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The Soviet Government's
Use and Abuse of Religion During World War II

A Liberal Studies Program
Seminar Project

By
Mary McCutchan Kell
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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Philosophical Background of Russian Communist Atheism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Historical Background</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Change in Policy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Russia Invaded by Germany 1941</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Situation in 1945</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Post-War Reversion to Pre-War Tactics</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footnotes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Part of the Soviet ideology asserts that atheism is a prerequisite for the Socialist State. I have investigated one period - 1939 to 1945 - in Soviet history in which the Soviets retreated from their atheistic stance. By tracing the philosophical and historical roots of Soviet atheism and by describing the events which led the Soviets to change their anti-religious tactics during World War II, I have tried to show that, Soviet propaganda to the contrary, the Russian government remained dedicated to building a Godless society.

I. Philosophical Background of Russian Communist Atheism

The basis of Soviet militant atheism is both philosophical and historical. In the opinion of Nicholas Berdyaev Russian atheism flows in an unbroken line entirely from her intellectual tradition. He traces Russian religious psychology to the tradition of the "Raskol" (a schismatic split in the early Russian Church) which predates Peter the Great. The effect of the "Raskol" on religious life in Russia was disastrous according to Berdyaev because it set the tone for all time to come of "... a divorce between the Church's people and her rulers, between the common people and the cultured class which," he says, "grew more and more strong and violent."¹

Berdyaev sees in the intellectual trends of the 1860s a continuation of the spirit of the "Raskol" combined with:

A hatred of all religion, mysticism, metaphysics, and
pure art as things which deflect energy from the creation of better social order; substitution of social utilitarianism for all absolute morality; exclusive domination of natural science and political economy, together with suspicion of the humanities; recognition of the labourers, workmen and peasants, as the only real men; oppression of interior personal life by the social principle and social utility; the utopia of a perfect social structure. Perfection in life is to be attained not by changing man but by changing society. It is understood first and foremost as freedom from suffering and the advent of happiness.  

Why was the Russian religious psychology so completely transformed in the nineteenth century from religious ideals to social problems? Was this transformation a result of the conflict between religious faith and scientific knowledge which played such an important role in the demise of religious faith in the West?

Berdyaev answers, no, that, "The Russian soul is troubled not so much by any conflict between Christianity and science as by that between it and social truth, by the fact that Christianity backs up social untruth."  

The Russian intelligentsia was alienated from the Russian Orthodox Church and turned off by organized Christianity. A Christian (for them) was someone who was concerned with maintaining the status quo (social injustice) for the sake of his own comfort.

Philosophically the Bolsheviks based their attitude toward religion on the teaching of Karl Marx. According to Marx, man passes through four ages with respect to religion: (1) "primitive man" - who was in awe of natural forces and called for supernatural help; (2) "slavery to feudalism" - in religion's "golden Period" the slaves of the Roman
empire took comfort and courage from Christianity to lift themselves up to feudalism; (3) "capitalism" - religion no longer helps the oppressed; instead it is a tool of the ruling class; and, (4) "socialism" - as the classes of society dissolve so does the need for religion which will wither away since men will not need consolation in the ideal society.

While condemning religion for its role in helping to keep the masses enslaved, Marx gave no strategy for its elimination because he foresaw the evolution of socialism only in an advanced capitalistic state. Marx wrote, "When economic conditions are ripe in any given country, the socialist revolution will take place naturally and inexorably." Furthermore, he argued it will not be affected by external international developments nor by "... internal developments (other than economic), such as violent pruning of exploitative religion". 4

Later, however, Marx qualified his view by outlining a more active stand which the aspiring socialist might take against religion. In 1844 in _Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right_, he advocates a more direct attack on religion:

The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly a struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion. Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of men is a demand for their real happiness. 5

Marx thought that religion and religious faith stood in the way of social justice. Religion by promising justice in the hereafter, condoned
injustice in this world.

In general Marxist religious policy was tolerant, but at least one early adherent supposed the necessity of the violent elimination of religion. 6

Marx's ambivalence on this point reflects his philosophical and personal inheritance of two opposed principles: "materialism" and "positivism". Materialism, stressing control in the sense of power over men and things, was his emotional inheritance. Positivism, stressing the rational, evolutionary, axiomatic laws of science, was his intellectual position.

As a materialist Marx believed that man is engaged in a dual struggle with the forces of nature on the one side and the irrationality of society on the other. Religion is a barrier in both aspects of man's struggle.

