Spring 2021

Power over the People: How Russia Used Religion to Unite and Control its Populace During the Eras of Monarchy and Communism

Roman Pena
Bard College

Power over the People:
How Russia Used Religion to Unite and Control its Populace During the Eras of Monarchy and Communism

A Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by

Roman Peña

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2021

For Didi

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my academic and senior project advisor, **Sean McMeekin**. Ever since I took his class called "Russia under the Romanovs" as an underclassman, I knew I would *have* to work with him on my senior project. I was so happy to find someone who is as passionate about these topics as I am. Professor McMeekin has been an invaluable resource, and my project would certainly not have been possible without his help. I am grateful that he took the time to meet with me Friday mornings to discuss my progress on this project. In addition, I am grateful for his patience and understanding while I completed this project during a time of difficult circumstances for me.

Researching and writing a topic which covers so much violence and destruction can be taxing. I am so grateful to my voice teacher **Rufus Müller**, for providing me an aesthetic and personal outlet to escape the dark era of Russia in the 1920s, and filling my world with friendship, and the beautiful music of Schubert, Mozart, and Handel. I always listened to his music recommendations while working on this project. Rufus was there for me at times when no one else was around and provided a kind ear to listen to my struggles. It is this kindness, and our mutual love of music, that allowed me to finish my senior project on time. I look forward to working with him this summer and next year.

My mother, **Marina Woronzoff** is a professor at the Bard High School Early College in Queens, teaching Russian literature, First-Year Seminar, and other classes. It is because of my mom that I am a Bard student, as I had heard about the school long before I applied. I am so grateful that she took me to Orthodox services, where I connected to God through the music of the liturgies. Finally, I am thankful to my mom for always supporting me with this project and reminding me to be proud of who I am and where I come from.

Finally, I would like to thank my best friend, **Alec Shields**. Although we attend different colleges, Alec made the effort to call me almost every day, particularly during the second semester of my senior year to make sure I was doing okay, to have a laugh, and to always ask about how my project was going. If it wasn't for him, I don't know if I could have completed any of my work at all. Alec kept me sane and calm during this difficult year. He is a rare breed - a scholar and a gentleman.

"We ask that a book be published, fully comprehensible to peasants, about the life and work of dear Com. Lenin and his legacy so that this book be our replacement for the Gospel."[1]

~ A Russian Peasant

[1] Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Harvard University Press), 219. (From a letter written by a peasant.)

Table of Contents

Introduction		1
Chapter I	The Church and State Relationship in Old Russia	3
Chapter II	The Soviets' War Against the "Other" Religion: Orthodox Christianity	13
Chapter III	The Soviet Church: The Kremlin, Moscow & The Lenin Cult	28
Conclusion		43
Bibliography		48

Introduction

Throughout Russia's long history, one of the country's defining aspects has been the Orthodox Church. The architecture of the churches, defined by their round, colorful onion-shaped domes has made them unique in Russian culture, especially compared to other Christian churches in Europe. St. Basil's Cathedral has always been a staple tourist attraction for those visiting the capital of Russia. In addition, the services themselves are visually very different from other branches of Christianity. The service is almost always sung, and incense, color, and mystery surround the proceedings. This visual and sensory experience probably appealed to the large Russian peasantry, which were mostly illiterate. As a result, the peasantry could feel a connection to the divine through the stimulating sensual aspects of the service. The senses were a very enticing feature of the Church for the people.

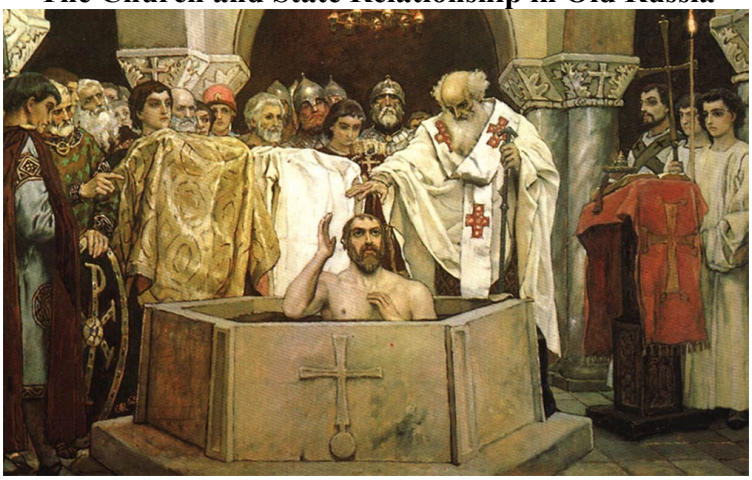
The growth of Orthodoxy in eastern Europe can be aligned with Russia's growing power as the country continued to expand its borders after the conversion to Christianity in the year 988. Why did religion become such an important aspect of Russian culture? The simple answer was size. By the late 19th century, the Russian Empire was one of the largest states in the world and was the home to around 125 million subjects.[2] The sheer size of the empire made it difficult to govern. As a result, religion would become increasingly important to keep people, especially the lower classes, in line. It is worthy to note that not all the people living in the Russian Empire were Christian; there were substantial minority Jewish and Muslim populations as well, among others. However, Christianity, specifically Orthodoxy, remained the dominant religion and was very influential in the Tsarist empire. Ever since Christianity was adopted as the main religion in Russia, Orthodoxy was used as a means to control the people and consolidate the political power

[2] "Imperial Russia – Government and People." BBC. Accessed April 23, 2021.

of the ruling party. In an absolute monarchy like Imperial Russia, being an Orthodox Christian meant one also supported the Tsar, as he was God's appointed representative on Earth. The social position the Church enjoyed would be greatly shaken by the Russian Revolution of 1917, and it would diminish during the opening decades of the 20th century, as the new Soviet Union would strengthen its own power, and push its own, new religion.

Soviet Russia attempted to eliminate Christianity as a form of worship, dismissing it as a superstition that relied on myth and storytelling to oppress the people. It further condemned the Orthodox Church as a corrupt institution that exploited the lower classes, using their labor and money to enrich itself. The Soviet Union claimed that banning religion was a means of liberating Russia from a backward tradition that inhibited society's intellectual and economic development. However, they did not eliminate religion as much they replaced it with their political ideology; communism under Lenin became the dominant belief system, with Lenin at its center as a god-like authority and object of veneration for intellectuals and common people alike. The Soviets would also use the Russian desire for a sensory experience to make their own religion more appealing. The Lenin cult, the grand parades and the visual power of Red Square fulfilled what had been destroyed by the Soviets; a dramatic, colorful new religion and something for the people to pray and venerate. For the Soviets, as for Russians before the revolution under the Tsar, religion continued to be an important force, it simply took on a new form as a political ideology and tool that functioned to control the people.

Chapter I
The Church and State Relationship in Old Russia



(Figure 1), Viktor Vatnetsov,
"Baptism of Prince Vladimir," Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

In the year 988, Grand Prince Vladimir, or Vladimir the Great, (r. 980-1015) ruler of the Kievan Rus', wanted a single, monotheistic religion which could help consolidate his power. Why did he choose Orthodoxy? Was he motivated by spiritual or political reasons? At the time, the peasants were worshiping various pagan gods. Vladimir wanted everyone to follow a single religion which would confirm his status as a ruler. Throughout Vladimir's reign, he secured the borders of the Kievan Rus, and worked to make it a united territory. Also, by making Russia a country that worshipped only one God, it would be more similar to other western states, and quite possibly open relations with the outside world. According to *The Primary Chronicle*, or *The Tale of Bygone Years*, an 11th century historical document compiled and narrated by Nestor, an Orthodox monk, Vladimir seemed to have a spiritual and mythical connection to Orthodoxy. While the document contains authentic historical accounts, it is told by a devout believer and patriot of Russia. It is a biased account of Russian history that tells the story of country's conversion to Orthodoxy as a story that reflects a clear spiritual perspective.[3] According to

[3] N. Zernov, "Vladimir and the Origin of the Russian Church," *The Slavonic and East European Review,* Vol 28, no. 70 (1949): 126.

Nestor, several envoys were sent to study and report on religions near the Kievan Rus to determine which one would be appropriate for Vladimir's kingdom. The Grand Prince reviewed Judaism, Islam, and Christianity and kept an open mind to all of them. Vladimir rejected Judaism because the Jews did not have a central city or kingdom of worship, like Rome or Constantinople, and were considered weak according to the American journalist Marvin Kalb: "the Jews were scattered everywhere, and they had lost Jerusalem—a clear sign, Vladimir believed, that they had lost God's favor."[4] Islam was also not as favorable, as the Quran forbade drinking alcohol, which Vladimir could simply not tolerate because, in his words: "Drinking is the joy of all Rus."[5] Finally, Vladimir settled on Christianity. The envoys noted how beautiful and impressive the city of Constantinople was, particularly the Church of the Hagia Sophia, and the service they attended. The quote below is taken from *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, which is the most ancient historical document on the Kievan Rus:

> Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks (including the Emperor himself) led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty.[6]

The aesthetic experience of the service at the Hagia Sophia was so overwhelming that the envoys felt disoriented and could no longer tell where they were. The experience was ineffable: "we know not whether we were in heaven or on earth…we are at a loss at how to describe it." In another version of the report the envoys noted, "We cannot forget that beauty since each person,

---

[4] Marvin Kalb, "Kievan Rus': The "First Russia"." In *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* (Brookings Institution Press), 32.

[5] Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War*, 32.

[6] "The Orthodox Faith - Volume III - Church History - Tenth Century - Saint Vladimir of Kiev." Orthodox Church in America.

if he eats something sweet, will not take something bitter afterwards; so we cannot remain any more in paganism."[7] The beauty of the Orthodox Church that was reported, along with the fact that Vladimir did not have to swear total allegiance to a head figure like the Catholic Pope, cemented his decision to make the Kievan Rus' an Orthodox Christian state.

