

Soviet Ideology, Western Delusion and The Russian Orthodox Church in the USSR

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The “Writings” of St. Tikhon as Indicative of the Soviet Mentality

The topic here concerns the use and abuse of Patriarch Tikhon (Bulavin) by both secular and Orthodox writers. The problem is that the usually non-critical approach of western “scholars” on this subject lead to absurdities when it comes to Soviet methods. Since the left cannot use deceit, St. Tikhon must have truly accepted the Soviet state. The analysis of some of “Tikhon's writings” that have “come down” to us gives a glimpse into the manipulation of words, language and names that lie at the heart of all propaganda.

Tikhon remains significant because he was a powerful voice against the Red takeover in the middle of the Civil War. His position was anything but enviable: divisions in his own church, a ruthless Red enemy, White forces whose ideology was non-existent and a country that had been brutalized into insensitivity. When Tikhon accepted the office of patriarch in 1918, he was the first man to hold that title since 1701 when Peter I abolished the office of patriarch. Moreover, Tikhon also knew it was a death sentence, since the dissolution of Russian society was already far advanced. In such times, the only winners are those with the least amount of scruple.

As bishop in the United States between 1898 and 1907, he also held American citizenship for a time and was familiar with English. In 1898, he was made bishop of Alaska and the Aleutian islands. His see was moved for a time to San Francisco and eventually, to New York City.

The issue here is the Soviet approach to the church and its reception both domestically and in exile. St. Tikhon condemned the Bolsheviks in no uncertain terms in 1918, accusing them correctly of creating war, division and daring to speak in the name of the “people.”

GPU documents dated October 31 1922 strongly insist that Tikhon is to be fought. Part of the means to do this is to create sectarianism and sow dissent in the church itself. This was repeated in another document dated one year later. There was a time when speaking like this would get the writer banned from all academic cocktail parties for being a “conspiracy nut.” yet now, it's public record, and the cocktail party set now speaks of it as if they believed it all along. This is the way “nationalists” work, after all. June 13 1928, the GPU recommends increasing support for sectarian groups, specifically the Doukhobors.

The first “document” from “Tikhon” is dated June 16, 1923. This is a poor example of propaganda that does improve in later years. This document is easy to show a fake, largely because it is made up of ideological cliches used by the lower level functionaries of the new Marxist state. For example, “Tikhon” is supposed to have said that his opinions could not be helped, since he “was the product of a monarchical society.” That phrase alone is so packed with error that it would take a book to refute. Most irritating is the neologism of an “monarchical society” which does not exist. The crown refers to the state, not social life.

Of course, there is the obligatory acceptance of all state action against “Anti-Soviet” elements in Russian life. Worst of all is the absurd error that the “Whites” were identical to

“royalists.” of course, even a cursory glance of the writings of the major leaders of the “White” factions show a dedication to Kerensky and the basic Cadet position. The very reference to a “White movement” is absurd, since there was (historically speaking) never any such a thing. The writing is stilted and bureaucratic. This did not prevent the majority of “Russia experts” up until the late 1980s from accepting it without criticism (Pipes, 1974).

As time goes by however, the propaganda gets more sophisticated and on occasion, almost incoherent. “Tikhon” seems to be more than one person, and it is quite possible that the resulting hodgepodge of ideological posturing is the result of bureaucratic disagreement as to what the “Russian people” are or want. For example, July 1 1923, “Tikhon” is said to have written a condemnation of the Renovators and foreign involvement in Russian religious life. Tikhon did actually say this. However, he is also supposed to have said that the “White monarchists” are to be condemned, as well as the Karlovci Synod, soon to be known as the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (sometimes in Exile). This seems to be inconsistent, largely because the Synod of Metropolitan Antony was certainly royalist, the Whites were anything but. It is silly to believe Tikhon would make such an error.

