

Holy Counter-Revolution on Trial:
The Russian Orthodox Church and the Bolshevik State, 1918-1921

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DEDICATION

This is affectionately dedicated to Yuri Nikolaevich Yegoroff, who fought in the battle of Stalingrad. He subsequently became one of the only soldiers to completely fulfill Stalin's command to the Red Army to advance to the West without stopping. He ended up at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, where I first learned about the subject of the church trials during our readings from Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Arkhipelago* in his advanced Russian reading class.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract.....	vii
1. Introduction.....	1
2. The Russian Orthodox Church on the Eve of the October Revolution.....	12
The Institution of the Church.....	15
The Bishops of the Black Clergy.....	17
The Parish Priests of the White Clergy.....	19
The Question of Church Reform.....	24
All-Russian Church Council.....	34
Pouring New Wine into Old Skins: The Enthronement of Patriarch Tikhon.....	43
3. Separation of the Church from the State.....	46
Attitudes and Actions of the Revolutionaries toward Religion following the October Revolution.....	49
Early Reaction of the Church to the October Revolution.....	53
Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church.....	55
Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic.....	61
Resolution of the Commissariat of Justice on Implementation of the Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church....	62
4. Holy War Against the Bolshevik Regime.....	65
Tikhon’s Anathema, January 19, 1918.....	66
Church Response to Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State, February 15 (28), 1918.....	71
Murder, Mayhem and Holy Martyrs.....	73
Assassination of Tsar Nicholas and His Family.....	80
The Voice of the Central Church Falls Silent.....	82
Tikhon’s Call for Political Neutrality, September 25 (October 8), 1919.....	90
5. The Holy Counter-Revolution on Trial.....	93
Early Bolshevik Law.....	95
Early Church Trials.....	101

Highest Measure of Punishment: The Death Penalty	105
The Zvenigorod Case, August – September 1918	111
Trial of the Former Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod Samarin and Others, January 1920	116
Trial of Hieromonk Dosifei and Abbess Serafima	124
6. Conclusion	128
Bibliography	137

ABSTRACT

THE HOLY COUNTER-REVOLUTION ON TRIAL: THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE BOLSHEVIK STATE, 1918-1921

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The first “official” assault of the Bolsheviks against religion was carried out against the institution of the Russian Orthodox Church from 1918-1921, during the civil war period in Soviet Russia. The assault was two-pronged, consisting of legal measures and a propaganda campaign against the Church and its leaders, consisting of clergy and laymen, who were collectively termed as “churchmen.” Of the legal measures, the most important was the decree on the separation of the Church from the State, which deprived the institutional Church of its former privileges, income, and property. When the Church leaders reacted protested the violence and bloodshed caused by the revolutionaries as well as the new conditions imposed by the decree on the separation of the Church from the State, the Bolsheviks claimed they had declared a “holy war” against the regime and had instigated a “holy counter-revolution” to overthrow it.

The Bolsheviks sought to discredit the Church leaders through a slanderous propaganda campaign in newspapers that denounced them as monarchists and

reactionaries. In early 1918, churchmen began appearing before revolutionary tribunals, which had been established in November 1917 to combat counter-revolutionary activities. The tribunals existed alongside the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission, or Cheka, which shot thousands of people, including churchmen, on an extrajudicial basis without trial. The revolutionary tribunals received the right to use the death penalty in June 1918; however, their primary purpose with regard to the Church was not to kill off churchmen, but to discredit them in the eyes of the people.

Although exact statistics were not kept during as to the total number of trials involving churchmen, the chief accuser of the tribunals, Nikolai Vasilievich Krylenko, declared in January 1920 that such trials had been heard in nearly every revolutionary tribunal of Soviet Russia. The trials of the churchmen were considered by Soviet scholars to have been instrumental in breaking the back of the Church counter-revolution and contributing to the break-away of the masses from religious belief. While the Church was undeniably weakened as an institution during the civil war years, this was probably due more to other factors, with the trials playing only a minor role. The trials played a slightly more important role in conveying the Bolshevik views on religion to the masses, which resulted in a reduction of overt religious displays in public life. They also helped changed the behavior of the churchmen, who never again challenged the authority of the Soviet State.

1. Introduction

In late January 1920, during his closing speech at the trial of Samarin, the former chief procurator of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, Nikolai Vasilievich Krylenko, the chief accuser of the revolutionary tribunals, declared:

After the October Revolution, when the main enemy was smashed, we did not have the time to take stock of all of our victories or isolated defeats. At that time, there were trials going on in almost every tribunal that revealed one kind of defeat and is a phenomenon that demands our undivided attention....All of [these trials] were isolated episodes of one and the same struggle that is being carried out against us by the representatives of the church: bishops, priests, deacons and psalm-readers, who are staunchly pursuing their policy.¹

Krylenko considered the Samarin trial to be one of the most important cases he prosecuted in front of the revolutionary tribunals. The tribunals existed for approximately five years, having been established by the Sovnarkom on November 24, 1917 for the purpose of combating counter-revolutionary forces.

¹ N.V. Krylenko, *Za Piat' Let: 1918: Obvinitel'nye rechi po naibolee krupnym protsessam, zasluwannym v Moskovskom i Verkhovnom Revoliutsionnykh Tribunalakh* (Moscow, Petrograd: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1923), 61. Nikolai Vasilievich Krylenko (1885-1938) headed the "College of Accusers of the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal of the Central Executive Committee." Sergei Kobiakov described him as the "inspirer and head of Soviet justice," although he did not become Commissar of Justice until 1931. He became a victim of the purges in 1938. See Kobiakov, *Krasnyi Sud*, in *Arkhiv Russkoi Revoliutsii*, tom 7 (Berlin: I.V. Gessen, 1922; reprinted Moscow: Politizdat, "TERRA," 1991), 250; Peter H. Juviler, *Revolutionary Law and Order: Politics and Social Change in the USSR* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., The Free Press, 1976), 24. I have translated the term *obvinitel'* as accuser, because as Solzhenitsyn pointed out, the term "prosecutor" (*prokuror*) was banned until 1922. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation, volumes I-II*. Translated by Thomas P. Whitney (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), 304.

The Bolsheviks connected the Russian Orthodox Church with the idea of counter-revolution very early. Orthodox Christianity was the religion of the majority of the people of Russia at the time of the revolution. The Church had enjoyed special status and privileges under the tsarist regime, although at the cost of being subordinate to the State. The Bolsheviks saw the destruction of the institution of the Russian Orthodox Church as a necessary prerequisite to the ultimate disappearance of religion in Russia.²

The Russian Orthodox Church was not completely out of touch with the changing times. On the eve of the October Revolution, it had been actively debating a number of reforms aimed at achieving independence from the State, modifying its internal structure, and revitalizing parish life. The forum for the debate was the All-Russian Church Council in Moscow, which had been more than a decade in preparation, but which became possible only in the wake of the February Revolution. It convened on August 15, 1917, during the final days of the Provisional Government.

When the Bolsheviks seized political power in late October, Church leaders were slow to grasp the full significance of what had happened. Like many people in Russia, they did not believe the Bolsheviks would remain in power for long, and they kept working in anticipation of the convening of the Constituent Assembly, where they would present their blueprint for a new Church-State relationship. The Church leaders

² Other religious organizations were not as affected initially by restrictions on their activities. The Bolsheviks were very careful in their handling of Muslims in Central Asia because of sensitivity to the nationalities issue. Sectarian groups such as the Baptists actually flourished well into the 1920s, because they had been persecuted under the tsarist regime, and the Bolsheviks saw them as potentially important allies on account of their economic and cultural resources. See Boleslaw Szczesniak's quotation from the resolutions of the Thirteenth Congress of the Communist Party held May 23-31, 1924, *The Russian Revolution and Religion: A Collection of Documents Concerning the Suppression of Religion by the Communists, 1917-1925* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 22.

envisioned a Church that would be independent of the State, to which it had been subordinated since the time of Peter the Great. As one of the first steps toward realizing this, they elected a new Patriarch, Tikhon (Belavin), the first Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church in more than two hundred years, in the midst of the October Revolution.

The Church leaders, led by Tikhon, reacted very strongly to the early actions of the revolutionaries. In January 1918, Tikhon issued an encyclical in which he anathematized them for instigating violence and bloodshed in the country, and for carrying out persecutions against the Church. Within days, the government issued its decree on the Separation of the Church from the State, which stripped the Church of its special privileges, income, and property. Articles began appearing in official Bolshevik newspapers that accused the Church leaders of having declared a “holy war” against the regime. During the spring of 1918, unrest across Russia by believers protesting desecrations of local churches and monasteries convinced the Bolsheviks that the Orthodox Church had instigated a holy counter-revolution to overthrow the regime.

Revolutionary tribunals, which had been set up for the purpose of combating counter-revolution and sabotage, began holding trials of Orthodox clergy and lay leaders, collectively termed as “churchmen” (*tserkovniki*), in the first part of 1918. According to Iu. P. Titov, exact statistics were not kept as to the total number of trials involving

churchmen during the civil war period.³ Nevertheless, if we are to believe Krylenko's claim cited above, they were not rarities.⁴

If there are no precise statistics as to how many trials involving churchmen were held from 1918-1921, neither do we have numbers for how many churchmen were sentenced to death or actually shot by the revolutionary tribunals.⁵ The Cassation tribunal did keep statistics, and we know that during 1919, it reviewed seventy-eight cases of churchmen charged with counter-revolutionary actions against the Soviet regime. Thirty-nine death sentences were passed, of which the Cassation tribunal upheld thirty-six.⁶ It is unlikely every case or death sentence was appealed to the Cassation tribunal, so there must have been more than thirty-six executions of churchmen by revolutionary tribunals, although how many more is not clear. Nonetheless, recently uncovered archival documents confirm what has long been suspected; that is, the overwhelming majority of churchmen who perished as a result of the violence during the civil war years died at the hands of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission, or Cheka, rather than the revolutionary tribunals.⁷

³ Iu.P. Titov, "Revoliutsionnye tribunaly v bor'be s tserkovnoi kontrrevoliutsiei." In *Sbornik nauchnykh trudov VluZI: Istoriko-pravovye voprosy vzaimootnoshenii gosudarstva i tserkvi v istorii Rossii*, ed. I.A. Isaev and O.A. Omel'chenko (Moscow: RIO VluZI, 1988), 156.

⁴ There were approximately 55 revolutionary tribunals, one in every provincial capital and one in every city with more than 200,000 inhabitants. Iona Brikhnichev, *Patriarkh Tikhon i ego tserkov'* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Krasnaia Nov', Glavpolitprosvet, 1923), 19; and Eugene Huskey, *Russian Lawyers and the Soviet State: The Origins and Development of the Soviet Bar, 1917-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 44.

⁵ On the other hand, there are numbers for the 1922 church trials, which are as follows: 732 tried, 149 convicted, 44 shot. Brikhnichev, 19.

⁶ Titov, "Revoliutsionnye tribunaly v bor'be s tserkovnoi kontrrevoliutsiei," 159.

⁷ According to statistics compiled by the Orthodox St. Tikhon Theological Institute, more than 9,000 clergy were shot in the "first wave of persecutions," or the civil war period. See N.A. Krivova, *Vlast' i tserkov' v 1922-1925 gg.: Politbiuro i GPU v bor'be za tserkovnye tsennosti i politicheskoe podchinenie dukhoventsva* (Moscow: Seriiia "Pervaia Monografiia," AIRO-XX, 1997), 14-15.

The primary purpose of the revolutionary tribunals, then, was not to kill off clergy and other religious believers. Although the tribunals certainly had the blood of churchmen on their hands, this thesis will argue that their main purpose was to undermine the Russian Orthodox Church as an institution by discrediting its leaders in front of the people, especially the workers and peasants. This was done in the belief that by getting rid of the institution and its leaders, the Bolsheviks could get rid of religious belief.

Trials were considered by the Bolsheviks to be an important means for propagandizing and enlightening the masses. They were a logical format: since the Judicial Reform of 1864, trials had been held in public, and people were accustomed to attending them as an entertainment. The church trials were particularly important, because they enabled the Bolsheviks to demonstrate to the dark, ignorant masses that churchmen, from high-ranking clergy and prominent bourgeois lay leaders to ordinary village priests and monks, were as guilty of dangerous counter-revolutionary activity as the most sophisticated urban intellectuals.

This thesis will examine the early relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church and Bolshevik State, particularly as seen through the trials of churchmen that took place during 1918-1921. More attention has been paid to the 1922 church trials that were held in conjunction with the campaign to confiscate church valuables and the alleged resistance of the churchmen.⁸ I, too, had originally hoped to look more closely at the

⁸See, for example, Jonathan W. Daly, "The Propaganda State Takes on the Church: The Confiscation of Church Valuables, the Schism in the Church, and the Trial of Metropolitan Veniamin, January-July, 1922." M.A. thesis, Georgetown University, 1985; N.A. Krivova (cited above); N.N. Pokrovskii and S.G. Petrov, eds. *Politbiuro i Tserkov' 1922-1925 gg.*, v 2-kh knigakh (Arkhivy Kremlya. Moskva: ROSSPEHN, 1998).

1922 trials, trying to see how the practices of the revolutionary tribunals evolved over the course of the year. As I did my background research, however, I became interested in finding out the genesis of the Church-State confrontation in the earliest days of the regime. Many Soviet writers point to Patriarch Tikhon's January 1918 anathema as the cause of the Church-State confrontation, but it also seemed that there was the underlying assumption on the part of the revolutionaries that the Church and its leaders were counter-revolutionary by nature, making such a confrontation inevitable. Whatever the origin of the confrontation, the churchmen soon found themselves, along with other persons charged with counter-revolution, in front of revolutionary tribunals. I wanted to know how the revolutionary tribunals were used to combat the Church "counter-revolution" during the civil war, when it was still not certain the Bolsheviks would remain in power (in contrast to the situation during the 1922 trials). Was the purpose of the trials to coerce the desired anti-religious behavior through terror, or did they perhaps have another purpose, such as enlightening the masses by discrediting the churchmen in front of the masses?

The earlier trials of the civil war period are deserving of attention because they illustrate the unfocused nature of the earliest Bolshevik assault on the Church, largely unsuccessful, which caused the regime to regroup and mount harsher assaults after the civil war period. They give a glimpse at the Bolsheviks' efforts to combat the counter-revolution, a notion which was rather amorphous in the early days. They also reflect the "justice" of the haphazard, jerry-built legal system of the young Bolshevik regime, with its insistence in the early days that the proletarian judges follow their "revolutionary

conscience” in their rulings. The results were not always satisfactory, which caused the Bolsheviks to use judges and prosecutors from Moscow to guide the decisions of revolutionary tribunals in the more important trials.

Layout of Thesis

The essay will be divided as follows: Chapter 2 will provide background about the Orthodox Church on the eve of the Revolution, and introduce the main players, the bishops of the “black clergy,” the parish priests of the “white clergy,” and, to a lesser extent, the lay leaders. It will consist almost entirely of material from secondary sources. One of the basic assumptions for this chapter is that the Orthodox Church was not simply a decaying institution that was out of step with the times and ripe for a fall like the monarchy.⁹ Since the mid-nineteenth century, Church leaders had recognized the need for reforms to keep in step with a changing society; one of the primary ways in which they sought to do this was to achieve greater independence from the State. Beginning in 1905, Church leaders began seeking permission to convene a national Church Council (*Pomestnyi Sobor*) to discuss and implement these reforms. However, such a Council became possible only following the February Revolution. One of its major accomplishments was the election of Tikhon as Patriarch, ironically in the midst of the

⁹I base this assumption on works such as the following: Gregory L. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Freeze, “Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered.” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. 1985): 82-102; James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905-1906*. Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir’s Press, 1981; Argyrios K. Pisiotis, “The Orthodox Church and Clerical Political Dissent in Late Imperial Russia, 1905-1914.” Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 2000; George T. Kosar, “Russian Orthodoxy in Crisis and Revolution: The Church Council of 1917-1918.” Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2003; Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

Bolshevik coup. Tikhon was enthroned at Uspenskii cathedral at the Kremlin in a traditional ceremony that the Bolsheviks, who occupied the Kremlin, had permitted after days of tense negotiations. The jubilation of the crowds who greeted the new Patriarch seemed to belie the fact that a political revolution had just taken place.

Chapter 3 will examine the early actions of the revolutionaries, primarily the Bolsheviks, against the Orthodox Church and religion. The revolutionaries' policy, which might more correctly be described as an attitude or attitudes, was more anti-religious than militantly atheistic in the beginning. It was expressed through propaganda and legal documents; this chapter will consider the latter. It will look at three documents in particular: The January 1918 decree on the separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church; the July 1918 Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic; and the August 1918 Instructions for implementing the January decree on the separation of the Church from the State. It was these documents that were at the basis of the Church-State confrontation during the civil war and early years of the New Economic Policy (NEP).

Chapter 4 will examine the reactions of the Church leaders, primarily Patriarch Tikhon, to the regime's early actions against religion. This is a subject that has not been studied in great detail previously, because of the lack of material.¹⁰ Probably the most plentiful source for studying the reactions are the encyclicals of Tikhon and related materials. Several of the encyclicals were well-known to Soviet anti-religious writers,

¹⁰Daly, for example, admits that he did not place a lot of emphasis on the attitudes of Church leaders in his master's thesis, pointing out that it was difficult to get at their intentions because the Bolsheviks had stripped the Church of the right to publish journals or pamphlets, etc. See Daly, 9-10.

who saw them as proof of Tikhon's and the Church's counter-revolutionary intentions.¹¹ I have included these encyclicals in my discussion, as well as some lesser-known documents, making use of a recently-published personal archive compiled by Mikhail Efimovich Gubonin. The Gubonin archive was a *samizdat* work that consisted of thirty-two type-written, large format notebooks.¹² It preserved letters from hierarchs, copies of encyclicals, newspaper articles, and other documents. Other sources include a compilation of material by A.A. Valentinov,¹³ another émigré writer; and *samizdat* works such as that of Lev Regel'son, a Soviet religious dissident of the 1970s.¹⁴ Admittedly, such material offers only glimpses of the Church leaders' motivations and

¹¹The most notorious of the encyclicals for the Bolsheviks was Tikhon's "anathema," which was issued on January 19, 1918. Other encyclicals of the civil war period issued by Tikhon that drew a critical response from Bolshevik anti-religious writers include the one opposing the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty dated March 5 (18), 1918; the one issued on the eve of the Dormition fast dated July 26 (August 8), 1918; and the one calling for political neutrality, dated September 25 (October 8) 1919.