The appeal of Marxism to Russian intellectuals in the late nineteenth century rested on two of its major characteristics: a pitiless non-concern for individual man "... before the mightiness of the new deity, the social collectivity...";7 and its concern with gaining power to change society. This appeal was in contrast to, and a reaction against, the older people-loving socialism of the "Narodniki".

Lenin subscribed to Marx's view that the struggle against religion is secondary to the class struggle. He believed that the socio-economic system which best fosters religion is capitalism. Therefore, he
argues, "... the struggle against religion should have for its principle objective the cutting of the roots of religion, that is the dissolution of the capitalistic system. In this way, the disappearance of religion will become merely a natural consequence of the fundamental victory."8

Lenin believed, as did Marx, that material and spiritual oppression weigh upon the workers. Religion becomes an intoxicant to soothe their misery on earth with promises of goodness to come in the hereafter. However, religion does not make any real change in a man's life. The only real change in man's condition on earth is the one which comes from a change in his economic condition.

Lenin modified Marx's philosophy to fit the circumstances in Russia. In his writings, What Is To Be Done? (1902) and Imperialism (1916) he advocated violence and propaganda as necessary tools to bring about social justice. He wrote, "... although socialism could not be achieved in a backward country such as Russia, socialists could take power in such a backwater area and act as the spark which would ignite socialist revolutions throughout the highly industrialized West."9 Lenin considered an attack on religion (i.e., Russian Orthodoxy) as a direct attack on Tsarism, "... an exploitative social system."10

In practice, however, Lenin did not attack religion directly until Bolshevik power was secure, thus:
His legacy to the communist state was, like Marx's legacy to socialists, ambivalent - while propounding a virulent stand against religion as opposed to waiting for it to die a natural death, Lenin's directives could justify any policy, including religious toleration, which would buttress the maintenance and extension of power.11

Josef Stalin, Lenin's successor, was born to a poor family in Gori, Georgia, in 1879. He attended the Eastern Orthodox seminary at Tiflis. "He was expelled shortly before graduation apparently for having belonged while in it to a secret Marxist discussion group."12 Thirteen years later he was recruited into the senior echelons of the Bolshevik party. There is very little known about Stalin's early life. There is no evidence at all that he was religiously inclined. The fact that he was from a poor family and attended the seminary suggests that he may have seen the priesthood as an escape from a dreary life.

Stalin's personal goal was to secure power to fortify his own position as leader in contrast to Lenin who wished to secure power to bring about the socialist state. In the 1930s Stalin brutalized religion because it represented a possible threat to his authority. When war approached he used religion to call forth the nationalistic feelings of the people. He resurrected nationalism to support his war policies. Marxism-Leninism was de-emphasized after 1939.

II. Historical Background

The Russian Church played a great part in the early history of the Russian state. It is even admitted by the Soviets that Christianity
civilized the early Russians and contributed much to their culture. In Michael Bourdeaux's opinion, "It is impossible to understand the situation of Christianity in the U.S.S.R. if we see it in isolation from the thousand years which precluded it."¹³

Peter the Great's abolition of the Patriarchate and other administrative reforms made the church completely subservient to the state. This event is from an historical point of view, a watershed in Russian church-state relations. The church became completely identified with the aims of the state. It helped the Tsars to repress and control the people. Spiritual leadership was lost as the church sought mainly to preserve its position of wealth and magnificence. Bourdeaux says:

There is always a danger that when Church and State become completely intertwined the tradition of the former will ossify. Instead of perpetually renewing itself in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church becomes intent on holding fast to the exalted position which it occupies, with all its trappings of magnificence and wealth. This is what happened between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries and the diehard conservatism of those years was one of the main factors in setting up a situation which made the Revolution possible.¹⁴

The church was almost completely unaffected by the intellectual trends of the nineteenth century which were to become the basis for the later upheavals in society. After the Revolution the (Orthodox) church allied itself with the "Whites". This only served to underline its reactionary nature
and to identify it with the counter-Revolutionary cause. It was this plus the Bolsheviks' hostility to religion and religious influence that brought about the inevitable conflict between the church and the Bolsheviks.

The sequence of events is thus: the Bolshevik leaders took control of the country; when their power was certain they began to push for the unpopular parts of their program, chiefly, persecution of religion.