Using religion as a means to justify a ruler's power was a continuous theme for the rest of Russia's history. The concept of ruling by divine right was not a new concept, as it had been used in Europe since the ancient world. Ruling by divine right meant that someone could govern because it was the will of God. By having the blessing of God and the Church, the people would be more likely to obey that particular ruler, as no one would dare to go against God himself. "Divine right" absolutism would live on in Europe well into the 18th century, but was shaken with the onset of the Enlightenment, with the *philosophes* and others challenging Church claims, which resulted in the smashing of monarchical absolutism during the French Revolution. No such challenge to the power of autocracy and the Church emerged in Russia in the 18th century, at least not on the scale seen in western Europe. In Russia, the Orthodox Church itself, despite periodic changes in its structure, always provided a mechanism for the Imperial government to prevent political upheaval. Although Orthodoxy was used as a political tool since Prince Vladimir, it was Peter the Great (r. 1682-1725) who brought the Church under the monarch's direct control. Before Peter's reign, the Church was run by the Patriarch, a high-level bishop. However, when the Patriarch became an obstacle to Peter's consolidation of power, he removed it in favor of a council of bishops appointed by the Tsar himself called the Most Holy Governing Synod. The Church was against many of Peter's reforms in his attempts to modernize Russia,

[7] Dan Graves, "We Did Not Know Where We Were: In Context." Christian History Institute. Christian History Institute.

such as the beard tax, which required men to carry a special coin to show they were allowed to grow their beards. Through this council, Peter the Great was able to bring the Orthodox Church under his control by appointing bishops who were loyal to him. Although the Church almost always supported the Tsar, it was now under his direct authority.[8]

The European governments were answerable to Rome, an external authority, unlike the Russians whose religious capital was at home. Besides Orthodoxy, the two other main branches of Christianity that were prominent were the Catholic faith, which was run from the Vatican in Rome, and the less centrally controlled Protestant churches. Until the 18th century, the Catholic Church, like Orthodoxy, helped to support and legitimize the rule of absolute monarchs like those in France and Spain. The relationship between the French Catholic Church, also known as the Gallican Church, and the monarchy, provides an interesting contrast to the Russian case. Although the Church granted legitimacy to the ruling monarch, as it did in Russia, it also had to answer to the Pope in Rome, an outside authority. King Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) looked to Rome to beatify his absolute power, which certainly contributed to the concept of divine right for many years to come, as Louis XIV became the model of an absolute ruler. King Louis XIV was a devout Catholic and worked to strengthen Catholicism in France by revoking the Edict of Nantes, which granted certain rights to French Protestants, also known as Huguenots. Removing the Edict of Nantes led to further persecution of the Huguenots. Although Louis XIV believed that France had to be a strong Catholic state, he often clashed with leading figures in Rome.[9] Louis XIV always saw himself as the embodiment of France, and so the Church would have to

[8] V. M. Zhivov, *"Tsar and God": And Other Essays in Russian Cultural Semiotics*, (Academic Studies Press), 196-197.

[9] Judge H. G., "Church and State under Louis XIV." *History* 45, no. 155, 219-20.

serve him, and not the other way around.[10] Louis XIV had to deal with an outside authority (Rome) when it came to centralizing his own power. By persecuting the Huguenots and forcing them to flee, Louis thought he was unifying his country under one single branch of Christianity. Like Orthodoxy, Catholicism became a method to control the populace and reiterate the monarch's absolute power. King Louis XIV's relationship with the Catholic Church was somewhat similar to Peter the Great's when he also began to centralize his autocratic power. However, there is one significant difference: King Louis had to deal with Rome when it came to controlling his own people. Ever since the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire in 1453, Russia became the de facto head of the Orthodox Church, even though there was still a Patriarch in Constantinople, his authority over the Russian Church was not accepted. As a result, controlling the Church became an internal affair. In Russia, dealing with religion was a domestic issue, while in France it was a foreign one.

As in Russia, France tried to bring the Church under its direct control again during the French Revolution. When the revolution broke out 1789, one of the biggest institutions threatened was the Catholic Church due to its connection with the monarchy. Many churches throughout the country were seized and looted by mobs. The new radical government tried to bring the Church under its control and not make it as much of an influence as it was during the Bourbon dynasty. The property of the Church was nationalized in order to pay off the country's debts and secure its financial position. In 1790, the revolutionaries promulgated the Civil Constitution of the Clergy to purge the Church of disloyal priests and secure its political loyalty. Nationalizing the Church's property and controlling the clergy put the institution under direct

[10] Mansfield, Andrew. "The Reign of Louis XIV: Absolute Monarchy," *Ideas of Monarchical Reform: Fénelon, Jacobitism, and the Political Works of the Chevalier Ramsay*, (2015): 116.

supervision of the government, which helped to break the power and influence of the Vatican in Rome. In a similar way, during the English Reformation of the 16th century, King Henry VIII (r. 1509-1547) had also nationalized monasteries in England, helping to break the power of the Vatican over the English Church, which made them national "Anglican" churches. Both England and France worked to sever their relationships with Rome. After the Revolution, there would be a gradual decline of French Catholic power throughout the 19th century.

As the use of religion as a political tool diminished in France and England during the 19th century, Russia only became closer with Orthodoxy as its own borders grew. Russia was rapidly expanding, taking territory from the Ottoman Empire and other states. For example, Georgia was officially annexed by the Russian Empire and in 1811, the Georgian Church fell under the control of the Russian Church.[11] Tsar Nicholas I, (r. 1825-1855) and his government attempted to create an "Official Nationality" which consisted of Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality.[12] In the Tsar's mind, as Russia grew in international prestige as well as geographically, Orthodoxy and monarchy would need to remain strong. Although Russia enjoyed international recognition and respect for defeating Napoleon Bonaparte in 1815, much of the Russian Empire's population remained illiterate and uneducated. Life in most villages was untouched by new economic developments and the Church continued its hold on the peasantry. The one common aspect that many Russians shared was their belief in God, the Orthodox Church, and by extension, the Tsar.

As Russia increased in size during the 19th century, religion remained a powerful force which united the populace. One of the statesmen at the time who was pushed for a strong

---

[11] Per Gahrton, *Georgia: Pawn in the New Great Game* (Pluto Press), 25.

[12] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, "Nationality" State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas I," *The Russian Review*, Vol. 19, no.1 (1960): 38-39.

Orthodox Church to unite the people was Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev. Pobedonostsev was a religious and conservative political advisor to several of the Tsars in the late 19th century and the Ober Procurator of the Most Holy Synod, which was the lay head of the Russian Church. Pobedonostsev may have been Fyodor Dostoevsky's influence for the Grand Inquisitor in his novel, *The Brothers Karamazov.* Unlike France, the United States, and other western countries which were leaning towards a separation of the church from the state, Pobedonostsev believed that the Orthodox Church should work even more closely with the government than it already was. Pobedonostsev thought that religion was the great unifier and equalizer in Russia, as historian John D. Basil writes: "In fact, the whole complex of notions that might be called religious individualism was absurd to Pobedonostsev. The church itself was always a communal affair in which all people met on the same level." [13] In Pobedonostsev's political work, *Reflections of a Russian Statesman*, he talks about how religion is needed to satisfy the masses:

> …the Church, as a community of believers, cannot and must not detach itself from the State, as a society united by a civil bond. Whatever perfection theories based on the separation of the Church and State may attain in the minds of logicians, they do not satisfy the simple sentiments of the mass believers.[14]

This statement may seem elitist and populist, as the monarch and the Church tried to connect with the common people, the "mass believers." This statement juxtaposes along a hierarchy of the ruling class with the masses and the rational with the emotional. The people in power are "logicians" who use logic to govern while the common people are characterized by their emotional lives. The "sentiment" of the people is satisfied by religion. Religion is needed in order to govern the masses who are viewed as illogical and irrational beings. The value of

---

[13] John D. Basil. "Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev: An Argument for a Russian State Church." *Church History*, Vol. 64, no. 1 (1995): 47.

[14] Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev, *Reflections of a Russian Statesman* (G. Richards), 2.

religion lies in its ability to manage specifically the emotional needs of the people. Although Pobedonostsev was not specifically talking about Russia in this work, the "logicians" may have been referring to the liberal thinkers in the cities like Saint Petersburg and Moscow who did not understand the needs of the common people in Russia.[15]

While faith certainly played an important role in other European countries like France and England, there was something unique when it came to how Russia used the Church. Pobedonostsev argued that in order to keep the Empire together, religion was needed much more than other European states. Countries like England and France had smaller populations, and so did not need a powerful Church to help control the populace, which was why the influence of their Churches in the government decreased. In contrast, the Russian Orthodox Church *had* to be much more intertwined with the government, since the Tsar was governing a vast land empire. The Church was used to make people from across Russia completely loyal to the Tsar. In many parts of the empire, Orthodoxy was the people's only link to a greater understanding of the country and its ruler. According to Pobedonostsev, this only accentuated the need for a powerful monarch and a strong Church to appeal to the emotional sentiments of the people. An influential Church and an absolute ruler were Pobedonostsev's conservative desires for Russia.

Russia's lack of reforms, as a result of Pobedonostsev's influence at the start of the 20th century, would only lead to social upheaval, and eventually revolution. When Nicholas II (r. 1894-1917) became the Tsar, he was one of the last absolute monarchs in Europe. Nicholas II truly believed that God had appointed him Tsar of all the Russians, and that the people understood this and loved him. Since Nicholas II was tutored by Pobedonostsev, this may have

[15] Nadeza Orlova, Sergei Soloiev, "Logic and logicians in Russia before 1917: Living in a wider world," *Hal Archives-Ouvertes*, (2019): chapter 2.

been as to why he was a committed monarchist from the beginning of his reign.[16] In a speech in 1895, Nicholas II declared his commitment to absolute power: “Let it be known to all that I devote my strength to the good of my people, but that I shall uphold the principle of autocracy as firmly and unflinchingly as did my ever-lamented father.”[17] Historian Arthur Adams has suggested that Pobedonostsev may have written this speech for the Tsar.[18] Nicholas’s commitment to “the principle of autocracy” would prove to be disastrous. The Revolution of 1905, also known as “Bloody Sunday," severed all remaining love the people had for Nicholas, after the Imperial guards were ordered to shoot on the crowds gathering outside of the Winter Palace. The Revolution of 1905 did result with some reforms being enacted, like the creation of the Duma, which was one of Russia’s first parliamentary bodies. The upheaval also resulted with more reforms being enacted under Russia’s new prime minister, Peter Stolypin, which were attempts to modernize the Russian state in order for it to compete industrially and militarily with other European countries. However, all these reforms were enacted far too late, as different revolutionary groups were plotting to overthrow the Imperial government, and the events in 1905 only accentuated the need for radical change in Russia.

The Bolsheviks would bring about a revolution and a new regime that would strip the Church of its power. Along with the desire for sweeping political change, the First World War was also a factor which caused a revolution in Russia. When the war broke out in 1914, the Russian Empire was dragged into the conflict due to its close relationship with Serbia. Although the Imperial army was quite successful in the opening stages of the conflict, the war would

---

[16] Arthur E. Adams, "Pobedonostsev and the Rule of Firmness," *The Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 32, no. 78, (1953): 133.

[17] Adams, "Pobedonostsev and the Rule of Firmness," 137.

[18] Ibid.

ultimately prove to be disastrous, as the appalling casualties and lack of supplies destroyed all Russian morale. The First World War sealed Imperial Russia's fate and the empire collapsed under the strains of the conflict in 1917. The Russian Revolution had finally begun. Once the Tsar abdicated in 1917, the Provisional government took control. Many of the politicians who led this new government were former members of the State Duma. However, more radical revolutionaries such as the Bolsheviks under Lenin took power in October of 1917. A bloody civil war broke out following World War I, with the Bolsheviks (Reds) fighting all the groups who were opposed to them called the Whites. Ultimately, the Bolsheviks won the conflict in the early 1920s. Once in power, they began to create their socialist paradise by waging a war against the peasantry and all aspects of the former Russian Empire including the influential institution which united them: the Orthodox Church. The Bolsheviks would wage a war on Orthodox Christianity, killing many priests and destroying places of worship. The old religion would have to be removed in order for a new state religion to take its place.

Chapter II
The Soviets' War Against The "Other" Religion: Orthodox Christianity

(Figure 2), Ivan Vladimirov,
"Confiscation of Church Property in Petrograd,"
Cycle of Documentary Sketches of 1917-1922.

