. Then, in January, 1914, when the Tsar offered the vacant post to Pyotr N. Durnovo, - in Clark’s words “a forceful and determined man who was adamantly opposed to Balkan entanglements of any kind”⁸¹⁰, - Durnovo turned it down, and the post passed to Goremykin, a much weaker character. With this change there probably also passed the last chance for the Russian government to abandon the “tripwire” policy of the nationalists.

One could argue that the Tsar should have imposed his will on the foreign policy establishment whether they liked it or not. But times had changed greatly since the reign of the absolutist Tsar Peter the Great. Tsar Nicholas, though far from being the weak man that western historians almost invariably make him out to be, was not in a position simply to ignore what his ministers thought and impose his will on them. Like all European monarchs in this, the beginning of the age of democracy and the common man, he simply could not afford to ignore public opinion. In any case, he was running out of wise and loyal men to place in the higher reaches of government. As Lieven points out, “he could not find a prime minister competent to do the job who would obey his orders and pursue the line he required. Talented officials were no longer willing to simply assume public responsibility for executing the tsar’s commands.”⁸¹¹

The Tsar did not want war, and fully understood that it might destroy Russia in the end - which it did. But he was determined to defend the Serbs, come what may. And the other foreign policy considerations outlined by Lieven above also played their part in his thinking – especially, as we know for certain, his fears that the Dardanelles could be cut off for the Russian navy and Russian exports (as they had been briefly when Italy invaded Libya)... That is why the Tsar and his cabinet decided to defend the Serbs on July 24, a decision confirmed on July 25, leading to the beginning of preparations for war on July 26...

⁸⁰⁸ Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

⁸⁰⁹ Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

⁸¹⁰ Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 557.

⁸¹¹ Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 347.

Evidence that the Tsar's sincere desire to avert war by all honourable means is contained in the telegrams exchanged between Tsar Nicholas and the Serbian regent, Prince Alexander in the last days before the catastrophe. The prince, who had commanded the First Serbian Army in the Balkan wars and later became king, wrote to the Tsar: "The demands of the Austro-Hungarian note unnecessarily represent a humiliation for Serbia and are not in accord with the dignity of an independent state. In a commanding tone it demands that we officially declare in *Serbian News*, and also issue a royal command to the army, that we ourselves cut off military offensives against Austria and recognize the accusation that we have been engaging in treacherous intrigues as just. They demand that we admit Austrian officials into Serbia, so that together with ours they may conduct the investigation and control the execution of the other demands of the note. We have been given a period of 48 hours to accept everything, otherwise the Austro-Hungarian embassy will leave Belgrade. We are ready to accept the Austro-Hungarian demands that are in accord with the position of an independent state, and also those which would be suggested by Your Majesty; everyone whose participation in the murder is proven will be strictly punished by us. Certain demands cannot be carried out without changing the laws, and for that time is required. We have been given too short a period... They can attack us after the expiry of the period, since Austro-Hungarian armies have assembled on our frontier. It is impossible for us to defend ourselves, and for that reason we beseech Your Majesty to come as soon as possible to our aid..."

To this the Tsar replied on July 27: "In addressing me at such a serious moment, Your Royal Highness has not been mistaken with regard to the feelings which I nourish towards him and to my heart-felt disposition towards the Serbian people. I am studying the present situation with the most serious attention and My government is striving with all its might to overcome the present difficulties. I do not doubt that Your Highness and the royal government will make this task easier by not despising anything that could lead to a decision that would avert the horrors of a new war, while at the same time preserving the dignity of Serbia. All My efforts, as long as there is the slightest hope of averting bloodshed, will be directed to this aim. If, in spite of our most sincere desire, success is not attained, Your Highness can be assured that in no case will Russia remain indifferent to the fate of Serbia."

Although the Tsar knew that resisting popular national feeling could lead to revolution, as Sazonov warned, he also knew that an unsuccessful war would lead to it still more surely. So the decisive factor in his decision was not popular opinion, but Russia's ties of faith with Serbia. And if one good thing came out of the First World War it was the strengthening of that religious bond both during and after it.

For as Prince Alexander replied to the Tsar: "Difficult times cannot fail to strengthen the bonds of deep attachment that link Serbia with Holy Slavic Rus', and the feeling of eternal gratitude for the help and defence of Your Majesty will be reverently preserved in the hearts of all Serbs."

The Tsar proved to be a faithful ally. In 1915, after being defeated by the Germans, the Serbian army was forced to retreat across the mountains to the Albanian coast. Tens of thousands began to die. Their allies looked upon them with indifference from their ships at anchor in the Adriatic. The Tsar informed his allies by telegram that they

must immediately evacuate the Serbs, otherwise he would consider the fall of the Serbs as an act of the greatest immorality and he would withdraw from the Alliance. This telegram brought prompt action, and dozens of Italian, French and English ships set about evacuating the dying army to Corfu, and from there, once they had recovered, to the new front that the Allies were forming in Salonika.

As the Serbian Bishop Nicholas (Velimirovich) of Zhicha, wrote: "Great is our debt to Russia. The debt of Serbia to Russia, for help to the Serbs in the war of 1914, is huge – many centuries will not be able to contain it for all following generations. This is the debt of love, which without thinking goes to its death, saving its neighbour. 'There is no greater love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his neighbour.' These are the words of Christ. The Russian Tsar and the Russian people, having taken the decision to enter the war for the sake of the defence of Serbia, while being unprepared for it, knew that they were going to certain destruction. The love of the Russians for their Serbian brothers did not fear death, and did not retreat before it. Can we ever forget that the Russian Tsar, in subjecting to danger both his children and millions of his brothers, went to his death for the sake of the Serbian people, for the sake of its salvation? Can we be silent before Heaven and earth about the fact that our freedom and statehood were worth more to Russia than to us ourselves? The Russians in our days repeated the Kosovo tragedy. If the Russian Tsar Nicholas II had been striving for an earthly kingdom, a kingdom of petty personal calculations and egoism, he would be sitting to this day on his throne in Petrograd. But he chose the Heavenly Kingdom, the Kingdom of sacrifice in the name of the Lord, the Kingdom of Gospel spirituality, for which he laid down his own head, for which his children and millions of his subjects laid down their heads..."⁸¹²

The Austrians rejected the Serbs' reply to their ultimatum on July 25, began mobilization on the same day, and declared war on the Serbs on July 28. Russia then mobilized the districts adjoining Austria (Odessa, Kiev, Moscow, Kazan) on the evening of July 29. Lieven points out that "so long as the Petersburg and Warsaw military districts were not mobilized, Russian preparations of war against Germany could not get very far."⁸¹³ But the Germans appeared to pay no attention to this fact – perhaps because their intelligence about Russian troop movements was faulty or confused. In any case, "as early as July 26, the Russian naval attaché in Berlin, Captain Evgenii Behrens, believed that the Germans had gone so far that that it would be impossible for them to withdraw now. Having served in Berlin throughout the Balkan Wars and the Liman von Sanders crisis, he reported that the Germans' expectation of war was far greater now than at any time in the two previous years. Alexander Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador in London, believed the same by July 29."⁸¹⁴

There was now only one hope for the prevention of war: that the Emperors of Russia and Germany would get together and work out some compromise. It nearly happened. For in 1914 Europe was a family of nations united by a single dynasty and a cosmopolitan elite confessing what most considered to be a single Christianity, albeit

⁸¹² Victor Salni and Svetlana Avlasovich, "Net bol'she toj liubvi, kak esli kto polozhit dushu svoiu za drugi svoia" (There is no greater love than that a man should lay down his life for his friend), http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page*pid=966.

⁸¹³ Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 333.

⁸¹⁴ Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 335.

divided into Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant varieties.⁸¹⁵ The European royal family was German in origin, being made up of branches of the Saxe-Coburg dynasty.⁸¹⁶ Thus even the matriarch of the family, Queen Victoria of England, once told King Leopold of the Belgians: "My heart is so German..."⁸¹⁷ For many generations, the Russian tsars and princes had taken brides from German princely families; Nicholas II, though thoroughly Russian in spirit, had much more German blood than Russian in his veins; and the Tsaritsa Alexandra and her sister Grand Duchess Elizabeth were Hessian princesses with an English mother.⁸¹⁸ However, a disunifying factor within the family was the fact that Alexandra and Minnie, the wives of King Edward VII of England and Tsar Alexander III of Russia, were sisters from the Danish dynasty; for the Danes nurtured an intense dislike of the Prussians, who had invaded their country in 1864, and so moved their husbands, and later their sons, King George V and Tsar Nicholas II, closer to each other and further away from Germany, thereby weakening the traditional hostility that existed between Russia and England and turning them against Germany. Meanwhile, the German Kaiser Wilhelm II reacted strongly against the liberalism of his English mother, and was attracted towards the militarist and fiercely anti-English monarchism of the Prussian aristocracy. In some ways, this also attracted him to autocratic Russia; but the developing alliance between Russia, Britain and France engendered in him and his circle a fear of "encirclement" and hostility against them all.

Nevertheless, in the summer of 1914 many hoped that the family links between the Kaiser and the Tsar would prevent war. For, as the London *Standard* had observed in 1894, "the influence of the Throne in determining the relations between European Power has never been disputed by those at all familiar with modern politics, it is sometimes lost sight of or ignored by the more flippant order of Democrats..."⁸¹⁹

And the emperors did talk, even after the outbreak of war. But by this time talking was to no avail. In the last resort family unity (and the avoidance of world war) counted for less for the Kaiser than nationalist pride and solidarity with the Austrians, and less for the Tsar than solidarity in faith and blood with the Serbs...

On the morning of July 29 the Tsar received a telegram from the Kaiser pleading with him not to undertake military measures that would undermine his position as

⁸¹⁵ Tsar Nicholas II became the godfather of the future King Edward VIII at his Anglican baptism (Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 137), and in 1904 Kaiser Wilhelm was invited to be godfather of the Tsarevich Alexis (Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World*, London: Penguin, 2007, p. 100).

⁸¹⁶ Sophie Gordon, "The Web of Royalty", *BBC History Magazine*, February, 2012, pp. 16-18. Victoria's son, Edward VII, reacted against this Germanism by becoming very anti-German.

⁸¹⁷ Ferguson, *The War of the World*, p. 97.

⁸¹⁸ However, as Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) pointed out, the sisters were more English than German in their tastes and upbringing, taking after their English mother rather than their German father ("Homily on the Seventh Anniversary of the Martyric End of Emperor Nicholas II and the Entire Royal Family", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 31, no. 4, July-August, 1981).

⁸¹⁹ Carter, *The Three Emperors*, London, 2010, p. 145. As Clark writes, "The European executives were still centred on the thrones and the men or women who sat on them. Ministers in Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia were imperial appointees. The three emperors had unlimited access to state papers. They also exercised formal authority over their respective armed forces. Dynastic institutions and networks structured the communications between states. Ambassadors presented their credentials to the sovereign in person and direct communications and meetings between monarchs continued to take place throughout the pre-war years; indeed, they acquired a heightened importance" (*op. cit.*, p. 170).

mediator with Austria. "Saying 'I will not be responsible for a monstrous slaughter', the Tsar insisted that the order [for general mobilization] be cancelled. Yanushkevich [Chief of the Russian General Staff] reached for the phone to stay Dobrorolsky's hand, and the messenger was sent running to the telegraph to explain that an order for partial mobilization was to be promulgated instead."⁸²⁰

However, as Sazonov hastened to tell the Tsar, the reversal of the previous order was impractical for purely military and logistical reasons. (The Kaiser encountered the same problem when, to the consternation of the German Chief of Staff von Moltke, he tried to reverse German mobilization a few days later; this was the "railway timetables problem.") Moreover, Sazonov advised the Tsar to undertake a full mobilization because "unless he yielded to the popular demand for war and unsheathed the sword in Serbia's behalf, he would run the risk of a revolution and perhaps the loss of his throne".

The Tsar made one last appeal to the Kaiser: "I foresee that very soon I shall be overwhelmed by the pressure brought upon me and forced to take extreme measures which will lead to war." On July 30 the Kaiser replied that he was neutral in the Serbian question (which he was not). And he reiterated the warning issued by the German Ambassador Pourtalès the previous day to the effect that "Germany favours the unappeasable attitude of Austria". The Tsar now "abandoned any hope that a deal between the cousins could save peace and returned to the option of general mobilization..."⁸²¹

"The emperor is sometimes accused," writes Lieven, "of 'caving in' to his generals in 1914 and thereby bringing on the descent into war. This is unfair. Nicholas was forced by the united pressure not just of the generals but also of the Foreign Ministry, the de facto head of the domestic government, and the spokesmen of the Duma and public opinion. In many ways, the surprise is that the emperor held out on his own for so long..."⁸²²

Grand Duchess Elizabeth said that the Tsar had not wanted war. She blamed her cousin, the Kaiser, "who disobeyed the bidding of Frederick the Great and Bismarck to live in peace and friendship with Russia."⁸²³ However, if Clark is right, the situation was both more complicated and more finely balanced than that. In the last analysis, both monarchs had cold feet about war. But both were pushed into it by the pressure of their subordinates and the logic of the opposing alliances to which they willingly ascribed at least to some degree.

This logic had been built up on both sides over the course of generations, and the monarchs were neither solely responsible for it nor able on their own to free themselves from its gravitational force... This is not to equate them from a moral point of view: as we shall see, the Kaiser and the Tsar were far from equal in terms of moral stature. But it does help us to understand a little better why they both acquiesced in a

⁸²⁰ Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

⁸²¹ Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

⁸²² Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 337.

⁸²³ Abbot Seraphim, *Martyrs of Christian Duty*, Peking, 1929; quoted in Lyubov Millar, *Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia*, Redding, Ca.: Nikodemos Publication Society, 1993, p. 176.

war that was to destroy both their kingdoms and the very foundations of European civilization...

In any case, the die was now cast; war between Russia and Germany could no longer be prevented. The Tsar gave the order for general mobilization on July 31, and the Germans declared war on the next day, August 1, the feast of St. Seraphim of Sarov, the great prophet of the last times...

On that first day, as Lubov Millar writes, "large patriotic crowds gathered before the Winter Palace, and when the Emperor and Empress appeared on the balcony, great and joyful ovations filled the air. When the national anthem was played, the crowds began to sing enthusiastically.