Historian N.S. Timasheff disagrees with Nicholas Berdyaev on the cause of the hostility between the Bolsheviks and the Orthodox Church. He sees the persecution of the Church as the inevitable outcome of historical events surrounding the revolutionary overthrow of the Provisional Government rather than an ideological clash. With reference to the clash between the old faith and the new faith described by Berdyaev, Timasheff thinks that his own explanation:

... is preferable to more sophisticated explanations which see in the anti-religious fanaticism of Communism a kind of metamorphosis of rooted piety of the Russian national spirit; this point of view would compel us to think of the victory of Communism as a straight continuation of Russian history, which it certainly was not.¹⁵

But, Timasheff does not answer the question of how a party of atheists could come to power in Russia. For that, Berdyaev gives the answer.

The reasons why the Bolsheviks repudiated the Russian Orthodox Church are these: that Marx was opposed to religion; that the Bolsheviks in an era of upheaval needed to make an absolute claim on men's loyalties (Tsardom and the Provisional Government having been
destroyed, the Church was the remaining bastion of the old regime); Lenin's belief that man's destiny lay in his hands and that he was chosen to lead the people to a new age.

The first attack on religion after the Revolution included: cessation of all payments by the state to the clergy; prohibition of religious instruction in schools and theological seminaries; closing of churches; attacks on clergymen - including imprisonment and execution; looting and confiscation of church property; and imprisonment and execution of the faithful on the grounds of counter-Revolutionary activity.  

After the period of the Civil War the direct attack on religion ceased. This was not the result of a new policy on the part of the Bolsheviks but the beginning of a new phase of religious persecution employing more subtle tactics. The Bolsheviks had seen that closing churches and executing priests had not destroyed the faith of the people.

The government now realized that their real efforts must be devoted to indoctrinating the young and raising the consciousness of their elders through antireligious propaganda.

Throughout the next decade (1920s) as economic policy became more liberal, religious policy became more rigid. Actually, however, this reflected not a policy change but a methodological one.

Timasheff in his book Religion in Soviet Russia 1917-1942 lists the four main features of government anti-religious policy in this period: (1) to deprive churches of material means and existence;
(2) to reduce priests to a status of social inferiority; (3) to destroy the church's influence on various phases of life, particularly education and morality; (4) the organization of the "Living Church" - a puppet church completely controlled by the state - in 1923, to rival the Orthodox Church and the organization of the "League of Militant Godless" in 1925 - a group dedicated to anti-religious activities and propaganda.

The year 1929 saw an increase in militancy on the part of the government with respect to religion. Religious activities were vigorously repressed through the secret police and the League of Militant Godless. Also, in 1929, the 1918 Constitution was amended to prohibit the dissemination of religious propaganda.

Although the Communists took systematic measures against the church during the period of the first five-year plan, they continued to allow the celebration of the liturgy. In doing this, in Michael Bourdeaux's opinion, "... they completely failed to understand the true nature of religion. They simply did not see that to allow Christians to continue celebrating the liturgy together was to spare their lifeline." 18

The year 1936 saw some letup of religious persecution on the part of the Soviets. The 1936 Soviet Constitution gave Soviet citizens the right to profess their religion but not to propagandize for it. Freedom of religious worship was reinstated and Sunday became once again a day of rest. This change in Soviet policy and action may have been instituted solely to impress Western countries with whom
the Soviet was attempting to establish economic relations.

Nevertheless, 1937-38 saw renewed attacks on the clergy. The party's Central Committee said in 1937 that: "It is much more difficult to uproot religion from the consciousness of the workers than to liberate them from the capitalists". 19

The third and last attack on religion reached its peak in 1937-38 at the same time that the purge trials of the last of the old guard of the party and most of the leading Red Generals were being held. This most virulent attack on religion is believed by Timasheff to have been caused by the results of a census taken in January, 1937, in which a question of religious adherence was answered in the affirmative by over fifty million people. The authorities were so upset that the census was never published and the census takers were jailed. The leaders of the League of Militant Godless were purged because they had failed in their responsibility. 20

Robert Conquest gives an additional reason for the 1937 attack. He says that:

The improvement in the position of the clergy, as a result of the 1936 Constitution made the Soviet leaders uneasy about the church's designs, for ... in the election of the Supreme Soviet of 11 December 1937 church leaders thought that they had a constitutional right to propose candidates from their own ranks for the Supreme Soviet. The Soviet leaders had overlooked this development and so had openly to contravene their own electoral regulations. 'It was necessary' it was said, 'to give a decisive rebuff to the attempts of the priesthood to spread lying fabrications to the effect that religious organizations...have the constitutional right to put forward their own candidates.' 21
III. Change in Policy

The attack ended as suddenly as it had begun. Yezhoff (the Chief of the NKVD) was dismissed. He was succeeded by Beria in January 1939, who, acting on new instructions, inaugurated a policy of religious toleration, although it was never officially proclaimed as such.²²

The fact that the old government religious policy had never really worked to eradicate religious belief undoubtedly had something to do with the new tactics.