During the 19th century, the expansion of Imperial Russian power, and consequently Orthodoxy, came with a backlash from socialist intellectuals. In this period, a social and cultural assimilation program called russification was enacted under Tsar Alexander III (r. 1881-1894) which was intended to bring more of the empire's subjects under a single, national identity. The russification program also increased the authority of the Orthodox Church throughout the empire. By the turn of the century, the Church had become a bastion of Russian society. While the Church was always about connecting to God, its closeness to the Imperial government made it look power-hungry, especially through the lens of the Tsar's russification program. It seemed that the Orthodox Church, along with any other branch of Christianity that supported an empire, was becoming corrupt and only concerned with attaining power. This became more apparent during the Industrial Revolution, when the Church took no active steps to support social justice and workers' rights and alleviate the suffering of the working class.

While the Church did not provide ways to bring about change, socialists and revolutionaries wanted to create a better government that would address the needs of the working class and the poor. The revolutionaries understood that religion, at least the spiritual type, had to be removed if they were to have a new society. Social theorists like Karl Marx understood western religion simply as means to control the people and were only concerned about their own power and less concerned about connecting people to God. Marx believed that religion was preventing people from truly understanding their terrible working and social conditions. In Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, he defines religion as the, "opium of the people:" "*Religious* suffering is, at one and the same time, the *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people."[19] If religion was to be removed from society, then people could then harness their full social potential. According to Marx, religion had prevented people from understanding their true conditions.

> The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to *give up a condition that requires illusions*. The criticism of religion is, therefore, *in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*.[20]

Marx's language is rhetorical and poetic, since he uses metaphors to describe the human condition instead of naming human distress directly; he calls it a "vale of tears." His use of italics further lends emphasis and a dramatic element to the words he is singling out for criticism. In a way, he is like a scientist who uses figurative language and punctuation as a lens to magnify the

---

[19] Karl Marx. *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Edited by Andy Blunden and Matthew Carmody, (marxists.org).

[20] Marx. *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.

ideas that he is examining and criticizing. Further, he equates religion with distress since "the criticism of religion is…the criticism of that vale of tears." Here, the "vale of tears" represents a troubled or unhappy society, and so religion is just a reflection of society's unhappiness with their way of life, but religion also sanctifies, or makes holy, that unhappiness because "religion is the halo" of that unhappiness. By describing religion as an illusion, and as a halo, Marx emphasizes that spiritual beliefs are a deception, a mere representation that distracts people from the real problem which is their own suffering. Moreover, by describing "the vale of tears" as an experience that wears a halo, he suggests that society has heroized suffering and made the human experience of distress appear like a superhuman act. The halo is the sign of a saint or martyr.

Marx's writings, powerful and persuasive because of its message and rhetorical style, inspired many social revolutionaries throughout Europe, especially a young Russian radical who sought to turn his homeland into a socialist paradise. Vladimir Lenin and many others like Leon Trotsky and Nikolai Bukharin understood that once the Tsar and his government collapsed, the question on how religion would work in this new society would need to be answered. When the Bolsheviks seized power from the Provisional Government in October of 1917, Vladimir Lenin put forth his agenda on how to turn Russia into a communist state, and one of his biggest obstacles to conversion was the Orthodox Church. In Russia, the Church, which had supported the Tsar for hundreds of years, suddenly found itself alone after the revolution, and without a government to protect it. However, even though the Tsar and his family had been removed from power and later executed, along with other high-ranking officials, the Orthodox Church remained intact and very influential among the Russian people. When it came to the Orthodox Church, the Bolsheviks had to wage a war on two fronts: the first was the removal of the established and deep-rooted memories of the Church in the minds of the people and the second was the physical

destruction of its property and valuables. In his *April Theses* or *The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution*, which was published in 1917, Lenin stated that the: "the country is passing from the first stage of the revolution—which…placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie—to its *second stage*, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants."[21] In order to transfer power to the peasants, the remnants of the old regime had to be eliminated, like religion. According to Karl Marx, the concept of religion could not exist in a socialist society, "...communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality…"[22]

Lenin could not outright abolish religion in post-revolutionary Russia for several reasons. The most important reason was that much of the peasant population in Russia was still conservative, religious and spiritual. For centuries, the Church gave the people a sense of comfort and relief, especially during periods of hardship like famines and war. Lenin had to now move the revolution from cities like Moscow to the countryside. Destroying a major aspect of the people's lives like the Church could not be done, so the Church remained for a few years following the Revolution and the Civil War. Another reason was that Lenin had to consolidate his power following the Revolution and the Civil War and could not afford to wage another war on the Church once his power was secure in the cities. The Bolsheviks continued to spread their influence into the countryside, which they had started to do before the Civil War.

There was a fine line between what the Bolsheviks could control and destroy in Russian society, and Lenin was all too aware of this. For example, the new government could nationalize

---

[21] V.I. Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution (a.k.a. the April Theses).* Translated by Isaacs Bernard. (Marxists Internet Archive).

[22] Karl Marx, *Marx and Engels: The Communist Manifesto* (Samuel H. Peer, Harvard University), 30.

the churches, but could not remove the holy items within them, such as icons, crosses and Bibles, because looting them would upset the people, and generate animosity towards the new regime. The physical destruction of Church property would have to wait. Instead of waging an all-out war against Orthodoxy, Lenin chose to bring about its destruction slowly and meticulously. In the months following the October Revolution, the new government took steps to gradually nationalize more and more aspects of the Church and make it more difficult for the people to practice their religion. The first decree was on the 26th of October, which placed the churches themselves in possession of the government. The second decree was on November 2nd which made all other religions in the former Russian Empire equal to Orthodoxy. By making all the other religions of equal status, the Church no longer became the official religion of Russia. Finally, the last decree, which was arguably the most important, announced the official separation between the Church and the state.[23] In addition, this law took further steps to isolate the Orthodox Church from society as historian William van den Bercken writes: "Not only does the Soviet decree amputate church privilege, it also does away with the elementary right of the church to operate as a social assembly. A clarification which followed further reduced the already minimal freedom of worship." These decrees moved the Orthodox Church to the outskirts of Russian society. [24]

What ultimately triggered the destruction of the Orthodox Church was the Volga famine of 1921. For two years, millions of people living in the Ukraine and the Volga region suffered from a lack of food and medical supplies due to bad harvests, famines, and very little support from the government. The government could not help as much as it wanted because it was a

[23] William van den Bercken, *Ideology and Atheism in the Soviet Union* (Walter de Gruyter & Co.), 89.

[24] Bercken, *Ideology and Atheism in the Soviet Union*, 90.

period of major economic hardship, as the country was still recovering from the First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the Civil War. Although the new regime exclaimed that they were not liable for any of the debts of the old Imperial government, it still had to feed its people, provide clothing and supplies for the new Red Army and the secret police, as well as restore order to the major cities in Russia, which were all very expensive tasks. The new regime was desperate for money and looked for ways to obtain it. The Bolsheviks used the crisis in the Volga region to accelerate their plans of transforming Russia into a communist state. Lenin could no longer afford to be weary when it came to dealing with the churches and the peasants. The Volga Famine of 1921 allowed Lenin and the others to begin robbing churches for money. In a telephone message in 1922, Lenin gave the order to begin looting the churches in search of valuables which could then be turned into rubles:

> It has become imperative for us to carry out the confiscation of church valuables in the most decisive and swift manner, so as to secure for ourselves a fund of several hundred million gold rubles (we must recall the gigantic wealth of the monasteries and abbeys).[25]

Once this order was given, many Orthodox churches began being looted and trashed, removing holy objects like crosses or icons by the Bolshevik police in order to turn them into rubles. In a letter to Vyacheslav Molotov, a member of the Politburo,[26] Lenin justified why they needed to act so swiftly and harshly when sacking the churches:

---

[25] Sean McMeekin. *History's Greatest Heist: The Looting of Russia by the Bolsheviks* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press), 73.

[26] The Politburo was the highest-ranking political committee in the Soviet Union which oversaw much of the country's industrial and social developments in the years following the revolution.

> One clever writer on statecraft correctly said that if it is necessary for the realization of a well-known political goal to perform a series of brutal actions then it is necessary to do them in the most energetic manner and in the shortest time, because masses of people will not tolerate the protracted use of brutality.[27]

Lenin is claiming that all these "brutal actions" were necessary in order to establish their new communist state. However, the brutality of the lootings of the churches had its consequences, as the people became very upset. In a documentary titled, *Persecuted Church,* a peasant from a Russian town talks about how the bell from the local church was destroyed:

> Even the workers charged with dismantling these treasures had trembling hands as they literally smashed them into small pieces. And all of this happened in complete secrecy, I witnessed it personally. They melted in a single crucible. Bronze, copper, silver, every mettle used for the bell. The original shapes vanished, and a bust of Lenin appeared in their place.[28]

It is interesting that even the workers who were ordered to destroy the churches were nervous about this significant task. One can infer that this nervousness reflects their respect for the spiritual and political authority of the Church. This respect continued even as the communists dismissed religious authority. Another local recalls how the clergy were also persecuted:

> "…many clergy, priests, monks and deacons were sentenced to be shot. They also came for the parish elders, and just ordinary parishioners. The cold was awful, digging graves was very hard. The ice was two and a half meters thick. So the powers…gave the order to drown them in the… river."[29]

It has become very clear that the little amount of money extracted from these churches did not go to the people suffering from the Volga famine, as the money which was collected was not nearly as much as Lenin had promised it would be:

---

[27] Vladimir Lenin, *Revelations from the Russian Archives Translation of Letter from Lenin* (Library of Congress). www.loc.gov/exhibits/archives/trans-ae2bkhun.html.

[28] *Persecuted Church - Soviet Attack against the Churches*. www.domuspatris.net.

[29] *Persecuted Church.* www.domuspatris.net.

> It was a lie from start to finish. To begin with, revenue raised by Bolshevik sales of gold and other precious metals abroad in 1921 (some $200 million, or the equivalent of $20 million today) had been devoted not to famine relief, but to pay for strategic efforts, especially high-end military aircraft, and even–perhaps more significantly, in the context of a nationwide famine–luxury food items, including tens of thousands of tons of Swedish herring…[30]

Looting the churches was never meant to help the suffering people, as the capital that was raised went to other places. It was actually the Church which organized relief efforts to help the peasants. It is ironic how the Bolsheviks began looting the churches in an attempt to generate aid for the Volga crisis. In reality, looting and destroying churches only made the situation worse, as the peasants could no long rely on their local church for support or comfort. During the looting of the churches, the Bolsheviks set out to disprove Orthodoxy to the people and show how it was founded on lies. While the churches' valuables were being removed and melted into money for the new regime, the relics of ancient Christian saints were taken out from their altars and other places of worship. This was a delicate task and was sometimes completed on days where the Church did not have a large crowd to avoid protests. In the Orthodox religion, it is believed that the bodies of saints are preserved after death by the will of God. The saints are immortal as a reward for doing good deeds on Earth. The bones of the saints were taken from the altars and featured in atheist publications with the intention to discredit the Church.[31]

Not only did the Bolsheviks physically destroy the churches and missionaries during the Volga famine, but they used the crisis to continue to harass major figures within the Church as well. Many priests and other members of the Church were arrested and either sent to labor camps or killed, sometimes in the most brutal fashion. For example, some priests had their beards cut

---

[30] McMeekin. *History's Greatest Heist: The Looting of Russia by the Bolsheviks*, 77.