"In a sitting room behind this balcony waited Grand Duchess Elizabeth, dressed in her white habit; her face was aglow, her eyes shining. Perhaps, writes Almedingen, she was thinking, 'What are revolutionary agents compared with these loyal crowds? They would lay down their lives for Nicky and their faith and will win in the struggle.' In a state of exaltation she made her way from the Winter Palace to the home of Grand Duke Constantine, where his five sons – already dressed in khaki uniforms – were preparing to leave for the front. These sons piously received Holy Communion and then went to the Romanov tombs and to the grave of Blessed Xenia of Petersburg before joining their troops."⁸²⁴

The great tragedy of the war from the Russian point of view was that the truly patriotic-religious mood that was manifest at the beginning did not last, and those who rapturously applauded the Tsar in August, 1914 were baying for his blood less than three years later...

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Turning from the narrow legal question of war guilt to more fundamental moral issues and the overarching role of Divine Providence, we must first acknowledge that the fatal passions of pride and nationalist vainglory were common to all the combatants to some degree. Typical of the spirit of the time were the words of the Austrian chief of staff, Conrad von Hötzendorff, on hearing of the assassination in Sarajevo: they now had to fight Serbia (and probably Russia) "since an old monarchy and a glorious army must not perish without glory".⁸²⁵

"Bethmann used what was perhaps the most revealing phrase of all when he said that for Germany to back down in the face of its enemies would be an act of self-castration. Such attitudes came in part from the German leaders' social class and their times but Bismarck, who came out of the same world, had been strong enough to defy its code when he chose. He never allowed war to be forced upon him. It was Germany's tragedy and that of Europe that his successors were not the man he was..."⁸²⁶

⁸²⁴ Millar, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁸²⁵ Strachan, *The First World War*, London: Pocket Books, 2006, p. 11.

⁸²⁶ MacMillan *The War That Ended Peace*, p. 529.

But important distinctions need to be made between the quality, intensity and consequences of the different nationalisms... Clark summarizes these as follows: "In Austria, the story of a nation of youthful bandits and regicides endlessly provoking and goading a patient elderly neighbour got in the way of a cool-headed assessment of how to manage relations with Belgrade. In Serbia, fantasies of victimhood and oppression by a rapacious, all-powerful Habsburg Empire did the same in reverse. In Germany, a dark vision of future invasions and partitions bedeviled decision-making in the summer of 1914. And the Russian saga of repeated humiliations at the hands of the central powers had a similar impact, at once distorting the past and clarifying the present. Most important of all was the widely trafficked narrative of Austria-Hungary's historically necessary decline, which, having gradually replaced an older set of assumptions about Austria's role as a fulcrum of stability in Central and Eastern Europe, disinhibited Vienna's enemies, undermining the notion that Austria-Hungary, like every other great power, possessed interests that it had the right robustly to defend..."⁸²⁷

However, an important qualification needs to be made to this analysis: the German variety of nationalism was distinguished from the others by its highly philosophical content that made it more poisonous and dangerous in the long term (that is, the term that ended in 1945). The German variety of the illness had developed over more than a century since the national humiliation suffered at the hands of Napoleon at Jena in 1806. It continued through the German victory over the French at Sedan in 1871 and into the building of the Second Reich. And it was exacerbated by Treitschke's glorification of war and Nietzsche's glorification of the Superman, not to mention Hegel's glorification of the Prussian State as the supreme expression of the World Spirit...

To these false and idolatrous philosophies must be added a belief that was common in the German-speaking countries - Social Darwinism. Thus in 1912 Friedrich von Bernhardt wrote: "Either Germany will go into war now or it will lose any chance to have world supremacy... The law of nature upon which all other laws are based is the struggle for existence. Consequently, war is a biological necessity."⁸²⁸ Again, von Hötendorff considered the struggle for existence to be "the basic principle behind all the events on this earth". Militarism was the natural consequence of this philosophy (if the philosophy was not an attempt to justify the militarism): "Politics consists precisely of applying war as method", said von Hötendorff.⁸²⁹

Thus the most fundamental ideological divide between the antagonists, according to the famous Serbian Bishop Nicholas Velimirovich, was the struggle between the All-Man, Christ, and the Superman of Nietzsche, between the doctrine that Right is Might and the opposite one that might is right. For German Christianity with its all-devouring scientism and theological scepticism had already surrendered to Nietzscheanism: "I wonder... that Professor Harnack, one of the chief representatives of German Christianity, omitted to see how every hollow that he and his colleagues made in traditional Christianity in Germany was at once filled with the all-conquering Nietzscheanism. And I wonder... whether he is now aware that in the nineteen

⁸²⁷ Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 558.

⁸²⁸ Von Bernhardt, *Germany and the Next War*.

⁸²⁹ Von Hötendorff, in Strachan, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

hundred and fourteenth year of our Lord, when he and other destroyers of the Bible, who proclaimed Christ a dreamy maniac [and] clothed Christianity in rags, Nietzscheanism arose [as] the real religion of the German race."⁸³⁰

Nietzsche had been opposed to the new Germany that emerged after 1871. However, many of his nihilist ideas had penetrated deep into the German consciousness. What drove him, writes Macmillan, "was a conviction that Western civilisation had gone badly wrong, indeed had been going wrong for the past two millennia, and that most of the ideas and practices which dominated it were completely wrong. Humanity, in his view, was doomed unless it made a clear break and started to think clearly and allow itself to feel deeply. His targets included positivism, bourgeois conventions, Christianity (his father was a Protestant minister) and indeed all organized religion, perhaps all organization itself. He was against capitalism and modern industrial society, and 'the herd people' it produced. Humans, Nietzsche told his readers, had forgotten that life was not orderly and conventional, but vital and dangerous. To reach the heights of spiritual reawakening it was necessary to break out of the confines of conventional morality and religion. God, he famously said, is dead... Those who embraced the challenge Nietzsche was throwing down would become the Supermen. In the coming century, there would be a 'new party of life' which would take humanity to a higher level, 'including the merciless destruction of everything that is degenerate and parasitical'. Life, he said, is 'appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity...' The young Serbian nationalists who carried out the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and so precipitated the Great War were deeply impressed by Nietzsche's views..."⁸³¹

In another place Bishop Nicholas spread the blame more widely on Europe as a whole: "The spirit was wrong, and everything became wrong. The spirit of any civilization is inspired by its religion, but the spirit of modern Europe was not inspired by Europe's religion at all. A terrific effort was made in many quarters to liberate Europe from the spirit of her religion. The effort-makers forgot one thing, i.e. that no civilization ever was liberated from religion and still lived. Whenever this liberation seemed to be fulfilled, the respective civilization decayed and died out, leaving behind barbaric materialism in towns and superstitions in villages. Europe had to live with Christianity, or to die in barbaric materialism and superstitions without it. The way to death was chosen. From Continental Europe first the infection came to the whole white race. It was there that the dangerous formula [of Nietzsche] was pointed out: 'Beyond good and evil'. Other parts of the white world followed slowly, taking first the path between Good and Evil. Good was changed for Power. Evil was explained away as Biological Necessity. The Christian religion, which inspired the greatest things that Europe ever possessed in every point of human activity, was degraded by means of new watchwords: individualism, liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, imperialism, secularism, which in essence meant nothing but the de-christianization of European society, or, in other words, the emptiness of European civilization. Europe abandoned the greatest things she possessed and clung to the lower and lowest ones. The greatest thing was - Christ.

⁸³⁰ Velimirovich, "The Religious Spirit of the Slavs", in *Sabrana Dela* (Collected Works), volume 3, 1986, Khimelstir, 1986, pp. 221-222.

⁸³¹ Macmillan, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-238.

“As you cannot imagine Arabic civilization in Spain without Islam, or India’s civilization without Hinduism, or Rome without the Roman Pantheon, so you cannot imagine Europe’s civilization without Christ. Yet some people thought that Christ was not so essentially needed for Europe, and behaved accordingly without Him or against Him. Christ was Europe’s God. When this God was banished from politics, art, science, social life, business, education, everybody consequently asked for a God, and everybody thought himself to be a god... So godless Europe became full of gods!

“Being de-christianized, Europe still thought to be civilized. In reality she was a poor valley full of dry bones. The only thing she had to boast of was her material power. By material power only she impressed and frightened the unchristian (but not antichristian) countries of Central and Eastern Asia, and depraved the rustic tribes in Africa and elsewhere. She went to conquer not by God or for God, but by material power and for material pleasure. Her spirituality did not astonish any of the peoples on earth. Her materialism astonished all of them... What an amazing poverty! She gained the whole world, and when she looked inside herself she could not find her soul. Where has Europe’s soul fled? The present war will give the answer. It is not a war to destroy the world but to show Europe’s poverty and to bring back her soul. It will last as long as Europe remains soulless, Godless, Christless. It will stop when Europe gets the vision of her soul, her only God, her only wealth.”⁸³²

A disciple of Bishop Nicholas, Archimandrite Justin (Popovich), followed his teacher in attributing the cause of God’s wrath against Christian Europe to its betrayal of True Christianity and its embracing an antichristian humanistic metaphysics of progress that was in fact regression. The end of such a nihilist metaphysic could only be death, death on a massive scale, death with no redeeming purpose or true glory, no resurrection in Christ: “It is obvious to normal eyes: European humanistic culture systematically blunts man’s sense of immortality, until it is extinguished altogether. The man of European culture affirms, with Nietzsche, that he is flesh and nothing but flesh. And that means: I am mortal, and nothing but mortal. It is thus that humanistic Europe gave itself over to the slogan: man is a mortal being. That is the formula of humanistic man; therein lies the essence of his progress.

“At first subconsciously, then consciously and deliberately, science, philosophy, and culture inculcated in the European man the proposition that man is completely mortal, with nothing else left over... Humanistic man is a devastated creature because the sense of personal immortality has been banished from him. And without that sentiment, can man ever be complete?

“European man is a shrunken dwarf, reduced to a fraction of man’s stature, for he has been emptied of the sense of transcendence. And without the transcendent, can man exist at all as man? And if he could, would there be any meaning to his existence? Minus that sense of the transcendent, is he not but a dead object among other objects, and a transient species among other animals?

“... [Supposedly] equal to the animals in his origin, why should he not also assimilate their morals? Being part of the animal world of beasts in basic nature, he has

⁸³² Velimirovich, “The Agony of the Church”, in *Sabrana Dela* (Collected Works), volume 3, 1986, Khimelstir, pp. 83-84.

also joined them in their morals. Are not sin and crime increasingly regarded by modern jurisprudence as an unavoidable by-product of the social environment and as a natural necessity? Since there is nothing eternal and immortal in man, ethics must, in the final analysis, be reduced to instinctive drives. In his ethics, humanistic man has become equal to his progenitors, monkeys and beasts. And the governing principle of his life has become: *homo homini lupus*.

“It could not be otherwise. For an ethic that is superior to that of the animals could only be founded on a sentiment of human immortality. If there is no immortality and eternal life, neither within nor around man, then animalistic morals are entirely natural and logical for a bestialized humanity: let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die (cf. I Corinthians 15.32).

“The relativism in the philosophy of European humanistic progress could not but result in an ethical relativism, and relativism is the father of anarchism and nihilism. Wherefore, in the last analysis, the practical ethic of humanistic man is nothing but anarchy and nihilism. For anarchy and nihilism are the unavoidable, final and apocalyptic phase of European progress. Ideological anarchism and nihilism, ideological disintegration, necessarily had to manifest themselves in practical anarchism and nihilism, in the practical disintegration of European humanistic man and his progress. Are we not eyewitnesses to the ideological and practical anarchism and nihilism that are devastating the European continent? The addenda of European progress are such that, no matter how they might be computed, their sum is always anarchism and nihilism. The evidence? Two world wars (actually European wars).

“European man is stupid, catastrophically stupid, when, while disbelieving in God and the immortality of the soul, he still professes belief in progress and life’s meaning and acts accordingly. What good is progress, if after it comes death? What use are the world, the stars, and cultures, if behind them lurks death, and ultimately it must conquer me?”⁸³³

But how different was Slavic Orthodox man from European man at this juncture, and was there any difference in how the First World War affected the Orthodox East by contrast with the heterodox West?

We may agree that the teachings of the Nietzschean Superman or the Darwinian Apeman had not yet penetrated as deeply into the Orthodox East as into the heterodox West. And yet we know that the Bosnian Serb terrorists who fired the shots at Sarajevo had been infected with Nietzscheanism, and that the mass of the Serbian people applauded their act. Moreover, terrorism of a more openly atheist, internationalist kind had already counted thousands of innocent victims in Russia and would soon produce many millions more....

In accordance with the principle that “to whom much is given, much is asked”, the Orthodox nations to whom had been entrusted the riches of the Orthodox faith must be considered to bear a major share of the responsibility for the catastrophe. Both faith and morals were in sharp decline in the Orthodox countries. Moreover, when war

⁸³³ Popovich, *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, Thessaloniki, 1974, translated in *Orthodox Life*, September-October, 1983, pp. 26-27.

broke out, the Orthodox nations did not form a united front behind the Tsar, the emperor of the Third Rome, in spite of the fact that the defeat of Russia was bound to have catastrophic effects on the whole of the Orthodox Commonwealth.

For, as Dominic Lieven points out, if there had been no First World War there would have been no Hitler or Stalin, with all the terrible destruction that those two dictators brought to the whole of the Orthodox commonwealth...⁸³⁴ Thus the Bulgarians, who owed their independence almost entirely to the Russians, decided to join the Germans.⁸³⁵ Again, the Romanians (who resented the Russian takeover of Bessarabia in 1878) and the Greeks (who had a German king) were for the time being neutral...

For all these reasons, the judgement of God fell hardest on the Orthodox, "the household of God". Thus the Russians, having murmured and plotted against their Tsar, were deprived of victory by revolution from within, and came to almost complete destruction afterwards; the Serbs, whose blind nationalism, as we have seen, was a significant cause of the war, suffered proportionately more than any other country, even though they were on the winning side; the Romanians were crushed by the Germans before also appearing on the winning side; and the Bulgarians, while adding to their huge losses in the Balkan Wars, still appeared on the losing side. Only the Greeks emerged from the war relatively unscathed – but their judgement would come only a few years later, in the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922-23. So the First World War was a judgement on the whole of European civilization, but first of all on the Orthodox nations who had allowed Europeanism gradually to drive out their God-given inheritance...

The unprecedented destructiveness of the war had been predicted by Engels as early as 1887: "Prussia-Germany can no longer fight any war but a world war; and a war of hitherto unknown dimensions and ferocity. Eight to ten million soldiers will swallow each other up and in doing so eat all Europe more bare than any swarm of locusts. The devastation of the Thirty Years War compressed into the space of three or four years and extending over the whole continent; famine, sickness, want, brutalizing the army and the mass of the population; irrevocable confusion of our artificial structure of trade, industry and credit, ending in general bankruptcy; collapse of the

⁸³⁴ Alexander Kan, "Istorik Lieven: bez Pervoj mirovoj ne bylo by ni Stalina ni Gitlera" (The historian Lieven: If there had been no First World War, there would have been no Stalin or Hitler), *BBC Russkaia Sluzhba*, 2 May, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/russian/society/2016/05/160502_dominic_lieven_interview_kan?ocid=socialflow_facebook.