¹²M.E. Gubonin, *Akty Svyateishogo Tikhona, Patriarkha Moskovskogo i vseia Rossii, Pozdneishie dokumenty i perepiska o kanonicheskom preemstve vysshei tserkovnoi vlasti 1917-1943, Sbornik v dvukh chastiakh (Documents of His Holiness Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, the later documents and correspondence on the canonical succession of the highest church authorities 1917-1943, Collection in two parts)*, (Moscow: Pravoslavnyi Sviato-Tikhonovskii Bogoslovskii Institut, Bratstvo vo Imia Vsemilostivogo Spasa, 1994). Mikhail Efimovich Gubonin (1907-1971) was the grandson of Petr Ionovich Gubonin, a Russian railroad magnate. He studied art, becoming familiar with the churches of Moscow where he often attended services. As a subdeacon to bishop Petr of Kolomenskii, he had the opportunity to participate in services that Petr concelebrated with Patriarch Tikhon. In connection with his church activities, Gubonin was arrested and exiled to Central Asia in the early 1930s. He was drafted into the Red Army in 1941 and served in the seventh Guards cavalry corps as a senior lieutenant. After the war, he continued the work of compiling his manuscript.

¹³A.A. Valentinov, *Chernaia kniga ("Shturm' Nebes")*: *Sbornik dokumental'nykh dannykh, kharakterizuiushchikh bor'bu sovetskoi kommunisticheskoi vlasti protiv vsiakoï religii, protiv vsekh ispovedanii i tserkvei* (Paris: Izdatel'stvo russkogo natsional'nogo studentcheskogo ob'ineniia, 1925). Valentinov was not an eye-witness to the events in his book. He used two primary sources for his accounts: the Soviet press, primarily the newspapers of the capital, and the émigré press in Western Europe.

¹⁴Lev Regel'son, *Tragediia Russkoi Tserkvi* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1977). The book, written in the 1970s, is a compilation from church publications of the civil war period (including publications from territory under control of White armies); a number of other *samizdat* sources; and official Soviet newspapers and books.

actions during the civil war years, but hopefully will demonstrate why the Bolsheviks considered what they said and did as a threat to Soviet power.

Chapter 5 will examine how the Bolsheviks took on what they termed as the “holy counter-revolution” through revolutionary tribunals. It will begin with a look at early Bolshevik attitudes toward law and the haphazard “legal system” that existed in the first years of Bolshevik rule. The reality of the situation in Russia following the October Revolution had forced the revolutionaries to cobble together a “legal system” based as much on borrowings from previous legal systems as on revolutionary ideology. The court system during the early years consisted of the people’s courts and revolutionary tribunals; the latter had been established specifically to deal with the counter-revolution. Cases involving churchmen were held in both kinds of court, but because the primary interest here is how the Bolsheviks attempted to combat the holy counter-revolution, all except one of the examples of trials that will be examined were held before revolutionary tribunals.

Trials were held of individuals and of groups. Three trials of individual churchmen will be reviewed; two of the cases involve clergymen charged with counter-revolutionary action (in one case, it was actually the lack of action that made the priest a counter-revolutionary). A third trial involves a low-ranking cleric charged with child molestation; although there is no mention of counter-revolutionary charges in the official account, the fact that it was tried by a revolutionary tribunal suggests that any crime committed by a clergyman had political overtones. Several group trials involving both churchmen and peasants will also be examined. These show how the different social

groups were treated, particularly with regard to punishment. In some of the trials, the accused actually seemed to be standing in for the hierarchs, especially Patriarch Tikhon, whom the Bolsheviks considered as the “main culprit” in the holy counter-revolution.

In Chapter 6, the Conclusion, the trials of the churchmen during the civil war period will be compared with the 1922 trials of churchmen and other groups; these in turn will be compared briefly with trials of the later 1920s. Finally, the question of how successful the revolutionary tribunals were in combating the institution of the Church, its leaders, and religious belief in general will be considered.

2. The Russian Orthodox Church on the Eve of the October Revolution

“We have no more tsar, no father, whom we may love. It is impossible to love a synod, and therefore we, the peasants, want a Patriarch.”

--Prince Grigorii Trubetskoi's account of peasant speaker at All-Russian Church Council of 1917.¹

A number of historians East and West have depicted the Russian Orthodox Church on the eve of the October Revolution as a moribund, obsolete institution, the last vestige of the Russian Imperial State.² The Bolsheviks endorsed this view, although they did not invent it. It existed in the writings of pre-revolutionary Russian historians such as P.V. Verkhuvskoi, who, in discussing the church reforms that had been brought about by Peter the Great in the early eighteenth century, asserted that “Peter deprived the Russian Church of its unique and independent existence as a distinct juridical institution, and brought it into the body of the Russian state structure and administration as an integral component...The reform made the Church a servant of the state.”³

¹Quoted by William C. Fletcher, *A Study in Survival: The Church in Russia 1927-1943* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 21.

² For examples of scholars in the West who have done this, see John Shelton Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia: The Last Years of the Empire, 1900-1917* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940. Reprint, New York: Octagon Books, Inc, 1965), 409; Paul Miliukov, *Outlines of Russian Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948), 151; Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Scribners, 1974), 221-45; and more recently Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1996), 63, 69.

³ P.V. Verkhuvskoi, *Uchrezhdenie Dukhovnoi kollegii i dukhovnyi reglament*, 2 vols, Rostov-on-the-Don, 1916, i. 684-685. Quoted by Gregory L. Freeze, “Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered.” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. 1985): 83-84. Verkhuvskoi was later a member of the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-1918.

More recently, a number of scholars in the West, led by Gregory L. Freeze, have come to challenge this view, which Freeze has dubbed the “handmaiden thesis.” These scholars argue that although the Church and its clergy, including the bishops, had carried out the bidding of the Tsar and Imperial State for more than two hundred years, they did not necessarily do so willingly. They maintain that the Church was neither indifferent nor unresponsive to the changes that were going on around it in Russian society in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century; moreover, its leaders were trying to find ways to adapt to those changes and renew church life.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the bishops of the Holy Synod had been contemplating a program of reforms intended to make the Church more independent of the State through reorganization of its administrative structure and possible restoration of the patriarchate, which Peter the Great had abolished in 1721. Parish clergy also desired reforms, seeking more of a voice in the governance of the Church and measures to improve their bleak financial situation. Parishioners sought the right to elect their own parish clergy and to control their own funds. The Russian Orthodox Church in the early twentieth century was, as Jennifer Hedda puts it, “as deeply divided as any other institution in tsarist Russia.”⁴

The objection might be raised that while these historians might be correct in their reassessment of Church attitudes toward its relationship with the State, what really counts is what the Bolsheviks thought about the Church. That is because the Bolsheviks’ perceptions, whether they were correct in an objective way or not, were what shaped their

⁴ Jennifer Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 154.

policies toward the Church and their treatment of it. Judging by statements made in official newspapers of the day, official accounts of church trials of 1918-1922 and books by Soviet scholars about the struggle against the Church, the Bolsheviks indeed saw the Church as the “handmaiden” of the Imperial State. They considered the Church and all churchmen as reactionaries who wanted to turn the clock back and restore the monarchy. They were a direct challenge to the Bolshevik vision of a new, classless society, which necessitated dealing with them as dangerous, counter-revolutionary political opponents.

Even if the “handmaiden” thesis is satisfactory for understanding the Bolshevik view of the Church, it should not be acceptable to historians for other reasons. It does not fully explain the motivations behind the Church leaders’ actions prior to and following the October Revolution. It also does not explain the resilience of the institutional Church, which did not crumble under the initial onslaught of the revolutionaries during the civil war period.

This chapter will argue that the Church that came into conflict with the Bolshevik regime following the October Revolution was not, in fact, the Church of the Imperial State. It had finally begun to debate possible reforms at the All-Russian Church Council that was convened in the last days of the Provisional Government. The Church, weakened by its long period of subservience to the Imperial State, was in a transitional situation during 1917, which in some ways paralleled the Provisional Government’s own circumstances. Unlike the Provisional Government, however, the Church emerged from the period with sufficient resilience to withstand the earliest Bolshevik attacks against it.

To better understand this resilience, this chapter will provide background about the Church on the eve of the October Revolution. The chapter will be divided as follows: First of all, the main players, including the institutional Church on the eve of the Revolution, the monastic bishops of the “black clergy,” the parish priests of the “white clergy,”⁵ and to a lesser extent the lay leaders, will be introduced. The effects of the Church reforms of Peter the Great and his successors on the black and white clergy will be examined, along with the dissatisfactions that arose within the two groups and the kinds of reforms that each thought were necessary for remedying the situation. The frustrated efforts of Church leaders during the final years of the Imperial State to convene an All-Russian Church Council, the proper forum, they believed, for discussing and implementing reforms, will be reviewed. Finally, the actual Council, which convened in August 1917, will be considered; the focus will be on the election of Tikhon as patriarch, and his enthronement in early December 1917 at Uspenskii Cathedral in the Kremlin, which was already occupied by Red Army soldiers.

The Institution of the Church

In 1914, the last year for which complete statistics were available, the Russian Orthodox Church consisted of 67 dioceses, 130 bishops, approximately 48,000 functioning churches, and more than 50,000 clergy of all ranks.⁶ It received an annual appropriation, which in 1916 amounted to nearly 63 million rubles, more than half of

⁵ The “white clergy” also included deacons and sacristans (or psalm-readers). For the sake of simplification, this discussion will focus primarily on the priests.

⁶ Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime, 1917-1982*, Vol. I (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 20. Curtiss’s numbers are similar, although he listed 40,437 functioning parish churches (Pospelovsky may be counting private chapels and monastery churches to get his total of 48,000 functioning churches). In addition, Curtiss listed 1,025 monastic institutions, with more than 21,000 monks and novices and more than 73,000 nuns and novices. Curtiss, 10.

which was used for the schools that were run by the Church.⁷ It was the official Church of the majority of the inhabitants of the Russian empire.

Its institutional structure up to 1917 was the legacy of Peter the Great. Peter had abolished the Patriarchate with his Spiritual Regulation (*Dukhovnyi Reglament*) of 1721, replacing it with the Holy Synod, a collegial body that was intended to oversee church affairs.⁸ The Holy Synod consisted of eleven bishops. The three most influential bishops on the Holy Synod were the metropolitans of Kiev, Moscow, and St. Petersburg.⁹ By the nineteenth century, the metropolitan of St. Petersburg had come to be considered the “highest ranking, most prominent clergyman in the church, the individual closest to being the ‘head’ of the institution in its dealings with the imperial government and Russian society.”¹⁰ Because he was the metropolitan of the capital, he was personally selected by the Tsar.¹¹

⁷ Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 9-10. Curtiss also points out that the 37,000 schools run by the Church accounted for approximately one third of the country’s total number of schools (p. 18).

⁸ Hedda compares the Holy Synod to other collegial bodies that oversaw other areas of government such as the navy, agriculture, and mining affairs. See Hedda, 13. Freeze cautions against seeing this as evidence that Peter had turned the Church into another state ministry, pointing out that the hierarchs had requested and received approval from Peter to change their name from “Ecclesiastical College” (*Dukhovnaia Kollegiia*) to “Most Holy Governing Synod” (*Sviateishii Pravitel’svuiushchii Sinod*), which underscored the Synod’s difference from state ministries. See G.L. Freeze, “Handmaiden of the State?” 86.

⁹ “Metropolitan” is the title of a bishop who exercises provincial, not merely diocesan powers. See *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Oxford, London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 335.

¹² Hedda, 21. Occasionally prelates of other sees, such as Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow, were more powerful and influential than the metropolitan of Petrograd.

¹¹ Pospelovsky asserts that because they were personally selected by the Tsar, the metropolitans of St. Petersburg “were almost always either unprincipled bureaucrats or weak and pliable characters.” Pospelovsky, 24.

The Bishops of the Black Clergy

All bishops, including the highest-ranking members of the Holy Synod, were members of the black clergy, meaning they had taken monastic vows and were celibate.¹² Bishops were appointed by the Holy Synod; as administrators of the Church, which had authority over marriage and divorce, they had a tremendous amount of authority over the everyday lives of the Orthodox laity. They also possessed higher status than the ordinary parish clergy of the white clergy, for whom they were responsible and who they had the authority to punish by transfer or even defrocking.¹³

Following his establishment of the Holy Synod, Peter appointed an *Ober-Procurator*, or chief procurator, a layman whose job was to act as the “emperor’s eye” on ecclesiastical matters. The chief procurator played a relatively minor role in the work of the Synod throughout the eighteenth century, but came to assume a greater one in the nineteenth century. One of the most powerful chief procurators was Count Nikolai A. Protasov, who was appointed in 1836 by Nicholas I. Protasov did not trust the bishops, particularly those on the Holy Synod.¹⁴ He took measures to ensure that the hierarchs did not go against the wishes of Nicholas, who saw the Church as one of the pillars that guaranteed the security of his State. In 1842, for example, Protasov removed the two

¹² Pospelovsky points out that the ecumenical canons of the Church did not require monastic tonsure as a condition for episcopal consecration, although this had become the practice in both East and West by the end of the eighth century. See Pospelovsky, 44. For many bishops, the monastic tonsure was a mere formality. Freeze argues that by the nineteenth century, advanced education, meaning study at a theological academy, became more important for a would-be bishop than long experience living in a monastery. That is because the episcopate had come to require administrative rather than spiritual skills. See Freeze, “Handmaiden of the State,” 96.

¹³ Gregory L. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 30.

¹⁴ Protasov was apparently suspicious of the bishops’ high level of education, which he thought was too closely patterned after Western models and “might erode religious conviction and eventually lead to political revolution.” Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 17.

most influential hierarchs of the Holy Synod, Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) of Moscow and Metropolitan Filaret (Amfiteatrov) of Kiev, because they had allegedly backed an unauthorized translation of the Old Testament into modern Russian. Both men denied doing so, although each supported the idea of translating the Bible into modern Russian, to which Nicholas was firmly opposed. Many ranking prelates of the day thought that Protasov provoked this crisis intentionally so that he could take closer control of the Synod.¹⁵

If the highest-ranking prelates of the Holy Synod found their authority undercut by the chief procurator, ordinary bishops found their authority undercut by the lay secretaries of the diocesan consistories who were appointed by and who reported back to Protasov's ministry. Often the secretaries had more influence over diocesan policies and personnel matters than the bishops.¹⁶ Ordinary bishops were moved around from one diocese to another every few years; sometimes the transfers were due to conflicts with the consistory secretaries. The bishops complained that frequent transfers prevented them from getting to know the problems of a diocese and its people sufficiently well to address them properly.

¹⁵ This was the so-called "Pavskii affair." G.P. Pavskii was a professor at St. Petersburg Theological Academy who had made an unauthorized translation for pedagogical purposes that gained wider distribution than he intended because it was copied by his students. See Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 18-19; 44-45.

¹⁶ For example, diocesan consistories provided ecclesiastical courts to handle marriage problems, questions of mixed marriages, annulments and divorce. The bulk of the work was handled by the junior clerks under the consistory secretary. These clerks, many of whom received their appointments while still students, performed their duties half-heartedly, but the bishops had no control over them. As a result of the venality and crudeness of the consistory clerks, many people began taking their cases to district courts of the Ministry of Justice "where proceedings were shorter, less complicated, and more humane." James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905-1906*. Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Press, 1981, 69, 76.

In the mid-nineteenth century, bishops had begun to unite around the idea of *sobornost*, or conciliarity, an idea which had its roots in the Slavophile movement. They began to speak about the need to shift power away from the Holy Synod and chief procurator to the bishops, giving them greater independence in decision-making for problems affecting their local dioceses. “Especially as tensions between the Synod and Procurator mounted in the last decades of the [nineteenth] century, the call for regional councils gained increasing support among the episcopate.”¹⁷ There began to be discussion about the need to bring back the patriarchate as a means of restoring conciliarity and independence to the Church.¹⁸

At the same time, in order to “allay the fears and animosities of civil bureaucrats” about the idea of an independent Church, there was talk about reviving the old Byzantine ideal of *symphonia* between Church and civilian authorities. According to this ideal, which had been clearly violated by Petrine reforms, “The Tsar and Patriarch functioned as a ‘symphony,’ the Patriarch deferring to the Tsar in matters of civil administration and the Tsar deferring to the Patriarch in matters of faith and discipline.”¹⁹

The Parish Priests of the White Clergy

If the bishops of the black clergy were disgruntled, so too were the parish priests of the white clergy, although their grievances were entirely different. Village priests in particular were of low social standing and often lived in poverty because of their large

¹⁷ Freeze, “Handmaiden of the State?” 100-101.

¹⁸ The talk of restoration of the patriarchate and conciliarity as a means of “reuniting people and Church into a single harmonious whole” was expressed in writings that appeared in 1882 by a Moscow archpriest named Alexander M. Ivantsov-Platonov. Ivantsov-Platonov’s writings were reprinted in 1898, and provided impetus to the growing movement to restore the patriarchate. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 444-445; Cunningham, 62-63; 68-69.