Three joint sessions of the Historical Institute of the Academy of Sciences and of the Central Committee of the Militant Athists League were held on December 12, 16, and 22, 1938. The purpose of these meetings was to develop a new ideology to support the government's new religious policy.²³ It was determined that an all out war with Christianity was not necessary because Christianity had "... not always been a reactionary force as was at first supposed".²⁴ This new policy was hailed as the:

... true interpretation of Marxism whereas the old policy had been a misconception, not on the part of the leadership which was infallible, but of the Militant Atheist's League²⁵ and local Communists.²⁶

The new theory stressed the value of Christianity as a support of traditional family life. At the same time any essential association between Christianity and Capitalism was denied. It hailed the
Christianization of Russia by Prince Vladimir in the fourth century as an important step in Russia's cultural development which led to her development as a great nation.

About this time, and in this same vein, Sergei Eisenstein made "Alexander Nevsky" a film about a thirteenth century hero who protected Russia from invasion by the Germans and Swedes. The Historical Institute, in line with the new approach, stated that, "Despite the fact that Alexander Nevsky is considered a saint by the Orthodox Church, atheists have to avoid any defamation of his memory; they must remember that he is a beloved hero of the people and that he merited the gratitude of later generations by his patriotism and military prowess."

Perhaps the most compelling reason for the new policy came as a result of the 1939 pact with Hitler. Stalin annexed the Baltic States, Bessarabia, and Eastern Poland. This brought several million practicing Christians, both Orthodox and Roman Catholic, under Soviet control.

After the annexation of Eastern Poland, Militant Atheists were once more reminded that Lenin and Stalin rebuked those Communists who considered that the struggle against religion was in all circumstances necessary; this struggle had to be subordinated to general policy.

Actions taken by the Soviet government backing up the new religious policy included:

1. refusal to permit acts of violence against worshippers (although some persecution of the clergy continued)
2. In 1939 all attempts to liquidate religion were decreed illegal

3. Closing churches - decreed illegal

4. Militant Atheists directed to see that there were no anti-religious outbursts(!)

5. "Trials" against religion halted

6. Anti-religious propaganda became milder

7. Some concessions were made to the 'Orthodox way of life'; icons permitted, etc.

8. 6-day week abandoned. Sunday declared a rest day over objections of atheists who wanted Monday or Wednesday.

9. Intensification of persecution of Roman Catholic Church

10. Realization by leadership that it "... was easier to keep religion within limits when it was under the jurisdiction of a well organized and centralized church than to try to curtail the activities of thousands of local sects or of the traveling priests."29

This policy had been in effect about two and a half years when war broke out in 1941.30

IV. Russia Invaded by Germany - 1941

The next phase of church-state relations began on June 21, 1941, the day the German armies invaded the Ukraine. The Soviets from that day forward became allied with the West, not by choice but by the force of circumstance.

The day after the invasion, June 22, 1941, the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow, Metropolitan Sergei, asked
his congregation to heed the danger to the nation and to stand behind
the government in its efforts to defeat the Germans. He said, in
part:

Our Orthodox Church has always shared the fate of the
people. It has always borne their trials and cherished
their successes. It will not desert the people now... The Church of Christ blesses all the Orthodox defending
the sacred frontiers of our Motherland. The Lord will
grant us victory.31

On June 26, 1941, Sergei held a prayer service for the Soviet
troops in which he declared, "It is the duty of all to defend the
Motherland."32

The immediate reaction of the government to Sergei's initiative
was to cease its anti-religious propaganda. Although the League of
Militant Godless, the government's official anti-religious propa-
ganda organ, was practically defunct the need to rally the people be-
hind the church and state effectively destroyed it. "Moscow radio
called upon all God-loving inhabitants of the occupied countries
to rise in defense of their religious freedom", charging, "... the
German regime with menacing the very existence of Christianity
and seeking the overthrow of Christ the King."33 The publication of
Bezbozhnik, (Godless) the League's weekly and Antireligioznik, the
League's monthly, ceased altogether. The production of atheist films
was suspended because the government wished to use film to propa-
gandize for the war effort.34

Religious values were officially approved by the government
in the first phase of the war with Germany. "Divorce and separation were once more limited," "... a tax was leveled on celibates and on unregistered marriages...", and "mixed schools were supressed..." The government's motivation was entirely practical. Due to the brutal enforcement of the first five year plan the population had suffered a huge drop. The government hoped by encouraging family life to reverse this trend.