[31] Jennifer Wynot, "Russian Orthodox Monasteries' Response to the Relics Exposing Campaign, 1917-1922," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe,* Vol. 23, Issue 1 (2003): 20.

off and forced to jump into near-frozen lakes.[32] The most obvious example was the hostilities towards Patriarch Tikhon. Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow was a bishop who oversaw the Orthodox Church in the transition era between the Provisional Government and the Soviet Union. When the Volga Famine broke out, Patriarch Tikhon organized relief efforts through the Church for the people through channels within the government. A committee was set up by the Church to work with the Bolsheviks in providing relief for the suffering people. However, the Church committee became overreaching, asking for less Bolshevik control, and was shut down by Lenin, thereby eliminating the much-needed help for the people suffering from the famines. Having the Church stripped of the last of its influence, as well as the physical destruction of the abbeys and looting, resulted with Tikhon writing a letter to the new government. Tikhon expressed how the revolution failed the people and had only caused suffering:

> "You promised freedom.... But you have not given that freedom; the freedom you have given consists in all manner of indulgence to the lowest crowd instincts, in murder and theft with impunity. All manifestations of both truly the civilian and higher spiritual freedom of mankind have you mercilessly crushed."[33]

In this quote, Tikhon is referring to all the violence that the new government had been permitting. The Bolsheviks had no restraint when it came to allow the common people to attacking the Church. The new government unleashed ferocious levels of violence on the Church in its attempts to destroy the, "higher spiritual freedom of mankind." Tikhon continues:

> "Not a day goes by when the most monstrous slanders against Christ's Church and her servants are not published in the agencies of your press, along with malicious blasphemy and mockery. You deride the servants of the altar, force bishops to dig trenches, and send priests to do dirty work. You have raised your hand against the Church's inheritance gathered through many generations of the faithful, and have given no thought to violating their posthumous will."[34]

---

[32] *Persecuted Church.*

[33] Patriarch Tikhon. *Patriarch Tikhon's 1918 Letter to Lenin*. Translated by Cornelia Rees. The Catalogue of Good Deeds,

[34] Tikhon. Patriarch *Tikhon's 1918 Letter to Lenin*.

Tikhon is reflecting on the war that the Bolsheviks were waging against all aspects of the Church. The Bolsheviks gave no consideration to all the valuables and money that was donated to the different Churches all across Russia by people when they died, that is why Tikhon is saying that the Bolsheviks had, "given no thought to violating their posthumous will." Regardless of how upset Tikhon was at the Bolsheviks, his complaints would fall on deaf ears. The new government needed the Orthodox Church to be completely eradicated if they were to continue to build a brand-new state. Orthodoxy and spiritualism could not exist in the Soviet Union, especially when they were crafting a new history of Russia which only mentioned the Imperial era as one that was backwards and decrepit.

In addition to the physical destruction of the Orthodoxy, the new government initiated a major propaganda campaign in journals and posters with the intent to create bad memories of the Church and depict it as a system that kept Russia back from progressing socially, economically, and technologically. Starting in the 1920s, several different journals were published with the intention of spreading anti-religious propaganda and ideas, with the intention of depicting Christianity as a system of oppression. Dimitri Moor, or better known as Dimitri Stakhievich, who is famous for designing propaganda posters in several journals such as *Pravda*,[35] was key in depicting Orthodox Christianity as a system that abused people of all social classes, not just the peasants.

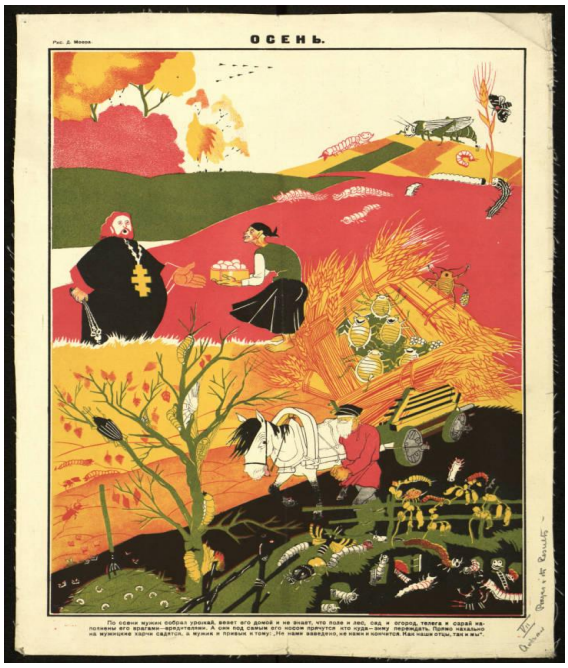
[35] "Dmitry Stakhievich Moor." The Giant: The Definitive Obey Giant Site. Accessed December 6, 2020. www.thegiant.org/wiki/index.php/Dmitry_Stakhievich_Moor.

(Figure 3), Dimitri Stakhievich, "The Defender" (*Zashchitnik*). Moscow, 1926 Soviet Anti-Religious Propaganda Collection, Saint Louis University Libraries Special Collections, Saint Louis, MO.

The propaganda poster above, designed by Stakhievich, depicts a capitalist being protected, but also dominated by Jesus Christ. Both characters are sitting on what appears to be a treasure chest symbolizing the capital that the bourgeoisie steals from the workers and lower classes. This image seems to be complementing the passage quoted earlier from Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* because it echoes Marx's criticism of religion as a force that works to sanctify society's suffering: "The criticism of religion is, therefore, *in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*."[36] In the poster, the institution of religion is represented by Christ and the Orthodox cross, which he has put down in order to hold the capitalist down by placing his hand on his head. This gesture might be interpreted as a blessing, but it is rather a parody of a blessing: because the capitalist's body is twisted into an uncomfortable position, it looks more as if he is controlling and oppressing him, and by

[36] Marx. *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.

extension, the people. The capitalist's body is twisted at an angle, which suggests the pain and discomfort of the Church's oppression. He is completely under the dominance of the Church. While the capitalist's body and face are contorted, the body of Jesus is upright, suggesting his authority and power, and he seems indifferent to the suffering he is inflicting on the human he holds. Jesus gazes straight and without feeling at the viewer, as if seeking to assert his dominance over his audience as well. The halo above Jesus is composed of concentric circles. This is an optical effect that seems designed to symbolize the spell, or hypnosis of Christianity.



(Figure 4), Dimitri Stakhievich, "Autumn" (*Osen'*). Moscow, 1926 Soviet Anti-Religious Propaganda Collection, Saint Louis University Libraries Special Collections, Saint Louis, MO.

The next example of an anti-religious propaganda poster by Stakhievich is called "Autumn." The poster shows two peasants, one working in the field, while another is giving her food that she has made from the harvest to the local Orthodox priest. All the while, giant locusts are eating off the land, which is probably alluding to the problems that locusts were causing in the 1920s. During this period, the Bolsheviks were expanding their agricultural practices, and

pest control, particularly the management of locust plagues in the countryside, was a priority.[37] Stakhievich is correlating the problem of parasites who destroy and feed off the crops with the Church. The poster is meant to convince the peasant population that they are subject to exploitation not just by nature, but by religion as well. The fact the one of the farmers is elderly, communicates to the viewer that compliance with exploitation has been a generational tradition or habit among the peasants. In the description underneath the image, the peasant says he is used to this exploitation and remarks, "what we don't know won't kill us. As our fathers did, so will we."[38] These words suggest that the peasants willingly live in ignorance, and that this ignorance is an attitude that they have adopted from their ancestors. They are fixed on tradition and resistant to change. Both the fully-grown locusts and the priest are very large, indicating that they have thrived living off the work and production of the peasants. The peasants, by contrast, are thin and hunched over, indicating their poverty and humility.

With the old religion destroyed socially, physically and intellectually, a new religion could finally begin to take its place. There could only be one single ideology that could exist in Soviet Russia after the revolution, and that was communism and the cult of Lenin. This idea of putting the state above all else was integral if the new system was to survive, and this mindset persisted throughout the rest of the Soviet Union's life. This became even more apparent when Lenin died in 1924. In a story about Lenin faking his death to see how people would react, called *Clever Lenin,* the supposed dead Lenin visits a small village and sits with some peasants, '"Lenin entered and was astonished. No icons. Red posters and portraits everywhere. "Are you not

---

[37] Etienne Peyrat. Fighting Locusts Together: Pest Control and the Birth of Soviet Development Aid, 1920-1939. (Global Environment, The White Horse Press), 2.

[38] Dimitri Stakhievich, "Autumn" (*Osen'*). Moscow, 1926 Soviet Anti-Religious Propaganda Collection, Saint Louis University Libraries Special Collections, Saint Louis, MO.

Christians?" he queried. "We are citizens, Comrade."'[39] Although this is a fictitious story, it shows Lenin's intentions to bring the revolution to the countryside were successful and replaced Orthodoxy with love for the state. "We are citizens, Comrade" sounds as if the peasants have finally achieved salvation, which is why Lenin is so happy: "Lenin left the hut filled with joy, lay down in the mausoleum feeling reassured….He will probably awaken soon. What a joy that will be! Words cannot relate it, ink cannot describe it."[40] It is interesting how Lenin could not express the joy he felt, which is eerily similar to how Prince Vladimir's envoys felt when they visited the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, their joy was ineffable. Instead of honoring Lenin as simply the founder of the Soviet system, Lenin was raised to a god-like state by Joseph Stalin himself, in an attempt to solidify his own power.[41] Ever since Vladimir the Great chose Orthodoxy to consolidate his authority, religion was used to control the people. The Soviet Union used their ideology as a means to make sure everyone was loyal to the governing power.

If everyone in the Soviet Union believed in communism, then everyone would remain faithful to the state. While the Soviet Union was tearing down and robbing churches and harassing members of the old religion, they were building a new kind of religion through their intense propaganda campaigns and embalming Lenin in the heart of Moscow, near the Kremlin. Lenin became a Christ-like figure in Russia as the Soviets literally attempted to make him immortal by putting his body on display for all to see. Communism replaced Orthodoxy in Russia in the 20th century as a means to control the people, and to make sure that everyone was loyal. With Lenin posing as an immortal figure, the Kremlin, which had always been a Russian

---

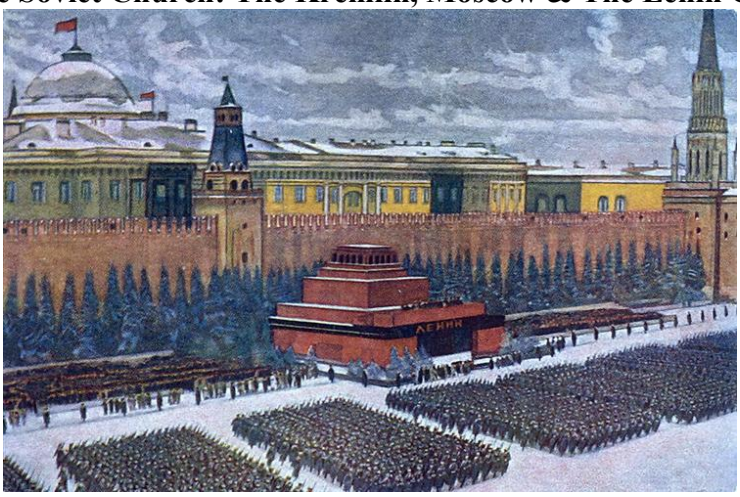
[39] Nina Tumarkin, "Religion, Bolshevism, and the Origins of the Lenin Cult," *The Russian Review* Vol. 40, no. 1, (1981): 36.