Another missive was issued in Tikhon's name on the 15th, again condemning the Renovators, while the August 23 offering also adds the “monarchists” to this list as well as the laughable sentiment that the USSR is “from God.” These three missives read precisely as a clumsy way to add authenticity to the writing by including a condemnation of the Renovators. The GPU had rejected this idea by then anyway. Mentioning of the “Polish interference” in Russian life is predictable, since this was at the conclusion of the Polish-Soviet war. Rejecting these on those grounds alone is quite certain.

Now, after saying that the New Calendar cannot be imposed by the state or the synod without the full consent of the faithful, “Tikhon” is now (that is, September 30, 1924) “saying” that the “New Calendar should be immediately imposed.” The clumsy writer says that there “is great support for the calendar change” among “Russians.” The smoking gun is the statement that only “ignorance and fanaticism” is keeping “Russia” from accepting this “bold reform.” That American and English “historians” accepted this garbage as “historical documentation” for decades shows just how much the typical academic is to be trusted.

One of the bigger issues in this field is the famed Testament of Patriarch Tikhon from April 7 1925. This writer has very good reason to dismiss it (or most of it) as poorly written propaganda, but slightly better than the GPU's earlier attempts. This requires lengthy quotations from this document, and the translations (and errors) are mine:

Coming to power over Russia, representatives of Soviet authority in January of 1918 issued a edict guaranteeing the complete freedom of Soviet citizens to believe what they wish in religious affairs. This means that the principle of “freedom of conscience” is enshrined in the Constitution of the USSR and it provides every religious group, and including our Orthodox Church, with the right and freedom to conduct its religious affairs in accordance with the requirements of their conscience, so long as it does not violate public order and the rights of other citizens.

Because of this, we write to the archpastors and pastors of our flock to fully accept and acknowledge the new order of things, the Workers and Peasants government of the people. This government has been welcomed by the people.

It is time to realize the Christian view that “the destiny of God's people are being built together” and accept everything that has happened as an expression of God's will. We will not sin against our faith and the Church by not meddling with these issues. We will permit no compromises or concessions in the area of faith and its civic expression, and we should be sincere with or respect for the Soviet government as an expression of the common good. We should adjust our church life to the new order of state and, in so doing, condemn every group that opposes this new order and any campaigns against it.

This can be found at the beginning of this Testament, and is a now common mixture of different factions putting this together within the Communist Party. The job of the scholar is to know both the ideology of Marx and Lenin, as well as those who were promoting it in the USSR. Once that is understood, the cliches in these missives are easily exposed as second rate versions of official propaganda.

A serious problem among the Anglo-American liberal cognoscenti is that the majority are not conversant in the details of philosophical writing or the ideological spectrum of the Soviet Union at the time. Since philosophy, theology, politics, economics and history are artificially separated, using one of these disciplines exclusively can not help but lead to a distorted view of things. Marx has to be understood in detail (and in context), and then the malformations of his doctrine by lower level functionaries makes more sense (and is more humorous to read). Understand the technical vocabulary as it wound its way from Marx to Lenin is essential, since these cliches are little more than very bad summations of this transmission. Worse, very few “Russian experts” have the slightest clue about the Orthodox church, and hence, most of their analysis on the matter is useless, albeit well intentioned.

“Tikhon” continues:

The public acts of our Orthodox communities should not be directed toward politics, which is completely alien to the church of God. It should be directed towards the strengthening of the faith, to fight the enemies of Orthodoxy: the sectarians, Catholics, Protestants, Renovators, atheists and all like them who use all their energy to attack Orthodoxy. The enemies of the Church have resorted to all kinds of deceptive acts, using violence, coercion and bribery in their effort to harm our church. Today in Poland, 350 of our churches have been reduced to just 50. The remainder were converted to the Roman faith or merely shut down. The Polish government has also engaged in the persecution of our clergy there.

While in the same document, the tone here has changed. First of all, the church in Russia has normally defined “politics” as the daily grind of elections, party factions, backroom deals and bureaucratic ladder-climbing. It certainly does not deal with questions of justice or ethics. While these have political implications, they are not essentially political questions. In this respect, the writer here is correct. On the other hand, if by “politics” the writer means “opposing the Soviet state,” then it's a deliberate manipulation of words. Given the circumstances, it is most likely the latter.