The Communists saw the necessity of putting the war on a nationalistic basis and the measures that they took at this time were pragmatic efforts to rally the citizens along this line. The phrase "rival ideologies" disappeared from the newspapers as the government controlled Pravda and Izvestia called the people to a national war. The churches, because of their patriotic rallying to the National cause, were no more to be characterized as "... the allies of foreign designs upon the Soviet Union." It soon became apparent to the Soviets that the need of the people for religious consolation in wartime was great. The abstract impersonal quality of Marxism would not suffice to inspire the people at home nor the soldiers at the front.

The strongest evidence of the people's need for religion came to the Soviet leadership as they saw church attendance in the Ukraine grow in the wake of the German invasion. The Nazi's sparked a religious revival in the areas which they conquered by reopening the churches.
In the words of a Red Army General, "Our people flocked gratefully to them. Nazis began making many friends among us by their apparent reverence and love of God." The Nazis did not perceive the advantage they had acquired nor the extent of the feeling of good will that they had evoked in the people, but the Soviet leadership was well aware by this time of the people's religious hunger and its value as a weapon in the war.

The Orthodox Church in Moscow continued actively to encourage its members to support the war effort. On February 23, 1942, the "... Orthodox Churches and clergy of Moscow gave 1,500,000 roubles to the Red Army Fund..." In January, 1943, "Metropolitan Sergei launched a campaign for contributions towards a Dmitri Donskoi' tank column..." And, in March 1944, "... the Orthodox clergy of Moscow gave a further 1,000,000 roubles to rebuild aircraft. In all during the war, the Orthodox Church contributed to the national defense more than 300,000,000 roubles." Priests during this period exhorted the people to have faith in and remain loyal to the government.

What was the Soviet government's reaction to this wholehearted support on the part of the Orthodox church?

Cessation of anti-religious propaganda has been mentioned as the most immediate reaction. This was followed by active encouragement on the part of the government to attend church services and to follow a Christian way of life. Another significant sign of
government encouragement came in November, 1942, when
"Metropolitan Nikolai of Kiev and Galicia was appointed to the
Extraordinary State Commission for investigating German atrocities
- the first State appointment held by an ecclesiastic since the Revo-
lation." 41

September 4, 1943, marked the most dramatic change in church-
state relations. Stalin and Molotov met with the three Metropolitan
of Russia; Sergei, Nikolai, and Alexsei, in the Kremlin to thank
them for their services to the state by informing them that the
activities of the Russian Orthodox Church would have official govern-
ment recognition. 42 Four days later a church council ("Sobor")
of nineteen bishops was permitted to meet to elect a Patriarch (the
first since the time of Peter the Great) and a Synod to assist him.
Sergei was the unanimous choice of the "Sobor".

On September 12, 1943, the monthly Journal of the Moscow
Patriarchate began publication. In October, 1943, the Council for
the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church was established, "... to
maintain liaison between the government of the USSR and the
Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia on questions of the Russian
Orthodox Church requiring decision by the Government of the USSR." 43
The Council headed by G. Karpov had five members. In addition,
a Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults was established in
July, 1944, "... to perform the same functions in relation to the
Armenian-Gregorian, Old Believer, Catholic, Graeco-Catholic, and
Lutheran Churches, the Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist creeds and sectarian organizations. 44

The function of these councils was to oversee the church. They carried this out by regulating the church's building programs, rules of church organizations, and church education programs. They acted as an intermediary in the church's dealings with the government. Michael Bourdeaux has likened these councils to the Procurator of the Holy Synod of Tsarist times who was the link between the church and the secret police.

On May 15, 1944, just eight months after his election, Sergei died. His work of rebuilding the Orthodox Church was immediately taken up by Metropolitan Alexsei of Leningrad. 45

Further important developments saw the reopening on June 14, 1944 of the Moscow Theological Institute for the training of young men to be Orthodox priests, 46 and, in September, 1944, the "... rules on religious instruction of children were given a more liberal interpretation." 47, 48

By June, 1945 the number of Orthodox Churches in Russia had increased to 16,000 (from less than 5,000 at the beginning of the war). As the churches opened under the State's protection, the influence of the Orthodox Church spread so that it advanced towards the Soviet goal of establishing Moscow as the center of world orthodoxy.