[40] Tumarkin, "Religion, Bolshevism, and the Origins of the Lenin Cult," 36.

[41] Anita Pisch, *The Personality Cult of Stalin in Soviet Posters, 1929–1953: Archetypes, Inventions and Fabrications*, ANU Press, 160.

center of power and prestige, would now become a *Soviet* symbol of power and the heart of the new communist religion.

Chapter III
The Soviet Church: The Kremlin, Moscow & The Lenin Cult



(Figure 6), Konstantin Yuon,
"The Red Army on Parade in Red Square, Moscow, November 1940,"
Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

One of the most well-known architectural icons of Russian history has always been Moscow's Kremlin. Although the capital of the Russian Empire was moved to the newly built Saint Petersburg in 1712, Moscow had remained in many ways the *sacred* capital of the Russian Empire as much of the country's origins could be traced to this old city. Historically important as the symbol of Russian tradition and religion, it also became a symbol in the 20th century of Russia's new communist identity. Moscow is a city that memorializes similar traditions that were used to control the people, such as Orthodoxy or communism. The city carries a great historical and religious significance as it had been a defining aspect of Russia's history. The Kremlin had symbolic importance in Russian history, and the communists realized this and exploited it, by moving the capital there as well as having Lenin's embalmed body on display in Red Square outside the Kremlin wall. The medieval fortress now protected communism instead of Orthodoxy, and Red Square was now the center of Soviet power.

There was a combination of factors as to why Moscow became the capital of the new regime. The two prevalent reasons were that Moscow was a symbol of Russian power and

endurance which harkened back to the past, and the other was the need for protection and safety during the First World War. The most practical of the two reasons was to preserve the revolution. In March of 1918, Imperial German troops were advancing towards Petrograd, and the city was being bombed from the air. As a result, the Bolshevik revolution was at risk of being stomped out. In order to preserve the movement, the capital was moved to Moscow for better security, as it was geographically further away from the front compared to Petrograd.[42] Also, presumably, the visuals of the city and the grandeur and easily defensible brick walls of the Kremlin also helped reassure Lenin of his own security.

The symbolic importance of Moscow, and the Kremlin itself, could very well had been another reason Lenin chose to move the capital. Long before the events of 1917, historical episodes like the burning of Moscow in 1812 during the Napoleonic Wars made the city a living legacy and illustrated the endurance of the Russian state. The legacy of Russia might have been on the minds of the Bolshevik leaders when the capital was moved from Petrograd [43] to Moscow in 1918. After all, Petrograd was a city defined by Western influence with its Italian architecture and grand palaces. It was the heart of the old empire since Tsar Peter the Great ordered the construction of the city in the early 18th century. In addition, the Petrograd was built by serfs and peasants. Since the Bolshevik movement wanted to define itself as fighting for the working class, it would make sense that the capital would be moved to Moscow in an attempt to make the new regime look more legitimate in the eyes of the common people. The new state would not be run by the bourgeoisie and the nobility who lived in Petrograd.

---

[42] "Russia–A Tale of Two Capitals" (The Globalist), Accessed April 5, 2021, www.theglobalist.com/russia-a-tale-of-two-capitals/

[43] The name of the Imperial capital was changed from *Saint Petersburg* to *Petrograd* in 1914 to make the city sound more "Russian" (grad) and less "Germanic" (burg) in order to increase public support for the war.

Once Moscow and the Kremlin became the new capital in 1918, it acquired great influence in Soviet Russia, which was the intention. In *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, Victor Serge, a former anarchist and Bolshevik, commented on how he was impressed with the visual aspects and overall atmosphere of the Kremlin:

> Medieval gateways topped by an ancient turret formed the approach to the nearby Vararka, where the first of the Romanovs had lived. From there we came out into the Kremlin, a city within a city… There, in the palaces of the old autocracy, in the midst of ancient Byzantine churches, lay the headquarters of the Revolution's double arm, the Soviet Government and the International.[44]

Perhaps the Bolsheviks were aware of the historical and cultural position they were taking by installing the new government in the Kremlin. Serge remarks how the "ancient Byzantine churches" were located where the "Soviet Government" was seated. Even Lenin himself set up his residence and office in the famous Russian fortress in 1918. Now that the new government had a center of power and control, the Kremlin and Red Square became not only a symbol of Russia, but a symbol of the new communist state as well. With Lenin's death in 1924, the prestige of the Kremlin would increase even more as it became the main cathedral of the Soviet religion, which would be Leninism.

After the death of Lenin, the Politburo sought ways to celebrate and remember his legacy, this effort included the use of religious symbolism to memorialize his accomplishments. The preservation of his body became the most popular option. In the early 1920s, Vladimir Lenin suffered a series of strokes which paralyzed much of his body. Soon, the leader of the revolution had lost his ability to walk, write and speak. It was clear that his end was approaching. Finally, on January 21, 1924, Vladimir Ilych Lenin died from a final stroke. Almost immediately after his death, there were talks to not only preserve his political legacy, but his body as well. Lenin's

---

[44] Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (New York Review Books), 121.

wife and long-time revolutionary, Nadezhda Krupskaia, submitted an article to Pravda, the official newspaper of the Party,[45] making it very clear that he should not become an object of veneration by the Party and Russia, and instead pay tribute to him by building centers of education to help the people:

> I have a great request of you; do not allow your mourning of Ilych to take the form of external reverence for this person. Do not raise memorials to him, name palaces after him, etc. To all this he attached so little importance in his life; all this was so burdensome to him...If you want to honor [him]–build day care centers, kindergartens, schools.[46]

Krupskaia's wishes were roundly ignored, as the talks in the Politburo to preserve Lenin's body continued. Raising monuments as Krupskaia stated was one thing; making the corpse last forever and creating a new religion went far beyond what she feared.[47]

The idea to preserve Lenin's body corresponded with the concept of "religious socialism" which members of the Party thought would be effective in Russia. This idea began to take shape with Lenin's funeral. The responsibility to plan the ceremony fell to Felix Dzerzhinsky, who led a committee to oversee the preparations and was the leader of the Cheka and the OGPU, the precursors to the NKVD. Dzerzhinsky was a man of science, and believed that Lenin's body could be preserved, and was the one who put forth this idea to the Politburo. There were even talks of reanimating Lenin and bringing him back to life. By preserving Lenin's body, he would become an immortal figure which no one in the Party could rival. Preserving Lenin's body also appealed to Anatoly Lunacharsky. Lunacharsky, who was the commissar of education at the time, had written in his work, *Religion and Socialism* (1908/11), about the idea of creating a

---

[45] The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the main political body which controlled the Soviet state.

[46] Henry Thompson, "Russia's Official Religion," *International Journal on World Peace:* Vol. 4, No. 4 (1987): 54-55.

[47] Thompson, "Russia's Official Religion," 55.

socialist religion solely based on science, and not spiritualism or superstition. Lenin's body would be preserved not through the will of God, but through science and modern medical procedures. As a result, Lenin would serve a similar role as Orthodox saints did in the past; he would be a watchful guardian. However, this new faith would be based on science and not superstition, with Lenin as the focal point of this new socialist religion. [48] In the previous chapter, during the Soviet war on Christianity in the 1920s, it was discussed how the remains of Orthodox saints were revealed to the public by showing how their bodies had not been preserved by God and had rotted away over time. Lenin's body, on the other hand, would be in perfect condition for all eternity, and would not rot away. Lunacharsky, along with another well-known Party member, Maxim Gorky, thought that the Russian people, who had spent centuries under the influence of Christianity, would respond well to a kind of "religious socialism."[49] Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, a leading contender for Lenin's mantle, who was looking to consolidate his own power at the time, threw his support behind this idea.

Joseph Stalin's first step in succeeding Lenin was to use the funeral to out-maneuver other high-ranking Party members and in the process memorialize him as a god. By the early 1920s, Stalin was becoming an important figure within the upper echelons of the Party and the Politburo. Stalin was originally given the position as the General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1922. Although this role was only an administrative and clerical one, he used it to create allies within the Party who would further contribute to his rise to power. All this clerical work put him in close contact with Lenin, as Lenin was the leader of the Party. Although the two men had known each other since before the revolution, Stalin worked to further strengthen his

---

[48] Gwendolyn Leick, *Tombs of the Great Leaders* (Reaktion Books), 37.

[49] Ruth Coates, *Deification in Russian Religious Thought: Between the Revolutions, 1905-1917* (Oxford University Press), 8.

relationship with Lenin so that he could look like a natural successor once he died. Of course, Stalin was not the one in the party looking to succeed Lenin. Other Party members, known as the "Old Bolsheviks," like Lev Kamenev and Nikolai Bukharin, also wanted power in the aftermath of Lenin's death. However, Stalin's greatest rival was Leon Trotsky. At the time of Lenin's death, Trotsky was on holiday away from Moscow as he was ill. Stalin sent a message to Trotsky, telling him the wrong date of the funeral: "The funeral will take place on Saturday, you will not make it in time. The politburo considers that in your state of health you should continue on to Sukhum."[50] In reality, the funeral was scheduled for Sunday, not Saturday. As a result, Trotsky, who had been by Lenin's side for much of the revolutionary struggle, was tricked into missing the ceremony.[51] Trotsky's absence from Lenin's funeral certainly damaged his political intentions, while raising those of Stalin, who was a pallbearer at the event.[52]

Stalin's aim was to raise Lenin to the status of a God for his own political purposes. Stalin, who spoke at the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets in 1924, reiterated how significant Lenin was to the revolutionary movement, by deifying him with religious terminology:

> It is we who form the army of the great proletarian strategist, Comrade Lenin. There is no higher honour than membership of this army….In leaving us, Comrade Lenin ordained us to hold high and keep pure the great title of member of the party. We vow to thee, Comrade Lenin, that we shall honourably fulfill this thy commandment.[53]

The words that Stalin chose in this speech are important. Words like, "ordained" and "commandment" are terms usually associated with Christianity. The use of religious language

---

[50] Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Volume I: The Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928* (Penguin Press), 1140.

[51] Leick, *Tombs of the Great Leaders* (Reaktion Books), 37.

[52] "At Lenin's Funeral," *Life Magazine*, March 16, 1953, 25.