The tone changes, secondly, when the polemical and random comments about the newly

revived Polish state comes up. The Soviet-Polish war ended in the Spring of 1921, and it delayed the establishment of Soviet power in large parts of Ukraine. Third, the most important aspect of Orthodoxy in Poland is not even mentioned: the establishment of autocephaly for the Orthodox Church in Poland from the patriarch of Antioch.

St. Tikhon erred in his condemnation of this canonical erection of an autocephalous church, but his strong opinions on the matter are not even mentioned here. Refusing to explain what churches are being closed (the Polish church, the ROCOR or his own) the entire section is highly suspect. However, a low level bureaucrat writing this would most likely be far more cognizant of the recent war than this canonical issue. Tikhon would have no doubt been quite the opposite. The section is randomly inserted, vague and totally irrelevant to what Tikhon had already manifested as his interest in the issue.

The worst can be found here:

Our enemies, forever trying to separate us from our beloved children entrusted to us by God, spread false rumors that we are not free to practice the faith and function as a church. We have full rights to preach the word of God, have full freedom of conscience and reject the fantasies of the enemies of the people who claim that we cannot communicate with our flock. These claims of our enemies are lies and fabrications and we denounce them. There is no power on earth that can interrupt our patriarchal work. In fact, we are optimistic in our future and will succeed. We humbly ask you – our children – to continue in the work of God so as to be victorious over the sons of iniquity.

The comical problems here are too many to mention. First, St. Tikhon did not write like this, the GPU always used that sort of language. The key words are “denounce,” “fabrications and lies,” “fantasies,” and of course “enemies of the people.” There is only a rare GPU document of this era that does not contain some of this sort of rhetoric. In addition, the saccharine phrases such as “beloved children” and its cognates are precisely what an atheist would imagine his stereotypical clergyman would say.

In July of 1923, “St. Tikhon” stated that he “strongly dissociates himself from both foreign and domestic monarchist and “White Guardist” counter-revolutionary movements.” Of course, this is clumsy propaganda, and is really the product of the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union in a case concluded on June 16th. June 16, 1923.

At the same time, Metropolitan Peter (Polyansky) privately spoke of such coercive messages and stated “Please do not pay attention to that, these are done for internal reasons. People we know on the inside tell us about the horrid conditions the Patriarch is forced to endure; and he feels powerless to escape. He might publicly say to submit to the Soviets, but always privately tells is to reject it, since it is an atheist regime dedicated to the destruction of the church.” Comments like these can be taken at face value, or it might even be an admission of ignorance.

EA Tuchkov wrote that Tikhon was in regular correspondence with the Synod Abroad, and that the OGPU chief AH Artuzov believes that this is being carried out of the country by the Finnish and Latvian diplomatic couriers. The real problem in this era is to distinguish between Tikhon's own words and that of the Reds. Also, to distinguish Tikhon from allies speaking in his

name, as well as statements made under extreme duress. The masterful ability of the GPU to use half-truths and double-meanings is legendary, but it seems that talent was not used on Tikhon. Nevertheless, it might be impossible to come to a completely certain conclusion.

The response was typical Soviet: they arranged the murder of Tikhon's brother Jacob, one organized by Tutchkov himself. The Regime then spread rumors that it was Tikhon himself that pulled the trigger, but at the same time, that it also might have been a “fanatical White Guardist” that would require a massive purge of the church to avoid.

Sergius and Soviet Ideology

In February 15th 1930, Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), who in 14 years will be made patriarch, gave a press conference to Soviet journalists. A year earlier, Sergius gave almost the identical answers to foreign journalists. In answer to the question “ Does there really exist in the USSR persecution of religion and in what forms does it manifest itself? The poor metropolitan stated:

There has not been any persecution of religion in the USSR. Due to the Decree on the separation of Church and State the profession of any faith is fully free, and is not persecuted by any state organ. Moreover, the last resolution of the TsIK and SNK RSFSR about religious organizations of 8 April 1929 completely excludes even the slightest semblance of any persecution of religion (Quoted from Boobbyer, 171)

And in answer to the question “Is it true that the godless are closing churches and how do believers relate to that?”