The Russian Orthodox Church was the chief beneficiary of the
change in government religious policy after 1943. Other
denominations were not included in the new policy. In fact, some
of them, particularly the Roman Catholics, were persecuted more
than ever. The new religious policy might be more properly
called a new method in the fight against religion. The Soviets in
theory, still wished to destroy all religion, but in practice they
attacked only those denominations which opposed them and were
lenient to those who could be helpful. The Roman Catholics were
seen by the Soviets as enemies of the regime for the reason that
most Catholics were Polish, Latvian, or Lithuanian, countries that
had been annexed by the Soviets in 1939. In addition, the central
authority of their religion was in Rome, not Moscow. The Soviets
were determined to gain political, as well as religious, allegiance
from the citizens in the countries they controlled. Russia’s new
policy of religious freedom was nothing more than a political move.

At least some of the action of the Soviet government with respect
to religion in this period was dictated by pressure from the West.
After the German attack of 1941, the Western countries had to decide
how they could morally support a country whose values were the
antithesis of their own. While feeling great sympathy with the suffering
of the Russian people the Westerners could hardly justify the right to
existence of the Soviet government whose very foundation lay in the
absolute denial of the rights of the individual.

In the history of the U.S. - Soviet relations the issue of religious
freedom in the U.S.S.R. had been a stumbling block to formal
recognition of Russia by the U.S.A. since the early 1930s. When
Roosevelt opened negotiations with the Russians in 1933, hundreds
of letters and telegrams were received in Washington on this issue.

In 1941 this difficulty came up again with the result that President
Roosevelt pressed the Russians to take a more lenient stand on the
question of religious freedom. On September 11, 1944, it was
reported in the New York Times that in a conversation with Soviet
Ambassador, Konstantin A. Umansky, "President Roosevelt obliquely
connected American aid with the religious issue in the U.S.S.R. by
suggesting that 'some publicity' regarding the freedom of religion
in the U.S.S.R. might have a very fine educational effect before the
next lend-lease bill comes up in Congress."\(^{51}\)

At the end of September, 1941: "W. Averell Harriman who was
in Moscow with Lord Beaverbrook to work out the details on Lend-
Lease for the U.S.S.R. informed Molotov and Umansky (as did
U.S. Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt) that the American Govern-
ment wanted a declaration on freedom of religion from the Soviet
Government."\(^{52}\)

It was pointed out to the Americans that the Soviet government
guaranteed freedom of religion in Article 124 of its Constitution.
This, of course, as we know, did not give the Russians freedom to
practice their religion in the sense that we in the West understand
it, but Roosevelt seized on this straw as an opportunity to show the
West that the Russians were not as bad as they seemed. 53

"At a banquet in honor of American and British guests, on November 18, 1941, Stalin said, 'May God help President Roosevelt in his task,' words which would have been inconceivable a few months earlier." 54

Stalin's blessing perfectly illustrates the pragmatic understanding which he had reached with Western leaders (Roosevelt and Churchill) about the sort of public utterances that were necessary to deflect their people from moral issues to what each considered to be the task of the moment, that of winning the war against the Germans.

V. Situation in 1945

In the days following the revolution the church had viewed the Communists with complete and open hostility. This feeling prevailed until 1941, when the Church endorsed the Soviet regime and actively supported its policies. By the end of the war the subjugation of the aims of the church to the aims of the government was complete. 55

The Soviet government without relinquishing its anti-religious theoretical stance, had undergone a complete change in relation to the Orthodox Church. The initial attack on the church, followed by more subtle, but no less brutal, efforts to destroy its hold on the people's loyalty, was suspended in 1941. The government after 1941 supported the church in return for the church's cooperation. By 1945, by following a policy of cautious extension of rights (but not real autonomy) the government had succeeded in making the Russian Orthodox Church
an arm of the government.

The new attitudes of Church and State were proclaimed to the world with the installation of Alexsei as Patriarch in 1945. 56

The Soviet leaders used the occasion to parade their tolerance. State assistance was given to entertain the foreign guests and Karpov greeted the "Sobor" on behalf of the Government, praising the patriotic efforts of the church and promising his council's good offices for the future. The "Sobor" issued an appeal, 'To The Peoples of the Whole World,' which showed how the Church was expected to support the foreign political line of the Government. The participants in the "Sobor" 'raise their voices against the efforts of those, particularly in the Vatican' who were said to be assisting the perpetuation after the war of anti-Christian Facist doctrine. 57

Patriarch Alexsei carried on the work of rebuilding the Orthodox Church on the lines which Sergei had begun in 1943. So that, with cooperation from the government, by 1947: bishops had increased in number from 19 in 1939 to 74; clergy from a few hundred in 1939, to about 30,000; monasteries and convents from none in 1939, to 67; open churches from 100 in 1939, to about 10,000; and seminaries from none in 1939, to 8.