[53] Valentino Garretano, "'Stalin, Lenin and "Leninism,"' *New Left Review*, (1977): 64.

invested the ceremony with sacred importance. The listeners probably understood subconsciously that Lenin was now like a religious subject worthy of veneration. Although many listeners were not devout active Christians, Stalin's words still carried weight. It is also important to note that throughout his speech, Stalin repeated the phrase: "We vow to thee, Comrade Lenin, that we shall honourably fulfill this thy commandment" several times during the speech like a religious chant. By raising Lenin to a level of sacredness and veneration, Stalin's rhetoric illustrated to the Congress how much he valued Lenin by making him a sacred figure.[54]

Although the idea to introduce a kind of religious socialism in Russia was not Stalin's alone, he certainly expropriated it to gain power. In the weeks and months following Lenin's funeral, Stalin continued to build up a cult around Lenin, by giving speeches and erecting monuments in his name, overriding Krupskaia's wishes. Stalin was no stranger to the power the role of religion had in Russia, as he was a student at an Orthodox seminary during his younger years, which is why he used Christian terminology in his speech to the Congress in 1924. The idea of religious socialism most definitely appealed to him. In his youth, Stalin learned how religion could be used as a tool to control people. Growing up in Georgia, Stalin, known as Josef Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili, had attended an Orthodox Christian Seminary where he studied to be a priest. At the seminary, his teachers often discouraged embracing his Georgian heritage and demanded he only speak Russian. This reflected the russification program which was taking place throughout the Russian Empire at the time, but also showed how the Orthodox Church sometimes worked to make people conform to the state. Stalin eventually fell out with the priests at the seminary, as his rebellious nature clashed with their desires for him to adhere to their strict

[54] Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Harvard University Press), 153.

religious teachings. He would frequently get in trouble for reading rebellious texts written by Ernest Renan and Karl Marx. A priest would be frequently sent into Stalin's room to make sure he was not hiding any books containing radical political ideas. Although Stalin regularly caused conflict with the priests, he saw through his classmates how religion could be used as tool to make people conform. The powerful and political role of religion in Russia would remain with Stalin for the rest of his life. [55]

The cult surrounding Lenin and the love for the state quickly became the new form of worship in Russia. Stalin saw the importance of objects that people could venerate, and thanks to his backing, the idea to preserve Lenin's body was approved by the Politburo. The decision to preserve the body was made more apparent when thousands of people fled to Moscow to pay respect to the fallen socialist leader in the first few weeks after his funeral.[56] Lenin would become an object of veneration by the Russian people and the Party, which went against Krupskaia's stated desires. Soon, Lenin would be worshiped in schools throughout the Soviet Union, with his picture hanging on the wall of every classroom, and his revolutionary work remembered through children's tales and poems.[57] The portraits of Lenin that were massed-produced and sent all over the Soviet Union made the Bolshevik leader's face a common image in 20th century eastern Europe, in a manner very similar to that of the old Orthodox Christian icons. Throughout the Soviet Union and territories under its influence, statues and pictures of Lenin were a constant reminder that he was watching over the people, just as icons of saints used to symbolize protectors or guardians to Christians.[58] As stated in the previous chapter, in the

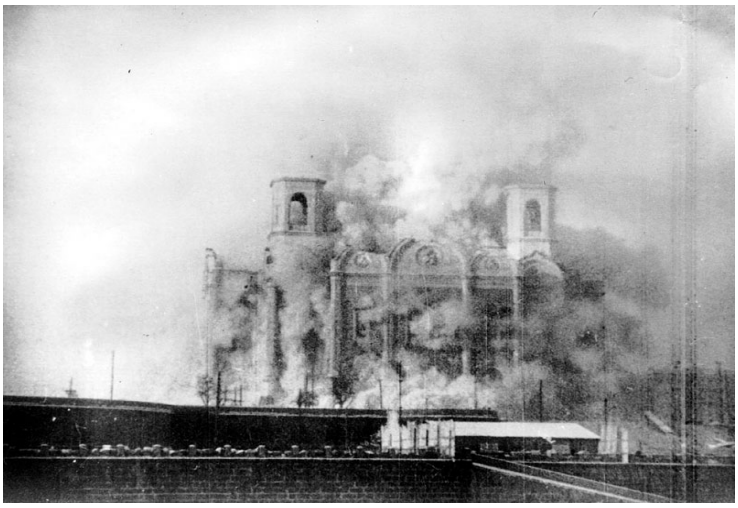
---

[55] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Young Stalin* (Vintage Books), Chapter 7.
[56] Ibid, 39.
[57] Thompson, "Russia's Official Religion," 52.
[58] Ibid, 54.

short story *Clever Lenin*, the reader observes that there were no more icons, only posters promoting the state: “Lenin entered and was astonished. No icons. Red posters and portraits everywhere.”[59] The cult surrounding Lenin was finally taking shape. The place to worship Lenin would be the mausoleum which would replace the Orthodox churches around the Kremlin, like St. Basil’s Cathedral. In the past, St. Basil’s Cathedral was the religious center of Red Square, but its importance was now displaced by the mausoleum.

St. Basil’s Cathedral, which had been constructed in the 16th century by order of Ivan the Terrible, had been remarkably spared from the Soviets’ war on the churches throughout Russia. The massive cathedral, which stands 156 feet high, had been converted to a museum in 1928 and remained a staple of the Russian cultural identity. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, there had been talk in the Politburo about demolishing the cathedral. The reasons the church was saved from destruction like so many others is shrouded in mystery. Why was St. Basil’s Cathedral spared, when other famous churches like the Cathedral of Christ the Savior were dynamited in 1931 on the orders of Stalin? After all, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was also in central Moscow and was built to celebrate the Russian victory over Napoleon Bonaparte in 1815. Wasn’t this cathedral also a symbol of Russian might, like the Kremlin?

[59] Tumarkin, *Religion, Bolshevism, and the Origins of the Lenin Cult,* 40.



(Figure 7), Vladislav Mikosha,
"Demolition of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. 1931"
Moscow, 1931. GL Online Archive.

In constructing the ultimate image Soviet power, the location of these landmarks was important, and determined what was destroyed and what was spared. The Cathedral of Christ the Savior was not in Red Square, it was located, "....eight miles southwest of the Kremlin on the south bank of the river Moscow…."[60] As a result, removing this cathedral from existence would not interfere with the visual power of Red Square. The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour was not important in the eyes of Stalin and was annoyed it was there and wanted it gone. It is plausible that Stalin understood how barren Red Square would look if St. Basil's Cathedral would be removed; the grand image of Russian power would be diminished. However, there were still discussions about destroying the old cathedral. The campaign to prevent the destruction of the St. Basil's was led by Peter Baranovsky. Baranovsky was an architect who advocated the preservation of many old Imperial buildings and churches in the 1930s on the grounds that they

[60] Andrew Gentes, *The Life, Death and Resurrection of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Moscow* (Oxford University Press), 66.

had cultural value and could be converted into museums.[61] Many churches were converted to museums of atheism. Baranovsky's work to preserve the churches was a dangerous task as throughout the first few decades of the Soviet Union, the war against the Orthodox Church was in full swing, and nowhere more intensely carried out than in Moscow. In 1922, there were exactly 764 churches in the capital alone[62] and hundreds of them had been looted, desecrated and destroyed. According to some accounts, Baranovsky was given the order to prepare the cathedral for its destruction. In protest, Baranovsky, "barracad[ed] himself in the church with a machine gun.[63] Some accounts say that Stalin wanted the destruction of St. Basil's Cathedral to proceed. However, it is possible that Stalin saw the cultural and political significance the cathedral carried and also wanted it to be spared. Whatever the reasons, St. Basil's Cathedral was not destroyed and remained a primary example of Russian prestige and eminence. Creating a sense of greatness and status in Red Square, along with the preservation of Lenin's body, was all done to solidify Stalin's own power and illustrate Soviet might. The parades which occurred in front of the mausoleum and near St. Basil's would use religious imagery to further support the cult of personality created around Lenin.

The parades which would take place on Red Square throughout the twentieth century would become a distinctive feature of Soviet might in the years following Lenin's death. These parades would show that the cult around Lenin would eventually expand to not only include him, but other prominent members of the Politburo as well, like Stalin himself. Starting after the

---

[61] "Another Feat of Peter Dmitrievich Baranovsky" (Moscow Museum of Architecture), Accessed April 17, 2021, web.archive.org/web/20061013050213/http://www.muar.ru/exibitions/exibit105b.htm.

[62] McMeekin. *History's Greatest Heist: The Looting of Russia by the Bolsheviks*, 84.

[63] Martha Davis, "St Basil's Cathedral" (Macalester College), Accessed April 17, 2021, www.macalester.edu/russian/about/resources/miscellany/stbasils/.

Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917, several different kinds of parades were organized to remember the revolutionary struggle and once again the communists relied on religious imagery to inspire devotion and veneration in the people. One of the first parades which was organized by the new state was the celebration of the abdication of the Tsar, which ended hundreds of years of autocratic rule in Russia.[64] Many different parades and national holidays became ritualized, such as International Women's Day and May Day, which celebrated the workers. During these parades, large portraits of Soviet leaders would be carried, very much like how icons of saints would be carried during an Orthodox Christian procession. Even though these parades and events were important holidays, it is also important *where* they were celebrated. Although many of these holidays were celebrated throughout the Soviet Union, the grandest and most significant location was Red Square in Moscow. The book, *Surviving Freedom: After the Gulag* is a collection of Janusz Bardach's memories once he left the Gulag. Bardach was a Polish Jew who suffered under both Nazi and Soviet rule. In his memoirs, he gives a very informative description of the October parade which celebrated the Bolshevik takeover in 1917:

> The October parade was one of two grandiose parades held every year; the other was the May Day Parade. Although the parades took place in every city and village, the country was really only concerned with what happened in Red Square.[65]

Bardach's account of the October parade reveals how important it was to everyone living in the Soviet Union. Since Moscow was the capital, it would make sense that the grandest parades would take place there. The different parades and celebrations would further illustrate Russian power, a tradition that continues to this day with the Victory Parade.

---

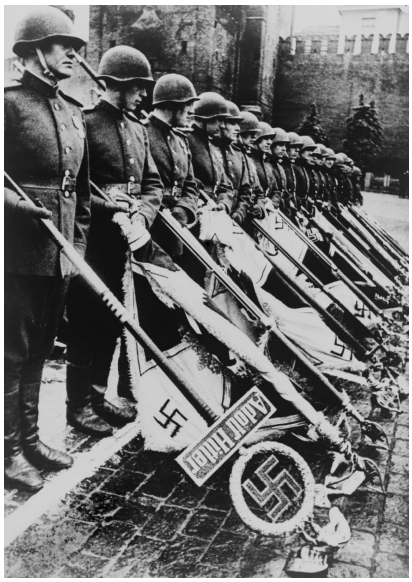
[64] Jennifer McDowell, "Soviet Civil Ceremonies," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion:* Vol. 13, no. 3 (1974): 266.

[65] Janusz Bardach, Kathleen Gleeson, *Surviving Freedom: After the Gulag* (University of California Press), 113.

One of the most famous parades took place in 1945 to celebrate the Allied victory over Nazi Germany and demonstrate the power of the communist state to the world and its own people, and solidified Stalin as a god-like figure next to Lenin. In the years prior to the Second World War, followers of Stalin worked to turn him into another venerated leader, like Lenin. Stalin's purges, as well as the famines which occurred in the 1930s did not help in making him look like a champion in the eyes of the people. The Soviet Union's victory in 1945 was exactly what was needed to depict Stalin as a savior of the Russian people, and communism itself.[66] As a result, the Moscow Victory Parade was one of the grandest parades the Soviet Union had held at the time. Army units from the front were ordered to return to Moscow, and the Soviet flag which had been planted on the Reichstag in Berlin was to be featured in the parade.[67] The event had guests from the other Allied countries such as the United States and Great Britain. If there was an opportunity to demonstrate Soviet Power to the world, it was this parade, along with the fact that they had defeated the Nazis and carried an entire Eastern European front on their own. As with most Soviet parades, Stalin and other members of the Politburo were situated on the platform on top of Lenin's mausoleum in front of the Kremlin wall. During the Parade, Red Army soldiers dropped Nazi flags and emblems in front of the mausoleum, where Stalin was standing, looking down at his defeated enemy. In the photograph below, Soviet soldiers are marching in front of the parade carrying captured Nazi standards:

[66] Jonathon R. Dreeze, "On the Creation of Gods: Lenin's Image in Stalin's Cult of Personality" Master's Thesis. (The Ohio State University, 2013).