¹⁹ Cunningham, 33; 69.

families and the fact that they were dependent upon their peasant parishioners for a living. Although the clergy in Russia had never been well-off, their plight had been worsened by the *soslovie*, or estate system. The estate system had been put in place in the eighteenth century to ensure a steady supply of candidates for service positions, including the clergy. Each estate received certain privileges; in the case of the clergy, these included exemption from the poll-tax and usually from military conscription.²⁰ To prevent outsiders from trying to avoid the poll-tax or conscription, one had to be born into a clergyman's family in order to become a sacristan, deacon, priest, or bishop.

The clergy, especially the parish priests, found themselves in the position of being unofficial agents of the State. They carried out certain administrative duties such as recording and reporting births, marriages, and deaths in their parishes for State records. They also acted as the State's first-line of defense against rebellion, having to pledge that "they would denounce to the authorities any information prejudicial to the interests of the sovereign and his state which came their way even at confession."²¹ At the same time,

²⁰ There were exceptions to the exemption from conscription, such as when there was an overabundance of clergy sons, particularly during wartime. This was not a successful way to prune the clerical surplus, however, because usually only the weaker, less desirable youths were unable to successfully appeal their conscription. The Crimean War was the last time conscription of excess clerical sons was attempted. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 144-145; 169-170.

²¹ Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, 241. Laurie Manchester provides insight into how at least one rural priest of the nineteenth century felt about this obligation: "The senior Elpat'evskii was embittered by the state's attempt to require priests to report anti-autocratic statements uttered by parishioners during confession. In his mind, the law of God was clearly superior to that of the state and the sanctity of confession should not be violated. On the other hand, he lived in fear of such an incident occurring because, being obedient, he would feel he had to report the confessor to the authorities." Laurie Manchester, "The Secularization of the Search for Salvation: The Self-Fashioning of Russian Orthodox Clergymen's Sons," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Spring, 1998), 56-57.

they were forbidden to express independent political or social views in sermons or publications, whether in support of the government or not.²²

Parish clergy were not highly regarded in their communities.²³ Their income came in large part from emoluments for the religious rituals they conducted for their parishioners; many priests were accused of overcharging for these services. In addition, priests received a plot of land on which to raise food, which the peasants were required by law to help them to cultivate.²⁴ This caused even more resentment against them.

The Russian nobility also looked down on parish priests, viewing them as “intellectually and socially backward.”²⁵ However, Laurie Manchester points out that parish priests were far from illiterate: the clergy in general were the second most-educated social estate in Russia.²⁶ The State had backed education of the clergy since Peter’s time, with the idea being that educated priests would enlighten the peasantry. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the majority of parish priests, including those in rural areas, had a seminary degree, which was the equivalent of a secondary school education.²⁷ They were expected by the State to use their education to instill values of

²² Hedda, 15. This prohibition had come about during the reign of Catherine the Great, following the participation of a number of parish priests in the Pugachev rebellion of 1773-1775.

²³ The lower ranks of the parish clergy, especially the sacristans, were probably what gave the white clergy as a whole the reputation of being idle drunks in villages. The priests, who were better-educated and had more work to occupy them, were probably better behaved, but still suffered from the bad reputation of the sacristans.

²⁴ The requirement came into being in 1842. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 201.

²⁵ Pisiotis, 56.

²⁶ Manchester, 51. The education of the average parish priest would have been less sophisticated than that of a nobleman, who would have been exposed to teachings of the Enlightenment either at European universities or from European tutors. Although seminary education was based on Western models, and included study of Latin and Latin authors, the method of teaching used was rote memorization. Seminary students were not encouraged to analyze and interpret.

²⁷ The percent of priests having seminary degrees is as follows: in 1860, 82.6 percent; in 1880, 87.4 percent; in 1890, 88.1 percent. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 455.

patriotism in their peasant parishioners, establish primary schools for village children, act as agronomists who could provide training on the latest agricultural techniques, and even serve as medics who would give inoculations to peasants.²⁸ They received little to compensate them for their expanding duties, and were still largely dependent on emoluments and their plot of land for a living.

Like the bishops, the white clergy began to express dissatisfaction with their situation during the mid-nineteenth century. The first voice was that of an obscure country priest from the Tver' diocese named I.M. Belliustin in 1858. Finding himself stuck in a rural parish with no hope for advancement, Belliustin authored a manuscript in which he criticized the short-comings of the Church. He related scandalous anecdotes about monks and bishops, and questioned the right of monastic clergy to rule the Church. The manuscript was published, apparently without Belliustin's knowledge or consent, and eventually came to the attention of the upper circles of government and Church in St. Petersburg, where it caused an uproar. Once Belliustin's identity was discovered, he was sentenced by the Holy Synod to exile at Solovki monastery, although Alexander II personally intervened and the sentence was overturned.²⁹

The emperor had now become personally aware of the dissatisfaction within the priestly ranks of the Church. His chief procurator, Count Aleksandr P. Tolstoi, attempted to implement a series of reforms to the Church; in particular, he attempted to raise the status of the white clergy. He sought to have them entered onto the list of service ranks

²⁸ Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 9.

²⁹ Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 205-216. See also I.S. Belliustin, *Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia: The Memoir of a Nineteenth Century Parish Priest*, trans. Gregory L. Freeze (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

so they would be paid state salaries like civil servants. The effort failed; there was not enough money in the treasury to do this, although priests did begin to receive small government subsidies. Tolstoi also succeeded in getting the clerical estate officially abolished in 1869 so that no one would be forced to serve as a priest, but this reform backfired: without real incentives to stay such as a state salary, many of the most gifted clerical sons, who would have been the best candidates for the priesthood, opted instead for secular careers.³⁰

Those who remained were not necessarily inept or without spiritual vocation, but they were dissatisfied with their circumstances. They found a forum for their grievances in a newspaper called the *Tserkovno-obshchestvennyi vestnik* (*Church Social-Messenger*), established in St. Petersburg in 1874, which helped to spread the ideas of “clerical liberalism” among the white clergy. The priests expressed the need to have more of a voice in the governance of the Church, and even of making members of the white clergy into bishops.³¹ Alexander III’s chief procurator, Konstantin P. Pobedonostsev, an arch-conservative, was scandalized by the clerical liberalism of the white clergy. He tightened Church censorship over the newspaper, which folded in 1886.³²

³⁰ Manchester offers the following statistics: “At Vladimir seminary the grade point average of seminarians who did not become clergymen was higher than that of seminarians who did become clergymen during every period between 1790-1900 except 1841-1850. ... In 1874-1875, nine out of ten of the top students in the two graduating classes of Vladimir seminary left the clergy.” “The Secularization of the Search for Salvation,” 63, footnote 45.

³¹ The idea that bishops should be selected from the ranks of the white or black clergy came from the same Ivantsov-Platonov quoted above, who had been concerned about restoring authority to the bishops. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 390-393.

³² Freeze, *The Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 416-417.

The Question of Church Reform

The situation of the white clergy in the largest cities in the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century was different than it was for the village *batiushkas*. The white clergy of St. Petersburg in particular were a special case: they were better off materially than their provincial brethren, because they served in wealthier city parishes which provided them with a better living and higher status. In addition, many of them had studied at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, and were as well-educated as the bishops.

The four theological academies provided the highest level of ecclesiastical education in Imperial Russia. They had been established during the reign of Alexander I at Moscow, Kiev, St. Petersburg and Kazan', and offered the equivalent of a master's or doctorate degree in theology and related studies for members of the clerical estate. Only the top graduates of the seminaries were sent to the academies. While many students at the academies were being groomed for the episcopate, others hoped to be ordained as married priests and "serve in the most important administrative and missionary positions in major cities and in Russian churches abroad."³³ The academies emphasized different specialties. For example, missionary work was stressed at Kiev and Kazan', because of the need to work among non-Orthodox populations (Catholics and Muslims, respectively), while the St. Petersburg Academy emphasized pastoral social work in

³³ Hedda, 17.

response to the growing influx of peasants from the provinces to work in the new factories.³⁴

Students at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy first became involved in the social issues of the day during the period of Great Reforms. “Like the university students of the early 1860s, [they] became interested in working to improve the lives of the people.”³⁵ Although the assassination of Alexander II brought an end to the period of Great Reforms and a crackdown on university students, including those at ecclesiastical schools, the St. Petersburg Theological Academy continued to turn out graduates with new ideas about what the Church’s mission and place in society should be.

One reason for this was Antonii Vadkovskii, a moderate bishop who became the rector of the Academy in 1887. Bishop Antonii believed that “the fundamental practices of Christian life were preaching and charity,” and that students should be prepared for Christian life outside the school walls. He petitioned the Holy Synod to allow students to become involved in the work of Society for Moral-Religious Enlightenment (ORRP), which strived to educate people about the Orthodox Church and to improve the lives of working people.³⁶

Work in ORRP as well as ORRP’s daughter organization, the Alexander Nevskii Temperance Society, and the parish charities of the capital encouraged the development of the notion of the clergy’s role as a “Good Shepherd” or pastor, rather than just a

³⁴ Cunningham, 46; 105-106.

³⁵ Hedda, 37.

³⁶ The full name of ORRP was the “Society for the Dissemination of Moral-Religious Enlightenment in the Spirit of the Orthodox Church.” It was founded in the late 1870s by prominent clergymen and notable lay persons for the purpose of combating the influence evangelical Christianity in the capital. Its original target audience was educated society, but was expanded to the working class, especially through the Alexander Nevskii Temperance Society. See Hedda, 87-99.

performer and dispenser of religious rites. Drawing inspiration from the American social gospel movement of the late nineteenth century, some students came to believe that the Church's job was not simply to prepare people for the Kingdom of God in some future afterlife, but to help bring about the Kingdom of God now, in a society based on truth and justice. Clergy should not be removed from events of the day or indifferent to politics.³⁷

The most notorious white clergy graduate of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy was Father Georgii Gapon, the priest who led the procession to the Winter Palace on January 9, 1905, which ended with the Bloody Sunday massacre that touched off the 1905 Revolution. Hedda argues that Father Georgii's religious beliefs and background, which have been almost completely ignored in accounts of the Bloody Sunday massacre, were the key motivators for his actions. She also makes the case that he was not alone among the white clergy of St. Petersburg in being inspired by his beliefs to engage in social and political action.³⁸

This may be the reason that the Holy Synod, headed by Antonii Vadkovskii, now metropolitan of St. Petersburg, initially hesitated to respond to what had occurred. Antonii had been aware of Father Georgii's activities among the workers, and had given at least tacit approval to them. In spite of this, Antonii and the Holy Synod were forced to go into damage control mode, denouncing Father Georgii as an "unworthy priest" and defrocking him *in absentia* because he had fled the country.

The hierarchs feared that any perception of Church involvement in the tragedy would jeopardize the possibility of Church reform, a subject that Nicholas II had taken a

³⁷ Hedda, 107-122.

³⁸ Hedda, 4-5; 135-138.

personal interest in several years previously.³⁹ What impelled Metropolitan Antonii to press for Church reform in early 1905, on the heels of a tragedy in which the Church was perceived to have some culpability, had to do with Nicholas's announcement in December 1904 of his intention to issue an edict on religious toleration in an effort to prevent unrest among the non-Orthodox populations of the Empire. The hierarchs were concerned that the Orthodox Church's status in the nation would be substantially weakened by such an edict.⁴⁰ Thus, Metropolitan Antonii went to argue before the Special Sessions of the Committee of Ministers that now, more than ever, a national Church Council was needed to discuss the issue of Church reform. Antonii contended that "The canonical relation of the church to the state should be one of symphony, not subordination."⁴¹ The Church needed more autonomy, and, toward that end, the patriarchate should be restored.

With the encouragement of Count Witte, the Prime Minister, Nicholas issued an *ukaz* in March 1905 in which he charged the Holy Synod with preparing for a Church Council, which he promised to convoke in the spring of 1905.⁴² Pobedonostsev, the aging chief procurator, disagreed that far-reaching Church reforms were needed, and did what he could to prevent a Council from taking place. Ultimately, however, it was not

³⁹ Nicholas had read articles by Professor A.S. Pavlov and Lev A. Tikhomirov urging Church reform, after which he had turned to Antonii in March 1903 and asked him to "give him an outline of the problems facing the church and suggestions as to how they could be resolved." Cunningham, 71-75; 78.

⁴⁰This may seem a contradictory stance for supposedly reform-minded Church leaders. While the Church leaders sought to be more independent of the State, they still saw the Orthodox Church as the religion of the Russian people, who made up the majority of the Empire, and therefore opposed any efforts by the State to undercut that status. Another contradictory stance was that the Church leaders still expected to keep receiving State subsidies, which formed a substantial part of the Church's budget.

⁴¹ Cunningham, 97.

⁴² Cunningham, 105.

Pobedonostev's actions that halted the process, but the political situation. After the sinking of the Baltic fleet by the Japanese navy in May 1905, Nicholas did not convene a Council as originally promised. He announced that he still intended to do so, but "at a suitable time."⁴³

The Holy Synod went ahead with preparatory discussions in anticipation of the Council. Two Preconciliar Committee sessions were held in 1906 that worked out an agenda that was based on issues identified by the bishops.⁴⁴ The first order of business would be the selection of a patriarch. The office of the modern patriarch would be different from what it was two hundred years previously: he would not make decisions single-handedly, but would be the first prelate of the Synod, a first among equals.⁴⁵ It was also decided that, in accordance with the church canons, only bishops could vote and make decisions at the Council, although it was agreed that each bishop could have clergy and lay representatives to advise him.⁴⁶

The latter was the one concession that was made to the white clergy and laity, which had tried to jump on the bandwagon as soon as they found out that a Church Council was to be held to discuss Church reforms. They wanted to ensure that this would not be just a Council of bishops. Among the white clergy, the most outspoken group was the Group of Thirty-Two Petersburg Priests. Their program was along the lines of

⁴³ Cunningham, 114.

⁴⁴ Cunningham, 106.

⁴⁵ Cunningham points out that Professor Ioann Sokolov of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy had argued at the Preconciliar Commission in 1906 that "Not only was there a *symphonia* between the Patriarch and the imperial government, but between the Patriarch and church as well." Cunningham, 257.

⁴⁶ Cunningham, 213. Pospelovsky maintains that the idea that the Council should consist only of bishops was the stance of the ultraconservative Archbishop Antonii Khrapovitskii; the majority of bishops actually favored participation of lower clergy and laity in the Council. Pospelovsky, 128.

clerical liberalism described above; they “opposed the restoration of the patriarchate and advocated different reforms in church administration that would allow parish clergy to elect and even become bishops.” After joining forces with lay advocates of Christian socialism and forming the “Union for Church Regeneration,” the Group of Thirty-Two also began demanding “separation of church and state, a democratic and conciliar system for church administration, the use of the Gregorian calendar by the church, and translation of the liturgy into vernacular Russian.”⁴⁷

A few words should also be said about the laity at this point, because they had taken a renewed interest in the Church and Church reform and become an important part of the debate, which they followed attentively in both the secular and Church press in the first years of the twentieth century. A large part of the intelligentsia had begun turning to religion because they were “disappoint[ed] with the reigning rationalism of the latter part of the nineteenth century.” Among those who embraced Orthodox spirituality were former Marxists such as Peter Struve, Sergei Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdiaev, and Semen Frank. They took part in groups such as the “Religious-Philosophical Society,” which debated the mission, ethics, and doctrine of the Church.⁴⁸

In the end, all the debate about Church reform by both clergy and laity turned out to be a moot point. Following the fall session of the Preconciliar Committee, which ended in November 1906, the four volumes of the minutes of the Committee’s work were

⁴⁷ Edward E. Rosloff, *Red Priests: Renovatism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946* (Indianapolis and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 7.

⁴⁸ Argyrios K. Pisiotis, “The Orthodox Church and Clerical Political Dissent in Late Imperial Russia, 1905-1914.” Ph.D. diss. (Georgetown University, Washington DC, 2000), 42-43. Pisiotis points out that the return to religion did not always mean a return to mainstream Christianity; many Russian poets, writers, composers and painters were in fact attracted to Occultism or Theosophy. He also notes that “Religious-Philosophical Societies” were organized in Moscow and Kiev.

handed over to Nicholas for his review, after which it was expected that he would convoke the Council. He did not, because his new Prime Minister, Petr Stolypin, had convinced him that given the situation in the country, it would not be appropriate to grant the Church independence.⁴⁹

Many churchmen continued to hold out hope that a Council would eventually be convened. It was thought, for example, that the tercentennial celebrations of the founding of the Romanov dynasty, which were to be held in 1913, would offer a window of opportunity. Another Preconciliar Committee began work in 1912 in anticipation of a Council, but once again Nicholas refused to convene one.⁵⁰

It should not be thought that the Russian Orthodox clergy had been sitting by idly all these years waiting for the Tsar's go-ahead to engage in reform, or that their interest in reform was focused solely on the Church. Many white clergy, including village priests, were involved in other issues of the day, largely because they were familiar with and sympathetic to the peasants' concerns; some even took an active interest in politics as a way of addressing these issues. Pisiotis does not see clergy involvement in politics in the late Russian Empire as unusual, because of their "social activism" and involvement for many decades as members of city dumas, zemstvos, and in civil service work.⁵¹ He argues that "There was only a small step between this exhortation of social activism and

⁴⁹ Cunningham, 10. Stolypin had replaced Witte as Prime Minister in April, 1906.

⁵⁰ Stolypin was dead by this time, felled by an assassin in 1911, and Pobedonostsev had resigned, so it is difficult to know who influenced Nicholas's decision in this case, if anyone did. Pisiotis speculates that "This second refusal may have...been motivated by the Tsar's own promotion of 'popular Orthodoxy' through his endorsement of new canonizations, the popular Father Ioann of Kronstadt and the mysterious 'holymen' Rasputin, as a last 'mystical' link between the monarchy and people." Pisiotis, 41.