⁸³⁵ Tsar Nicholas wrote on October 6, 1915: "Impossible as it has seemed, but treacherously preparing from the very beginning of the war, Bulgaria has betrayed the Slav cause. The Bulgarian army has attacked Our faithful ally Serbia, [which is already] bleeding profusely in a struggle with a strong enemy. Russia and Our allied Great Powers tried to warn Ferdinand of Coburg against this fatal step. The fulfillment of an age-old aspiration of the Bulgarian people – union with Macedonia – has [already] been guaranteed to Bulgaria by a means more in accord with the interests of the Slav world. But appeals by the Germans to secret ambitions and fratricidal enmity against the Serbs prevailed. Bulgaria, whose [Orthodox] faith is the same as Ours, who so recently has been liberated from Turkish slavery by the brotherly love and blood of the Russian people, openly took the side of the enemies of the Christian faith, the Slav world and of Russia. The Russian people react with bitterness to the treachery of a Bulgaria which was so close to them until recently, and draw their swords against her with heavy hearts, leaving the fate of these traitors to the Slav world to God's just retribution." (<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1915/nickbulg.html>)

old states and their traditional statecraft, so that crowns will roll by dozens in the gutter and no one can be found to pick them up. It is absolutely impossible to predict where it will end and who will emerge from the struggle as victor. Only *one* result is absolutely certain: general exhaustion and the establishment of conditions for the final victory of the working class.”⁸³⁶

And truly: after the war, everything was different. The Russian empire was gone, and with its disappearance all the islands of Orthodoxy throughout the world began to tremble and contract within themselves. Also gone were the German and Austrian empires. The very principle of monarchy was fatally undermined, surviving in a feebler, truncated form for a short time only in Orthodox Eastern Europe. Christianity as a whole was on the defensive; in most places it became a minority religion again, and in some it was fiercely persecuted, as if the Edict of Milan had been reversed and a new age of the catacombs had returned.

The powerful, if superficial *pax Europaica* had been succeeded by a new age of barbarism, in which nations were divided within and between themselves, and neo-pagan ideologies held sway. The nature of the war itself contributed to this seismic change. It was not like most earlier European wars – short, involving only professional armies, with limited effects on the civilian population. It was (with the possible exception of the Napoleonic wars) the first of the *total* wars, involving the *whole* of the people and taking up *all* its resources, thereby presaging the appearance of *the totalitarian age*.

The war’s length, the vast numbers of its killed and wounded, the unprecedented sufferings of the civilian populations, and the sheer horror of its front-line combat deprived it, after the patriotic élan of the first few months, of any chivalric, redemptive aspects – at any rate, for all but the minority who consciously fought for God, Tsar and Fatherland. Indeed, the main legacy of the war was simply *hatred* – hatred of the enemy, hatred of one’s own leaders – a hatred that did not die after the war’s end, but was translated into a kind of universal hatred that presaged still more horrific and total wars to come. Thus the Germans so hated the English that Shakespeare could not be mentioned in Germany. And the English so hated the “Huns” that Beethoven could not be mentioned in England. And the Russians so hated the Germans that the Germanic-sounding “St. Petersburg” had to be changed to the more Slavic “Petrograd” ...

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So were there no redeeming features for the Orthodox in this, the great watershed in modern European history? Do not “all things work together for good for those who love God” (Romans 8)? And were there no people who loved God at this time?

One possible reason why God should have allowed it is that it was not so much a war between Slavdom and Germandom, as between Orthodoxy and Westernism, on which the future of Orthodoxy depended. Divine Providence allowed it to save the Orthodox, according to this argument, from *peaceful*, ecumenist merging with those of

⁸³⁶ Engels, in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassell, 2004, p. 707.

another *faith*. This is how many Russians understood the war. In 1912 the country had celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Borodino, and in 1913 – the three-hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Romanov dynasty. These were patriotic celebrations, but also religious ones; for both the commemorated events had taken place on the background of great threats to the Orthodox Faith from western nations. So when the Tsar went to war in 1914, this was again seen as the beginning of a great patriotic *and religious* war.

As Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) put it: “Germany and Austria declared war on us, for which the former had already been preparing for forty years, wishing to extend its control to the East. What then? Should we quietly have submitted to the Germans? Should we have imitated their cruel and coarse manners? Planted in our country in place of the holy deeds of Orthodoxy piety the worship of the stomach and the wallet? No! It would be better for the whole nation to die than to be fed with such heretical poison!

“We have swallowed enough of it since the time of Peter the Great! And without that the Germans have torn away from the Russian nation, from Russian history and the Orthodox Church its aristocracy and intelligentsia; but in the event of a total submission to the German governmental authority, at last the simple people would have been corrupted. We already have enough renegades from the simple people under the influence of the Germans and of German money. These are above all those same Protestants who so hypocritically cry out for peace. Of course, they were not all conscious traitors and betrayers of their homeland, they did not all share in those 2,000,000 marks which were established by the German government (and a half of it from the personal fortune of the Kaiser) to be spent on the propagation of Protestant chapels in Russia...”⁸³⁷

Again, a disciple of Archbishop Anthony, Archimandrite Hilarion (Troitsky), regarded the war as “liberational in the broadest meaning of the word”, and called on his students at the theological academy to resist German influence in theology with books and words.⁸³⁸

The problem with this argument is that while Protestant chapels were indeed prevented from being built in Russia, and the influence of Protestant ecumenist theology was checked for the time being, another, still more destructive product of German (and Jewish) culture, the Marxist doctrine of dialectical materialism, was planted very firmly in Russian soil – with absolutely catastrophic results for Russian Orthodoxy...

However, there is no doubt that one definitively positive result of the war and of the revolution that followed closely upon it was that it forced many people to reconsider the emptiness of the lives they had been leading and return to God. For while defeat and revolution had a deleterious effect on the external position of the Church, her spiritual condition improved, and her real as opposed to formal membership swelled considerably in the post-war period. The fruits of this were

⁸³⁷ Khrapovitsky, *The Christian Faith and War*, Jordanville, 2005, pp. 8-9.

⁸³⁸ Troitsky, “Bogoslovie i Svoboda Tserkvi” (Theology and the Freedom of the Church), *Bogoslovskij Vestnik* (Theological Herald), September, 1915, vol. 3, Sergiev Posad; reprinted in Kaluga in 2005, p. 4.

twofold: the spreading of Russian Orthodoxy throughout the world through the emigration, and within Russia - the emergence of a mighty choir of holy new martyrs and confessors, the positive effects of whose salutary intercession for the Russian people have yet to be clearly seen but will undoubtedly be seen one day...

At the head of this choir stood the Tsar, whose truly self-sacrificial support for Serbia in August, 1914 constituted a legacy of *love*. The intercessions of the Royal Family and of the great choir of holy new martyrs and confessors that followed them to torments and death for Christ constitute the long-term basis for hope in the resurrection of Russia and Orthodoxy as a whole. And it may be hoped that in the grand scheme of Divine Providence this legacy of love and faithfulness will prove stronger than death...

However, if look at 1914 from the perspective of a century later, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the decision to go to war was catastrophic, not only for Russia but for Orthodoxy as a whole and for the whole world. If the Tsar had known its consequences, would he not have regretted his decision, just as he came to regret his decision to abdicate in February, 1917? Perhaps...

And yet "there is a tide in the affairs of men", and there is no question that the tide in European politics, all over the continent, was towards war. The Tsar might have resisted the tide for a while, as he resisted it in 1912. But it is difficult to avoid the further conclusion that the Tsar felt he had no real alternative but to go to war *eventually*. The best he could do was choose a time when honour and loyalty (to the Serbs) provided at any rate a certain moral justification for the war. And that time certainly came in July, 1914.

Moreover, the Tsar's famed "fatalism" - a better word would be "providentialism" - may have played a part here.⁸³⁹ He certainly believed in the proverb: "Man proposes, but God disposes". And even more in the proverb: "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord. Like the rivers of water, He turns it wherever He wishes" (Proverbs 21.1). The Tsar sincerely wanted peace, knowing the terrible consequences of war. But he also knew that it is God Who controls the destinies of nations. Who was he - who was any man - to resist the will of God if He wanted to punish His people and all the nations in accordance with His inscrutable judgements?

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⁸³⁹ We can more reliably detect fatalism in the attitude of the German chancellor Bethmann at this time, whose acquiescence to the Austrians Lieven finds "bewildering" (*Towards the Flame*, p. 317). Macmillan writes: "German society, Bethmann felt, was in moral and intellectual decline and the existing political and social order seemed incapable of renewing itself. 'Everything,' he said sadly, 'has become so very old.'" (op. cit., p. 527). And again he said in July, 1914: *A leap in the dark has its attractions...*

32. NICHOLAS II AND THE PLOT AGAINST HIS THRONE

There was no lack of plotters against the Russian autocracy in the first decade of the twentieth century, and in the Masonic lodges in particular the plots were assuming an organized form...

The main plotter was A.I. Guchkov the Old Ritualist and Masonic leader of the Octobrist faction in the Duma. "Armis", a pseudonym for a Duma delegate and a former friend of Guchkov, wrote: "Already in 1909, in the Commission of State Defence, its president, the well-known political and social activist Guchkov declared that it was necessary to prepare by all means for a future war with Germany.

"In order to characterize this activist it is necessary to say that in order to achieve his ends he was never particularly squeamish about methods and means. In the destruction of Russia he undoubtedly played one of the chief roles.

"In the following year, 1910, the newspaper *Novoe Vremia* became a joint-stock company, and a little later Guchkov was chosen as president of its editorial committee. From this moment there began on the columns of *Novoe Vremia* a special campaign against the Germans and the preparation of public opinion for war with Germany.

"Guchkov wrote to the workers of *Novoe Vremia*, *Golos Moskvy* and *Golos Pravdy*, which were unfailingly ruled by his directives:

"'Rattle your sabres a little more, prepare public opinion for war with the Germans. Write articles in such a way that between the lines will already be heard peals of weapon thunder.'

"People who know Guchkov well say that in his flat, together with the well-known A. Ksyunin, he composed articles of the most provocative character in relation to Germany.

"In 1912, during a reception for an English military mission, Guchkov turned to those present with the following toast:

"'Gentlemen! I drink to the health of the English army and fleet, who are not only our friends, but also our allies.'

"And within the close circle of the members of the Commission of State Defence, he declared: 'Today Germany has suffered a decisive defeat: war is inevitable, if only the Tsar does not stop it.'

"In March, 1914, Guchkov at one dinner warned his acquaintances that they should not go abroad in the summer, and in particular - not to Germany.

"'I don't advise you to go abroad. War will unfailingly break out this summer: it has been decided. Germany can turn as she wants, but she cannot turn away from war.' And at these words Guchkov smiled.

“To the question of one of those present: who needed a war?, Guchkov replied:

“France must have Alsace-Lorraine and the Rhine; Russia – all the Slavic lands and an exit from the Black Sea; England will lap up the German colonies and take world trade into her hands.’

“To the objection that the Russian and German emperors would hardly enter such a dangerous world war, there followed Guchkov’s bold reply:

“We have foreseen this... and we shall arrange it so that both of them will find themselves before a *fait accompli*.

“Then it was pointed out to Guchkov that the Triple Alliance represented a formidable military power, to which Guchkov objected:

“Italy, in accordance with a secret agreement with England, will not be on the side of Germany and Austria, and if the war goes well can stab them in the back. The plan of the future war has already been worked out in detail by our allied staffs (English, French and Russian), and in no way will the war last for more than three months.’

“Then Guchkov was asked: ‘Tell us, Alexander Ivanovich, don’t you think that the war may be prolonged contrary to your expectations? It will require the most colossal exertion of national nerves, and very possibly it will be linked with the danger of popular discontent and a coup d’etat.’

“Smiling, Guchkov replied: ‘In the extreme case, the liquidation of the Dynasty will be the greatest benefit for Russia...’⁸⁴⁰

Guchkov’s prognosis was extraordinarily accurate. This leads us to conclude that war in Europe and revolution in Russia were if not “inevitable”, as many thought, at any rate to a large degree determined by the Masonic solidarity of the elites in all the combatant powers.

Only one human actor, as Guchkov admitted, could still say no and stop it – the Tsar; and only the one Divine Actor could prevent it if the peoples were worthy of it – He Who said of Himself: “I am He Who makes peace and creates wars...” (Isaiah 45.7)

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Given that the tsar’s rule was God-established, and that he had been anointed to the kingdom in a special church rite, the sacrament of anointing to the kingdom, how was he to exercise his rule in relation to the rebels against his throne, whose plot was known to him years before 1917?

This was truly a most difficult problem, which required both the meekness of David and the wisdom of Solomon. For real one-man rule had become almost impossible by

⁸⁴⁰ “Skrytaia Byl’” (A Hidden Story), *Prizyv’* (Summons), N 50, Spring, 1920; in F. Vinberg, *Krestnij Put’* (The Way of the Cross), Munich, 1920, St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 167-168).

the early twentieth-century: not only had democratic sentiments spread throughout society in all the Great Powers, and public opinion as expressed in the press was a force that no ruler could ignore: the sheer complexity of ruling a large, increasingly differentiated and rapidly industrializing society inevitably involved a large measure of devolution of power.

Tsar Nicholas II was highly educated and intelligent, and, contrary to the clichéd image of him constructed by western historians, probably as capable of coping with the vast complexity of ruling a twentieth-century empire as any man. He was also the most tactful and merciful of men, and the least inclined to manifest his power in violent action. Once the head of the police promised him that there would be no revolution in Russia for a hundred years if he would permit 50,000 executions. The Tsar quickly refused this proposal... In view of what happened after 1917, some may wonder whether he was right to be so merciful; but this at any rate shows that the epithet given to him by the revolutionaries of “Bloody Nicholas” was in no way deserved...

And yet he could manifest firmness, and was by no means as weak-willed as has been claimed. Thus once, in 1906, Admiral F.V. Dubasov asked him to have mercy on a terrorist who had tried to kill him. The Tsar replied: “Field tribunals act independently and independently of me: let them act with all the strictness of the law. With men who have become bestial there is not, and cannot be, any other means of struggle. You know me, I am not malicious: I write to you completely convinced of the rightness of my opinion. It is painful and hard, but right to say this, that ‘to our shame and gall’ [Stolypin’s words] only the execution of a few can prevent a sea of blood and has already prevented it.”⁸⁴¹

However, it was not the execution of a few (or even 50,000) revolutionaries that was the question or the solution ten years later, in the autumn of 1916. Only in the factories of St. Petersburg were they well-entrenched with their defeatist programme. The real problem was the legal opposition, the progressive bloc in the Duma, which professed to want the war continued to a successful end, but argued that success could be attained, in effect, only by destroying the Russian autocracy and replacing it by a constitutional monarchy in which the real power remained in their own hands.