Yes, it is true, some churches are closing. But the closure takes place not on the initiative of the [state] power, but on the wish of the population, and in certain cases even at the decision of the believers themselves. . . This news [attacks on clergy] does not correspond to reality in any way. It is all pure speculation and slander, completely unworthy of serious people. Certain priests have been called to account not for their religious activity, but charged for various anti-government activities (Quoted From Philip Boobbyer, 172).

The term for “conscience” “совести,” is more than just a rational and justifies assent to a course of action. It is the meeting of the heart and the mind, that entity where cognition and feeling come together. It is the whole body as one. Its similarity to the word “soviet” (sovesty) might well have been chosen on purpose.

One of the more laughable claims is that the “west” supported the “whites.” This is nullified by so many facts that it would entail a book by itself. First of all, upon Kolchak's mass retreat into Entente territory, the British authorities condemned Kolchak and stated that if he wanted relief aid, he would have to disband is entire army. Then the British flat out refused to assist the Whites, demanding that they return to Russia.

It is occasionally retorted that France recognized Wrangel's state and accepted all White refugees. Yet, this has no relation to anti-communism, but rather that Wrangel had the treasury of the Russian empire stowed away in Swiss banks. Since so much of the capital in Russia was owned by the French, this was seen as a “tribute” or a premium to begin repaying debts the Reds

had repudiated with impunity. On the other hand, the immigration law in France was amended to say that even a traffic ticket or mild citation was sufficient to repatriate.

It is almost universally unknown that, in the refugee camps in the Balkans and Germany, the authorities forced all to liquidate their holdings at bargain basement prices in exchange for any food aid while in exile. In Turkey, a separate market was established called the “Bazaar from Russian Refugees' Property.” Starting in 1924, France, Germany and Italy banned all Russian doctors, accountants or lawyers from working within their borders. In one of many insults to Russians, the Versailles Conference did not recognize the Imperial Russian delegation regardless of the fact that millions of Russians died fighting Germany.

The “capitalist” west was far more effective than the Cheka in destroying the Russian opposition. The Russian emigration was penniless and powerless, as the White army was disarmed, dissolved and hounded out of existence through poverty and employment. This is certainly a strange way for the west to deal with anti-communists. Doesn't money talk? At the same time, millions of dollars of investment and aid money from these same powers was pouring into the USSR. Francisco Franco came under western sanctions while Stalin was receiving aid and investment. To believe that the west was nothing if not pro-Marxist, statist and pro-Soviet can only come from constant repetition, as it can have no other source (Arato, 1978).

The pro-Bolshevik idea in the west continues to bear fruit. Absurdly, the academic establishment goes orbital; when nationalist groups are conjectured to have “collaborated” with the Germans. Implied here is the idea that Stalin was a good man unjustly attacked by Hitler. Further, that a suffering, bleeding and weak people have the luxury of these cosmopolitan and conformist moral principles shows the level of thoughtlessness American historians have now descended. In an almost knee-jerk reaction, “collaboration” is granted the most vile condemnation, while working with the Soviets is seen as heroic almost without exception.

Stalin, the Church, and the Cooperative Capitalists

Acting as Stalin's PR wing, FDR wrote to “Uncle Joe” and stated: “the Soviet image in the West would be improved, if they disbanded the Comintern and provided some evidence of religious freedom” (from Kalkandjieva, 179). The result was that Stalin ordered his kept bishops to “Create your own Vatican” (ibid). The result was the Patriarchate and the institution called the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church. The CAROC was the direct creation of Stalin with no input from any hierarch. Its purpose was to facilitate the connection between the NKVD and the ROC.