⁵¹ Pisiotis sees "social activism" as being more than just charitable activities in big cities; it included many of the non-pastoral duties that had been performed by village priests since the mid-nineteenth century (e.g., teaching children, instructing peasants in agricultural techniques, serving as medics, helping the State to conduct the 1897 census, etc.).

the political activism of the twentieth century.”⁵² Thus, when the legislative body, the Duma, was established by the 1905 October Manifesto, it was not surprising that clergymen were among those elected as deputies. Not all were supporters of the autocracy; in fact, the majority of clerical deputies in the first and second Dumas were leftists.⁵³ By the third Duma, however, the overall political orientation of the clerical deputies could be characterized as moderately to the right.⁵⁴

While it is impossible to come to a conclusion about the overall political orientation of the Russian Orthodox clergy on the eve of the October Revolution on the basis of the political affiliations of the clerical members of the first three Dumas, the information does suggest that the political picture with regard to the clergy was far more complicated than was portrayed by later Bolshevik propaganda, which tarred all clergy with the same brush, that of the extreme rightist Black Hundreds. “Black Hundreds” is an umbrella term for the pro-monarchist, right-wing groups that formed in the wake of the 1905 Revolution.⁵⁵ The most important of these was the Union of Russian People,

⁵² Pisiotis, 360.

⁵³ Three of the six clergy members of the first Duma were elected with the Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets); in the second Duma, there were another three Kadets, three with the Trudoviki, one with the SR, and two non-partisan. Only two bishops and one priest had joined the pro-government faction of the Moderate Rightists. Surprising as it seem, the only concern of the Holy Synod seems to have been that the clerical deputies not belong to any party that advocated the overthrow of the existing regime. Pisiotis, 390-395. See also his detailed tables on clerical composition of each Duma, 601-618.

⁵⁴ “Forty-nine Orthodox and one Catholic churchmen as well as three men of clerical origin joined the third Duma as deputies. They belonged to different factions of the Right, except for four Progressives and one Kadet.” Pisiotis, 399. The political affiliation of five of the 11 clerical deputies of the fourth Duma is unknown. Two were leftists, with the remaining five were members of right factions. Pisiotis, Table 19, 614-618.

⁵⁵ Nicholas II became an honorary member of the organization in 1905; chief procurator Pobedonostsev was also a member. Orlando Figes describes the Black Hundreds as “an early Russian version of the Fascist movement.” The term “Black Hundreds” was an ironic, derogatory term coined by the democrats; it was adopted from the term “White Hundreds,” which referred to the privileged classes of nobles and merchants in medieval Russia. While the Black Hundreds had supporters among the nobility and upper classes, it appealed primarily to the lower classes, “embittered *lumpen* elements” which included casual

which was established in October 1905 by two minor government officials and was patronized by the Tsar and his court as well as several prominent Orthodox clergymen.⁵⁶ Not all the Orthodox clergy backed the Union, however. Metropolitan Antonii, the head of the Holy Synod, refused to join it and even preached against it, whereupon one of the founders of the Union called for Antonii's resignation or defrocking. The Preconciliar Committee introduced a resolution of solidarity with Antonii, which apparently did not endear it to the Tsar.⁵⁷

In spite of any tensions that existed between the hierarchs and the Tsar, after World War I broke out, the Church leaders dutifully blessed the Tsar's troops as they headed to the front, and Russian clergy marched off to war with them as military chaplains. However, this show of support for the Tsar and the war effort began showing strains as defeats mounted for the army and the autocracy began disintegrating. The final insult for Church leaders was Rasputin, the dissolute Siberian "holy man" whose

laborers, artisans, shopkeepers and minor officials. Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1996), 196.

⁵⁶ The two most prominent Orthodox clergymen associated with the Black Hundreds and Union of Russian People were Metropolitan Antonii Khrapovitskii and Father John of Kronstadt. Khrapovitskii was the front-runner for the patriarchate in 1917 and later became head of the Russian Church Outside of Russia. See Cunningham, 115-116. Father John of Kronstadt, who was well-known for his charitable work and as a healer, attracted many pilgrims, especially the poor and common people. Nadia Kizenko questions the extent of his involvement with the Black Hundreds and Union of Russian People, arguing that he was too old and ill to be actively involved in the movement (he died in 1908). She suggests the association of Father John with the Black Hundreds by the Bolsheviks and Soviets came about because of the politicization of him by the Russian Church Outside of Russia, which canonized him in 1964. Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 252; 284-285. Bolshevik and Soviet writers later claimed that Tikhon had also been involved with the Union of Russian People, although they do not provide a basis for this. See, for example, Iu.P. Titov, "Revoliutsionnye tribunaly v bor'be s tserkovnoi kontrevoliutsiei," in *Sbornik nauchnykh trudov VluZI: Istoriko-pravovye voprosy vzaimootnoshenii gosudarstva i tserkvi v istorii Rossii*, I.A. Isaev, O.A. Omel'chenko, eds., (Moskva: RIO VluZI, 1988), 151.

⁵⁷ Cunningham suggests that Nicholas's refusal to convoke the Church council in late 1905 might have had something to do with Antonii's stance on the Union of Russian People and the Pre-Sobor committee's show of solidarity for the metropolitan. Cunningham, 311-312.

hypnotic hold over the Empress Alexandra extended to influence over who would be selected and approved as candidates for the episcopate.⁵⁸ Among Rasputin's protégés were the metropolitans of the two most important cities, Pitirim Oknov in St. Petersburg and Makarii Nevskii in Moscow.⁵⁹ The *Rasputinshchina* so scandalized even the most conservative bishops that "By 1917 the bishops stood ready to abandon the *ancien régime*. When the chief procurator appealed to the Synod on 27 February 1917 for a proclamation in defense of the monarchy, it summarily refused."⁶⁰ Nicholas abdicated on March 2 (15). A week later, on March 9 (22), the Synod issued the proclamation, "The will of God has come to pass. Russia has entered on the path of a new state existence. May the Lord bless our great Motherland with happiness and glory in her new path."⁶¹

In spite of the endorsement of the "new state existence" by the Synod, there was confusion and disbelief on the part of many clergymen. Boris Kandidov, a leading Soviet anti-religious writer, pointed out that clergy in some cities refused to read Nicholas II's abdication manifesto in their churches and continued to commemorate the Imperial

⁵⁸ This mirrors Rasputin's interference in the highest ranks of the Russian government, which resulted in the so-called "ministerial leapfrog," in which competent men were removed from power for the slightest criticism, with no one remaining in office long enough to master their responsibilities. Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 277-278. Rasputin may have played a role the dismissal of A.D. Samarin from his post as chief procurator of the Holy Synod in 1915 because the latter had criticized Rasputin.

⁵⁹ Vladimir Bogoiavlenskii, the chaplain to the Black Hundreds, had been the Holy Synod's first choice to replace Antonii Vadkovskii as metropolitan of St. Petersburg upon the latter's death in 1912. The thinking was that he was "old enough not to offer any serious challenge to the established church government." However, after Vladimir expressed his outrage at Rasputin's interference in church affairs, he was moved to Kiev (where he was later murdered by four Red Army men). His replacement was Pitirim, who was more compliant. In Moscow, Archbishop Makarii, an elderly man who was expected to be "quiet and grateful," was appointed metropolitan to replace Archbishop Antonii Khrapovitskii, a fiery and outspoken conservative churchman, who was transferred to Khar'kov. Cunningham, 324-325.

⁶⁰ Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 469-470.

⁶¹ Quoted by M.A. Babkin in "Pravoslavnaia Rossiiskaia Tserkov' v fevral'skoi revoliutsii 1917 g.," in *Istoriia Rossiiskoi Dukhovnosti: Materiali Dvadsat' vtoroi Vserossiiskoi zaochnoi nauchnoi konferentsii*, ed. S.N. Poltorak (Saint Petersburg: Nestor, 2001), 197.

family in their services.⁶² In another instance, a bewildered priest had sought advice from a Commissar of the Provisional Government, complaining he did not know what to do because his superiors (the bishops) would not give him instructions.⁶³

All-Russian Church Council

Soviet writers seized on anecdotes like these to make the case that following the February Revolution, the Church was drifting to the right while the people were moving to the left. They saw the convening of the All-Russian Church Council during this period as proof of this. Archpriest Aleksandr Vvedenskii, a leader of the pro-Bolshevik Renovationist Church, argued in 1923 that the Council had been convened by Church leaders in an effort to calm the nation and bring order: “The work of bringing the Russian land to sanity, so necessary at present, is possible only on a religious basis.”⁶⁴ In other words, the leaders wanted to turn back the clock and return to the old ways.

Richard Pipes takes into account the actions of the Provisional Government regarding religion. Pipes argues that the churchmen sought to convene the Council not so much to save the Russian nation as to ensure the Church’s own survival as an institution:

⁶²Boris Pavlovich Kandidov, *Tserkov’ i fevral’skaia revoliutsiia—klassovaia pozitsiia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi v period fevral’-avgust 1917 g. Materialy i ocherki* (Moscow: Ogiz, gosudarstvennoe antireligioznoe izdatel’stvo, 1934), 19-20.

⁶³A.V. Peshekhonov, *Pervye nedeli*, in S.A. Alekseev (comp.), *Fevral’skaia revoliutsiia* (Moscow, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1925), 451. Cited by Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 11. This was not quite true. George Kosar points out that the Holy Synod had ordered on March 9 that the Imperial family no longer be commemorated in Church services. Prayers were to be offered instead for the “divinely-protected Russian Power and its right-believing Provisional Government.” The decree was published in *Tserkovnye vedomosti*, the central organ of the Church, and may have taken weeks or even months to reach all the clergy, given the chaos of the time. See “Russian Orthodoxy in Crisis and Revolution: The Church Council of 1917-1918.” Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2003 195 (footnote 11). My thanks to Professor Rex A. Wade for obtaining Kosar’s dissertation for me.

⁶⁴Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 26. Vvedenskii in turn cited a line from a list of problems issued on August 12 by the preparatory committee for solution by the Council. A. I. Vvedenskii, *Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo: Ocherk Vzaimootnoshenii tserkvi i gosudarstva v Rossii 1918-1922* (Moscow: Mospoligraf, 1923) 66-72.

they were troubled because “the drift of [the Provisional Government’s] legislation pointed to disestablishment.” The Provisional Government had proclaimed the equality of all religions in July; placed all schools that received state subsidies, including those operated by the Church, under the Ministry of Education; and had eliminated the compulsory study of the Church catechism from the school curriculum. “Churchmen interpreted these measures as steps toward secularization and blamed them for the decline of religious sentiment in the country.”⁶⁵

The problem with this explanation is that it still implies that the highest-ranking leaders, the bishops and archpriests, desiring to maintain the *status quo*, were the driving force behind the Council. New research, especially that of P.Ia. Leont’ev and George T. Kosar, suggests that there was a much broader base of support for the All-Russian Church Council following the February Revolution. This research emphasizes the key role played by ordinary clergy and laymen in preparations for it. The Church Council was very much a reflection of the social and political changes brought about by the February Revolution, without which it would not have been convened.

During the period of revolutionary turmoil, the topic of Church reform came to the forefront of public awareness once again. A wide spectrum of people, including ordinary parish priests, lower-ranking clergy (deacons and sacristans) and laity, saw this period as an unparalleled opportunity for bringing about much-needed changes.⁶⁶

Furthermore, they believed that they had a stake in the reform process and sought to be

⁶⁵ Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime*, 340. Pospelovsky has a different take on events: he argues that the only lasting conflict between Church and State was over parochial schools. The very fact that the Provisional Government granted permission to convoke the All-Russian Council tends to support Pospelovsky’s view that there was not a serious conflict between Church and State. Pospelovsky, 26-27.

⁶⁶ See Kosar, 48-56 (“Diocesan Congresses and Reform”).

included in it. When the All-Russian Council was convened in August 1917, a large number of the participants were in fact parish priests, lower clergy and lay delegates. . This was quite a change from the original plan of the Preconciliar Committees of 1906, which had resolved that while priests and lay representatives could serve as advisers to the bishops, only bishops would make decisions.⁶⁷

To see how this came about, it is necessary to back-track a little. Following the February Revolution, both Church and government found themselves in a state of transition. Unlike the government, the institutional apparatus of the Church had survived, with the two highest organs of the chief procurator's office and Holy Synod remaining in place, at least in the beginning. In April, however, Prince V.N. L'vov, the chief procurator,⁶⁸ dispersed the old "Imperial Synod," consisting of eight bishops and two priests, taking the opportunity to replace the more reactionary clergy. The new "Provisional Synod" consisted of four bishops and four priests.⁶⁹ The "Provisional Synod" became "essentially a kind of temporary revolutionary government of the

⁶⁷See Cunningham, 213, as well as previous discussion.

⁶⁸Figes describes V.N. L'vov as "a nobleman of no particular talent or profession" who had been an Octobrist deputy in the Fourth Duma. He was the self-appointed mediator between Kerensky and Kornilov during the disastrous "Kornilov affair" in the summer of 1917. L'vov "ended up in the 1920s as a pauper and a madman living on the streets of Paris." Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 449-453. It is not clear what this Prince L'vov's relationship was to Prince Georgii E. L'vov, the first prime minister of the Provisional Government. L'vov's office of chief procurator was itself abolished by the Provisional Government on August 5, and replaced with a minister of confessions. See Kosar, 63.

⁶⁹Among those who were dismissed was at least one of Rasputin's bishops, Makarii (Nevskii), metropolitan of Moscow. Metropolitan Tikhon (Belavin), the future Patriarch, was also dismissed from the "Imperial Synod," although it is not clear why; he was considered one of the moderate, "relatively liberal" bishops by L'vov, according to Leont'ev. The only member of the old "Imperial Synod" who was retained as a member of the "Provisional Synod" was Archbishop Sergei (Stragorodskii) of Finland, himself a future Patriarch. *Moskovskoe dukhovstvo v preddverii i nachale gonanii, 1917-1922 gg.* Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Pravoslavnogo bratstva Sporuchnitsi greshnykh, 1999), 14-15; P. Ia. Leont'ev, "Revoliutsiia v tserkvi: s'ezdy dukhovenstva i mirian v 1917 godu," *Tserkov' v istorii Rossii*, Sbornik 2 (Moscow, 1998): 215-216. L'vov's office of chief procurator was itself abolished by the Provisional Government on August 5, and replaced with a minister of confessions. See Kosar, 63.

Church,” as one liberally-minded writer of the day referred to it; it would remain in existence until an All-Russian Church Council could be convened. It was L’vov, in fact, who “gave the new ‘Provisional Synod’ the task of convening the All-Russian Church Council and satisfying a general demand that it meet before the Constituent Assembly,” which had been scheduled for September 30.⁷⁰

Between April and late July, prior to the convening of the All-Russian Church Council, numerous diocesan congresses of clergy and laity took place across the Empire. Such diocesan congresses had existed since the last half of the nineteenth century, but had consisted only of clergy and were limited to discussion of issues concerning the local seminaries, finances, and fund-raising. The many congresses that took place in the spring of 1917, as well as the lay participation in them, appear to have been a spontaneous phenomenon. Leont’ev suggests that the hierarchs had issued instructions to organize such congresses in only a few dioceses, but that “Even if there had been no instructions, the congresses would have gathered anyway. Such was the logic of the revolutionary events, which touched all aspects of Russian life.” The congresses took place from mid-April to late May, and “became a forum of public life, a basic form of civic and political activism of the entire population.”⁷¹

The primary purpose of the diocesan congresses was to prepare for the All-Russian Congress of Clergy and Laity, which took place in Moscow in June 1917.

⁷⁰ Kosar, 28-29.

⁷¹ Leont’ev, 220. Leont’ev notes that the congresses of clergy and laity continued to meet after the All-Russian Congress of Clergy and Laity was in session, and even after the All-Russian Church Council opened August (218). As will be seen in Chapter 4, they were the forerunners for the united parish councils that defended church property following the issuance of the decree on separation of Church from the State, which nationalized church property.

Although the All-Russian Congress was set up at the initiative of the Provisional Synod, it exhibited some of the same “grassroots” quality seen in the diocesan congresses that had just taken place. It drew more than 1,000 delegates, mostly parish clergy and lay persons, from across Russia.⁷² It was intended largely for addressing issues of concern to parish clergy and lay believers, and served in some ways like a preparatory commission to the All-Russian Orthodox Church Council.⁷³ This Congress, along with the diocesan congresses, demonstrates that there was broader interest in the topic of Church reform than previously thought, and suggests that the All-Russian Church Council was more than a desperate attempt by a handful of hierarchs to save the Russian nation or Church.

A Preconciliar Committee, also appointed by the Provisional Synod, met in Petrograd in June-July 1917 to make final preparations for the Council. Because of the short suspense, the Preconciliar Committee relied to a great extent on material drafted by previous Preconciliar committees when compiling the specific issues that were to be discussed by the individual committees.⁷⁴ After the Preconciliar Committee filed its report, the Synod ordered the Church Council to convene on August 15.⁷⁵

The Council was opened in Moscow with a service at Uspenskii cathedral in the Kremlin on Dormition, August 15, 1917 (old style Julian calendar), the feast day of the

⁷² There were also a few representatives from the monastic clergy and diocesan church schools, as well as seven bishops. The chief procurator L’vov had initially sought to exclude bishops from attendance, but he was overruled by unanimous vote of the Synod. Kosar, 56.

⁷³ Pospelovsky gives the impression that the All-Russian Congress of Clergy and Laity had the primary responsibility for the preparatory work for the All-Russian Church Council. Topics concerning reforms that were desired by parish priests and laypeople, may have been discussed at the Congress, but the actual preparatory work, which included setting the agenda and the time and place for the Council, was the job of the Preconciliar Committee. See Pospelovsky, 26.