To this end they employed all kinds of dishonourable, lying means. They concealed from the general public the improving situation in the army and in the economy as a whole; they insinuated that the Tsar was ruled by Rasputin, when he was not⁸⁴²; that the Tsarina was pro-German and even a German spy, which she was not⁸⁴³; that the Tsar’s ministers with German names, such as Prime Minister Stürmer, were Germanophiles, which they were not. An atmosphere of morbid distrust and suspicion, fuelled by baseless rumours and gossip, reigned in society...

In the Duma on November 1, 1916, the leader of the Cadet party, Paul Milyukov, holding a German newspaper in his hand and reading the words: “the victory of the

⁸⁴¹ Archpriest Lev Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 430.

⁸⁴² In fact, the Tsar as often as not ignored Rasputin’s advice. See S.S. Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II* (The Reign of Emperor Nicholas II), Belgrade, 1939, vol. II, pp. 190-191.

⁸⁴³ V.F. Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Moscow, 1997, pp. 411-412.

court party grouped around the young Tsarina”, uttered his famously seditious evaluation of the regime’s performance: “Is it stupidity – or treason?” insinuating that the authorities wanted a separate peace with Germany. To which the auditorium replied: “Treason”.

Major-General V.N. Voeikov, who was with the Tsar at the time, writes: “The most shocking thing in this most disgusting slander, unheard of in the annals of history, was that it was based on German newspapers...

“For Germany that was at war with us it was, of course, necessary, on the eve of the possible victory of Russia and the Allies, to exert every effort and employ all means to undermine the might of Russia.

“Count P.A. Ignatiev, who was working in our counter-espionage abroad, cites the words of a German diplomat that one of his agents overheard: ‘We are not at all interested to know whether the Russian emperor wants to conclude a separate peace. What is important to us is that they should believe this rumour, which weakens the position of Russia and the Allies.’ And we must give them their due: in the given case both our external and our internal enemies showed no hesitation: one example is the fact that our public figures spread the rumour coming from Duma circles that supposedly on September 15, 1915 Grand Duke Ludwig of Hesse, the brother of the Empress, secretly visited Tsarskoye Selo. To those who objected to this fable they replied: if it was not the Grand Duke, in any case it was a member of his suite; the mysterious visit was attributed to the desire of Germany, with the cooperation of the Empress, to conclude a separate peace with Russia.

“At that time nobody could explain to men whether the leader of the Cadet party, Milyukov himself, was led by stupidity or treason when he ascended the tribune of the State Duma, holding in his hands a German newspaper, and what relations *he* had with the Germans...”⁸⁴⁴

Treason was certainly afoot – but among the Masons. And so, it could be argued, the Tsar should have acted against the conspirators at least as firmly as he had against the revolutionaries of 1905-06. Moreover, this was precisely what the Tsaritsa argued in private letters to her husband: “Show to all, that you are the Master & your will shall be obeyed – the time of great indulgence & gentleness is over – now comes your reign of will & power, & obedience...” (December 4, 1916). And again: “Be Peter the Great, John [Ivan] the Terrible, Emperor Paul – crush them all under you.” (December 14, 1916). She urged him to prorogue the Duma, remove Trepov and send Lvov, Milyukov, Guchkov and Polivanov to Siberia...

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On December 16 Rasputin was killed by Great Prince Dmitri Pavlovich Romanov, Prince Felix Yusupov and a right-wing member of the Duma, Purishkevich. Yusupov lured him to his flat on the pretext of introducing him to his wife, the beautiful Irina, the Tsar’s niece. He was given madeira mixed with poison (although this is disputed),

⁸⁴⁴ Voeikov, *So Tsarem i Bez Tsaria* (With and Without the Tsar), Moscow, 1995, p. 137.

but this did not kill him. He was shot twice, but neither did this kill him. Finally he was shot a third time and pushed under the ice of the River Neva.⁸⁴⁵

Now there is no doubt that during the war, Rasputin had become more influential and dangerous. For, with the Tsar at the front, control of home appointments *de facto* came under the control of the Tsarina, who always turned to Rasputin and to those who were approved by him... Voeikov points out that from 1914 Rasputin and the Tsarina's and Rasputin's friend Vyubova "began to take a greater and greater interest in questions of internal politics", but at the same time argues that the number of appointments actually made by the Tsarina were few.⁸⁴⁶ Bakhanov calculates that there were no more than eleven... But these few included Prime Ministers, Interior Ministers and church metropolitans! Moreover, even the Tsarina admitted that one of them, the appointment of A.N. Khvostov as Interior Minister, was disastrous!⁸⁴⁷ It is hardly surprising, in those circumstances, that the reputation of the Royal Couple suffered...

Rasputin had "prophesied": "Know that if your relatives commit murder, then not one of your family, i.e. your relatives and children, will live more than two years..." Now Rasputin had been murdered by relatives of the tsar. Did this mean that resistance to the revolution was useless?

However, the tsar was not as superstitious as his enemies have made out. One pseudo-prophecy could not have deterred him from acting firmly against the conspirators, if that is what his conscience told him to do. Rasputin was certainly the evil genius of the Royal Family, and they – or the Tsarina, at any rate – were deceived in believing him to be a holy man.⁸⁴⁸ But his real influence on the course of events was only indirect – in giving the enemies of the Tsar an excuse for viciously slandering him...

⁸⁴⁵ A joint investigation by British and Russian police has now come to the conclusion that the third and fatal shot that killed Rasputin was actually fired by a British secret service agent. See Michael Smith, *A History of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service*, London: Dialogue; Annabel Venning, "How Britain's First Spy Chief Ordered Rasputin's Murder", *Daily Mail*, July 22, 2010, pp. 32-33.

The Tsar did not condone the murder. But Yusupov was justified by his close friend, Great Princess Elizabeth Fyodorovna, who said that he had only done his patriotic duty – "you killed a demon," she said. To Yusupov's parents she wrote: "May the Lord bless the patriotic exploit of your son" (Yusupov, *op.cit.*, p. 235). And to the Tsar she wrote on December 29: "Crime remains crime, but this one being of a special kind, can be counted as a duel and it is considered a patriotic act... Maybe nobody has had the courage to tell you now, that in the street of the towns people kissed like at Easter week, sang the hymn in the theatres and all moved by one feeling – at last the black wall between us and our Emperor is removed" (Alexander Bokhanov, Manfred Knodt, Vladimir Oustimenko, Zinaida Peregudova, Lyubov Tyutyunnik, *The Romanovs*, London: Leppi, 1993, p. 237).

⁸⁴⁶ Voeikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 143.

⁸⁴⁷ Bakhanov, *Imperator Nikolaj II*, Moscow, 1998, p. 371.

⁸⁴⁸ Two women close to the Royal Family during the war, Princess Vera Gedroits and Valentina Chebotareva, believed that the tsar "without doubt did not believe in either Grigory's saintliness or his powers, but put up with him, like a sick person when exhausted by clutching at straws" (Helen Rappoport, *Four Sisters*, London: Pan Books, 2014, pp. 243-244). General Spiridovich claimed that Grand Duchess Olga had always "instinctively sensed that there was something bad in Rasputin" (*op. cit.*, p. 279). And even Grand Duchess Tatiana, in spite of being very close to her mother, told Valentina Chebotareva not long after his death: "Maybe it was necessary to kill him, but not in such a terrible way" (*op. cit.*, p. 279).

Rasputin's significance lies not in his "prophecies" and their supposed influence on the tsar, but in that he was a symbol of the majority, peasant stratum of the Russian population in the last days of the empire. Though basically Orthodox and monarchist, it was infected with spiritual diseases that manifested themselves in the wild behaviour of so many peasants and workers after the revolution. The support of the peasants kept the monarchy alive just as Rasputin kept the tsarevich alive, stopping the flow of blood that represented the ebbing spiritual strength of the dynasty; but the majority of the peasants deserted the Tsar in 1917, bringing down the dynasty.

"Rasputin," writes Radzinsky, "is a key to understanding both the soul and the brutality of the Russia that came after him. He was a precursor of the millions of peasants who, with religious consciousness in their souls, would nevertheless tear down churches, and who, with a dream of the reign of Love and Justice, would murder, rape, and flood the country with blood, in the end destroying themselves..."⁸⁴⁹

If we follow through the allegory a little further, we can draw another lesson. Rasputin was killed by representatives of the right-wing monarchists and aristocrats. Though supposedly loyal to the Tsar (and many of them were not), by their evil way of life they had done much to undermine the faith of the peasants both in the Tsar and in the upper classes. In a spiritual sense, the rotten upper classes, stupid *and* treacherous, killed the peasantry just as their representatives killed Rasputin...

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We come back to the question why the Tsar did not immediately imprison the plotters against his throne. Archpriest Lev Lebedev supposes that the Tsar, too, was tempted to deal with them "simply and speedily. We remember his words, that 'with men who have become bestial there is not, and cannot be, any other means of struggle' (*besides shooting them*) and that 'only the execution of a few can prevent a sea of blood'. But there appeared before the Tsar at that time in the persons of Lvov, Rodzyanko, Guchkov, etc. not 'bestialized' criminal murderers like the Bolsheviks, but respectable people with good intentions! Yes, they were *in error* in thinking that by removing the Tsar from power they rule Russia better [than he]. But this was a *sincere error*, they *thought* that they were truly *patriots*. It would have been wrong to kill *such* people! *Such* people should not even have been sent to Siberia (that is, into prison). It was necessary to *show* them that they *were mistaken*. And how better to show them than by *victory* over the external enemy, a victory which was already in their hands, and would be inevitable in four or five *months*! The tsar *did not know* that his closest generals had already prepared to arrest him and deprive him of power on February 22, 1917. And the generals did not know that they were doing this precisely in order that in four or five months' time *there should be no victory*! That had been decided in Bnai-Brith, in other international Jewish organizations (Russia must not be 'among the victor-countries!'). Therefore through the German General Staff (which also *did not know* all the plots, but thought only about its own salvation and the salvation of Germany), and also directly from the banks of Jacob Schiff and others (we shall name them later) huge sums of money had already gone to the *real murderers* of the Tsar and the Fatherland - the Bolsheviks. This was *the second echelon* [of plotters], it hid behind the first [the

⁸⁴⁹ Radzinsky, *Rasputin*, Moscow, 1992, p. 501.

Russian Masons]. It was on them (and not on the 'noble patriots') that the world powers of evil placed their hopes, for they had no need at all of a transfigured Russia, even if on the western ('their') model. What they needed was that Russia and the Great Russian people should *not exist* as such! For they, the powers of evil, *knew Great Russia better* (incomparably better!) than *the whole* of Russian 'society' (especially the despised intelligentsia). Did Guchkov know about the planned murder of the whole of Great Russia? *He knew!* The Empress accurately called him 'cattle'. Kerensky also knew, and also several *specially initiated* Masons, who hid this from *the overwhelming majority* of all the 'brothers' – the other Russian Masons. The specially initiated had already for a long time had secret links (through Trotsky, M. Gorky and several others) with Lenin and the Bolsheviki, which *the overwhelming majority* of the Bolsheviki, too, *did not know!*

"And what did his Majesty know? He knew that society was eaten up by Judaeo-Masonry, that in it was *error* and cowardice and deception. But he *did not know* that at the base of the error, in its secret places, was *treason*. And he also *did not know* that treason and cowardice and deception were all around him, that is, everywhere throughout the higher *command* of the army. And what is the Tsar without an army, without troops?! Then there is the question: could the Tsar have learned in time about the treachery among the generals? Why not! Let's take, for example, Yanushkevich, or Gurko, or Korfa (or all of them together), whom Sukhomlinov had pointed to as plotters already in 1909 (!). In prison, *under torture* – such torture as they had with Tsars Ivan and Peter – they would have said everything, *given up all the rest...!* But then he, Nicholas II, would have needed to be truly like Ivan IV or Peter I from the beginning – that is, a *satanist* and a born murderer (psychologically), not trusting *anyone*, suspecting *everyone*, sparing *nobody*. It is significant that her Majesty joined to the names of these Tsars the name of Paul I. That means that she had in mind, not Satanism and bestiality, but only *firmness...* But she *felt* with striking perspicacity that her husband was 'suffering for the mistakes of his royal predecessors'. Which ones?! Just as we said, first of all and mainly for the 'mistakes' *precisely of Ivan IV and Peter I*. Not to become like them, these predecessors, to overcome the temptation of *replying to evil with evil means* – that was the task of Nicholas II. For *not everything is allowed, not all means* are good for the attainment of what would seem to be the most important ends. *The righteousness of God* is not attained by diabolic methods. Evil is not conquered by evil! There was a time when they, including also his Majesty Nicholas II, suppressed evil by evil! But in accordance with the Providence of God *another time* had come, a time to show where the Russian Tsar could himself become *a victim of evil* – voluntarily! – and endure evil *to the end*. *Did he believe* in Christ and *love* Him truly in such a way as to suffer voluntarily *like Christ*? The same Divine providential *question* as was posed for *the whole of Great Russia!* This was the final test of faith – *through life and through death*. If one can live only by killing and making oneself *one* with evil and the devil (as those whom one has to kill), then it would be better *not to live!* That is the reply of the Tsar and of Great Russia that he headed! The more so in that it was then a matter of earthly, *historical* life. Here, in *this* life and in *this* history to die in order to live again in the eternal and new 'history' of the Kingdom of Heaven! For there is no other way into this Kingdom of Heaven – *the Lord* left no other. He decreed that it should be experienced only *by this* entry... That is what turned out to be His, God's will!

"We recall that his Majesty Nicholas II took all his most important decisions after ardent prayer, having felt *the goodwill of God*. Therefore now, on considering earnestly

why he then, at the end of 1916 and very beginning of 1917, did not take those measures which his wife so warmly wrote to him about, we must inescapably admit one thing: he *did not have* God's goodwill in relation to them! Her Majesty's thought is remarkable in itself, that the Tsar, if he had to be ruled by anyone, should be ruled only by one who was himself ruled by God! But there was no such person near the Tsar. Rasputin was *not that* person. His Majesty already understood this, but the Tsaritsa did not yet understand it. In this question he was condescending to her and delicate. But, as we see, he did not carry out the advice of their 'Friend', and did not even mention him in his replies to his wife. The Tsar entrusted all his heart and his thoughts to God and was forced to be ruled by Him alone."⁸⁵⁰

There is much of value in this hypothesis, but it is too kind to the Masonic plotters. Yes, they were "sincere" – but so were the Bolsheviks! It seems unlikely that the Tsar should have considered the Bolsheviks worthy of punishment, but the Masons not.