It is common to claim that Stalin ordered the opening of many churches. This is false. In the first class work of Kalkandjieva, she says:

Parallel with Decree No. 1325 of November 28, 1943, which allowed the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR to reopen Orthodox churches, Molotov ordered Karpov not to grant such permissions without the preliminary sanction of the government. In the period 1943–1945, believers submitted 5,770 requests for the opening of churches, but only 414 of them were granted (pg 184).

Her work comes from the opening of the new Kremlin archives only recently unsealed and is anything but flattering to the ROC. However, to his credit, Sergius did reject Stalin's request to permit married bishops. On the other hand, it became very clear that ecumenism was

part of the Soviet illusion of religious freedom. The first group were the naive Anglicans.

The bishop of York at the time was Cyril Garrett, who headed the mission to the USSR. Their reluctance to serve with Orthodox clergy did not come from any rejection of ecumenism, but due to the undying hatred of the English for Russia. However, his subsequent book *The Truth about Religion in Russia* was as idiotic as could be imagined. He argued that the only reason the church was liquidated in the 1920s was their support for the monarchy. Now, under Stalin, the church is “reborn.” The BBC aired this as well, creating a mini-series that romanticized Stalin as the “religious leader” of the Russian church. The MI6 also beamed it into Eastern Europe so as to prevent any rebellion against Stalin.

Adding greater insult to this farce, the soi-distant Patriarch of Alexandria wrote:

It must not be thought that the restoration of the [Moscow] Holy Synod is a political device imposed by circumstances. On the contrary it is due to an outspoken declaration of the national faith. Long before the dissolution of the Third International the Orthodox Church had assumed its rightful place (190)

Soviet documents clearly show that this was written by MI6, who controlled Egypt at the time. It also shows that there was never any “Cold War” and the west, more often than not, served as the protector of Soviet interests. The ROCOR's statement, condemned by some “mainline” organizations, was accurate in that it stated this “election” existed only for political purposes. Documents uncovered by Kalkandjieva show they were right. Worse, the entire “mainline” Orthodox world recognized Stalin's church. This is a crime these jurisdictions refuse to address. They need to. Even worse was the fact that these bishops knew they were lying, but the subsidies paid from Moscow to the Middle East (in pounds) were large. It also created an isolated, corrupt clerical elite among the “Orthodox churches” of the Mideast and parts of Europe (Tucker, 1971).

One of the important conduits of Soviet dominance over the other Orthodox sees was Princess Irina of Greece. On April 10 of 1945, Stalin met with Patriarch Alexei and laid out a plan for capturing the Orthodox world. Using the “victor over Fascism” was a major part of this movement. In addition, the minutes of this meeting also show how Alexei was to use “canonical arguments” to take all authority away from Constantinople. Due to Stalin's earlier directive, the “Orthodox Vatican” idea continues to be the Constitution of this abortion.

The CAROC was placed in charge of all efforts to bring “canonical” Orthodoxy over all the churches of the east. This was successful in Transcarpathia, western Ukraine, Czechoslovakia and unfortunately, in Poland. Soon, Finland and the Baltics were also to be forced under Moscow. None of these actions has any canonical validity for many reasons, but not the least of which is that it was merely Stalin's foreign policy only incidentally related to the church. This means that the “recognition” of Stalin's new sect was based almost entirely on financial pressure. Of course, Stalin spoke in lockstep with the MI6 in calling any anti-Soviet church “fascist.” The truth is that western media was far more enthusiastic about this than even the Soviet media.

Whenever the “canons” or church tradition got in the way of the ROC, the bishops would merely ask CAROC for assistance. They would then put “pressure” on the offending party or government, and quickly, fearing for their lives, did whatever Moscow wanted. Soon, the entire Orthodox world seemed “unified” around their Russian Marxist pope. Those dissenting were anathematized as “non-canonical.” This is the foundation of the “canonical” Orthodox church in

the 20th century.