[67] "Victory Parade Took Place on Red Square" (Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library). Accessed April 15, 2021, www.prlib.ru/en/history/619337.



(Figure 8), Evgeniĭ Khaldeĭ, "Moscow -- Victory parade -- 24 June 1945."
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

In this picture, the Nazi flags are pointed downwards, as if they are bowing down to the victor of the war. The Victory Parade was only one example of the different events that were held in Red Square. Regardless of the event, Red Square was the most effective location for these ceremonies to take place, as there were multiple emblems of Soviet power and influence like the Kremlin. The General Secretary watched the parades above Lenin's mausoleum, as if Lenin himself was also watching the festivities.

Although one of main reasons why the capital was moved Petrograd to Moscow was security, the Bolsheviks used the visual power of the old city, like hosting parades on Red Square, to their advantage when constructing their new communist state. Members of the Politburo like Stalin saw the cultural significance Moscow had, and how it could be used to solidify the legitimacy of the new regime. Since Moscow was the sacred capital of Russia before the revolution, having this city be the Soviet Union's capital was necessary in showing that this new state was the natural successor to the Tsarist empire. The Kremlin, which had long been known as a fortress that protected the people and Orthodoxy from foreign invaders, was now a

fortress that protected the heart of the Soviet government, as well as its founder, Lenin. With the Kremlin, Lenin's mausoleum, and the parades celebrating the Soviet leaders like Lenin and Stalin, Red Square had become the symbolic heart of not only the Soviet government, but also of international communism as the Cold War raged throughout the 20th century. The construction of the visual display of Soviet power in Red Square, supported by the new religion, was finally complete.

Conclusion

The desire for social and political change in Russia in the 19th century was well-founded. For generations the peasantry had suffered under landlords and, in the eyes of the revolutionaries, under the Orthodox Church as well. The longing for reform in Russia was led by intellectuals who documented the aristocracy's mistreatment of the lower classes in their written work and particularly in the "thick journals." The "thick journals" were a series of magazines published throughout the 19th century which published articles dealing with important civil questions concerning reform in Russia. Members of the intelligentsia published their writings in these journals. The intelligentsia in Russia, who were made up of writers, thinkers and sons and daughters of the clergy as well as upper-middle class families were deeply concerned about the abuses of serfdom and other social injustices like poverty in the cities and the countryside. Radical writers like Nikolai Chernyshevksy, the son of an Orthodox priest, who wrote *What Is To Be Done?* (1863), argued that a society could be built on socialist ideals and a commune life. The Tsar and his government, supported by the Church, censored these journals and imprisoned the writers. The Tsar prevented social justice reform and stood in the way of creating a fair and equal society.

While Chernyshevksy represented the more radical side of the intelligentsia, arguing for a complete overhaul of Russian society, others like the novelist Ivan Turgenev wanted a more gradual, evolutionary path through Tsarist proclamations and laws. An important goal for both radical and moderate reformers was the elimination of serfdom. Serfdom in the Russian Empire had persisted well beyond other European countries and was only abolished by Tsar Alexander II in 1861. The liberation of the serfs was a good example of how change was possible without a violent political upheaval. However, when Alexander II was assassinated in 1881, the Imperial

government moved away from gradual reform and turned to a more repressive approach when controlling the people, backed by Pobedonostsev.

The Orthodox Church would be instrumental in this repressive system which eventually resulted in the Russian Revolution. Tsar Nicholas II's political and religious advisor, Konstantin Pobedonostsev argued for a powerful and united Orthodox Church which would support the Imperial regime, and its constant territorial expansion in the late 19th and early 20th century. Pobedonostsev strongly believed that the Russian people relied on such a powerful and spiritual force in order for them to remain faithful to the Tsar and quell the desires for radical social and political change. Pobedonostsev correctly understood the Russian populace's need for a religious and a spiritual commitment as a means for creating unity and cohesion in the vast Russian state. He prioritized cohesion, control and order over justice since the Church and the Tsar did not address the inequities and oppression suffered by the common people in Russia. This neglect led to an increasing dissatisfaction and anger with the state; the abuse of the factory workers in the cities (who were overworked and underpaid) led to protests in the streets of Moscow and Petrograd. Unrest and anger increased especially during the First World War, because the factories were pressured to quickly produce more material to support the war effort, which led to further abuse of the workers.

Pobedonostsev believed that the Russian people always needed something to venerate, whether that was the Tsar himself or God through the Orthodox Church. After the Soviets' war on the Orthodox Church in the years following the Russian Revolution, they would also capitalize on the Russian desire to revere something higher than themselves. For both the monarchy and the communists, veneration (of either God or a political ideal) served to unite and control the population. Creating a new religion was important so everyone in the Soviet Union

would have a set of common values such as a commitment to the state as symbolized by the figure of Lenin and later Stalin. Lenin's death was an opportunity for the Soviet state to assert its power by creating a cult of personality around the fallen Bolshevik leader, and give the people a Christ-like figure for them to worship.

The cult of Lenin was created in order to help Stalin become the leader of the Soviet Union, and to prevent the new regime from falling apart. The death of Lenin came at a time when the Soviet Union was still trying to establish itself as the new, official Russian state. When looking at the revolutions of the past, the Bolsheviks were worried that all of their progress might be reversed, and that a counter-revolutionary movement would occur like in France after Napoleon Bonaparte with the Bourbon restoration in the early 19th century. The Bolsheviks were determined to not allow such a thing to happen in Russia.[68] Lenin himself could be a tool to keep the new regime together. The preservation of Lenin's body, supported by Stalin, was the beginning of a cult of personality which would persist for many decades to come in the 20th century. Stalin wanted to make Lenin a God-like figure so that he could look like his successor. If Lenin was a god, Stalin could present himself as the most devout and loyal follower, making him look like the natural new leader of the regime. Stalin, who in his younger years studied to be a priest, used religious language and rituals to create the communist religion around Lenin. Lenin's mausoleum and remembrance throughout the Soviet Union as well the parades on Red Square were done not only to support the new religion, but to illustrate Soviet power and authority as well. Stalin eventually incorporated himself into this cult of personality, with his victory over Nazi Germany in 1945 making him also look like a savior of the Russian people and communism.

---

[68] Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (Vintage Books), 343.

The leaders of both Imperial Russia and Soviet Russia saw how religion could serve as a tool to help govern their large empires. In a country as large and diverse as Russia, it would always be difficult to establish control over the entire populace. As a result, religion could be used to unite people. This would become even more apparent as the Soviet Union spread their influence to nearby territories as well as internationally. The cult of personality emerged wherever communist governments were established. For example, Lenin and Stalin would not only be worshipped in Russia, but in Communist China as well. However, no matter how powerful these cults of personalities were, it could not save the Soviet Union from collapse at the end of the 20th century.

Religion was a powerful force in Russia both during the Imperial regime and in the Soviet Union. It appealed to the Russians' desire for worship, for community, and their love of sensory, particularly visual experiences. The Soviets, like the monarchy before them, used these desires to garner the people's loyalty and devotion. However, as the Soviets would learn, humanity also desires the freedom to practice beliefs of their own choosing, and to worship and experience nonmaterial ideals (the transcendent). They could not prevent the social and political changes that answered the people's desire for freedom from economic and social inequities, and also the freedom to choose how and what they could worship. When the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991, the cult around Lenin began to decay, and the Orthodox Church saw a rise in membership which continues today.[69] This shows how even in the former Soviet Union, people needed non-material ideals.

[69] Geoffrey Evans, Ksenia Northmore-Ball, "The Limits of Secularization? The Resurgence of Orthodoxy in Post-Soviet Russia," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (2012): 725.

Today, in the 21st century, Vladimir Putin continues the tradition of calling on symbols from the past, from both the Imperial and Soviet eras of Russia's history to legitimize his position as absolute ruler in the eyes of the people. Putin has become closer with the Orthodox Church, always receiving a blessing from the Patriarch when he wins the national election, this is an action that suggests a desire to present himself as faithful follower of God. This act can also be seen as Putin's desire to become a modern absolute ruler in Russia. Receiving a blessing from the Church shows how the Orthodox Church is behind Putin's power. It is unknown whether or not Putin does really believe in God and in Orthodoxy, as he keeps this information to himself, especially when pressed in interviews. However, he has used religious imagery to appeal to his population. In many shirtless photographs, he is often wearing a cross around his neck, and he attends Russian Christmas and Easter services. These visual examples of Putin as a devout Christian probably appeals to Russia's growing spiritual population. Religious imagery is not the only way Putin uses Orthodoxy to justify his power to the people.

In 2014, when the Russian Federation annexed Crimea, Putin used Russia's spiritual history to justify its actions. Crimea was the place where Prince Vladimir was baptized into the Orthodox Church, by the Byzantine Emperor himself, an act which is essential to Russia's history with Orthodoxy. Since the Crimean Peninsula was the birthplace of the Russian Christian tradition, the justification for making it a part of the Russian Federation, especially in the eyes of Russia's increasing religious population, made sense. In Putin's address to the the Federal Assembly, Russia's main governing body, in December of 2014, he noted how the Crimea was the birthplace of Russian Orthodoxy:

> It was an event of special significance for the country and the people, because Crimea is where our people live, and the peninsula is of strategic importance for Russia as the spiritual source of the development of a multifaceted but solid Russian nation and a centralized Russian state. It was in Crimea, in the ancient city of Chersonesus or Korsun, as ancient Russian chroniclers called it, that Grand Prince Vladimir was baptized before bringing Christianity to Rus.[70]

Putin's decision to provide a religious explanation is valuable, especially in Russia, where faith and devotion to God have been such an essential part of its history. Putin's inclusion of the baptism of Prince Vladimir in his speech alludes to Russia's spiritual connection with Crimea. Putin notes how, "It was Crimea, in the ancient city of Chersonesus or Korsun…that Grand Prince Vladimir was baptized before bringing Christianity to Rus." Although it is not known if Putin truly believes in God and Orthodoxy, he knows it is a powerful tool to appease the people and make himself popular. The current Patriarch of Moscow, Patriarch Kirill, has closely supported Putin and his government. It is clear from Putin's actions that his relationship with the Church is motivated by political ambition and utility rather than a personal belief in God.[71] The Tsar, Stalin and Putin understood that Russia is a deeply spiritual country. In the Imperial, Soviet, and modern Russian governments, religion has been used as a mechanism to justify absolute power and maintain control and order.

---

[70] Vladimir Putin, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly" (speech, Russian Federal Assembly, Moscow, December 4, 2014).

[71] Alexis Mrachek, "How Putin Uses Russian Orthodoxy to Grow His Empire," The Heritage Foundation, (2019), www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/how-putin-uses-russian-orthodoxy-grow-his-empire

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Gorky, Maxim. “Revelations from the Russian Archives Translation of Letter from Gorky to Stalin.” Library of Congress. Accessed December 2, 2020. www.loc.gov/exhibits/archives/trans-f2gorky.html.