More likely, in our opinion, is that he thought that acting against the Masons would bring forward the revolution at precisely the moment when he wanted peace in the rear of the army.

It must be remembered the Masons controlled the public organizations, like the Military-Industrial Committee, whose leader was the industrialist and conservative parliamentarian, A.I. Guchkov, and the *zemstvos*, whose leader was Prince George Lvov (who also happened to be the leader of Russian Masonry). These, in spite of their disloyalty, were nevertheless making their contribution to providing ammunition for the army and helping the wounded. The Emperor held the opinion that "in wartime one must not touch the public organizations"⁸⁵¹.

And so it was the war that both created the conditions that made the revolution possible, and prevented the Tsar taking the steps that were necessary in order to crush it...

Many people think that the Russian revolution was the result of an elemental movement of the masses. This is not true – although the masses later joined it. The February revolution was a carefully hatched plot involving about three hundred Masons; its organizer was Guchkov.

The plot was successful. But it succeeded in eventually bringing to power, not the Masonic plotters, but the Bolsheviks, who destroyed all the plotters and all their Masonic lodges, forcing the Masons themselves to flee back to their mother lodges abroad... Thus in October Kerensky and his Masonic colleagues fled to France, where they set up lodges under the aegis of the Grand Orient.⁸⁵²

Yana Sedova writes: "Already in 1906, after a meeting with the Emperor, A.I. Guchkov came to the unexpected conclusion: 'We are in for still more violent

⁸⁵⁰ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 473-475.

⁸⁵¹ Sedova, "Ne Tsar', a Ego Poddanie Otvetsvenny za Febral'skij Perevorot 1917 Goda" (Not the Tsar, but his Subjects were Responsible for the Coup of 1917), *Nasha Strana*, N 2864, March 14, 2009, p. 3.

⁸⁵² G. Katkov, *Febral'skaia Revoliutsia* (The February Revolution), Paris, 1984, pp. 175-82.

upheavals'. Then he wanted 'simply to step aside'. But already in those years he began to talk about a 'coup d'état'.

"In the next few years Guchkov's attention was temporarily occupied by work in the State Duma. But in 1911 after the murder of Stolypin, as he later recalled, there arose in him 'an unfriendly feeling' towards the Emperor Nicholas II.

"At the beginning of 1913, at a meeting in his Petersburg flat, Guchkov talked about a military coup in Serbia. The discussion moved to a coup in Russia. At this point one of the participants in the meeting said that 'the party of the coup is coming into being'.

"Several months later, at a congress of his [Octobrist] party in Petersburg, Guchkov proclaimed the principle by which he was governed in the next four years: 'the defence of the monarchy against the monarch'.

"The next year, during the 'great retreat', Guchkov created the Military-Industrial Committees, an organization whose official task was to help provide the army with ammunition. In fact, however, the committees turned out to be an instrument for the preparation of a coup.

"However, Guchkov would probably have continued to the end of his life only to 'platonically sympathize' with the coup, and do nothing himself, if once there had not appeared in his flat the Russian masonic leader, N.V. Nekrasov.

"The two of them became the 'initiators' of a plan: 'a palace coup, as a result of which his Majesty would be forced to sign his abdication passing the throne to his lawful Heir'.

"Soon another Mason, M.I. Tereschenko, joined the plot, and, as Guchkov recalled, 'the three of us set about a detailed working out of this plan'."⁸⁵³

On September 8, 1915 a "Committee of National Salvation" issued "Disposition Number 1". "It affirmed," writes N. Yakovlev, "that there were two wars going on in Russia - against a stubborn and skilful enemy from outside and a no less stubborn and skilful enemy from inside. The attainment of victory over the external enemy was unthinkable without a prior victory over the internal enemy. By the latter they had in mind the ruling dynasty. For victory on the internal front it was necessary... immediately to appoint a supreme command staff, whose basic core consisted of Prince G.E. Lvov, A.I. Guchkov and A.F. Kerensky."⁸⁵⁴

Shtormakh considers that the main plotters were A.I. Guchkov, Prince G.E. Lvov, N.V. Nekrasov and M.I. Tereschenko, all of whom became ministers in the Provisional Government.⁸⁵⁵ Lvov was leader of the Union of the *Zemstva* and Cities.

Some of the plotters may have considered regicide. Thus Shtormakh writes: "'In 1915,' recounts the Mason A.F. Kerensky in his memoirs, 'speaking at a secret meeting

⁸⁵³ Sedova, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁸⁵⁴ Yakovlev, *1 Avgusta, 1914*, Moscow, 1974, p. 13.

⁸⁵⁵ <http://rushistory.3dn.ru/forum/4-86-1>

of representatives of the liberal and moderate conservative majority in the Duma and the State Council, which was discussing the Tsar's politics, V.A. Maklakov, who was to the highest degree a conservative liberal, said that it was possible to avert catastrophe and save Russia only by repeating the events of March 11, 1801 (the assassination of Paul I).⁸⁵⁶ Kerensky reasons that the difference in views between him and Maklakov came down only to time, for Kerensky himself had come to conclude that killing the Tsar was 'a necessity' ten years earlier. 'And besides,' continues Kerensky, 'Maklakov and those who thought like him would have wanted that others do it. But I suggested that, in accepting the idea, one should assume the whole responsibility for it, and go on to execute it personally'. Kerensky continued to call for the murder of the Tsar. In his speech at the session of the State Duma in February, 1917 he called for the 'physical removal of the Tsar, explaining that they should do to the Tsar 'what Brutus did in the time of Ancient Rome'."⁸⁵⁶

According to Guchkov, they worked out several variants of the seizure of power. One involved seizing the Tsar in Tsarskoye Selo or Peterhof. Another involved doing the same at Headquarters. This would have had to involve some generals who were members of the military lodge, especially Alexeyev (a friend of Guchkov's) and Ruzsky. However, this might lead to a schism in the army, which would undermine its capability for war. So it was decided not to initiate the generals into the plot – although, as we shall see, they played a very important role quite independently of Guchkov's band, prevented loyal military units from coming to the aid of the Tsar, and themselves demanded his abdication.⁸⁵⁷ A third variant, worked out by another Mason, Prince D.L. Vyazemsky, envisaged a military unit taking control of the Tsar's train between Military Headquarters and Tsarskoye Selo and forcing him to abdicate in favour of the Tsarevich. Yet another plan was to seize the Tsar (on March 1) and exile him abroad. Guchkov claims that the agreement of some foreign governments to this was obtained.

The Germans got wind of these plans, and not long before February, 1917 the Bulgarian Ambassador tried to warn the Tsar about them. The Germans were looking to save the Tsar in order to establish a separate peace with him. But the Tsar, in accordance with his promise to the Allies, rejected this out of hand. It was then that the Germans turned to Lenin...

Yet another plan was worked out by Prince G.E. Lvov. He suggested forcing the Tsar to abdicate and putting Great Prince Nicholas Nikolayevich on the throne in his place, with Guchkov and Lvov as the powers behind the throne. Lvov had hopes of Nikolasha because in October he and other Romanovs had tried to persuade the Tsar to adopt the constitutional path, while on November 6 he had had a stormy conversation with the Tsar at Stavka during which he had said: "How shameful of you it was to believe that I wanted to overthrow you from the throne!"⁸⁵⁸ Then, in a private

⁸⁵⁶ <http://rushistory.3dn.ru/forum/4-86-1>.

⁸⁵⁷ Sedova, after arguing that the generals were never initiated into Guchkov's plot, goes on: "Finally, nevertheless, Guchkov revealed his plan to Ruzsky. But this took place already after the coup. On learning of the plot, Ruzsky cried out: 'Ach, Alexander Ivanovich, if you had told me about this earlier, I would have joined you.' But Guchkov said: 'My dear, if I had revealed the plan, you would have pressed a button, and an adjutant would have come and you would have said: "Arrest him!"' ("Ne Tsar...", p. 4)

⁸⁵⁸ G.M. Katkov, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

conversation with his nephew, Prince Andrew Vladimirovich, Nikolasha had confided to him that he had lost all hope of saving the Tsar from his wife and from himself. So on January 1 Lvov sent a friend of his, the Mason A.I. Khatsov, to Tiflis to speak with him and his wife Anastasia (a notorious critic of the Tsarina) about his plot. According to Oldenburg, the Great Prince rejected the idea on the grounds of the monarchical sentiments of the army.⁸⁵⁹ Sedova claims that Lvov actually offered the throne to Nikolasha...⁸⁶⁰ In any case, as Katkov points out, "there are no indications that Nikolai Nikolayevich reported Khatsov's approach to the corresponding authorities, although this is precisely what duty required. And in this way the Great Prince willingly or unwillingly became a participant in a plot whose aim was to overthrow Nicholas II followed by his own ascent to the throne. That is, there took place precisely that which he had so sincerely renounced with an oath on November 6..."⁸⁶¹

At a meeting between members of the Duma and some generals in the study of Rodzyanko in February, 1917 another plot to force the Tsar to abdicate was formed. The leading roles in this were to be played by Generals Krymov and Ruzsky and Colonel Rodzyanko, the Duma leader's son... Finally, the so-called naval plot was formed, as Shulgin recounts, according to which the Tsaritsa was to be invited onto a warship for England.⁸⁶²

Besides the formal conspirators, there were many others who helped them by trying to undermine the resolve of the Tsar. Thus "before the February coup," writes Yana Sedova, "in the Russian empire there were more and more attempts on the part of individual people to 'open the eyes of his Majesty' to the internal political situation.

"This 'search for truth' assumed a particularly massive character in November, 1916, beginning on November 1, when Great Prince Nicholas Mikhailovich arrived at Stavka to have a heart-to-heart conversation with his Majesty...

"Very many considered it their duty to 'open the eyes of his Majesty': Great Princes Nicholas and Alexander Mikhailovich, Nicholas Nikolayevich and Paul Alexandrovich, the ministers Ignatiev and Pokrovsky, Generals Alexeyev and N.I. Ivanov, the ambassadors of allied governments Buchanan and Paléologue, the president of the Duma M. Rodzyanko, Protopresbyter of the army and navy G. Shavel'sky,... the chief representative of the Red Cross P.M. Kaufmann-Turkestan'sky, the official A.A. Klopov, the dentist S.S. Kostritsky...

"This is far from a complete list. It includes only conversations, but many addressed his Majesty in letters or try to influence the Empress (Great Prince Alexander Mikhailovich both spoke with his Majesty and sent him a very long letter and spoke with the Empress). 'It seemed,' wrote Rodzyanko later, 'that the whole of Russia was beseeching his Majesty about one and the same thing, and it was impossible not to understand and pay heed to the pleas of a land worn out by suffering'.

⁸⁵⁹ Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 228.

⁸⁶⁰ Sedova, "Byl li masonskij zagovor...?" *Nasha Strana*.

⁸⁶¹ Katkov, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

⁸⁶² <http://rushistory.3dn.ru/forum/4-86-1> .

“But what did ‘the whole of Russia’ ask about? As a rule, about two things: the removal of ‘dark powers’ and the bestowing of ‘a ministry of confidence’. The degree to which the boundaries between these two groups was blurred is evident from the fact that the Duma deputy Protopopov at first considered himself a candidate for the ‘ministry of confidence’, but when his Majesty truly appointed him a minister, the name of Protopopov immediately appeared in the ranks of the ‘dark powers’. By the ‘dark powers’ was usually understood Rasputin and his supposed protégés...

“It was less evident what the ‘ministry of confidence’ was. For many this term had a purely practical meaning and signified the removal from the government of certain ministers who were not pleasing to the Duma and the appointment in their place of Milyukov, Rodzyanko and other members of the Duma.

“But the closer it came to the February coup, the more demands there were in favour of a really responsible ministry, that is, a government which would be formed by the Duma and would only formally be confirmed by his Majesty. That a responsible ministry was no longer a real monarchy, but the end of the Autocracy was not understood by everyone. Nobody at that time listened to the words of Scheglovitov: ‘A monarchist who goes with a demand for a ministry of public confidence is not a monarchist’.

“As for the idea of appointed people with no administrative experience, but of the Duma, to the government in conditions of war, this was evidently thought precisely by those people. All these arguments about ‘dark forces’ and ‘a ministry of confidence’ first arose in the Duma and were proclaimed from its tribune. Evidently the beginning of the mass movements towards his Majesty in November, 1916 were linked with the opening of a Duma session at precisely that time. These conversations were hardly time to coincide with the opening of the Duma: rather, they were elicited by the Duma speeches, which were distributed at the time not only on the pages of newspapers, but also in the form of leaflets. ‘We,’ wrote Shulgin later, ‘ourselves went mad and made the whole country mad with the myth about certain geniuses, ‘endowed with public confidence’, when in fact there were none such...’

“In general, all these conversations were quite similar and usually irrelevant. Nevertheless, his Majesty always listened attentively to what was expressed in them, although by no means all his interlocutors were easy to listen to.

“Some of them, like many of the Great Princes and Rodzyanko, strove to impose their point of view and change his political course, demanding a ministry endowed with confidence or even a responsible ministry. His Majesty listened to them in silence and thanked them for their ‘advice’.

“Others, like General Alexeyev or S.S. Kostritsky, were under the powerful impression (not to say influence) of the Duma speeches and political agitation, which the truly dark forces who had already thought up the February coup were conducting at the time. Those who gave regular reports to his Majesty and whom he trusted were subjected to particularly strong pressure. If they began a heart-to-heart conversation, his Majesty patiently explained to them in what he did not agree with them and why.

“There existed a third category which, like P.M. Kaufmann, got through to his Majesty, even though they did not have a report to give, so as to tell him ‘the whole bitter truth’. They did not clearly know what they wanted, and simply said ‘everything that had built up in their souls’. Usually they began their speeches with the question: could they speak to him openly (as if his Majesty would say no to such a question!), and then spoke on the same two subjects, about the ‘dark powers’ and the government, insofar as, by the end of 1916, the same things, generally speaking, had built up in all their souls. The speech of such a ‘truth-seeker’ usually ended in such a sad way (Kaufmann just said: ‘Allow me: I’ll go and kill Grishka!’) that his Majesty had to calm them down and assure them that ‘everything will work out’.