It gets worse. Metropolitan Dionysus of Poland is one of the new-martyrs of the Soviet yoke. He was also in Hitler's camps. This bishops condemned Stalin's new sect and the bishops that were Stalin's men in cassocks. These men claimed that Polish autocephaly could only come from Moscow, thus the 1924 tomos creating this church was null and void. The argument is nonsense of course, but it shows the crude through process of the Church that Stalin built. Dionysus was a victim of CAROC, in that they began spreading rumors that he was a "Nazi agent" regardless of the fact that he did time in Dachau.

In 1949 the Polish Minister of Justice, G. Swentkowski, was summoned by CAROC to Moscow. The plan was then hatched that the Polish Church, which was actually the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church, would have its tomos revoked, then granted a new one from Moscow. Of course, the church was purged of "nationalists" and forced under Moscow, while still considered "autonomous" by "world Orthodoxy." Patriarch Maximus V of Constantinople was given a check for \$50,000 American dollars, which in 1949 was an immense sum. He then kept quiet (226-228ff).

Another example is that of Metropolitan Seraphim (Lukyanov), whop became the successor to Metropolitan Evlogius of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, soon under Moscow. Seraphim was a former ROCOR bishop that had been smeared with the "collaborationist" accusation. Of course, it was collaboration with Hitler, since collaboration with Stalin was universally seen as a praiseworthy act. Extremely sensitive to his smear, Seraphim was seen as vulnerable. It was for this reason that he was chosen by CAROC to be the next "leader" of the ROC in the west (245).

This poor soul was forced to say the following:

The Orthodox ecumenical Church goes beyond national frontiers. Within this vast Orthodox ecumenical Church our Russian Church must occupy an honorable place as Mother of its people and Protector of other Orthodox Churches asking its support, especially the Churches of the Slav peoples who are near to us.... While calling us to him, the Patriarch allows us all Christian liberty. We may believe and profess our faith freely. He binds us by no political obligations. We may be subjects of any country and live in it (246)

In exchange for this nonsense, Seraphim was assured that all accusations for collaboration would go away. It is worth noting that this also meant that western newspapers would also drop the accusation. How could that be? Unfortunately for Stalin, the Paris Orthodox voted for Metropolitan Vladimir over Stalin's appointee. Ultimately, this is what led to the failure of the MP in western Europe.

After Sergius: Metropolitan Benjamin and the Theology of Accommodation

Metropolitan Benjamin Fedchenko (d 1961) is an important transitional figure between the world of Tikhon and that of Sergius. His views came to typify the basic position of the accommodation of the "Russian Orthodox" bishops and the Soviet state. He defended the Moscow Patriarchate's submission to the USSR shortly after the death of Tikhon. He argues that the Red forces created a consolidated state that was irresistible. The church had no choice but to

accept it. He says that the Reds came as a chastisement for the sins of Russia, hence, it must be recognized and accepted. Ultimately, this was the view of Metropolitan Sergius.

Bad kings of Israel were not repudiated by the Temple authorities, but this begs the question. Part of the reason why they were bad kings – eg Jeroboam II – was their purging of the Temple and murder of the prophets. Hence, this is assuming the consequent. From this argument for Old Testament “submission” Metropolitan Benjamin concludes that all power is from God. Itself question begging.

More seriously, Benjamin argues that strict canonical order is not possible given the chaos of the war and its aftermath. Making detailed canonical arguments – as many opponents of the Patriarchate do – make little sense given the lack of law in general as well as the inability to communicate or gather relevant information. Overall, history is in God's hands, including Lenin.

It is impossible to understand the inner workings of his mind, especially under such horrific conditions. In basic spirituality, he was quite traditional and was the defender of the Optina tradition far into the Soviet period. The fact that he argued that humanity is in a constant state of degeneration since the fall, the accommodation to the USSR is necessary. The human element will no longer support anything else but power and materialism.

Similarly, Innocent of Kherson argued that the Reds forced the church into an existence apart from social life. This is a form of cleansing – the church tries to sanctify social life, not reorder it. This is a rationalization in that the church has always been at the center of everything social. The state has no social rights in Orthodox thought except in carrying out the inner meaning of theology. From the Prophets to St. Paul to Joseph of Volok, the church has been the very content of social laws, not the state. Claiming that “the church is not a social force” is a weak and desperate rationalization, not a theological opinion.