⁷⁴ Those were the committees that met in 1906-1907, and in 1912-1916, as discussed previously.

⁷⁵ Kosar, 58-59.

cathedral. The fact that the 1917 Council was held in Moscow may have been based on the original decision by the Holy Synod 1906 to hold the All-Russian Church Council there for the following reasons: first of all, the traditional throne of the Patriarchs was at Uspenskii cathedral, which was where the previous Council had been held in 1666-1667. Secondly, consideration was given to the idea that there would be less bureaucratic interference in the workings of the Council by being away from the center of secular government in St. Petersburg.⁷⁶ Thus, the center of the Church administration and leadership shifted to Moscow during the time of the Provisional Government.

In general assembly, the Council met not at Uspenskii cathedral, but at the Eparchial Dom on Likhovaia pereulka. The Eparchial Dom had an enormous hall that could seat all the delegates, who numbered far more than had been originally planned in 1906.⁷⁷ The Council consisted of 564 voting members, of which there were 314 lay members and 250 clerical members. The representatives included “provincial teachers, doctors, lawyers, educated peasants, and rural clergy, as well as professors, theologians, and members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.”⁷⁸ Most of the actual work of the Council was carried out by twenty different “departments” or committees, which met at different venues in and around Moscow where the separate issues and solutions were prepared for eventual presentation to and approval by the Council at its general assembly.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Cunningham, 105-106.

⁷⁷ Metropolitan Evlogii, *Put' moei zhizni: Vospominaniia Mitropolita Evlogiia (Georgievskogo), izlozhennye po ego rasskazam T. Manukhinoi* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1947; reprint Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii izdatel'skii otdel vsetserkovnogo pravoslavnogo molodezhnogo dvizheniia, 1994), 271-272.

⁷⁸ Catherine Evtuhov, “The Church in the Russian Revolution: Arguments for and against Restoring the Patriarchate at the Church Council of 1917-1918,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Autumn, 1991), 498.

⁷⁹ Metropolitan Evlogii, 272.

Their first order of business was reform of the upper administration of the Church. This included the question of restoration of the patriarchate, which was the subject of intense debate during the first weeks of the Council. Vvedenskii, an opponent to the restoration, later claimed that the debate might have gone on endlessly with no clear outcome, and that only the threat of the October revolution had finally forced the election.⁸⁰ While it is true that the decision to elect a patriarch was made within days of the political coup, on October 28, Kosar argues that “Contrary to the assertions of early studies, the [Council] did not restore the patriarchate mainly as a response to a political situation that threatened the church.” For one thing, the restoration of the patriarchate had been discussed for decades, since the latter part of the nineteenth century. For another, the debate over the restoration at the Council “had given prolonged and careful consideration to the issue of the patriarchate. As the debates unfolded, it was clear that Church doctrines and prior debates—not the immediate political environment—dominated discussions and the decision to restore the patriarchate.”⁸¹

While the rapidly deteriorating political situation may not have been the real deciding factor in restoring the patriarchate, it can be said that it accelerated the process. As Metropolitan Evlogii described events,

The Council broke off the normal course of its work....The situation in the city became so threatening that it was necessary to hurry up, and the issue of the election of a Patriarch, which had been debated over the course of such a long time, required immediate resolution. From previous discussions, it was clear that the majority of the Council favored the patriarchate....To the roar of canons and

⁸⁰ Vvedenskii, 106.

⁸¹ Kosar, 94. The “early studies” Kosar is referring to are John Curtiss, “The Russian Orthodox Church and the Provisional Government,” *American Slavic and East European Review* 7 (October 1948): 237-250; and Roman Roessler *Kirche und Revolution in Russland: Patriarch Tichon und der Sowjetstaat* (Cologne: Boehlau Verlag, 1969).

crackle of machine-gun fire, the Council voted on what was the most important action of the entire All-Russian Church Council of 1917-1918...⁸²

In summing up the results of the voting, Catherine Evtuhov observes that “The majority of lay members voted for the patriarchate, as did the bishops; the white clergy was divided and most of the professors voted against it.”⁸³

Following the decision to elect a patriarch, the actual electoral process came in two stages. Three candidates were selected from overall voting, which began on October 31 (November 13). The final candidates were Metropolitan Tikhon (Belavin) of Moscow, who was the Council president;⁸⁴ Archbishop Arsenii of Novgorod; and Archbishop Antonii (Khrapovitskii) of Khar’kov.⁸⁵ The final selection was made by drawing lots, which occurred on November 5 (18). Although Metropolitan Antonii had received the most electoral votes, the man whose name was drawn from the urn by Father

⁸² Metropolitan Evlogii, 276.

⁸³ Evtuhov, 509.

⁸⁴ Metropolitan Tikhon (1865-1925) was born Vasilii Belavin into a priest’s family in Pskov diocese. Following graduation from the Theological Academy in St. Petersburg, he became an instructor in the Pskov seminary, where he was popular among both students and faculty. He was consecrated as bishop in 1898, after which he was sent to the United States to head the Russian Orthodox Diocese in North America (and was made an honorary citizen of the United States). Following his return to Russia in 1907, he first served as Archbishop of Yaroslavl, and then was transferred to Vilnius. On June 21, 1917, he was elected as metropolitan of Moscow by a diocesan council consisting of clergy and laity. Summarized from “Zhitie sviatitelia Tikhona, Patriarkha Moskovskogo i vseia Rusi,” *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 1990, No. 2, 56-59.

⁸⁵ Metropolitan Antonii Khrapovitskii (1863-1936) was born in Novgorod province into a noble family. He graduated from the St. Petersburg Theological Academy in 1885, and was consecrated a bishop in 1897. A long-time supporter of the restoration of the patriarchate, he was the leading candidate for the post at the All-Russian Church Council in 1917. After the Council, he became metropolitan of Khar’kov, and later Kiev and Galitskii. Following his imprisonment in Ukraine and Poland (together with Metropolitan Evlogii), he returned to Russia and went to Novocherkassk where he headed the Provisional Supreme Church Administration. In early 1921, he emigrated to Yugoslavia at the invitation of the Patriarch of Serbia, eventually heading up the Karlovatskii Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia with the blessing of Patriarch Tikhon. Subsequent pronouncements of Antonii and the Karlovatskii Sobor in 1922 against the Bolshevik regime led to Tikhon’s denunciation of them as being out of communion with the Russian Orthodox Church, and the appointment of Metropolitan Evlogii in place of Antonii as head of the Russian Church in western Europe. Summarized from “Mitropolit Antonii Khrapovitskii,” *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 1996, No. 9, 50-51.

Aleksii, an elderly recluse monk, was Metropolitan Tikhon's; it was considered that this manner of final selection reflected the will of God.⁸⁶

Unlike previous patriarchs of Russia, the new patriarch was not intended to be an ecclesiastical monarch. Limitations were placed on his authority, and the new central Church administration was set up that reflected the principles of democracy and *sobornost'*, or conciliarity. The patriarch would work with two organs. The first was the Holy Synod, which he would chair. The Synod would consist of twelve additional bishops, most of whom would serve on a rotating basis; the patriarch was to function as the first among equals and rule collectively with the Synod. The patriarch would also chair a Supreme Church Board (*Vyshee tserkovnoe upravlenie*), which was originally intended by the Preconciliar Commission to be a lay counterweight to the Holy Synod. The concept of the Supreme Church Board changed, however, and it was finally decided that it would consist of three Synod bishops, a monk, five representatives of the white clergy, and six laymen.⁸⁷ Each body had its own competencies, with “questions relating to theology, religious discipline and ecclesiastical administration...the prerogative of the Synod,” and “secular-juridical, charity and other church-related social questions...the prerogative of the [Supreme Church Board].”⁸⁸ These bodies were to meet between sessions of the All-Church Council, which was to convene every three years.

⁸⁶ It also followed the example of the selection of the Apostle Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot in Acts 1:23-26, as pointed out by Pospelovsky, 30.

⁸⁷ Summarized from Kosar, 98-103.

⁸⁸ Pospelovsky, 33. Pospelovsky translates *Vyshee tserkovnoe upravlenie* as “Higher Church Council.”

Pouring New Wine into Old Skins: The Enthronement of Patriarch Tikhon

Even if he was meant to be a new kind of constitutional patriarch, Tikhon's installment as patriarch, which is technically termed "enthronement" (*intronizatsiia*), took place in a traditional ceremony. The enthronement took place on November 21 (December 4), 1917, at the Kremlin in Uspenskii cathedral, the customary place of enthronement for the patriarchs.⁸⁹ It was the feast day of the Entry into the Temple of the Mother of God, which had been chosen as an auspicious day for the ceremony. Initially the Bolsheviks, who occupied the Kremlin, did not want to allow the ceremony, but after "lengthy negotiations," agreed to permit entry into the Kremlin by tickets, which would bear the stamp of the new regime. The Holy Synod scrambled to put together the ceremony. After some difficulty, they managed to obtain what remained of the patriarchal vestments from the vestry, which had been looted during the October days.⁹⁰

The enthronement service began early in the morning with the procession of the clergy into the cathedral. Amid cries of "Axios! Axios!" ("He is worthy!") from the altar, Tikhon was brought forward to the center of the cathedral where the sub-deacons and senior metropolitans of the Church assisted him in vesting. After the reading of the Gospel, Tikhon gave his blessing to the people for the first time as Patriarch, after which the choir sang "*Eis polla, eti despota*" ("Many years to you, Master!")⁹¹ Following the liturgy, congratulatory speeches and a separate prayer service, the clergy and senior lay

⁸⁹ It was also the traditional place of coronation for the tsars.

⁹⁰ Among the vestments handed over by the Bolsheviks were Patriarch Nikon's mantle and cross. Metropolitan Evlogii, 280.

⁹¹ A detailed description of the enthronement liturgy, which includes the precise time that the most significant actions occurred during the service, appeared in *Vserossiiskii Tserkovno-Obshchestvennyi Vestnik*, 1917, Nos 148, 153, 154, and is reprinted in full in *Akty sviateishego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 49-57.

representatives of the All-Russian Church Council exited onto Red Square in a religious procession (*khrestnyi khod*), with icons and religious banners at their head. They processed around the buildings of the Kremlin, many of which had been heavily damaged during the recent fighting. The new Patriarch, riding in an open car, sprinkled holy water on the throngs of people who had gathered, many of whom got down on their knees as he went by them.⁹² Even the Red Army guards at the Kremlin doffed their hats as Tikhon passed by in the procession, although Metropolitan Evlogii remarked many years later that they had merely chosen not to express their displeasure at the time.⁹³

Summary

The Russian Orthodox Church on the eve of the October Revolution was more than just a relic of the past, a decaying institution that would swiftly pass out of existence like the monarchy. Its leaders had become aware during the previous century of the need for change and reform if the Church was to be a viable organization in a rapidly modernizing society. After more than a decade of trying to convene a forum for discussing and implementing the reforms, the Church leaders finally received their opportunity as a result of the February Revolution and the overthrow of Nicholas II. The All-Russian Church Council opened in August 1917, and consisted of bishops, lower clergy, and lay delegates, a more democratic representation than initially envisioned when the Council was first proposed. The Council's first session was capped by the election and enthronement of a new Patriarch, which was regarded by the leaders as the

⁹² *Akty sviateishego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 56-57. A photograph of Uspenskii cathedral, with a hole in its central cupola from an artillery shell, appears in *National Geographic*, Volume XXXIV, No. 5 (November 1918), 381. Other photographs in the same issue show the damage inside the cathedral (382) and the plundered patriarchal vestry (387).

⁹³ Metropolitan Evlogii, 281.

first step in realizing their aim of a Church that was independent from the State. Their relation, however, was to be short-lived. The Council continued to operate well into 1918, but instead of completing its work of building a new Church-State relationship, it found itself up against a regime that sought to disestablish it. The early policy of the regime toward the Church, along with the decrees and other legal documents that were adopted to combat the Church and its leaders, are the subject of the next chapter.

3. Separation of the Church from the State

Many, not knowing the life and moods of Russia, have a very casual attitude toward the struggle against the church and depict the victory over it in light-hearted tones. Here is where we part ways, because I am convinced that the struggle is difficult, that the actions must be careful and methodical. When we were drafting the decree in the committee, I thought there would be outbursts of religious excesses and blood in some places, but my words were greeted with a smile. Life has demonstrated that my words were justified.

--Letter to V.D. Bonch-Bruевич from a member of the committee that drafted the decree on the Separation of the Church from the State.¹

By order of the Holy Synod, the enthronement of Patriarch Tikhon at the Kremlin was accompanied by the ringing of church bells for the entire day all over Moscow and in other parts of the country.² This must have been jarring in both the aesthetic and ideological sense to the revolutionaries. That they had even allowed Patriarch Tikhon's enthronement service to take place, although they had initially refused to permit it, is a demonstration of how fluid the situation was in the weeks following the October coup.

A number of reasons have been offered as to why the revolutionaries did not deal more ruthlessly with the Russian Orthodox Church in the beginning. George P. Fedotov

¹ Quoted by V. A. Alekseev, *Illiuzii i Dogmy* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1991), 29.

² The Holy Synod issued a decision to "Mark the day of this celebration with the ringing of the bells all day in all churches of Moscow and those cities of Russia, in which the report of this celebration arrives by the day [on which it occurs]; in other churches of the Russian Church, conduct all-day ringing of bells on the first Sunday or feast day after news of the event is received." From "Opredelenie Sviatshego Sinoda o vozvedenii na patriarshiu kafedru mitropolita Moskovskogo i Kolomenskogo Tikhona", dated approximately 17(30) November 1917, *Akty Sviateshego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 49.

asserted that

During the Civil War, the Bolsheviks had little time for the Church. While by no means hiding their attitude towards it...they did not undertake the struggle on a broad programme....The struggle with the Church was concentrated...in the Commissariat of Justice, whence local Soviets were instructed, anti-religious agitators were sent out and literature distributed.³

Fedotov's explanation is a good starting point for understanding why the regime's earliest official actions against the Church were not more severe, although it suggests that the Bolsheviks' efforts were more centrally coordinated than they actually were.

Curtiss had a similar explanation: "For four years the Soviet regime was engaged in a desperate struggle for survival during which its hostility to religion, and especially to the Russian Orthodox Church, was a matter of minor importance."⁴ This reflects what was written in the letter quoted at the head of the chapter by one of the drafters of the decree on the separation of the Church from the State. The struggle simply was not taken seriously by many revolutionaries, especially in the beginning.

There may also have been an element of embarrassment on the part of the revolutionaries. Paul Miliukov remarked that initially the Soviet government acted cautiously "in part [because] of its inability to cope with the religious feelings within its own ranks."⁵ In addition, a large number of believers were women, and there was reluctance to insult the feelings of one's mother, grandmother, wife or sister.⁶

³ G.P. Fedotov, *The Russian Church since the Revolution* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York, Toronto: The MacMillan Co., 1928), 42-43.

⁴ Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 89.

⁵ Paul Miliukov, *Outlines of Russian Culture*, ed. Michael Karpovich, trans. Valentine Ughet and Eleanor Davis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948), 167. As an illustration of this, Alexander Rabinowitch relates that the planned day of the assault on Left Socialist Revolutionary military headquarters in Moscow, July 7, 1918, happened to be St. John the Baptist's Day: "Not one unit of the Red

Russia was still very much an agrarian nation, with peasants making up eighty percent of the population in 1917. Religious traditions were deeply rooted in Russian culture, and so religion played some kind of role in the lives of most people, even if only indirectly. People may not have been overtly religious in the sense that they attended church services on a frequent basis, but they participated in religious observances at weddings, baptisms, and funerals; they took part in the celebrations associated with major feast days such as Pascha or the feast of the patron saint of the village church; the peasants gauged their agricultural seasons by the church calendar. Even the working classes in the cities, to include communist party members, were barely a generation removed from the village, and had not entirely forgotten religious traditions.

The revolutionaries may have been ambivalent about religion in the beginning, but they were convinced that it had no place in the new kind of society that they were trying to build, and that ultimately it had to go. Legislation separating the Church from

Guards, Red Army, or Latvian Rifles ordered to participate in the attack...showed up on schedule at jumping off points.” Rabininowitch, *The Bolsheviks in Power: The First Year of Soviet Rule in Petrograd* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 293-294. Similarly, Bernard Patenaude describes how American famine relief workers in 1921-1922 had to pick up slack on religious holidays, when Russian staff would be absent. One incident in Tsaritsyn seems a good example: “During Easter, [George] Cornick was surprised to find that the Soviet government ‘saw fit to proclaim it as an official holiday,’ beginning Friday at noon and extending until Tuesday morning.” Bernard M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 238.

⁶ In April, 1923, a young Red Army soldier told a *Pravda* correspondent that during a visit home for the recent holiday (presumably Easter), he had decided to have a debate with his mother at the dinner table over the question of what villagers thought about the anti-religious campaigns by their children. “The mother ended the religious dispute by striking the Red Army soldier on his brow with a hot spoonful of kasha.” The *Pravda* correspondent concluded his article with advice to soldiers “not to be afraid of your mother’s spoon.” From *Pravda*, April 21, 1923. Quoted by A.A. Valentinov, *Chernaia kniga* (“*Shturm’ Nebes*”): *Sbornik dokumental’nykh dannnykh, kharakterizuiushchikh bor’bu sovetskoi kommunisticheskoi vlasti protiv vsiakoi religii, protiv vseh ispovedanii i tserkvei* (Paris: Izdatel’stvo russkogo natsional’nogo studentcheskogo ob’edineniia, 1925), 146.

the State was a feature of many modern societies of the day, and the Bolsheviks saw it as a desirable, necessary first step for their enterprise. This chapter will examine the decree on the separation of the Church from the State, and several other major legal documents that were issued by the Bolsheviks to deal with the Church. There will be a brief examination of the attitudes and actions of the revolutionaries toward religion immediately following the October Revolution; the early reaction of the Church and its leaders to the Revolution; the early confrontation over Aleksandro-Nevskaia Lavra, which accelerated the release of the decree on the separation of the Church from the State in January 1918; the first Constitution in July 1918; and the instructions for implementing the decree on the separation of the Church from the State that were issued in August 1918.