“One cannot say that his Majesty did not listen to his interlocutors. Some ministers had to leave their posts precisely because of the conversations. For example, on November 9, 1916 his Majesty wrote to the Empress that he was sacking Shtürmer since nobody trusted that minister: ‘Every day I hear more and more about him. We have to take account of that.’ And on the same day he wrote in his diary: ‘My head is tired from all these conversations’.

“By the beginning everyone noticed his tiredness, and his interlocutors began more often to foretell revolution to him. Earlier he could say to the visitor: ‘But you’ve gone out of your mind, this is all in your dreams. And when did you dream it? Almost on the very eve of our victory?! And what are you frightened of? The rumours of corrupt Petersburg and the babblers in the Duma, who value, not Russia, but their own interests?’ (from the memoirs of Mamantov). And then the conversation came to an end. But now he had to reply to the most senseless attacks. And he replied. To the rumours of betrayal in the entourage of the Empress: ‘What, in your opinion I’m a traitor?’ To the diagnosis made by the Duma about Protopopov: ‘When did he begin to go mad? When I appointed him a minister?’ To the demand ‘to deserve the confidence of the people’: ‘But is it not that my people has to deserve my confidence?’ However, they did not listen to him...”⁸⁶³

Almost all the plotters later repented of their actions. Thus “in the summer of 1917,” writes F. Vinberg, “in Petrograd and Moscow there circulated from hand to hand copies of a letter of the Cadet leader Milyukov. In this letter he openly admitted that he had taken part, as had almost all the members of the State Duma, in the February coup, in spite of the fact that he understood the danger of the ‘experiment’ he had undertaken. ‘But,’ this gentleman cynically admitted in the letter, ‘we knew that in the spring we were about to see the victory of the Russian Army. In such a case the prestige and attraction of the Tsar among the people would again become so strong and tenacious that all our efforts to shake and overthrow the Throne of the Autocrat would be in vain. That is why we had to resort to a very quick revolutionary explosion, so as to avert this danger. However, we hoped that we ourselves would be able to finish the war triumphantly. It turned out that we were mistaken: all power was quickly torn out of our hands by the plebs... Our mistake turned out to be fatal for Russia’ ...”⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶³ Sedova, “Razgovory po dusham’ Fevral’skikh Impotentov” (‘Heart-to-heart’ Conversations of the February Impotents), *Nasha Strana* (Our Country), N 2834, December 29, 2007, p. 7.

⁸⁶⁴ Vinberg, *Krestnij Put’* (The Way of the Cross), Munich, 1920, St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 151.

So we must conclude that it was *both* stupidity *and* treason that manifested themselves in the actions of the February plotters. They were undoubtedly traitors in violating their oath of allegiance to the Tsar. But they were also stupid because they did not understand what the overthrow of the Tsar would lead to – something that Rasputin understood better than they...

33. WHY DID THE TSAR ABDICATE IN 1917?

In the months leading up to his abdication, the Tsar was put under increasing pressure by the political and military leaders of Russia. They were convinced that his abdication in favour of a government “responsible to the people”, i.e. a constitutional monarchy or parliamentary democracy, would bring peace and prosperity to the country. But Nicholas, with his deeper knowledge of God’s ways and his country’s needs, was doubtful, repeatedly asking: "Are you confident that my abdication will save Russia from bloodshed?"

The Legal Argument

It has been argued that both Tsar Nicholas’ abdication and that of his brother and successor, Michael Alexandrovich, had no legal force because there was no provision for abdication in the Basic Laws. As Michael Nazarov points out, the Basic Laws of the Russian Empire, which had been drawn up by Tsar Paul I and which all members of the Royal Family swore to uphold, “do not foresee the abdication of a reigning Emperor (‘from a religious... point of view the abdication of the Monarch, the Anointed of God, is contrary to the act of His Sacred Coronation and Anointing; it would be possible only by means of monastic tonsure’ [N. Korevo]). Still less did his Majesty have the right to abdicate for his son in favour of his brother; while his brother Michael Alexandrovich had the right neither to ascend the Throne during the lifetime of the adolescent Tsarevich Alexis, nor to be crowned, since he was married to a divorced woman, nor to transfer power to the Provisional government, nor refer the resolution of the question of the fate of the monarchy to the future Constituent Assembly.

“Even if the monarch had been installed by the will of such an Assembly, ‘this would have been the abolition of the Orthodox legitimating principle of the Basic Laws’, so that these acts would have been ‘juridically non-existent’, says M.V. Zyzykin... ‘Great Prince Michael Alexandrovich... performed only an act in which he expressed his personal opinions and abdication, which had an obligatory force for nobody. Thereby he estranged himself from the succession in accordance with the Basic Laws, which juridically in his eyes did not exist, in spite of the fact that he had earlier, in his capacity as Great Prince on the day of his coming of age, sworn allegiance to the decrees of the Basic Laws on the inheritance of the Throne and the order of the Family Institution’.⁸⁶⁵

“It goes without saying that his Majesty did not expect such a step from his brother, a step which placed the very monarchical order under question...”⁸⁶⁶

So from a juridical point of view, the abdications were unlawful – both Tsar Nicholas’ and Tsar Michael’s. But was it possible to fulfill the law in these cases? And are there not considerations higher than the law? After all, it is Orthodox teaching that the tsar is above the law – not the Law of God, but those human laws, including the Basic Laws, of which he and his predecessors were the origin.

⁸⁶⁵ Zyzykin, *Tsarskaia Vlast'*, Sophia, 1924. (V.M.)

⁸⁶⁶ Nazarov, *Kto naslednik rossijskogo prestola?* (Who is the Heir of the Russian Throne?), Moscow, 1996, p. 68.

Thus Archpriest John Vostorgov considered the transfer of power lawful, in spite of its incompatibility with the Basic Laws of the Empire: "Our former Emperor, who has abdicated from the throne, transferred power in a lawful manner to his brother. In his turn the brother of the Emperor, having abdicated from power until the final decision of the Constituent Assembly, in the same lawful manner transferred power to the Provisional Government, and to that permanent government that which be given to Russia by the Constituent Assembly. And so we now have a completely lawful Provisional Government which is the powers that be, as the Word of God calls it. To this power, which is now the One Supreme and All-Russian power, we are obliged to submit in accordance with the duty of religious conscience; we are obliged to pray for it; we are obliged also to obey the local authorities established by it. In this obedience, after the abdication of the former Emperor and his brother, and after their indications that the Provisional Government is lawful, there can be no betrayal of the former oath, but in it consists our direct duty."⁸⁶⁷

And yet confusion and searching of consciences continued, as can be seen in a letter of some Orthodox Christians to the Holy Synod dated July 24, 1917: "We Orthodox Christians most ardently beseech you to explain to us in the newspaper *Russkoe Slovo* [*Russian Word*] what... the oath given to us to be faithful to the Tsar, Nicholas Alexandrovich, means. People are saying in our area that if this oath is worth nothing, then the new oath to the new Tsar [the Provisional Government?] will be worth nothing. Which oath must be more pleasing to God. The first or the second? Because the Tsar is not dead, but is alive and in prison..."⁸⁶⁸

[The Defence of the Realm](#)

Yana Sedova points to the similarities between the situations in February, 1917 and October, 1905, when "his Majesty himself explained the reason for his agreement [to abdicate]. He wrote that he had to choose between two paths: a dictatorship and a constitution [which the plotters against him demanded]. A dictatorship, in his words, would give a short 'breathing space', after which he would 'again have to act by force within a few months; but this would cost rivers of blood and in the end would lead inexorably to the present situation, that is, the power's authority would have been demonstrated, but the result would remain the same and reforms could not be achieved in the future'. So as to escape this closed circle, his Majesty preferred to give a constitution with which he was not in sympathy.

"These words about a 'breathing-space' after which he would again have to act by force could perhaps have been applied now [in 1917]. In view of the solitude in which his Majesty found himself in 1917, the suppression of the revolution would have been the cure, not of the illness, but of its symptoms, a temporary anaesthesia - and, moreover, for a very short time."⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁷ Quoted in Tamara Groyan, *Tsariu Nebesnomu i Zemnomu Vernij* (Faithful to the Heavenly and Earthly Tsar), Moscow: Palomnik, 1996, p. 128.

⁸⁶⁸ Groyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 122, 123.

⁸⁶⁹ Sedova, "Pochemu Gosudar' ne mog ne otrech'sa?" (Why his Majesty could not avoid abdication), *Nasha Strana*, March 6, 2010, N 2887, p. 2.

“By contrast with Peter I, Tsar Nicholas II of course was not inclined to walk over other people’s bodies. But he, too, was able, in case of necessity, to act firmly and send troops to put down the rebellious city. He could have acted in this way to defend the throne, order and the monarchical principle as a whole. But now he saw how much hatred there was against himself, and that the February revolution was as it were directed only personally against him. He did not want to shed the blood of his subjects to defend, not so much his throne, as himself on the throne...”⁸⁷⁰

Archpriest Lev Lebedev agrees that the Tsar agreed to abdicate because he believed that the general dissatisfaction with his *personal* rule could be assuaged by his *personal* departure from the scene. But he never saw in this the renunciation of the Monarchy and its replacement by a republic; he envisaged only the transfer of power from himself to another member of the Dynasty – in the first place his son, under the regency of his brother. This, he thought, would placate the army and therefore ensure victory against Germany.

Thus the Tsar wrote in his diary-entry for March 2: “My abdication is necessary. Ruzsky transmitted this conversation [with Rodzianko] to the Staff HQ, and Alexeyev to all the commanders-in-chief of the fronts. The replies from all arrived at 2:05. The essence is that that for the sake of the salvation of Russia and keeping the army at the front quiet, I must resolve on this step. I agreed. From the Staff HQ they sent the draft of a manifesto. In the evening there arrived from Petrograd Guchkov and Shulgin. I discussed and transmitted to them the signed and edited manifesto. At one in the morning I left Pskov greatly affected by all that had come to pass. All around me I see treason, cowardice, and deceit.”

Commenting on these words, Fr. Lev writes: “The Tsar was convinced that this treason was personally against him, and not against the Monarchy, not against Russia! The generals were *sincerely* convinced of the same: they supposed that in betraying the Tsar they were not betraying the Monarchy and the Fatherland, but were even serving them, acting for their true good!... But betrayal and treason to *God’s* Anointed is treason to everything that is headed by him. The Masonic consciousness of the generals, drunk on their supposed ‘real power’ over the army, could not rise even to the level of this *simple* spiritual truth! And meanwhile the traitors had already been *betrayed*, the deceivers *deceived*! Already on the following day, March 3, General Alexeyev, having received more detailed information on what was happening in Petrograd, exclaimed: ‘I shall never forgive myself that I *believed* in the sincerity of certain people, obeyed them and sent the telegram to the commanders-in-chief on the question of the abdication of his Majesty from the Throne!’ ... In a similar way General Ruzsky quickly ‘*lost faith* in the new government’ and, as was written about him, ‘suffered great moral torments’ concerning his conversation with the Tsar, and the days March 1 and 2, ‘until the end of his life’ (his end came in October, 1918, when the Bolsheviks finished off Ruzsky in the Northern Caucasus). But we should not be moved by these belated ‘sufferings’ and ‘recovery of sight’ of the generals (and also of some of the Great Princes). They did not have to possess information, nor be particularly clairvoyant or wise; they simply had to be *faithful to their oath* – and nothing more!..

⁸⁷⁰ Sedova, “Ataka na Gosudaria Sprava” (An Attack on his Majesty from the Right), *Nasha Strana*, September 5, 2009.

“... At that time, March 1-2, 1917, the question was placed before the Tsar, his consciousness and his conscience in the following way: the revolution in Petrograd is being carried out under *monarchical* banners: society, the people (Russia!) are standing for the preservation of tsarist power, for the planned carrying on of the war to victory, but this is being hindered only by one thing – general dissatisfaction *personally* with Nicholas II, general distrust of his *personal* leadership, so that if he, for the sake of the good and the victory of Russia, were to depart, he would *save* both the Homeland and the Dynasty!

“Convinced, as were his generals, that everything was like that, his Majesty, who never suffered from love of power (he could be powerful, but not power-loving!), after 3 o’clock in the afternoon of March 2, 1917, immediately sent two telegrams – to Rodzyanko in Petrograd and to Alexeyev in Mogilev. In the first he said: ‘*There is no sacrifice that I would not undertake in the name of the real good of our native Mother Russia. For that reason I am ready to renounce the Throne in favour of My Son, in order that he should remain with Me until his coming of age, under the regency of My brother, Michael Alexandrovich*’. The telegram to Headquarters proclaimed: ‘In the name of the good of our ardently beloved Russia, her calm and salvation, I am ready to renounce the Throne in favour of My Son. I ask everyone to serve Him faithfully and unhyprocritically.’ His Majesty said, as it were between the lines: ‘Not as you have served Me...’ Ruzsky, Danilov and Savich went away with the texts of the telegrams.

“On learning about this, Voeikov ran into the Tsar’s carriage: ‘Can it be true... that You have signed the abdication?’ The Tsar gave him the telegrams lying on the table with the replies of the commanders-in-chief, and said: ‘What was left for me to do, when they have all betrayed Me? And first of all – Nikolasha (Great Prince Nicholas Nikolayevich)... Read!’”⁸⁷¹

In 1905, therefore, as in 1917, the most important factor influencing the Tsar had been the attitude of his generals, and in particular of his uncle, the former Supreme Commander, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevich Romanov, “Nikolasha”. It was indeed the case that there was very little he could do in view of the treason of the generals and Nikolasha.⁸⁷² He could probably continue to defy the will of the social and political élite, as he had done more than once in the past – but not the generals...⁸⁷³

E.E. Alferev writes: “Factually speaking, in view of the position taken by [his senior Generals] Ruzsky and Alexeev, the possibility of resistance was excluded. Being cut off from the external world, the Sovereign was as it were in captivity. His orders were not carried out, the telegrams of those who remained faithful to their oath of allegiance were not communicated to him. The Empress, who had never trusted Ruzsky, on learning that the Tsar’s train had been help up at Pskov, immediately understood the

⁸⁷¹ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 486-488; Mark Steinberg and Vladimir Khrustalev, *The Fall of the Romanovs*, Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 89-90, citing State Archive of the Russian Federation, document f.601, op. 1, d. 2102, 1.1-2.

⁸⁷² Nikolasha was blessed by Metropolitan Platon, Exarch of Georgia to ask the Tsar to abdicate (N.K. Talberg, “K sorokaletiu pagubnogo evlogianskogo raskola” (On the Fortieth Anniversary of the Destructive Eulogian Schism”), Jordanville, 1966, p. 36).