VI. Post-War Reversion to Pre-War Tactics

The changed attitudes of church and state as manifested in Alexsei's installation and in the reopening of churches and seminaries in Russia did not mean a changed attitude toward religion. The support given to the practice of orthodoxy during the war was not to last. The philosophical basis of Communism and the history of the Communist party in Russia since 1947 reveal in no uncertain terms the implacable hostility of Communism to religion.
Father George lists the post-war rules for fighting religion as issued by the central executive committee of the "Comosol" in July, 1947, in God's Underground. They are:

1. Never forget that the clergy are the bitterest foes of the Communist State.

2. Try to win your friends over to Communism and remember that Stalin, who has given a new constitution to the Russian people, is the head of the "Godless", not only in the Soviet Union, but all over the world.

3. Prevail upon your friends to avoid contacts with priests.

4. Beware of spies and tell the police about saboteurs.

5. See to it that atheist publications are widely distributed among the people.

6. A good Communist must also be a militant atheist. He must know how to use his weapons and be experienced in the art of war.

7. Wherever you can, fight religious elements and forestall any influence they might bring to bear upon your comrades.

8. A true "Godless" must also be a good policeman. It is the duty of every "Godless" to protect the security of the state.

9. Support the "Godless" movement with money which is needed particularly for our propaganda abroad, since under present circumstances it can only be carried on underground.

10. If you are not a convinced "Godless" you cannot be a good Communist and true Soviet citizen. Atheism is insolubly tied in with Communism. Both ideals are the foundation of Soviet power.\textsuperscript{58}

These rules speak for themselves about the intent of the Soviet government with respect to religion.
FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid., p. 17.

3. Ibid., p. 20


5. Ibid., p. 20

6. Dennis J. Dunn, The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government 1939-1949, p. 21., tells us that Duhring in the 1870s elaborated on the active anti-religious parts of Marxist writing and called for a complete annihilation of religion. In a polemic against this view (Anti-Duhring) 1879, Engels accused Duhring of misunderstanding the laws of history and "... calling for unnecessary and abortive action."


11
Ibid., p. 27.

12

13

14

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16
This information found in B. H. Sumner, A Short History of Russia (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1949), p. 162

17
"Children's primers and textbooks taught them to scoff at religion. Antireligious posters were hung in the classrooms. Pictures of the Saints and the Blessed Trinity decorated playing cards. Teachers put drops of holy water under the microscope to show children the loathsome looking bacilli and to repel them. Antireligious traveling shows toured the villages, playing in church buildings; their audiences were served refreshments 'including church wine.'" This information is found in, Father George, God's Underground (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, Inc., 1949), p. 50.

18
Bourdeaux, p. 57.

19

20
N. S. Timasheff describes the third attack on religion (1937) in Religion in Soviet Russia 1917–1942, p. 64., as:

"...the result of the uneasy conviction among the ruling clique that religion was still a formidable force, the only force which could oppose the administration at elections. During this assault, the most brutal of all, the beleaguered church 'went to the catacombs'; that is to say it disappeared from the surface, yet it continued in its practices and prayers."
21

22
N.S. Timasheff, Religion in Soviet Russia 1917-1942, p. 161., describes the new religious policy as:
"... a compromise, reluctantly accepted for compelling reasons, and contrary to the convictions of the government."

23
N.S. Timasheff, Religion in Soviet Russia 1917-1942, p. 114., says that new tactics at the beginning of the new religious policy necessitated a new ideology:
"... for Communism is an ideocracy, that is the rule of a system of ideas, externalized and faithfully executed by those in power."

24
Timasheff, p. 114.

25
N.S. Timasheff, Religion in Soviet Russia 1917-1942, p. 119, cites an article published in the weekly of the League of Militant Godless, Antireligioznik in 1939 in which the League was forced to admit:
"Our League has committed many blunders in regard to Christianity. Marxist atheists have assumed the policy of bourgeois atheists. They denied Christianity in general without taking into consideration special circumstances. Marxist atheists must exercise a concrete approach and must realize that the Church has not always been a harmful influence."