Attitudes and Actions of the Revolutionaries toward Religion following the October Revolution

It is difficult to speak about the revolutionaries having an actual policy toward religion in the beginning, because specific instructions on what to do about religion were not provided by Marx and Engels or later development of Marxist thought.⁷ Other revolutionaries such as the Mensheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) were more lenient overall toward religion. Even individual Bolsheviks had different views as to what should be done about religion. Some were more hard-line than others, but by and

⁷ Daniel Peris points out that “Revolutionaries inspired by Marxism were not supposed to have to contend with religion after a proletarian revolution.” Marx and Engels had assumed that a communist revolution would take place in “an industrialized nation with an already secularized working class.” Daniel Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 23.

large, the regime's early attitude toward it may be characterized as more anti-religious than militantly atheistic.⁸

Bolshevik leaders such as Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin and Lunacharskii thought that religion would simply disappear with education and other distractions such as the cinema.⁹ Their cautious stance on religion and religious believers was nothing new, being based on the experiences of radical propagandists of the late nineteenth century: "In general, propagandists addressing uneducated and unpoliticized workers took care not to offend the religious sensibilities of their listeners." The propagandists were not to bring up subjects having to do with the tsar, God, or lying priests to the listeners, but "if raised by the workers...the topics were acceptable."¹⁰

This view came to be incorporated in Bolshevik policy toward religion, although not immediately; it came after early experiences indicated that religious belief was more pervasive and persistent than the Bolsheviks initially expected. Speaking in March 1919, Lenin articulated the need to emancipate working people from religious prejudices "by means of propaganda and by raising the political consciousness of the masses but carefully avoiding anything that may hurt the feelings of the religious section of the

⁸Arto Luukkanen speaks of hawks and doves on the religious question in the early years, but does not name them. He does mention the Komsomol, or Communist Youth League, as an example of an organization that was very hawkish in the anti-religious battle from the beginning. It struggled with the Commissariat for Enlightenment for control over anti-religious education, because the Komsomol considered the latter organization as too lenient in its stance toward religion. Arto Luukkanen, *The Party of Unbelief: The Religious Policy of the Bolshevik Party, 1917- 1929* (Helsinki; Studia Historica 48, 1994), 68.

⁹Peris, 22-23.

¹⁰Deborah L. Pearl, "Tsar and Religion in Russian Revolutionary Propaganda," *Russian History*, 20, Nos. 1-4 (1993), 100.

population and serve to increase religious fanaticism.”¹¹ It was also propounded in Bukharin and Preobrazhensky’s *The ABC of Communism*, which advised new adherents to communism, who were expected to be atheists, to be cautious with regard to the religious sentiments of the people: “The campaign against the backwardness of the masses in this matter of religion, must be conducted with patience and considerateness, as well as with energy and perseverance. The credulous crowd is extremely sensitive to anything which hurts its feelings.”¹² Although articles critical of religion and the Church appeared in Bolshevik newspapers very early on, the more aggressive propaganda against religion did not appear until later in the 1920s, along with organizations such as the Soviet League of the Godless, after the Bolshevik regime had firmly established itself and had decided that more stringent measures were required to root out religious belief.

The actions that were taken against religious belief and the Church in the months and first years following the revolution were hit and miss. The more successful actions appear to have had some thought behind them, taking into account popular reaction. For example, many parish churches were allowed to remain open, but monasteries lacked the same kind of popular support, and so most were closed and their property seized by 1920. Similarly, private churches and chapels were shut down and converted into social clubs or places of amusement.¹³ Less successful actions did not take into account unfavorable consequences; one example is Alexandra Kollontai’s attempt to seize the Aleksandro-

¹¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Volume 29, March – August 1919 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965), 111.

¹² N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism with The Programme of the Communist Party of Russia*. Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul (Monmouth, Wales: The Merlin Press, 2007), 240.

¹³ Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, 344-345.

Nevskaia Lavra in Petrograd in January 1918 and convert it into a home for war invalids (to be discussed below). The campaign to “expose the cult of mummies” by opening the reliquaries of saints, usually located at monasteries, had mixed results. It was intended to combat religious prejudices of the people through enlightenment, and lasted from October 1918 to December 1920.¹⁴ Although scholars such as Fedotov maintain that the campaign enjoyed “special success,”¹⁵ in some cases the lesson seems to have been lost on the peasants or even damaging to the revolutionaries’ cause. In one instance, an elderly peasant explained to an American visitor that “Our holy saints disappeared to heaven and substituted rags and straw for their relics when they found that their tombs were to be desecrated by nonbelievers. It was a great miracle.”¹⁶ In another instance, a peasant man testified at a trial that he had burst into tears when he was forced to look at the bones of St. Savva, the local saint, which had been posed in an amusing position by the Bolshevik representatives after they had removed them from their reliquary.¹⁷ Local officials in at least one provincial district refused to open reliquaries, noting that “The opening of the coffins without political preparation could be harmful for the revolution.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Jennifer Jean Wynot, *Keeping the Faith: Russian Orthodox Monasticism in the Soviet Union, 1917-1939* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 47.

¹⁵ Fedotov, 43.

¹⁶ Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, 346.

¹⁷ This testimony was given during the “Trial of the Churchmen Counter-revolutionaries,” which ran from January 11-16, 1920 (to be discussed in Chapter 5). See “Istoriia zakrytiia Savvina Storozhevskogo monastyria,” *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 2-1998, 60-62.

¹⁸ Luukkanen, 87.

Early Reaction of the Church to the October Revolution

Initially, Church leaders, like many other people in Russia, did not believe that the Bolsheviks would remain in power for long. They carried on their business as if they were still dealing with the Provisional Government. This is illustrated by the December 2 (15), 1917 decree that was issued by the All-Russian Church Council. Entitled “On the Legal Status of the Russian Orthodox Church,” the decree listed “twenty-five conditions for the government to accept in order to guarantee the Russian Orthodox Church the freedom and independence it desired.”¹⁹ Among other things, it “claim[ed] a legal precedence for the Orthodox Church as the national Church of Russia, [and] ruled that the state should issue no law relating to the Church without prior consultation with and approval by the Church.” It even included the stipulation that “The head of the Russian state, the ministers of religion and of education and their deputies must belong to the Orthodox Church.”²⁰ The Church leaders passed this decree in anticipation of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly that was to occur in early January. They no doubt expected the Assembly would consist of a moderate socialist majority, probably not too different in tone from the provisional government they had dealt with the previous year.²¹ This expectation was supported by election returns in November 1917, which indicated that the Bolsheviks would only hold a minority of the seats when the Assembly convened. Of course, after it became evident that they would not be in the majority, the

¹⁹ Kosar, 198-199.

²⁰ Pospelovsky, 37. Pospelovsky’s source is *Sobranie opredelenii*, 2:6-8.

²¹ Rex Wade points out that “When the new Soviet government was formed in October, it had declared itself ‘provisional.’” Thus, the belief of many people was that this was just another temporary government that would be in place until the Constituent Assembly could meet. See *The Russian Revolution, 1917*, New Approaches to European History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 275.

Bolsheviks engineered the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly on January 6, 1918, after it had met in only one session.²²

A week later, Aleksandra Kollontai, the Bolshevik Commissar for Public Welfare, attempted to take over the Aleksandro-Nevskaia Lavra in Petrograd and convert it into a home for war invalids.²³ After issuing an order to confiscate the monastery's buildings and supplies, Kollontai arranged for a detachment of armed sailors from Kronstadt to evict the monks on January 13. The monks resisted and summoned the faithful to their aid by ringing the church bells. In the bloody fighting that followed, a priest-monk was killed by Red Guards who had joined the fray, and several other people were injured.²⁴ The crowd of people which had gathered could not be dispersed even with the threat of machine gun fire, and finally, the sailors and Red Guards departed without accomplishing their mission.

The Church response was swift. In Moscow, Patriarch Tikhon issued an encyclical on January 19 in which he anathematized the revolutionaries because of the bloodshed they had caused and their persecutions against the Church.²⁵ In Petrograd, a religious procession was led by Metropolitan Veniamin (Kazanskii) on Sunday, January

²² Wade, 279-280.

²³ The term "lavra" refers to the largest, most important monasteries in Russia, which were directly subordinated to the Patriarch or Holy Synod. Besides Aleksandro-Nevskaia Lavra, there was Troitske-Sergieva Lavra near Moscow, Pecherskaia (Caves) Lavra in Kiev and Pochaevskaia Lavra in western Ukraine.

²⁴ Wynot relates that most of the people who came to the aid of the monks in response to the church bells were women. She adds that "One interesting aspect of this incident was the behavior of the soldiers living in the vicinity of the lavra" who also responded to the bells. Some joined the fight on the side of the Red Guards, while others fought against them. Wynot, 47. The *London Times* of February 7, 1918, endorses the view that women were the "preponderating sex, as usual, in these religious parades" (p.1).

²⁵ This encyclical will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

21, to protest the government's actions. The Bolshevik leaders, possibly wanting to avoid a post-revolutionary "Bloody Sunday," did not try to stop it.²⁶

The government in the meantime reversed Kollontai's decree. Lenin took her aside and admonished her for it.²⁷ His anger was based in part on the fact that her action had come at a politically explosive time: Peace negotiations were dragging on with Imperial Germany, and there was the threat that Petrograd could be occupied by the Germans if they fell through. It was hardly the time to turn the population of the city against the Bolsheviks.²⁸

As Farnsworth observes, "Except for her initial dismay at Lenin's criticism, Kollontai was unchastened. The clash with the church became a favorite story, and she referred to herself as a female Antichrist." In addition, the fall-out from the misguided action apparently accelerated the issuance of the decree on the separation of the Church from the State, which among other things cut off government funding to the Church, something that pleased Kollontai immensely.²⁹

Decree on Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church

Following the confrontation over the Lavra and the appearance of Tikhon's anathema, the decree on the separation of the Church from the State was issued by the

²⁶ This account is drawn from Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 48-49; Beatrice Farnsworth, *Aleksandra Kollontai: Socialism, Feminism and the Bolshevik Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980), 100-101; and Luukkanen, 70-71.

²⁷ Some accounts imply that Kollontai acted on her own. According to Alekseev, she sought and received permission for her action from the Sovnarkom on January 4 (Trotskii and Stalin were absent from the session). Alekseev, 30. The situation with the Germans may have taken a turn for the worse between the time Sovnarkom approved her action and when she tried to carry it out, which may explain why Lenin criticized her.

²⁸ Luukkanen, 70.

²⁹ Farnsworth, 101.

regime on January 23, 1918.³⁰ Several decrees which affected the Church had already been issued by the new regime. The first was the “Decree on Land Nationalization” of October 26 (November 8), 1917, which included monastery and church-owned lands and the livestock, equipment, and buildings on them;³¹ the “Revolutionary Divorce [Law]” of December 31, 1917, which liberalized the process of divorce and placed it in the hands of the State; and the [decree] on “Marriage, Children, and Registration of Civil Status” of December 31, 1917, which recognized only civil marriage, and which made registration of births and deaths the responsibility of the civil authorities rather than the Church.³²

The question of a separate decree on the separation of the Church and the State was raised and discussed by Sovnarkom on December 11, 1917. A special committee headed by M.A. Reissner, a lawyer within the People’s Commissariat of Justice, was established to work on its text.³³ Discussion about the upcoming decree appeared in central newspapers in December to prepare the people politically for it.³⁴ It was

³⁰ It was originally published in *Izvestiia* on January 21, 1918 as the “Decree on freedom of conscience, church and religious associations.” It was subsequently published on January 23, 1918, under the title “Decree of the Soviet Commissars of the RSFSR Concerning Separation of Church and State, and of School and Church,” which it has been called ever since.

³¹ Glennys Young argues that not every piece of legislation regarding the Church was radical; the Decree on Land “merely gave national legal form and validity to the land seizures that peasants had already carried out.” *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Village* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 56.

³² Summarized from Boleslaw Szczesniak, *The Russian Revolution and Religion: A Collection of Documents Concerning the Suppression of Religion by the Communists, 1917-1925* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 28-33.

³³ Also on the committee were A.V. Lunacharskii, P. I. Stuchka, P.A. Krasikov, and M. Galkin, a former priest who later worked for the Eighth Section of the Commissariat of Justice and who also served as an expert witness at trials of churchmen. R.Iu. Plaksin, *Krakh Tserkovnoi Kontrrevoliutsii, 1917-1923 gg.* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Nauka,” 1968), 56.

³⁴ See, for example, “Pervye shagi na puti k otdeleniiu tserkvi ot gosudarstva,” *Pravda*, December 16, 1917, p. 2. The article also comments on the December 2 (15) decree issued by the Church, “On the Legal Status of the Russian Orthodox Church,” which is discussed above. This suggests that the State’s decree on

subsequently published on January 23, 1918, under the title “Decree of the Soviet Commissars of the RSFSR Concerning Separation of Church and State, and of School and Church.”³⁵ The decree consisted of thirteen articles, the most important of which, for purposes of this essay, are summarized as follows:³⁶

Article 1: The Church is separated from the State.

The Bolshevik’s 1918 decree in ways resembled legislation of other Western European states on separation of church and state, which had become increasingly common during the period. However, the Bolsheviks judged such legislation as “insufficient and a bourgeois deception,” and Peris asserts that they did not consider what they were doing was in imitation of them.³⁷

In their version of separation of the Church from the State, the Bolsheviks were actually taking a page from the playbook of the Paris Commune.³⁸ The Paris Commune’s Decree consisted of statements on the separation of the Church from the State, the suppression of the budget of cults, and the nationalization of moveable and fixed property (the latter to be discussed below).³⁹ The Bolshevik decree contained all these elements as well as additional articles that addressed specific circumstances in Russia.

the separation of the Church from the State was at least in part a response to the Church decree with its 25 conditions.

³⁵ Aside from the brief discussion about Article 9 below, this thesis is not concerned with the separation of the school from the Church. Thus, for the sake of brevity, the decree will be referred to from this point forward only as the “Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State” (except for direct quotations).

³⁶ Translations of the articles are taken from Szczesniak, 34-35.

³⁷ Peris, 22.

³⁸ Titov, “Revoliutsionnye tribunaly v bor’be s tserkovnoi kontrrevoliutsiei,” 147.

³⁹ “The Paris Commune, 1871, Decree on the Separation of Church and State.” Accessed and downloaded February 6, 2009 from <http://www.marxists.org/history/france/paris-commune/documents/church-state.htm>

Article 3: Each citizen may profess any religious belief, or profess no belief at all.

This echoed what Lenin wrote in his article “Socialism and Religion” in 1905:

The state should have nothing to do with religion, and religious communities should not be associated with the state authorities. Each person should be completely free to confess whatever religion suits him, or to acknowledge no religion at all; that is, to be an atheist, as is ordinarily the case with each socialist.⁴⁰

This early view of Lenin on religion had been published in the days when Russian newspapers were full of discussion of the issues of Church reform. His expression of the right of the individual to be free to believe in any religion he wished or no religion at all was preserved in the 1918 decree. The article was also a reiteration of earlier statements made by the Bolsheviks to promote national self-determination and prevent unrest among minority nationalities, particularly the Muslims of the Caucasus and Central Asia.⁴¹

Although the article makes it appear that religion on an individual basis was acceptable to the State, Luukkanen points out that Lenin wanted to fuse the public and private sphere so there would be “very little room left for so-called ‘private religion.’”⁴² The preference of the Bolsheviks was for citizens to profess no belief at all. They would pursue that goal more vigorously later on, but for now, the intended target of the decree was the institution of the Russian Orthodox Church.

⁴⁰ V.I. Lenin, V.I., *Pol'noe sobranie sochineniia, Tom 12*, 143-144. The article originally appeared in *Novaiia zhizn'*, No. 28, December 3, 1905.

⁴¹ In the appeal of the Soviet of People's Commissars dated 20 November (December 3, 1917), “To all Muslim laborers of Russia and the East,” a declaration was made concerning the freedom and inviolability of their religious beliefs and traditions, among other things. See A.F. Goncharov, Iu. P. Titov, eds, *Istoriia gosudarstva i prava SSSR (sbornik dokumentov)*, chast' II (Moskva: Iuridicheskaiia Literatura, 1968), Otdel 2, Natsional'no-gosudarstvennoe stroitel'stvo, Dokument 19, “Deklaratsiia prav narodov Rossii,” footnote 1, 64.

⁴² Luukkaanen, 61.

The first few articles of the decree are not out of line with legislation seen in other countries; Fedotov remarked that they reflected a “liberal attitude” toward religion. He maintained that the final articles encroached upon what he considered to be the “essential rights of the Church, binding its activities hand and foot.”⁴³

Article 9. The School is separated from the Church. Instruction in any religious creed or belief shall be prohibited in all State, public, and also private educational establishments in which general instruction is given. Citizens may give or receive religious instruction in a private way.

As noted in the previous chapter, the Church had gotten into the business of educating children of the laity during the nineteenth century through its parish schools. In addition to providing elementary instruction in secular subjects such as reading, writing, and mathematics, which put them in competition with schools run by the Ministry of Education and the *zemstvo*, parish schools gave religious instruction to pupils. Religious instruction to persons under the age of eighteen was subsequently outlawed by supplementary decrees.⁴⁴

Article 10: [Church and religious associations] shall not enjoy special privileges, nor receive any subsidies from the State or from local autonomous or self-governing institutions.