⁸⁷³ Apart from the Muslim (!) General Khan-Hussein, General Theodore Keller, who was later martyred, was also faithful, as were Adjutant-General Nilov and General Voejkov.

danger. On March 2 she wrote to his Majesty: 'But you are alone, you don't have the army with you, you are caught like a mouse in a trap. What can you do?'"⁸⁷⁴

Perhaps he could count on the support of some military units. But the result would undoubtedly be a civil war, whose outcome was doubtful, but whose effect on the war with Germany could not be doubted: it would give the Germans a decisive advantage at a critical moment when Russia was just preparing for a spring offensive.

It was this factor that was decisive for the Tsar: he would not contemplate undermining the war effort for any reason whatsoever. For the first duty of an Orthodox Autocrat, after the defence of the Orthodox faith against heretics and pagans, is *the defence of the country* against external enemies – and in the case of the war with Germany the two duties coincided. And so he laid aside the crown for his country's sake.

"The Lord," continues Lebedev, "allowed the satanic plan of [the leading plotter] Guchkov – borrowed by him, as we recall, from the Young Turks – to be carried out exactly. The Tsar, having left Headquarters, was, while *on his way* (isolated from the *concrete, immediate levers and threads* of the administration of the army and state), seized by plotters from the highest officers of the army and *by deceit* forced to abdicate.

"The 'monarchists' Guchkov and Shulgin, who did not yet know of his decision, and were only thinking to incline him towards it, that is, to carry out the work which Ruzsky, Alexeyev and the others *had already done*, left Petrograd for Pskov *without the Soviet of Deputies knowing (!)*. They arrived at about 10 p.m. on March 2. By this time, that is, in the evening, the Tsar had somewhat changed his original decision. The point was the extremely dangerous illness of his Son, the Tsarevich Alexis, who was still destined to rule, albeit under the regency of his uncle, Michael. The Tsar-Father, worrying about his, asked the doctors for the last time: was there the slightest hope of Alexis Nikolayevich being cured of haemophilia? And he received a negative reply: there was no hope. Then the Tsar took the decision to keep his sick son completely with himself and abdicate in favour of his brother *Michael*. However, the text of the abdication manifesto was still marked as March 2, *15.00 hours*, that is, the moment when he decided to renounce his power. So when Guchkov and Shulgin brought the text of the manifesto that they had composed they found that it was not necessary. The Tsar gave them his. And they had to admit with shame how much more powerful, spiritual and majestic in its simplicity was the manifesto written by the Tsar than their talentless composition.⁸⁷⁵ They *begged* the Tsar *to appoint* Prince Lvov as President of the Council of Ministers and General L.G. Kornilov as Commander of the Petrograd military district. The Tsar signed the necessary orders. These were the last appointments made by *the Tsar*.

⁸⁷⁴ Alferov, *Imperator Nikolaj II kak chelovek sil'noj voli* (Emperor Nicholas II as a Man of Strong Will), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983, 2004, p. 121.

⁸⁷⁵ Shulgin wrote: "How pitiful seemed to me the sketch that we had brought him... It is too late to guess whether his Majesty could have not abdicated. Taking into account the position that General Ruzsky and General Alexeyev held, the possibility of resistance was excluded: his Majesty's orders were no longer passed on, the telegrams of those faithful to him were not communicated to him... In abdicating, his Majesty at least retained the possibility of appealing to the people with his own last word" (in S.S. Oldenburg, *Tsarstvoovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II* (The Reign of Emperor Nicholas II), Belgrade, 1939, vol. 2, p. 253). (V.M.)

“Seeing themselves as the controllers of the destinies and rulers of Russia, Guchkov and Shulgin both arrived in a concealed manner, bewildered, unshaven, in noticeably dirty collars, and departed with all the papers they had been given in a conspiratorial manner, looking around them and concealing themselves from ‘the people’ whom they thought to rule... Thieves and robbers! Guchkov’s plan had been carried out, while as for Guchkov himself – what a boundlessly pitiful situation did this very clever Mason find himself in, he who had worked for so many years to dig a hole under Tsar Nicholas II!

“Nicholas II’s manifesto declared: ‘During the days of the great struggle against the external foe which, in the space of almost three years, has been striving to enslave our Native Land, it has pleased the Lord God to send down upon Russia a new and difficult trial. The national disturbances that have begun within the country threaten to reflect disastrously upon the further conduct of the stubborn war. The fate of Russia, the honour of our heroic army, the well-being of the people, the entire future of our precious Fatherland demand that the war be carried out to a victorious conclusion, come what may. The cruel foe is exerting what remains of his strength, and nor far distant is the hour when our valiant army with our glorious allies will be able to break the foe completely. In these decisive days in the life of Russia, We have considered it a duty of conscience to make it easy for Our people to bring about a tight-knit union and cohesion of all our national strength, in order that victory might be the more quickly attained, and, in agreement with the State Duma We have concluded that it would be a good thing to abdicate the Throne of the Russian State and to remove Supreme Power from Ourselves. Not desiring to be separated from Our beloved Son, We transfer Our legacy to Our Brother Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich, and bless Him to ascend the Throne of the Russian State. We command Our Brother to conduct State affairs fully and in inviolable unity with the representatives of those men who hold legislative office, upon those principles which they shall establish, swearing an inviolable oath to that effect. In the name of our ardently beloved Native Land We call upon all faithful sons of the Fatherland to fulfil their sacred duty before it, by submitting to the Tsar during the difficult moment of universal trials, and, aiding Him, together with the representatives of the people, to lead the Russian State out upon the path of victory, well-being and glory. May the Lord God help Russia. Pskov. 2 March, 15.00 hours. 1917. Nicholas.’ Countersigned by the Minister of the Court Count Fredericks.⁸⁷⁶

“Then – it was already night on March 2 – the Tsar telegraphed the essence of the matter to his brother Michael and asked forgiveness that he ‘had not been able to warn’ him. But this telegram *did not reach* its addressee.

“Then the train set off. Left on his own, in his personal compartment, the Tsar prayed for a long time by the light only of a lampada that burned in front of an icon. Then he sat down and wrote in his diary: ‘At one in the morning I left Pskov greatly

⁸⁷⁶ Lebedev’s text has been slightly altered to include the whole text of the manifesto (V.M.). For more on the text of the manifesto, and proof that it was written by the Tsar himself, see “Manifest ob otrechenii i oktiabrskij perevorot: Kniaz’ Nikolai Davydovich Zhevakov” (1874-1939)”, <http://www.zhevakhov.info/?p=465>.

affected by all that had come to pass. All around me I see treason, cowardice, and deceit."⁸⁷⁷

General Voeikov writes: "Immediately the train had moved from the station, I went into the Tsar's compartment, which was lit by one lampada burning in front of an icon. After all the experiences of that heavy day, the Tsar, who was always distinguished by huge self-possession, could not control himself. He embraced me and sobbed... My heart broke into pieces at the sight of such undeserved sufferings that had fallen to the lot of the noblest and kindest of tsars. He had only just endured the tragedy of abdicating from the throne for himself and his son because of the treason and baseness of the people who had abdicated from him, although they had received only good from him. He was torn away from his beloved family. All the misfortunes sent down upon him he bore with the humility of an ascetic... The image of the Tsar with his tear-blurred eyes in the half-lit compartment will never be erased from my memory to the end of my life..."⁸⁷⁸

It has been argued that this telegram-manifesto was not an abdication, but a final coded appeal to the army to support him. But such a supposition cannot be reconciled with the plain meaning of the text. And since all agree on the crystal-clear sincerity and guilelessness of Nicholas' character, there is no reason not to believe the plain meaning of the text. What *is* true, however, is that the Tsar considered himself to be still Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Russia. That is why his train now moved towards Mogilev, and why neither Ruzsky nor Alexeyev nor even Guchkov prevented him from returning there.

And for almost a whole week he continued to lead all the Armed Forces of Russia!... But, although there were many senior officers there who were ready to die for him, the Tsar made no move to make use of his powerful position to march against the revolution.

The reason for this, according to Lebedev, was that the Tsar was sincerely convinced that "his departure from power could help everyone to come together for the decisive and already very imminent victory over the external enemy (the general offensive was due to take place in April). Let us recall his words to the effect that *there was no sacrifice* which he was not prepared to offer for the good of Russia. In those days the Tsar expressed himself still more definitely: '*... If Russia needs an atoning sacrifice, let me be that sacrifice*'. The Tsar was convinced (and they convinced him) that... the Provisional Government, society and the revolution were all (!) for *the preservation of the Monarchy* and for carrying through the war to a glorious *victory*..."⁸⁷⁹

Lebedev is less than convincing here. The Tsar's first priority was undoubtedly a successful conclusion to the war. After all, on the night of his abdication, he wrote in his diary: "I decided to take this step for the sake of Russia, *and to keep the armies in the field*." And it is hard to believe that he *still*, after all the treason he had seen around him, believed that "the Provisional Government, society and the revolution [!] are all for the preservation of the Monarchy" ... It is more likely that he believed that without

⁸⁷⁷ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 488-489.

⁸⁷⁸ Voeikov, *So Tsarem i Bez Tsaria* (With and Without the Tsar), Moscow, 1995, p. 190.

⁸⁷⁹ Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 491.

the support of the generals and the Duma he could not lead the country to victory, which was the prime objective, upon which everything else depended. And so he abdicated, not because he had any illusions about the Provisional Government, but because, as a true patriot, he wanted Russia to win the war...

The Church and the Revolution

According to the Orthodox understanding of the Christian autocracy, the autocrat can rule only in partnership or “symphony” with the Church. Moreover, the leaders of neither Church nor State can rule if the people rejects them; for in Deuteronomy 17.14 the Lord had laid it down as one of the conditions of the creation of a God-pleasing monarchy that the people should *want* a God-pleasing king. As the revolutionary-turned-monarchist Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov writes: "Without establishing a kingdom, Moses foresaw it and pointed it out in advance to Israel... It was precisely Moses who pointed out in advance the two conditions for the emergence of monarchical power: it was necessary, first, that the people itself should recognize its necessity, and secondly, that the people itself should not elect the king over itself, but should present this to the Lord. Moreover, Moses indicated a leadership for the king himself: 'when he shall sit upon the throne of his kingdom, he must... fulfil all the words of this law'." ⁸⁸⁰ In view of this, the Tsar, who very well understood the true meaning of the autocracy, could not continue to rule if the Church and people did not want it. Just as it takes two willing partners to make a marriage, so in the creation of a Christian state. The bridegroom in this case was willing, but the bride was not...

It is not that the bride, in the persons of the Holy Synod, was militantly anti-tsarist: she was simply at a loss... At its session of February 26 (old style), the bishops refused the request of the Assistant Procurator, Prince N.D. Zhevakhov, that the creators of disturbances should be threatened with ecclesiastical punishments.⁸⁸¹ Then, on February 27, they refused the request of the Over-Procurator, N.P. Raev, that it publicly support the monarchy. Ironically, therefore, that much-criticised creation of Peter the Great, the office of Over-Procurator, proved more faithful to the Anointed of God at this critical moment than the Church leadership itself...

“On March 2,” writes M.A. Babkin, “the Synodal hierarchs gathered in the residence of the Metropolitan of Moscow. They listened to a report given by Metropolitan Pitirim of St. Petersburg asking that he be retired (this request was agreed to on March 6 – M.B.). The administration of the capital’s diocese was temporarily laid upon Bishop Benjamin of Gdov. But then the members of the Synod recognized that it was necessary immediately to enter into relations with the Executive committee of the State Duma. On the basis of which we can assert that the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church recognized the Provisional Government even before the abdication of Nicholas II from the throne. (The next meeting of the members of the Synod took place on March 3 in the residence of the Metropolitan of Kiev. On the same day the new government was told of the resolutions of the Synod.)

⁸⁸⁰ Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 127-129).

⁸⁸¹ A.D. Stepanov, “Mezhdum mirom i monastyrem” (“Between the World and the Monastery”), in *Tajna Bezzakonia* (The Mystery of Iniquity), St. Petersburg, 2002, p. 491.

“The first triumphantly official session of the Holy Synod after the coup d’état took place on March 4. Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev presided and the new Synodal over-procurator, V.N. Lvov, who had been appointed by the Provisional government the previous day, was present. Metropolitan Vladimir and the members of the Synod (with the exception of Metropolitan Pitirim, who was absent – M.B.) expressed their sincere joy at the coming of a new era in the life of the Orthodox Church. And then at the initiative of the over-procurator the royal chair... was removed into the archives... One of the Church hierarchs helped him. It was decided to put the chair into a museum.

“The next day, March 5, the Synod ordered that in all the churches of the Petrograd diocese the Many Years to the Royal House ‘should no longer be proclaimed’. In our opinion, these actions of the Synod had a symbolical character and witnessed to the desire of its members ‘to put into a museum’ not only the chair of the Tsar, but also ‘to despatch to the archives’ of history royal power itself.

“The Synod reacted neutrally to the ‘Act on the abdication of Nicholas II from the Throne of the State of Russia for himself and his son in favour of Great Prince Michael Alexandrovich’ of March 2, 1917 and to the ‘Act on the refusal of Great Prince Michael Alexandrovich to accept supreme power’ of March 3. On March 6 it resolved to accept these acts ‘for information and execution’, and that in all the churches of the empire molebens should be served with a Many Years ‘to the God-preserved Russian Realm and the Right-believing Provisional Government’.”⁸⁸²

But was the new government, whose leading members were Masons⁸⁸³, really “right-believing”? The foreign minister of the new government, Paul Milyukov, when asked who had elected his government, had replied: “The Russian revolution elected us”.⁸⁸⁴ But the revolution cannot be lawful, being the incarnation of lawlessness. How, then, could the Church allow her members to vote for Masonic or social-democratic delegates to the Constituent Assembly? After all, that Assembly would determine the future form of government of the Russian land. Why had the Church so quickly renounced Tsarism, which had formed one of the pillars of Russian identity for nearly 1000 years?

The hierarch who took the most uncompromising stand on this question was the future Hieromartyr, Archbishop Andronicus of Perm. On March 4, in an address “To All Russian Orthodox Christians”, he called the present situation an “interregnum”. Calling on all to obey the Provisional Government, he said: “We shall beseech the All-Generous One that He Himself establish authority and peace on our land, that He not abandon us for long without a Tsar, as children without a mother. May He help us, as

⁸⁸² Babkin, “Sviatejsnij Sinod Pravoslavnoj Rossijskoj Tserkvi i Revoliutsionnie Sobytia Fevralia-Marta 1917 g.” (“The Most Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Revolutionary Events of February-March, 1917”), <http://www.monarhist-spb.narod.ru/D-ST/Babkin-1>, pp. 2, 3.