Worse, he argues that the mass murder of Orthodox people is a “cleansing and purging” of the church, and hence is justified. In the process of this “purging” he argues, Russia has been unified and centralized. The Reds are no different than the Mongols, Turks or Crusaders in this regard. To believe that Lenin did not do any good at all is absurd. To his credit, he did not reject the ROCA, but sought a balanced accommodation with it. Both men did not believe the USSR would last long. Both believed that even if it did, it would soon lose its revolutionary character and become nationalized.

While Sergius' Declaration of July 1927 is often quoted, it is rare that the entire paper is read. What makes the church of the Soviet period distinct from all other forms of torment before it is that he identified the church explicitly with the body of the USSR. From his Declaration,

Every blow directed against the Union, be it war, boycott, or simply murder from behind a corner, like that in Warsaw, we acknowledge as a blow directed against us. Remaining Orthodox we remember our duty to be citizens of the Union ‘not from fear, but from conscience’, as the Apostle has taught us (Rom 13:5). And we hope that with God’s help, by your general cooperation and support, we shall resolve this matter (quoted from Boobbyer, 170).

By claiming that the body of the church is identical to that of the state (or the Soviet idea more generally), he is making an ontological statement striking in its content. Even if Sergius was promised freedom for priests in exchange for his words, he did not have to go this far. Making a mockery of the whole process, the foreign journalists, once they got a hold of this,

printed them as fact, without research or even approaching the exile community in all western major cities. Further, the use of the word “conscience”

It is almost laughable to argue that western policymakers and diplomatists knew anything about Marxism or Bolshevism. Only in the post World War II era did the west undertake any serious study of Russia, and this is largely worthless. For the western world, there was nothing inherently immoral about demanding equality, though the Reds were concerned with no such thing. A strong state sector is not only acceptable in the west, its western policy. As far as western capital was concerned, the USSR was no threat, but the results of a huge wealth transfer from the former capitalists to the Party. It mattered not who was controlling the wealth, only their willingness to let the west profit from it. That they did. There is no evidence whatsoever that the west was ever threatened by the USSR on ideological grounds, or that any significant figure among western policymakers knew what Bolshevism was (Tucker, 1971).

St. Tikhon was not dealing with an isolated USSR, but also a western-backed Red state that soon became a playground for western capital. Tikhon was dealing with materialism and globalism, not “Marxism.” In early 1919, the Entente demanded a rapprochement between Red and White for the sake of maintaining a buffer against a defeated Germany. Fedchenko helped negotiate the very unpopular Brest peace treaty, which if anything, signaled the inability of Russia to fight for the west.

The Entente wanted to use the Czech POWs as well as the “ideologically reliable” Whites to recreate the eastern front at the end of the war. This was somewhat realistic in that the Czechs needed little prompting to fight the Germans and Austrians.

Great Britain early on rejected the White movement due to their “Great Russia” position. That was a threat to British colonialism in Central Asia, East Asia and the Middle East. While the Reds were awash in weapons and cash, the White forces were almost always out of ammunition. The latter received no aid, the few rifles sent to them were inoperable. The result was that the British sought to unseat Denikin, while Germany saw Red Russia as a useful ally against the west. Since the Bolsheviks would assist the “revisionist powers,” Germany became heavily invested in the new USSR.

Conclusion: The Absurdity of Atheistic Orthodoxy

It has often been argued that “religion” was persecuted in the USSR. As in the west “religion” is a code word for “Christianity.” However, in the book *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and the Successor States* (Cambridge UP 1994) John Anderson cites official and non-official statistics that say otherwise. The height of Khrushchev's repression of Orthodoxy was between January of 1958 to the year of his overthrow, 1964.

Anderson's statistics deal with the numbers of institutions closed, mostly parishes, from all denominations. In this period of time, the Orthodox church, the sole target of the repression, went from 13,430 parishes (many opened due to Stalin's interest in the war) to roughly 7500 in 1964, a reduction of half. Almost all of which was accomplished through the command of the regime through the synod.