Article 11. Compulsory collection of imposts and taxes in favor of church and religious associations, also measures of compulsion or punishment adopted by such associations in respect to their members, shall not be permitted.

In an article in *Izvestiia* that appeared on February 24 (11), 1918, it was stated that the Church should be pleased that it had been freed from its period of “Babylonian captivity” to the state by the Soviet regime, but that it was not, because it missed the

⁴³ Fedotov, 20-21.

⁴⁴ Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, 344.

considerable subsidies from the tsarist state that it had received.⁴⁵ State subsidies had indeed formed a substantial portion of the Church's budget, but Soviet legislation also deprived it of property from which income might be derived,⁴⁶ as well as the ability to ask for money from church-goers. The Church had little income with which to support itself, other than voluntary donations from the faithful.⁴⁷

Article 12: No church or religious associations have the right to own property. They do not possess the rights of juridical persons.

Article 13: The property of all church and religious associations existing in Russia is pronounced the property of the People. Buildings and objects especially used for the purposes of worship shall be let, free of charge, to the respective religious associations, by resolution of the local, or Central State authorities.

These two articles reiterated the earlier decree that nationalized land belonging to churches and monasteries, and went a step further (based on the Paris Commune decree): property inside religious buildings, that is, the articles used for worship, also belonged to the State.

⁴⁵ The article alleges that the Holy Synod was allotted nearly 70 million rubles by the state treasury in 1917, "of which more than 20 million went to the needs of the metropolitans and bishops." "Otdelenie tserkvi ot gosudarstva," *Izvestiia*, 24(11) February 1918, p. 1.

⁴⁶ This included not just church-owned farms or rental properties, but also enterprises such as candle factories. Kosar reports that a man attempted to seize the Moscow diocesan candle factory on February 3, 1918, "on the basis that, having ostensibly received government subsidies, it was now the 'people's property.'" Kosar, 203. The Bolsheviks apparently did not get around to nationalizing church-owned candle factories until April 1919. After performing an investigation, the Eighth section of the Commissariat of Justice accused the Orthodox Church of large-scale monopolization of candle-making in the country. The raw materials to make them had been purchased abroad, apparently using government subsidies (there were stocks of wax remaining following the cut-off of government funding to the Church). Sales of candles to worshippers at church and monastery counters had been bringing tens of millions of rubles in revenue to the Church annually. The Eighth section investigation discovered that ordinary city residents were buying tiny, expensive candles at church candle counters for use at home because of electrical outages. "Revoliutsiia i tserkov'," *Izvestiia*, April 29, 1919, p. 1.

⁴⁷ This becomes clearer in the instructions issued in August, 1918 for implementing the decree, which stipulated that a group of twenty people (*dvadsatok*) who petitioned the local Soviet of Workers'-Peasants' Deputies for the right to use a church building was responsible for maintaining that property out of its own means. That is, people had to cover repairs, heating, insurance, guarding, taxes, etc; the means for doing this was through voluntary donations. "Resolution of the Commissariat of Justice Concerning Execution of the Decree of Separation of Church and State, and of School from Church," Szczesniak, 40-44.

The decree on the separation of Church from the State was not implemented immediately. A special committee within the Commissariat of Justice was formed in April to discuss measures for implementing it.⁴⁸ These measures were contained in instructions that were issued in August, 1918. Although there was a time lapse between the issuance of the decree and the beginning of its enforcement, the Church leaders took the challenge from the government very seriously. They began preparing a response to the State's decree and other actions, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic

The Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, which was passed by the Fifth All-Russian Conference of Soviets on July 10, 1918, laid out the obligations and rights of citizens of Soviet Russia. The separation of Church from the State was reiterated in the Constitution, with the addition of a phrase about freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda: "For purposes of ensuring true freedom of conscience for the workers, the church is separated from the state and the school from the church, and the freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens."⁴⁹

"Workers" were defined in article 64 of Section Four, Chapter 13 as

- a) All those who earn a living by performing "productive and socially useful work," as well as domestic housewives [of workers]; peasants and cossack-farmers who did not make use of hired labor for the purpose of making a profit;
- b) soldiers of the Soviet army and navy;

⁴⁸ Lev Regel'son, *Tragediia Russkoi Tserkvi* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1977), 239. Regel'son quotes from *Izvestiia* of April 19, 1918.

⁴⁹ Section Two, Chapter Five, article 13. Goncharov and Titov, 48.

- c) citizens in the categories enumerated in points a) and b) of this article who have lost their work capability to some degree.⁵⁰

Those who did not perform “productive and socially useful work” were listed in article 65 of Section Four, Chapter 13. “Monks and spiritual ministers of the church,” together with capitalists, merchants, former agents of the tsarist police, mentally ill persons, and criminals, were denied the right to vote or be elected to Soviets.⁵¹ Although disenfranchised, these individuals were still considered citizens, and were to be held to the same standard of law as fully-franchised citizens.⁵²

Resolution of the Commissariat of Justice on Implementation of the Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State

The Bolshevik government was not finished dealing with the Church legislatively that summer. It finally began putting teeth in the decree on the separation of the Church from the State in late August, 1918. The Eighth Section of the Commissariat of Justice issued a Resolution that spelled out how various provisions were to be implemented. With regard to property, groups of at least twenty believers (*dvadtsatki*) who wished to use a building for religious worship, including the property inside the building, were required to submit a petition to the local soviet, which would make the decision on

⁵⁰ Section Four, Chapter Thirteen, “Active and Passive voting rights,” Article 64, a)-c). Goncharov and Titov, 58-59.

⁵¹ Goncharov, and Titov, 59.

⁵² Being disenfranchised had more serious consequences than merely not being allowed to vote in elections or be elected to Soviets. As Golfo Alexopoulos explains, “By the late 1920s, people without voting rights lost myriad other essential rights, as well, such as access to housing, employment, education, medical care, and a ration card for essential food items, and many experienced more severe punishment like arrest and compulsory labor on the construction projects of Stalin’s First Five-Year Plan.” Golfo Alexopoulos, *Stalin’s Outcasts: Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926-1936* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 3

whether to permit it; the soviet would then act as the custodian of the property, moveable and immoveable.⁵³

A group that had received the right to use a church building was responsible for maintaining that property out of its own means. That is, they had to pay for repairs, heating, insurance, guarding, taxes, and the like out of their own pockets.⁵⁴ Donations were to be purely voluntary; as mandated by Article 11 of the decree on the separation of the Church from the State, money could not be solicited from believers in the form of membership dues.⁵⁵

Another requirement was that once a building had been approved for use by a religious group, the local soviet would require the group's representatives "to compile in triplicate, a specification of all property intended specifically for the performance of divine service and religious rites."⁵⁶ Copies of these inventories were to be provided to the local Soviet and the Commissariat of Education. The requirement for an inventory, or *uchet*, was not unique to church property: Lars T. Lih, in discussing grain monopoly by the Bolsheviks, describes *uchet* as the first task in nationalization by the State, an information-gathering step which was "a prelude to full control."⁵⁷ In the case of church valuables in parish churches, this "full control" came several years later, during the confiscation of church valuables in connection with the famine of 1921-1922.

⁵³ "Resolution of the Commissariat of Justice Concerning Execution of the Decree of Separation of Church and State, and of School from Church," *Szcesniak*, 40- 46.

⁵⁴ "Resolution of the Commissariat of Justice Concerning Execution of the Decree of Separation of Church and State, and of School from Church," *Szcesniak*, 41, 47.

⁵⁵ See Article 11 of the decree on the Separation of the Church from the State.

⁵⁶ "Resolution of the Commissariat of Justice Concerning Execution of the Decree of Separation of Church and State, and of School from Church," *Szcesniak*, 40-41..

⁵⁷ Lars T. Lih, "Bolshevik Razverstka and War Communism," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Winter, 1986): 676.

Summary

This chapter has examined the early attitudes and actions of the revolutionaries, primarily the Bolsheviks, toward religion and the Russian Orthodox Church. The early attitudes were more anti-religious than militantly atheistic in the beginning, reflecting the low priority given to religion by the revolutionaries during this period. The revolutionaries passed legislation for dealing with the Church, primarily the decree on the Separation of the Church from the State. This legislation resembled legislation in other countries, except for articles that denied ownership of all property, whether real estate or moveable articles.

The separation of the Church from the State was reiterated in the Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the RSFSR of July 1918. The Constitution also categorized the clergy among the disenfranchised, along with capitalists, criminals, mentally-ill persons, etc. Instructions for implementing the decree on the Separation of the Church from the State were issued by the Eighth Section of the Commissariat of Justice in August, 1918, which elicited a sharp response from the All-Russian Council that insisted that the Church was sole custodian of its property.

The reaction of Patriarch Tikhon and other Church leaders to the situation that was unfolding with regard to religion in the first years of Bolshevik rule is the subject of the next chapter. Tikhon came to personify the institution of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Bolsheviks, who charged that he and other Church leaders, both clergymen and laymen, were dangerous counter-revolutionaries who were conducting a “holy war” against the new regime.

4. Holy War against the Bolshevik Regime

If one takes the guiding directives of the head of the Russian church, this spiritual monarch, this chip off the block of Nicholas II, if one looks at what his reaction was to the most important moments of our Russian life, then it is not difficult to see that it was always expressed in blows against the Soviet regime, in throwing a wrench into the gears of the Soviet machine.

--P.A. Krasikov¹

The documents that were issued by Tikhon, the Holy Synod and the All-Russian Church Council between January 1918 and October 1919 reflect what Krasikov mockingly termed as the “heroic period of the church’s struggle against the Bolsheviks.”² For Krasikov, who headed the Eighth Department of the Commissariat of Justice, which was charged with implementing the decree on separation of the Church from the State, every statement of Patriarch Tikhon’s was incontrovertibly political, particularly his quotations from Old Testament prophets. For him, such statements were proof that the Church was a subversive, counter-revolutionary organization, political in its essence and actions. Its leaders, as exemplified by Tikhon, were seeking to roll back the clock and restore the old way of life in Russia, which would mean bringing back the monarchy, specifically the Romanov dynasty, and restore the privileges for the senior Church hierarchs.

¹ Quoted by R.Iu. Plaksin, *Krakh Tserkovnoi Kontrrevoliutsii 1917-1923 gg.* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Nauka,” 1968), 40.

² P.A. Krasikov, *Na Tserkovnom Fronte (1918-1923)* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Narkom Iuridecheskoe, 1923), 177.

Tikhon and the Church leaders were slow in coming to the realization of exactly who and what they were up against. For two and a half months following the October Revolution, they continued business as usual at the All-Russian Church Council and Holy Synod in anticipation of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, where they hoped to finalize their work on the new Church-State relationship. Following the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly by the Bolsheviks and their coalition partners in early January, and after the publication of the decree on the separation of the Church from the State several weeks later, the Church leaders began to take the challenge from the regime seriously, and to adopt measures to protect what they believed were the interests of the Church and its believers. This chapter will consider the actions they took and the motivations that were behind them, largely through an examination of encyclicals and other documents that were issued by Tikhon and the Holy Synod during 1918-1919.

Tikhon's Anathema, January 19, 1918

Tikhon had lost no time in responding to events at Aleksandro-Nevskaia Lavra in mid-January, 1918, and other “brutal persecutions” of the Church that had occurred since the October coup.³ He issued an encyclical in which he pronounced “Anathema against those creating disorders and the persecutors of the faith and Orthodox Church,” dated January 19, 1918, in which he declared:

³ Alekseev sees this encyclical as being in reaction to the decree on the separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church. *Illiuzii i dogmy*, 41. Although the decree was not officially published until after the “anathema” encyclical, its contents were largely known to the public, including the Church leaders, because of newspaper articles that discussed the upcoming decree. See, for example, “Pervye shagi na puti k otdeleniiu tserkvi ot gosudarstva,” *Pravda*, December 16 (3), 1917, p. 2. (The official newspapers were listing the new-style date first and the old-style in parentheses, in anticipation of the adoption of the Gregorian calendar. See discussion of calendar change below.)

Think what you are doing, you madmen! Stop your bloody outrages! Your acts are not merely cruel, they are the works of Satan, for which you will burn in hell-fire in the life hereafter and will be cursed by future generations in this life. By the authority given me by God I forbid you to partake of the Christian mysteries, I anathematize you, if you bear a Christian name and belong, if only by birth, to the Orthodox church...⁴

At the end of the encyclical, Tikhon urged the parish clergy to “summon your children with burning zeal to defend the rights of the Orthodox Church that have been trampled; immediately set up religious organizations; call on them to stand in the ranks of spiritual fighters...”⁵

Within days of Tikhon’s anathema, an article appeared in *Izvestiia* in which it was declared, “In the days of construction of the new Russian life, the Orthodox clergy and monastics have declared holy war against the liberated people, demanding a return of Russian life to its former path under the slogan of defense of the faith of the fathers!”⁶ In liberal, SR, and Menshevik circles it was asked, “Since Bolsheviks have declared themselves to be atheists, why are they frightened by Tikhon calling down the wrath of God on their heads?”⁷ They saw the Bolshevik response as an overreaction to a bit of saber-rattling by an old man.

What they did not realize was that the Bolsheviks were not frightened that Tikhon had called down the wrath of God on their heads, but rather that he was calling on the

⁴ Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 49-50.

⁵ “Poslanie Sviatishnego Patriarkha Tikhona ob anafematstvovanii tvoriashchikh bezzakonii i gonitelei very i Tserkvi Pravoslavnoi,” 1918. *Akty Sviatishnego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 82-85. This document was reprinted in a number of places, among them A. Vvedenskii, *Tserkov’ i gosudarstvo: ocherk vzaimootnoshenii 1918-1922*, Moscow, 1923; *Utro Rossii*, 1918; *Listovka*, Moscow, 1918; and *Tserkovnye Vedomosti*, 1918 N 2.

⁶ Veniamin Slavskii, “Poslednaia stavka,” *Izvestiia*, 25 January 1918, p. 1.

⁷ Alekseev, 45.

clergy and a potentially large segment of the population to resist the regime. For the Bolsheviks, this was the *casus belli* for an ideological confrontation with the Russian Orthodox Church.

The lines between the two had actually been drawn long before. Alekseev notes that prior to the October Revolution, “A number of workers’ newspapers assessed the All-Russian Council as reactionary, pro-monarchist, and counter-revolutionary.” That is, the Bolshevik attitudes toward the Church were already in place. Likewise, the Church leaders had already formed their own assessment of the Bolsheviks. “The majority of Council delegates were up in arms against the Bolsheviks for ‘inciting the people to rebellion,’ ‘disobedience to the authorities,’ [and] ‘desire to introduce chaos and confusion into the minds of the people.’” During the Council session of October 19, approximately a week before the armed uprising, then- metropolitan Tikhon had called on the Bolsheviks to make a “prayer of repentance.”⁸ It had been only a matter of time before conflict broke out between the two sides.

In the weeks following the issuance of the “anathema” encyclical, *Izvestiia* continued to play up the image of the Church’s “holy war” against the regime with articles such as “Mobilizatsiia tserkvi” (“Mobilization of the church”) and “Chernoe voinstvo” (“Black host,” a reference to the bishops).⁹ Images of war were on the minds of the Bolsheviks: the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations with the Germans had broken down, Bolshevik forces were battling Ukrainian nationalists for control of Kiev, and the

⁸ Alekseev, 22.

⁹ “Mobilizatsiia tserkvi,” *Izvestiia*, 15(2) February, 1918, p. 2; “Chernoe voinstvo,” *Izvestiia*, 19 (6) February, 1918, p. 1.

Voluntary Army was forming on the Don under Alekseev and Kornilov.¹⁰ The Bolsheviks felt themselves to be surrounded by external enemies and penetrated by internal ones. They saw Tikhon's encyclical as proof that the Church was among the internal enemies, and began to depict it as such. Several days after the issuance of the "anathema" and the Bolshevik decree on the separation of the Church and the State, an article appeared in *Izvestiia* complaining that "Nothing has been undertaken against the counter-revolutionary activities of the church hierarchs." The implication was that the Church and its leaders were on the offensive, and the Bolsheviks were forced to do something about it.¹¹

Nowhere in the anathema or in any of the other public or private statements that followed did Tikhon suggest the restoration of the monarchy or Romanov dynasty as the remedy to the country's woes.¹² Tikhon did not think of himself in terms of politics or understand his words to be political statements; he saw the clergy as being above political events. This was the "political blindness" of the Church, as Alekseev puts it.¹³ This political blindness helps to explain why Tikhon continued to send communion bread and blessings to the former tsar and his family while they were being kept in Tobol'sk, without any consideration as to how the Bolsheviks might have interpreted this action.¹⁴

¹⁰ Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 540-550; 556.

¹¹ "Otdelenie tserkvi ot gosudarstva," *Izvestiia*, January 24, 1918, p. 1.

¹² Tikhon had in fact been considered as one of the moderate, "relatively liberal" bishops by L'vov when the latter conducted his housecleaning of the "Imperial Synod" in April 1917. Leont'iev, 215-216.

¹³ Furthermore, Alekseev remarks that "This political blindness of the church, which took ten or fifteen years to overcome, played a role in the aggravation of the situation in Russia in 1918." The blindness began to be overcome presumably when Metropolitan Sergei (Stragorodskii), the patriarchal *locum tenens*, made his Declaration of Loyalty to the Soviet regime in 1927. Alekseev, 59-60.

¹⁴ Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 69. Curtiss notes the Patriarch communicated with the tsar and his family through the local bishop, Hermogen, who was subsequently charged with being

Of course, for the Bolsheviks, it did not really matter whether Tikhon was a monarchist or not. He was a member of a class that represented a particular political and ideological viewpoint that was inimical to theirs. For them, his words and actions indicated clearly that he wanted to turn the people back to their old ways. They were proof that Tikhon and the Orthodox clergy, especially the hierarchs, were locked in a battle with the Bolsheviks for control of the dark, ignorant masses. From this point forward, the Bolsheviks began depicting the Church openly as a dangerous counter-revolutionary foe and dealt with it as such.