⁸⁸³ Tsuyoshi Hasegawa writes: “Five members, Kerensky, N.V. Nekrasov, A.I. Konovalov, M.I. Tereshchenko and I.N. Efremov are known to have belonged to the secret political Masonic organization” (“The February Revolution”, in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, William Rosenberg (eds.), *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution 1914-1921*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997, p. 59).

⁸⁸⁴ Quoted in G.M. Katkov, *Fevral'skaia Revoliutsia* (The February Revolution), Paris: YMCA Press, 1984, p. 370.

three hundred years ago He helped our ancestors, that we may unanimously and with inspiration receive a native Tsar from His All-Good Providence.”

The new over-procurator wrote to Andronicus demanding an explanation for his actions in support of the old regime, which “aimed at the setting up of the clergy against the new order”. The correspondence between them culminated on April 16 with a detailed letter from Archbishop Andronicus, in which he said: “The act on the refusal of Michael Alexandrovich which legitimises the Provisional Government declared that after the Constituent Assembly we could have a monarchical government, or any other, depending on how the Constituent Assembly will pronounce on this. I have submitted to the Provisional Government, I will also submit to a republic if it will be established by the Constituent Assembly. But until then not one citizen is deprived of the freedom of expressing himself on the form of government for Russia; otherwise a Constituent Assembly would be superfluous if someone could irrevocably predetermine the question on the form of government in Russia. As I have already said many times, I have submitted to the Provisional Government, I submit now and I call on all to submit. I am perplexed on what basis you find it necessary to accuse me ‘of inciting the people not only against the Provisional Government, but also against the spiritual authorities generally’”.⁸⁸⁵

A similar position was taken by Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kharkov, who on March 5, at the end of the liturgy, declared: “When we received news of the abdication from the throne of His Most Pious Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich, we prepared, in accordance with his instructions, to commemorate His Most Pious Emperor Michael Alexandrovich. But now he too has abdicated, and commanded that we should obey the Provisional Government, and for that reason, and only for that reason, we are commemorating the Provisional Government. Otherwise no power could force us to cease the commemoration of the Tsar and the Royal Family...

“... We must do this, first, in fulfilment of the oath given by us to His Majesty Nicholas II, who handed over power to Prince Michael Alexandrovich, who handed this power over to the Provisional Government until the Constituent Assembly. Secondly, we must do this so as to avoid complete anarchy, larceny, fighting and sacrilege against the holy things. Only in one must we listen to nobody, neither now nor in the past, neither tsars nor rulers nor the mob: if they demand that we renounce the faith, or defile the holy things, or in general carry out clearly lawless and sinful acts.”⁸⁸⁶

However, with the exception of a very few such as these, the Church could not be said to have been on the Tsar’s side. Thus on March 7 the “conservative” Archbishop Seraphim (Chichagov) of Tver and Kashin appeared to welcome the change of regime: “By the mercy of God, the popular uprising against the old, wretched order in the

⁸⁸⁵ Babkin, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁸⁸⁶ Archbishop Anthony, *Pastyr' i Pastva* (Pastor and Flock), 1917, № 10, pp. 280-281; *Pis'ma Blazhenneishago Mitropolita Antonia (Khrapovitskago)* (The Letters of his Beatitude Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), Jordanville, 1988, p. 57; Monk Benjamin (Gomareli), *Letopis' tserkovnykh sobytij Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi nachinaia s 1917 goda* (Chronicle of Church Events, beginning from 1917), www.zlatoust.ws/letopis.htm, pp. 2-3. Cf. Victor Antonov, “1917 god: Arkhiepiskop Antonij i Fevralisty” (1917: Archbishop Anthony and the Februarists), *Vozvrashchenie* (Return), № 2 (6), 1994, p. 25.

State, which led Russia to the edge of destruction in the harsh years of world war, has taken place without many victims, and Russia has easily passed to the new State order, thanks to the firm decision of the State Duma, which formed the Provisional Government, and the Soviet of workers' deputies. The Russian revolution has turned out to be almost the shortest and most bloodless of all revolutions that history has known..."⁸⁸⁷

On March 9, the Holy Synod addressed all the children of the Orthodox Russian Church. The Address began with the fateful words: "The will of God has been accomplished. Russia has entered on the path of a new State life. May God bless our great Homeland with happiness and glory on its new path. Trust the Provisional Government. All together and everyone individually, apply all your efforts to the end that by your labours, exploits, prayer and obedience you may help it in its great work of introducing new principles of State life..."

Now it is understandable that the Synod would not want to risk a civil war by displaying opposition to the new government. But was it true that "the will of God has been accomplished"? Was it not rather that God had allowed the will of *Satan* to be accomplished, as a punishment for the sins of the Russian people? And if so, how could the path be called a "great work"?

Babkin writes: "This epistle was characterised by B.V. Titlinov, professor of the Petrograd Theological Academy, as 'an epistle blessing a new and free Russia', and by General A.I. Denikin as 'sanctioning the coup d'état that has taken place'. To the epistle were affixed the signatures of the bishops of the 'tsarist' composition of the Synod, even those who had the reputation of being monarchists and 'black hundredists', for example, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow. This witnessed to the 'loyal' feelings of the Synodal hierarchs..."⁸⁸⁸

Other hierarchs echoed the words of the Address in still more revolutionary tones. Thus Bishop Andrew of Ufa wrote: "The abdication from the throne of Nicholas II frees his former subjects from their oath to him. But besides this, every Orthodox Christian must remember the words of one Church song, that 'if thou hast sworn, but not for the good, it is better for thee to break thine oath' than to do evil (from the service on the day of the Beheading of John the Forerunner). I wrote about this in *Thoughts on February 9, 1916*, when I pointed to the great church-civil exploit of Metropolitan Philip of Moscow, who found in his conscience support for his rebuking the iniquities of the Terrible one. And so the question of the oath for those who have been disturbed and are weak in conscience completely falls away.

"... The Autocracy of the Russian tsars degenerated first into absolutism [*samovlastie*] and then into despotism [*svoevlastie*] exceeding all probability... And lo! their power has collapsed – the power that turned away from the Church. The will of

⁸⁸⁷ Archbishop Seraphim, *Tverskie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosti* (Tver Diocesan Gazette), 1917, № 9-10, pp. 75-76; in Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁸⁸⁸ Babkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4. Cf. Oleg Lebedev, "Mezhdu Fevraliem i Oktiabrem" ("Between February and October), *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* (The Independent Newspaper), 13 November, 1996, p. 5.

God has been accomplished... The Catholic Church of Christ has been delivered from the oppression of the State."⁸⁸⁹

The Council of the Petrograd religious-philosophical society went still further, demanding the removal not only of the Tsar, but also of the very concept of Sacred Monarchy. Thus in its sessions of March 11 and 12, the Council resolved that the Synod's acceptance of the Tsar's abdication "does not correspond to the enormous religious importance of the act, by which the Church recognized the Tsar in the rite of the coronation of the anointed of God. It is necessary, for the liberation of the people's conscience and to avoid the possibility of a restoration, that a corresponding act be issued in the name of the Church hierarchy *abolishing the power of the Sacrament of Royal Anointing, by analogy with the church acts abolishing the power of the Sacraments of Marriage and the Priesthood.*"⁸⁹⁰

Fortunately, the Church did not officially renounce Tsarism and the Sacrament of Royal Anointing at this point. In general, however, its behavior during the February revolution was pusillanimous, even treasonous. And if the Church hierarchy, traditionally the main support of the Autocracy, faltered, it is not surprising that the people as a whole faltered, too...

And so the Tsar *was* alone, deprived of the support both of the Church and of the people. As P.S. Lopukhin wrote: "At the moment of his abdication his Majesty felt himself to be profoundly alone, and around him was 'cowardice, baseness and treason'. And to the question how he could have abdicated from his tsarist service, it is necessary to reply: he did this because *we* abdicated from *his* tsarist service, from his sacred and holy authority."⁸⁹¹

According to Archimandrite Constantine (Zaitsev), the tragedy consisted in the people's attraction to the European path with its liberation from all paths hindering the attainment of ever greater prosperity and freedom. "In this striving for civil freedom, the Russian man lost the capacity and the readiness freely to submit to the power given by God, and rational freedom was transformed in the consciousness of Russian people into freedom from spiritual discipline, into a cooling towards the Church, into lack of respect for the Tsar. The Tsar became, with the civil flourishing of Russia, spiritually and psychologically speaking unnecessary. He was not needed by free Russia. The closer to the throne, and the higher up the ladder of culture, prosperity and intellectual development, the more striking became the spiritual abyss opening up between the Tsar and his subjects. Only in this way, generally speaking, can we explain the fact of the terrifying emptiness that was formed around the Tsar from the moment of the revolution." The demand for his abdication was "a sharp manifestation of that psychological feeling of the unnecessariness of the Tsar which took hold of Russia. Every person acted according to his own logic and had his own understanding of what was necessary for the salvation and prosperity of Russia. Here there might have been much cleverness, and even much state wisdom. But that mystical trembling before the

⁸⁸⁹ Archbishop Andrew, *Ufimskie Vedomosti* (Ufa Gazette), 1917, № 5-6, pp. 138-139; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁹⁰ Groyan, *op. cit.*, p. 142. Italics mine (V.M.).

⁸⁹¹ Lopukhin, "Tsar' i Patriarkh" (Tsar and Patriarch), *Pravoslavnij Put'* (The Orthodox Way), Jordanville, 1951, pp. 103-104.

Tsar's power and that religious certainty that the Tsar and Anointed of God bore in himself the grace of God which it was impossible to distance oneself from by substituting one's own ideas for it, no longer existed, it had disappeared..."⁸⁹²

As St. John Maximovich put it: "Calculating malice did its work: it separated Russia from her tsar, and at that terrible moment in Pskov he remained abandoned... The terrible abandonment of the Tsar... But it was not he who abandoned Russia: Russia abandoned him, who loved Russia more than his own life. Seeing this, and in hope that his self-humiliation would calm the stormy passions of the people, his Majesty renounced the throne... Those who wanted the deposition of the Tsar rejoiced. The rest were silent. There followed the arrest of his Majesty and the further developments were inevitable... His Majesty was killed, Russia was silent..."

The Mystery of Divine Providence

These explanations of why the Tsar abdicated agree with each other and are essentially true. But we can go still further and deeper.

Michael Nazarov argues that the Tsar, seeing that it was impossible to stem the tide of apostasy at that time, offered himself as a sacrifice for the enlightenment of *future* generations, in accordance with his own expressed willingness to become "an atoning sacrifice": "His Majesty Nicholas II very profoundly felt the meaning of his service as tsar. His tragedy consisted in the fact that at the governmental level of the crisis fewer and fewer co-workers were appearing who would combine in themselves administrative abilities, spiritual discernment and devotion. 'All around me are betrayal and cowardice and deception', wrote his Majesty in his diary on the day of the abdication... Therefore, in the conditions of almost complete betrayal, his humble refusal to fight for power was dictated not only by a striving to avoid civil war, which would have weakened the country before the external enemy. This rejection of power was in some way similar to Christ's refusal to fight for His life before His crucifixion – for the sake of the future salvation of men. Perhaps his Majesty Nicholas II, the most Orthodox of all the Romanovs, intuitively felt that there was already no other way for Russia to be saved – except *the path of self-sacrifice for the enlightenment of descendants*, hoping on the help and the will of God..."⁸⁹³

In a real sense, moreover, the Tsar saved *the monarchy* for the future by his abdication. For in abdicating he resisted the temptation to apply force and start a civil war in a cause that was just from a purely juridical point of view, but which could not be justified from a deeper, eschatological point of view. (Compare the words of the Prophet Shemaiah to King Rehoboam and the house of Judah as they prepared to face the house of Israel: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Return every man to his house..." (I Kings 12.24))

The Tsar-Martyr resisted the temptation to act like a Western absolutist ruler, thereby refuting those in both East and West who looked on his rule as just that – a form of absolutism. He showed that the Orthodox Autocracy was not a form of

⁸⁹² Zaitsev, in *Zhitia i Tvorenia Russkikh Sviatykh* (The Lives and Works of the Russian Saints), Moscow, 2001, p. 1055).

⁸⁹³ Nazarov, op. cit., pp. 72-73. Italics mine (V.M.).

absolutism, but something completely *sui generis* – the external aspect of the self-government of the Orthodox Church and people on earth. He refused to treat his power as if it were *independent of* the Church and people, but showed that it was a form of *service to* the Church and the people *from within* the Church and the people, in accordance with the word: “I have raised up one chosen out of My people... with My holy oil have I anointed him” (Psalm 88.18,19). So not “government by the people and for the people” in a democratic sense, but “government by one chosen out of the people of God for the people of God and responsible to God alone”.

In demonstrating this in the whole manner of his self-sacrificial life, the Tsar actually preserved the ideal of the Orthodox Autocracy, handing it over “for safe-keeping”, as it were, to God and His Most Holy Mother. For on that very day the Mother of God appeared to the peasant woman Eudocia Adrianovna and said to her: “Go to the village of Kolomenskoe; there you will find a big, black icon. Take it and make it beautiful, and let people pray in front of it.” Eudocia found the icon at 3 o’clock, the precise hour of the abdication. Miraculously it renewed itself, and showed itself to be the “Reigning” icon of the Mother of God, the same that had led the Russian armies into war with Napoleon. On it she was depicted bearing the orb and sceptre of the Orthodox Tsars, as if to show that the sceptre of rule of the Russian land had passed from earthly rulers to the Queen of Heaven until such time she should graciously return it to earth...

From this point of view it was the will of God that the Tsar abdicate, even though it meant disaster for the Russian people, just as it was the will of God that Christ be crucified, even though it meant the destruction of the Jewish people – until their conversion in future generations. Hence the words of Eldress Paraskeva (Pasha) of Sarov (+1915), who had foretold the Tsar’s destiny during the Sarov Days: “Your Majesty, descend from the throne yourself”.⁸⁹⁴ On the one hand, it was wrong, contrary to the Basic Laws, and disastrous for Russia that the Tsar should abdicate. But on the other hand, it was right and inevitable; for it was God’s will that Old Russia, steeped in sins, should be converted and repent through the patient endurance of suffering, “so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3.19)... As Eldress Duniushka of Ussuruisk, who was martyred by the Bolsheviks in 1918, said: “The Tsar will leave the nation, which shouldn’t be, but this has been foretold to him from Above. This is his destiny. There is no way that he can evade it...”⁸⁹⁵

May 3/16, 2016.

⁸⁹⁴ N. Gubanov (ed.), *Nikolai II-ij i Novie Mucheniki*, St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 70.

⁸⁹⁵ <http://www.geocities.com/kitezgrad/prophets/duniushka.html>.