The other religious groups saw only token repression. The Roman church saw the reduction of their 1244 parishes to 1046, mostly in the west and the Baltics. This is a decrease of 16%. The Lutherans gained a parish in this period, going from 451 to 452. Jews saw a few closures due to the Zionist connection, going from 135 synagogues to 92, though the sect was officially sponsored in the far east. Buddhism – not a religion but a philosophy of life – was not

touched at all. The Mormons were not touched, while the sectarian Molokans likewise. Baptists and Old Believers saw a few closures, though the Old Believer statistics cannot be accurate given their long tradition of never reporting their existence. Muslims saw about 100 mosques closed, a 22% decrease for them. All other sects saw no repression whatsoever (Anderson, 1994: 55).

Many of the non-Orthodox closures can be explained through specific motives. Islam to control the Central Asian republics, the Jews for Zionism, and the Armenians for nationalism. These were not religious issues at all. The Orthodox were destroyed for being Russian and Orthodox at the same time. A deadly combination under the materialist and Darwinian Marxists.

One of the most painful episodes of this period is the behavior of the “Russian Orthodox Church.” Reading Anderson's detailed analysis, it becomes clear that this sectarian group was little more than a transmission belt for Soviet demands. One example is both humorous and vile. In 1960, one of the strategies to destroy Orthodoxy was to remove priests from any close connection to the parish. They were to be removed from any social or financial aspect of church life. Seven months later, the Moscow Church called a “sacred synod” at Zagorsk, where they decreed that priests were to be removed from any social or financial aspect of church life. All they did was take the KGB order and pasted it into a “church document.” This tragic and comic episode was a daily event in the Soviet Union.

Appendix

The author is not judging the clergy. The threat of camps, starvation, torture and the destruction of their families was very real. They had seen it for themselves. Their fear was reasonable and they conformed to the state rather than be frozen to death in the on the White Sea. Most Americans, the author included, would likely have done the same rather than risk their wife, children and parents being sent to the Taiga. To hear comfortable, suburban Orthodox in America condemn the “traitors” and “apostates” in the Soviet Union is enough to cause severe blood pressure issues. They would all have waved the hammer and sickle if their Volvo was threatened. They would have sold their priest up the river if their credit score might go down a point. The church at the time had no validity, their personal decisions, however, if they were truly Orthodox and not just bureaucrats, are understandable and rational.

In 1975, Fr. Gleb Yakunin and the lay scholar Lev Regelson addressed the Nairobi meeting of the World Council of Churches. This organization exists solely from corporate donations from western firms. Their speech to the group was ironic: they asked why this body, piously condemning every injustice in the world – real or imagined – except one: the persecution of the Orthodox church in the USSR. They received no answer except a swift condemnation from the “Russian Orthodox Church” present there. Yet for all this, the party complained about a Orthodox revival as early as 1970 and worse, that the new generation of believers were far better education than earlier.

Even the best of scholars remarks that “western pressure” influenced the Soviet policy on religion, they are incapable of providing any real documentation. When Jews were forbidden to emigrate to Israel, the US Congress erupted in indignation, for the Orthodox, the collective yawn would force a blackout due to the excess of carbon monoxide in the air. The fact that the WCC was the “religious wing” of corporate America generally negates any claim that the “west” was anything but supportive of Soviet policy in that respect. When it was clear that the Orthodox in Russia were advocating “nationalism” the crushing persecution by Andropov was met with barely concealed nods of approval.

The otherwise excellent book by Anderson argues that “detente” was the cause of the Soviet easing up on persecution. He suggests that detente was about lowering ”Cold War” tensions, and thus, reducing the execution rate of the Orthodox was a means to show “good faith.” The truth was that detente was the Soviet plea for some space and greater aid. Their economy was struggling and, as always, western corporations struck deals with Moscow for lower grain prices. Chief among these corporate financiers of the USSR was Archer-Daniels-Midland, once of the main companies financing the WCC.

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