Lenin, Vladimir. *The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion*. Proletary, 1909. Accessed October 13, 2020. https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1909/may/13.htm Smith, Sydney Bernard. "What Is To Be Done? (Lenin)." *Ambit*, no. 90 (1982): 86-87. Accessed November 12, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/44333078.

Lenin, V.I. “The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution (a.k.a. the April Theses).” Translated by Isaacs Bernard. Marxists Internet Archive. Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed November 22, 2020. www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/04.htm.

Lenin, Vladimir. “Revelations from the Russian Archives Translation of Letter from Lenin.” Library of Congress. Accessed December 1, 2020. www.loc.gov/exhibits/archives/trans-ae2bkhun.html.

Marx, Karl. “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.” Edited by Andy Blunden and Matthew Carmody. marxists.org. Accessed November 27, 2020. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm

Patriarch Tikhon. “Patriarch Tikhon's 1918 Letter to Lenin.” Translated by Cornelia Rees. The Catalogue of Good Deeds, July 20, 2020. blog.obitel-minsk.com/2018/03/patriarch-tikhons-1918-letter-to-lenin.html.

Pobedonostsev, Konstantin Petrovich, *Reflections of a Russian Statesman,* G. Richards, 1898.

Putin, Vladimir, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly.” Russian Federal Assembly, Moscow, December 4, 2014. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173

Printed Document Collections:

Bunyan, James, and H. H. Fisher, Eds. *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1918: Documents and Materials. By James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher.* Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1934.

Emmons, Terence & Patenaude M. Bertrand. *War, Revolution and Peace in Russia: The Passages of Frank Golder 1914-1927*. Hoover Press, 1992.

Secondary Sources:

Adams, Arthur E. "Pobedonostsev's Religious Politics." *Church History* 22, no. 4 (1953): 314-26. Accessed March 12, 2021. doi:10.2307/3161783.

Adams, Arthur E. "Pobedonostsev and the Rule of Firmness." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 32, no. 78 (1953): 132-39. Accessed March 14, 2021. www.jstor.org/stable/4204514.

Anderson, John. "The Council for Religious Affairs and the Shaping of Soviet Religious Policy." *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 4 (1991): 689-710. Accessed October 13, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/152299.

“Another Feat of Peter Dmitrievich Baranovsky” Moscow Museum of Architecture, April 24-May 19, 2002. web.archive.org/web/20061013050213/http://www.muar.ru/exibitions/exibit105b.htm.

Bardach, Janusz and Kathleen Gleeson. *Surviving Freedom: After the Gulag*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2003. Accessed March 5, 2021. www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnnkf.

Basil, John D. "Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev: An Argument for a Russian State Church." *Church History* 64, no. 1 (1995): 44-61. Accessed March 11, 2021. www.jstor.org/stable/3168656.

Bercken, William. *Ideology and Atheism in the Soviet Union*. De Gruyter, 1988. Accessed October 14, 2020. www.degruyter.com/view/title/11307?tab_body=toc

Brinton, Crane, and Christopher, John B. and Wolf, L. Robert. *A History of Civilization, Volume I: Prehistory to 1715.* Prentice-Hall, inc, 1958.

Coates, Ruth, *Deification in Russian Religious Thought: Between the Revolutions, 1905-1917.* Oxford University Press, 2019.

Crankshaw, Edward, “False God Dies, Crisis is Born.” *Life Magazine*, Vol 34, no. 11 (1953). books.google.com/books?id=F0IEAAAAMBAJ&dq=stalin+pallbearer+lenin+funeral&source=gbs_navlinks_s

Daly, Jonathan. *Storming the Last Citadel: The Bolshevik Assault on the Church, 1922*. 1997.

Davis, Martha. “St. Basil’s Cathedral.” Macalester College. Accessed April 17, 2021. www.macalester.edu/russian/about/resources/miscellany/stbasils/.

Dreeze, Jonathon R., “On the Creation of Gods: Lenin’s Image in Stalin’s Cult of Personality” Master’s Thesis. The Ohio State University, 2013.

Evans, Geoffrey & Ksenia Northmore-Ball. "The Limits of Secularization? The Resurgence of Orthodoxy in Post-Soviet Russia." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 4 (2012): 795-808. Accessed May 2, 2021. www.jstor.org/stable/23353833.

Gahrton, Per. "Puppet or Buffer?" In *Georgia: Pawn in the New Great Game*, 20-33. London; New York, NY: Pluto Press, 2010. Accessed April 28, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt183p91c.8.

Garretano, Valentino, ‘“Stalin, Lenin and ‘Leninism.’” *New Left Review,* (1977).

Gentes, Andrew. "The Life, Death and Resurrection of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Moscow." *History Workshop Journal*, no. 46 (1998): 63-95. Accessed March 5, 2021. www.jstor.org/stable/4289581.

Graves, Dan. “We Did Not Know Where We Were: In Context.” Christian History Institute. Christian History Institute. Accessed November 20, 2020. christianhistoryinstitute.org/incontext/article/vladimir.

Jonas, Raymond. “The French Revolution, Catholic Anxieties, and the Sacred Heart.” In *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart: An Epic Tale for Modern Times*, 54-90. University of California Press, 2000. Accessed March 4, 2021. www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pn6nk.8.

Judge, H. G. "Church and State Under Louis XIV." *History* 45, no. 155 (1960): 217-33. Accessed March 4, 2021. www.jstor.org/stable/24403720.

Kalb, Marvin. "Kievan Rus’: The “First Russia”." In *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War*, 28-36. Brookings Institution Press, 2015. Accessed November 22, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt15hvrbc.8.

Kotkin, Stephen, *Stalin: Volume I: The Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928.* Penguin Press, 2014.

Leik, Gwendolyn, *Tombs of the Great Leaders: A Contemporary Guide*. Reaktion Books, 2014.

Mansfield, Andrew. "The Reign of Louis XIV: Absolute Monarchy." In *Ideas of Monarchical Reform: Fénelon, Jacobitism, and the Political Works of the Chevalier Ramsay*, 105-28. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015. Accessed March 5, 2021. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1mf70gv.9.

McDowell, Jennifer. "Soviet Civil Ceremonies." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 13, no. 3 (1974): 265-79. Accessed April 1, 2021. doi:10.2307/1384758.

McMeekin, Sean. *History's Greatest Heist: The Looting of Russia by the Bolsheviks*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009.

Montefiore, Sebag Simon, *Young Stalin,* Vintage Books, 2007.

Mrachek, Alexis. "How Putin Uses Russian Orthodoxy to Grow His Empire." The Heritage Foundation, February 22, 2019. www.heritage.org/europe/commentary//how-putin-uses-russian-orthodoxy-grow-his-empire.

Nadezda Orlova, Sergei Soloviev. Logic and logicians in Russia before 1917: Living in a wider world. Historia Mathematica, Elsevier, 2019, 46, pp.38-55. ff10.1016/j.hm.2018.05.002ff. ffhal-02894309f

Nicholas V. Riasanovsky. ""Nationality" in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas I." *The Russian Review* 19, no. 1 (1960): 38-46. Accessed April 28, 2021. doi:10.2307/126191.

"Persecuted Church," *The Soviet Attack Against the Churches*, http://www.domuspatris.net.

Pipes, Richard. *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution.* Vintage Books, 1995.

Rennert, Anne, and Karen Williams. "Transforming Russian Architecture: "Steps" By Aleksandr Rodchenko–and Eisenstein's Film Montage." *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* 47/48 (2013): 55-75. Accessed September 30, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/44174175.

Russia – A Tale of Two Capitals." The Globalist, November 14, 2001. www.theglobalist.com/russia-a-tale-of-two-capitals/.

Ryan, James. ''Revolution Is War'': The Development of the Thought of V. I. Lenin on Violence, 1899—1907." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 89, no. 2 (2011): 248-73. Accessed December 3, 2020. doi:10.5699/slaveasteurorev2.89.2.0248.

Serge, Victor. *Memoirs of a Revolutionary.* New York Review of Books, 1963.

Smolkin, Victoria. *A Sacred Space is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism*. Princeton University Press, 2019.

Slezkine, Yuri. T*he House of Government: A Saga of Russian Revolution*. Princeton University Press, 2017.

Thompson, Henry O., and Alexander Gershkovich. "Russia's Official Religion [with Comment]." *International Journal on World Peace* 4, no. 4 (1987): 51-64. Accessed February 9, 2021. www.jstor.org/stable/20751175.

Tumarkin, Nina. "Religion, Bolshevism, and the Origins of the Lenin Cult." *The Russian Review* 40, no. 1 (1981): 35-46. Accessed December 4, 2020. doi:10.2307/128733.

Tumarkin, Nina, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia.* Harvard University Press, 1983.

"The Orthodox Faith - Volume III - Church History - Tenth Century - Saint Vladimir of Kiev." Orthodox Church in America. Accessed November 20, 2020. www.oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/church-history/tenth-century/saint-vladimir-of-kiev.

Wistrich, Robert S. "From Lenin to the Soviet Black Hundreds." In *From Ambivalence to Betrayal: The Left, the Jews, and Israel*, 419-47. Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. Accessed October 6, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1d9nqcw.18.

Wynot, Jennifer (2003) "Russian Orthodox Monasteries' Response to the Relics Exposing Campaign, 1917-1922," Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe: Vol. 23 : Iss. 1, Article 3.

"Victory Parade Took Place on Red Square." Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library, June 24, 2019. www.prlib.ru/en/history/619337.

Zernov, N. "Vladimir and the Origin of the Russian Church." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 28, no. 70 (1949): 123-38. Accessed November 1, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/4204099.

Zhivov, V. M. "Cultural Reforms in Peter I's System of Transformations." In *"Tsar and God": And Other Essays in Russian Cultural Semiotics*, edited by Levitt Marcus C., by Uspenskij Boris, Zhivov Victor, Budgen David, and Bliss Liv, 191-238. Brighton, MA, USA: Academic Studies Press, 2012. Accessed March 11, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt1zxsjpf.7.

Images:

Cover Image #1, “Orthodox icon of Saint Vladimir, the Great Prince, Equal to Apostles.”

Cover Image #2, Gerasimov, Aleksandr, “Lenin on the Tribune,” Oil on Canvas, 1930, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Fig. 1, Vatnestov, Viktor, “Baptism of Prince Vladimir,” Gouache, Pencil, Watercolor, Paper, 1890, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Fig. 2, Vladimirov, Ivan, “Confiscation of Church Property in Petrograd,” 1922, Cycle of Documentary Sketches of 1917-1922.

Fig. 4, Stakhievich, Dimitri, “The Defender,” (*Zashchitnik*) Saint Louis, MO., In 1926 Soviet Anti-Religious Propaganda Collection.

Fig. 5, Stakhievich, Dimitri, “Autumn,” (*Osen’*) Saint Louis, MO., In 1926 Soviet Anti-Religious Propaganda Collection.

Fig. 6, Yuon, Konstantin, “The Red Army on Parade in Red Square, Moscow, November 1940,” Lithography, Paper, 1940, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Fig. 7, Mikosha, Vladislav, “Demolition of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, 1931.”

Fig. 8, Khaldeĭ, Evgeniĭ, “Moscow -- Victory parade -- 24 June 1945,” 1945, Washington, D.C., In Prints and Photographs Division.