26
N.S. Timasheff, Religion in Soviet Russia 1917-1942, cites this quotation, p. 118.

27
Timasheff, p. 116.

28
Timasheff, p. 120.

29
Timasheff, p. 126.
Robert Conquest, *Religion in the USSR*, p. 34., tells us that, as a result of the government's new religious policy, by:

"July, 1941, in the USSR
there were:
8,338 houses of prayer
30,000 registered religious communities
58,442 ministers of religion
Orthodox Church had:
4,225 churches
37 monasteries
28 Metropolitans & Bishops
5,665 priests
3,100 deacons & sacristans"

Sergei's speech of June 22, 1941, quoted in Robert Conquest, *Religion in the USSR*, p. 34.

Sergei's speech of June 26, 1941, quoted in Robert Conquest, *Religion in the USSR*, p. 34.


"In fact, in some films of this period, heroes refer to God, turn toward icons (often conspicuously displayed) and cross themselves. In one film *The Rainbow*, a partisan actually replies to a traitor who begs for mercy in the name of God: 'He's our God, not yours!'"

Kania, p. 32

Sumner, p. 163

Michael Bourdeaux, *Opium of the People*, p. 61., tells us that:

"After these areas were retaken by the Red Army much of the religious fervour died down, but, to this day one finds more churches open per head of population in those areas which the Nazis conquered than in any other place which has been continuously under Soviet control since 1917."
The Red Army General is quoted, but not named, in Father George, God's Underground, p. 120.

Conquest, p. 34.

Michael Bourdeaux, Opium of the People, p. 59., tells us that on Easter Eve 1942:
"Soviet gun emplacements stopped covering fire in Moscow, despite the danger of an aerial attack, so that the faithful could go to their midnight services."

Conquest, p. 35.

Dennis Dunn, The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government, 1939-1949, p. 84, tells us that:
"The State bureaucracy strove to embrace the Church, an envelopment to which the ecclesiastical leaders, now conditioned via decades of maltreatment to political docility, warmed and reciprocated."

Conquest, p. 35.

Michael Bourdeaux, Opium of the People, p. 62., tells us that:
"The Roman Catholic Church alone received no benefit from the concordat which Stalin granted to the other churches in 1943."

How are candidates selected for training at the Moscow Theological Seminary? An elderly priest speaking to Father George, God's Underground, p. 189., said:
"They must have first passed through the State University, and they are sent to be priests only if the University authorities recommend them for the seminary. I wonder how much a priestly vocation is considered by the Soviet Committee that judges these cases? And how much political reliability is weighed?"
48
In addition Robert Conquest, *Religion in the USSR*, p. 35., tells us that:
"Parents may instruct at home, or send children to a priest's home for instruction, or children may gather in groups for the purpose of religious instruction."

49
Boris Iwanow, *Religion in the U.S.S.R.*, p. 111, tells us that:
"The changes that took place in Bolshevik policy toward religion after 1942 do not concern religion as such and apply first of all to the Russian Orthodox Church, or more precisely to the Moscow Patriarchate."

50
Father George, *God's Underground*, p. 246-7., also gives the opinion that:
"The hope of the Communists is to make Moscow a 'third Rome,' a religious center whose Patriarch will be the prisoner of the Bolsheviks, subject to their threats and commands."

51

52
Dunn, p. 86.

53
Dennis Dunn, *The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government 1939-1949*, p. 86, says that:
"At the end of September (1941) Roosevelt in a press conference declared that the Soviets allowed 'freedom of religion' in accordance with Article 124 of their constitution."

54
Timasheff, p. 137.
David Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*, p. 23, tells us that:

"Virtually all religious groups in the U.S.S.R. have abandoned their earlier policy of uncompromising hostility and have adapted themselves to the new order. Motivated by what some see as absolute necessity, but what others denounce as lack of principle or even abject servility, organized religion has been able to survive. While church officials can hardly be content with the restrictions placed on them they have learned to support the regime and its policies."

Michael Bourdeaux, *Opium of the People*, p. 62-63, describes the change in attitude:

"There was a wave of pro-Russian feeling among the Allied nations after the victorious part the Soviet Union had played in the Second World War. This seemed an appropriate time for the Communist country to impress upon mankind that it had arrived at last among the great civilized nations of the world. The Church's contribution to this endeavour was to build a superstructure of great pomp around the enthronement of the new Patriarch, Alexis, on 4 February 1945. Church delegations were invited from all friendly countries and Moscow provided a warm welcome for the Patriarchs of Serbia, Rumania, Jerusalem, and the Oecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, as well as high ranking delegations from many non-Orthodox churches."

Conquest, p. 37.

*Father George*, p. 214.
Bibliography