The Orthodox clergy and lay leaders may have been slow to understand the full implications of who and what they were up against, but the decree on separation of the Church from the State stimulated a response, and they began drawing up measures. For them, these measures were not political or ideological in nature, but for self-defense. The All-Russian Council, recognizing the potential seriousness of the situation, adopted a resolution on January 25 (February 7) to appoint immediately several *locum tenentes* to the Patriarchal throne in case anything happened to Tikhon.¹⁵ The names of these men were kept secret.¹⁶ In addition, an organization called the “Council of United Parishes” (*Sovet ob’edinenennykh prikhodov*) was established in Moscow on January 30 at a meeting of the congress of clergy and laity. Aleksandr Dmitrievich Samarin, who had served

involved in “monarchist plots to rescue the prisoners, although there is no proof that the Patriarch was also a party to them.”

¹⁵ From “Deianie 69, Moskva, chetverg, 25 ianvaria/7 fevralia 1918 g. 10.15-14.00. Istochniki: Deianie VI.C.61-80.” A.A. Pletneva and Giunter Shul’ts, eds. *Sviashchennyi Sobor Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi 1917-1918, Obzor Deianii, Vtoraia Sessiia*. (Moscow: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvor’e, Obshchestvo liubiteli tserkovnoi istorii, 2001), 37.

¹⁶ Shkarovskii, 419.

briefly as chief procurator of the Holy Synod in 1915,¹⁷ became chairman of the Moscow Council of United Parishes, and Nikolai Dmitrievich Kuznetsov, a professor of church law, his deputy.¹⁸ This group was intended for defense of churches and their property, which were already being looted and desecrated.

Church Response to Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State, February 15 (28), 1918

The Church's response to the government's decree on the separation of the Church from the State was entitled "On the Actions of the Church-Administrative Apparatus under the Conditions of the New State Regime," and was dated February 15 (28), 1918.¹⁹ This document might be considered even more a declaration of "holy war"

¹⁷ Samarin was allegedly ousted from his position as chief procurator because he had criticized Rasputin. Gregory Freeze also points out that he opposed what he and the Holy Synod considered as an improper canonization of a saint. Nicholas II went ahead and gave the order to proceed with the canonization, and Samarin was dismissed soon thereafter. Freeze, "Subversive Piety: Religion and the Political Crisis in Late Imperial Russia," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Jun, 1996): 347.

¹⁸ Archdeacon Sergii Golubtsov, *Moskovskoe dukhovstvo v preddverii i nachale gonimii, 1917-1922 gg.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Pravoslavnogo bratstva Sporuchnitsi greshnykh, 1999), 57. Golubtsov says that other accounts give the founding date of the Council of United Parishes as January 17, 1918.

¹⁹ In late January, 1918, the Soviet government announced its switch to the "Western European" (Gregorian) calendar at the beginning of February. That is, February 1 was moved ahead to February 14 (in the twentieth century, the Gregorian-style was thirteen days ahead of the old Julian-style calendar). The calendar change had already been under consideration by tsarist officials. Following the Bolshevik announcement about the calendar change, two committees of the All-Russian Church Council met to discuss the possibility of adoption of the Gregorian calendar by the Church. The Church decided not to switch for several reasons: First and foremost, the new-style calendar would make it impossible to follow the rules of the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in setting the date for Pascha (Easter) on some years (if the Gregorian calendar is used, Easter sometimes coincides with or comes before Jewish Passover, while the original Nicaea formulation specifies that Easter must come after Passover). Secondly, it was determined that this was not a matter to be resolved by a local church, but one that should be decided by all the Orthodox churches in a council. An Inter-Orthodox Congress was held in Constantinople in 1923 that discussed the question with the result that some, but not all, Orthodox churches switched to the Gregorian calendar, except in the calculation of the date of Easter. The Russian Orthodox Church retained (and still uses) the old-style Julian calendar. The decision to stick to the Julian calendar did not constitute a refusal by the Church to go along with the Bolshevik regime in 1918, and was not viewed by the Bolsheviks as such. For the sake of clarity, the Russian Orthodox Church double-dated many of its documents after the civil calendar switch, with the old-style Julian date given first and the new-style civil date in parentheses (which is what has been done in this thesis). For a detailed description of the calendar question in the Russian Orthodox Church, see Kosar, 165-172. For a more general description of the calendar question in

against the Bolshevik state than the “anathema” encyclical. As will be seen in Chapter 5, the most significant trials of churchmen by revolutionary tribunals in the civil war period focused on the declarations made in the Church’s February 1918 decree concerning the establishment of parishioner organizations to defend church property.

In the February decree, the Church leaders asserted that “Church property belongs to the Holy Church; the clergy and the entire Orthodox people are its sole custodians.” Recognizing the usefulness of organizations such as the “Council of United Parishes” that had been established in Moscow, the Church leaders called on pastors everywhere to organize the faithful into collectives that would defend church property, including sacred objects, from infringement.²⁰ Heads of monasteries were called on to organize similar collectives of the faithful living near the monasteries to help defend them. Parish schools directors were instructed to organize with parents of pupils into collectives that would resist the seizure of parish schools and ensure their continued operation on behalf of the Church and Orthodox people.²¹ This was a bold challenge to the regime.

In many places, the faithful had already been acting to defend their churches. During the first months of 1918, there was a swell of support for religion as people came out to demonstrate against seizures and desecration of church property. Orlando Figes relates a case of a *samosud*, or kangaroo court, that took place in April, 1918. A crowd of

all the Orthodox churches, see Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Pelican Books, 1963; revised edition, London, New York: Penguin Books, 1993) 301-303 (page references are to the revised edition).

²⁰ Tikhon had already called on the pastors to organize religious alliances in his “anathema” encyclical.

²¹ “N 65. Postanovlenie Sviatishhego Patriarkha Tikhona i Sviashchennogo Sinoda o deiatel’nosti tserkovno-administrativnogo apparata v usloviakh novoi gosudarstvennoi vlasti,” 15(28).02.1918,” *Akty sviatishhego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 96-99. The decree was published openly in *Tserkovnye Vedomosti* 1918, N 7/8.

500 peasants, mostly women, gathered to protest the removal of icons from their church by a Bolshevik party cell in Buzuluk *uezd*. The peasants put the Bolsheviks on trial.

When the local mounted police detachment came to the rescue, the peasants attempted to disarm them and put them on trial, as well. “Scuffles broke out and the brigade was forced to flee from the village.”²²

A more common form of protest was the *khrestnyi khod*, or religious procession. Numerous religious processions took place throughout Russia, and there were clashes between believers and local authorities in Khar’kov, Saratov, Nizhnyi Novgorod, Orel, Viatka, Vladimir, Voronezh and other places. Plaksin claimed that the clergy used the religious processions as a cover for uprisings against the Soviet regime.²³ They were quite violent; according to Curtiss, “A Soviet antireligious publication later declared that in the period from February to May, 1918, there were 687 victims killed in religious riots [that is, religious processions], to say nothing of persons wounded or beaten.”²⁴

Murder, Mayhem and Holy Martyrs

The violence against religious believers had already struck close to home for the Church leaders. Early in February, the news was received about the murder of Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoiavlenskii) of Kiev during street fighting for control of the Ukrainian capital. Vladimir, one of the senior prelates of the Church, had allegedly been

²² Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution (1917-1921)* (London: The Clarendon Press, 1989; London, Phoenix Press, 2001), 150. Figes comments in a footnote that “The overzealous confiscation of church property by rural Bolshevik officials was said by the higher authorities to have seriously threatened peasant-state relations during 1918-1920.”

²³ Plaksin, 68.

²⁴ Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 57. The “Soviet antireligious publication” he quotes is a work by M. Gorev, *Protiv Antisemitov. Ocherki i Zarisovki* (Moscow, 1928). “M. Gorev” was the pseudonym for Mikhail Vladimirovich Galkin, who quit the priesthood following the October Revolution and went to work for the Commissariat of Justice.

taken from his quarters at Kiev-Pecherskaia Lavra by four Red Army soldiers and murdered. This act brought the face of the enemy into sharper focus for Tikhon and other Church leaders, to whom “The name of metropolitan Vladimir [became] a symbol of persecutions against the Church.”²⁵ In his public eulogy of Vladimir, Tikhon stated that Vladimir had suffered a martyr’s death. The Church subsequently proclaimed the day of Vladimir’s murder, January 25, as a day of commemoration for “all deceased confessors and martyrs who had suffered in the fierce persecutions of the present day.”²⁶

The Bolsheviks apparently recognized the murder of Vladimir as a political mistake. They tried to smooth over the situation by diffusing blame for the murder in an article in *Izvestiia*, which recounted various rumors about who might have committed it (one suggestion was that the killer should be sought “among the clergy”). The article contains exclamation points in its account of Tikhon’s decision to close the Council session on the day the news was received about Vladimir’s death, and his statement that Vladimir had died a martyr’s death.²⁷ In the end, the Bolsheviks looked on Tikhon’s statement, as well as the prayer “for the persecuted Orthodox faith and Church and for its deceased confessors and martyrs” that clergy were instructed to insert in their daily services, as counter-revolutionary actions.²⁸

²⁵ Schultz, *Vvedenie, Sviashchennyi Sobor Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi 1917-1918*, 9.

²⁶ “Rech’ Sviateshego Patriarkha Tikhona na torzhestvennom traurnom zasedanii Sviashchennogo Sobora Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi, posviashchennom pamiati muchenicheski skonchavshegosia Pochetnogo Predsedatelia Sobora mitropolita Kievskogo i Galitskogo Vladimira, 15(28).02.1918,” *Akty Sviateshego Patriarckha Tikhona*, 100. This originally appeared in *Tserkovnye Vedomosti*, 1918, N 9/10.

²⁷ “Smert’ mitropol. Vladimira,” *Izvestiia*, 20(7) February, 1918, p. 2.

²⁸ Plaksin, 82.

Violence that specifically targeted Orthodox clergy and ordinary believers became of great concern to Church leaders. On February 21 (March 6), Tikhon and the Holy Synod issued a decree instructing the leadership in each diocese to investigate all instances of violence relating to the Church, including arrests, murders, bloodshed during religious processions or during the course of normal duties by the clergy. Reports of such violence were to be forwarded to the Holy Synod.²⁹ Nearly two months later, possibly because of Vladimir's murder and other violent attacks on clergy, Samarin, the chairman of the Council of United Parishes in Moscow, offered to establish a round-the-clock bodyguard for the Patriarch consisting of volunteers from the age of forty to eighty. Initially Tikhon thought the bodyguard to be unnecessary, but then changed his mind, seeing it as "one of the best ways to get closer to his Moscow flock."³⁰

The Church leaders did more than just try to address the situation through organizing defensive unions to protect people and property; they also tried to make

²⁹ "N 64. Postanovlenie Sviateishego Patriarkha Tikhona i Sviashchennogo Sinoda ob uchinenii na mestakh eparkhial'nym nachal'stvom rassledovaniia vsekhn sluchaev nasiliia, imeiushchikh otnoshenie k Tserkvi, 21.02(06.03).1918," *Akty Sviateshego Patriarckha Tikhona*, 102. The decree originally appeared in *Tserkovnye Vedomosti*, 1918, N 11/12. It is not clear whether the Holy Synod in Moscow ever received such reports or followed them up, given the breakdown in communications that ensued between the center and the provinces. Statistics were kept and published in other places, however. For example, Valentinov lists one of his sources as the "Special Commission for investigation of Bolshevik crimes;" this commission was attached to the Headquarters of the armed forces in Southern Russia. A.A. Valentinov, *Chernaia kniga ("Shturm' Nebes")*: *Sbornik dokumental'nykh dannnykh, kharakterizuiushchikh bor'bu sovetskoi kommunisticheskoi vlasti protiv vsiakoi religii, protiv vsekhn ispovedanii i tserkvei* (Paris: Izdatel'stvo russkogo natsional'nogo studentcheskogo ob'edineniia, 1925), 24. Russian clergy, especially in places under White control, reported statistics in local diocesan publications. One example is given by Lev Regel'son, who quotes the Tobol'sk *Eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, No. 8-9, 1919: "Incomplete data on the persecutions of the Church during the course of 8 months (June 1918-January 1919): 'Killed: 1 metropolitan (Vladimir of Kiev), 18 bishops, 102 priests, 154 deacons, 94 monks and nuns. 94 churches and 26 monasteries were closed. 14 churches and 9 chapels were desecrated.'" (etc). Regel'son, 255.

³⁰ "Otvetnaia rech' Sviateishego Patriarkha Tikhona na paskhal'noe privetstvie ego A.D. Samarinyam, predsedatelem Soiuzna Moskovskikh prikhodskikh sovetov," 27.04 (10.05).1918, *Akty sviateshego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 128-129. The Bolsheviks subsequently charged that Tikhon's bodyguard and the united parishes were counter-revolutionary organizations.

contact with the Bolsheviks, still believing it possible to achieve a *modus vivendi* with the regime through discussion. An initial effort was made at the beginning of February 1918, when the Council sent a delegation to Petrograd consisting of Samarin, professor Kuznetsov, and two peasants, Malygin and Iudin. They travelled to Petrograd, but were not received by Sovnarkom.³¹ This was probably not surprising in view of the peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, which had stalled.³²

Several weeks later, a delegation consisting of representatives from the united parish organizations met with representatives of Sovnarkom.³³ The first meeting took place on March 1(14), during which the churchmen protested confiscations of church property. The Church leaders, who had high hopes for the negotiations, pressed to put other issues of church-state relations on the table. Some compromises were apparently achieved, such as allowing the clergy to receive land for their own use “on the same basis as other agriculturalists,” and “monastics who actually worked the land [to] form agricultural communes, but without special privileges.” The Sovnarkom representatives stood firm on other issues, such as the ban on teaching religion in schools, the loss of juridical rights for the Church, nationalization of church property, and government

³¹ They had been given the charter by the Council to work out a new decree that would “define the activity of the church in a society ‘liberated from the autocracy and bourgeoisie,’” in other words, to rewrite the decree on the separation of the Church from the State (!). Alekseev, 47.

³² The most obvious one was the peace negotiations with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk. A wave of strikes in Germany and Austria-Hungary in January 1918 gave the Bolsheviks hope for a revolution in the West, and Trotsky put forward his slogan “Neither war nor peace” in an effort to play for time. After three weeks, the German High Command lost its patience, and on February 9, the Kaiser issued an ultimatum stating that if German demands were not signed by the next day, military operations against Russia would be resumed. See Figes, 544; Rabinowitch, 157.

³³ The Sovnarkom representatives were Mark Timofeevich Elizarov, who was married to Lenin’s sister Anna; Dmitrii I. Kurskii, the Commissar of Justice; and Vladimir D. Bonch-Bruевич, then secretary of the Sovnarkom. Introduction (*Vvedenie*), Pletneva and Shul’ts, 14. All the representatives were Bolsheviks.

subsidies.³⁴ They also assured the Church representatives that “all remaining decrees touching on church issues would be developed unfailingly with the participation of representatives of church organizations.”³⁵ The negotiations were terminated on March 14 (27) after the third meeting. Curtiss implies the talks were broken off because Orthodox representatives were unrealistic in their demands, while Schul'ts suggests this occurred because of lack of interest on the part of the Sovnarkom representatives.³⁶

Finding themselves unable to negotiate with the Bolsheviks, and also in response to the political activities of certain clergymen, the Church leaders began to advocate political neutrality as a strategy for the Church. The clergymen in question were mostly white clergy, the ideological descendants of the church activists from St. Petersburg in the first years of the twentieth century. The Renovationist movement in the Orthodox Church would not fully rear its head for several years, but already in early 1918 some were trying to make it appear as if there was a schism between the “Black Hundreds, counter-revolutionary” clergy and those clergy who considered themselves as progressives, as trying to bring the Church closer to the religious needs of the people, providing them with “rest, peace, and a true spiritual haven.”³⁷

For Tikhon and the Church leaders, this kind of talk was nothing short of betrayal of the Mother Church, and they made a declaration against “Bolshevism in the Church”

³⁴ Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 58-59.

³⁵ Alekseev, 47.

³⁶ Schul'ts, Introduction, 14-15. The seeming lack of interest may have come about because the central government had just been evacuated to Moscow out of fear that the Germans might occupy Petrograd. The timing of the Church leaders for talks with Sovnarkom seems rather unfortunate.

³⁷ See “Dukhoventsvo i revoliutsiia: Iz besedy so sviashchennikom Galkinym,” *Izvestiia*, April 25, 1918, p. 2.

on March 20 (April 2), 1918. In the declaration, it was stated that “The people are being deceived, bewildered not just by the secular Bolsheviks, but also by the church traitors who are no less terrible, because Bolshevism has strongly taken hold of a considerable number of priests.”³⁸ After threatening to defrock several clergymen for political motives, Tikhon and the Holy Synod asserted that “No one should engage himself in politics in the name of the Church, but only in his own name....He should strive not to harm the Church through his political activity.”³⁹

On the opposite side of the political spectrum, Tikhon tried to steer clear of the appearance of support to any of the White armies that were forming to fight the Reds. One anecdote was related several years after the fact by Prince Grigorii N. Trubetskoi, a lay delegate at the All-Russian Church Council who knew Tikhon personally. Trubetskoi told how he had gone to the Patriarch prior to his (Trubetskoi’s) departure to join the Volunteer Army in the Don Region in the spring of 1918, and had asked Tikhon to give a blessing that he would pass on to “one of the eminent leaders of the White movement.” Although Trubetskoi had pledged to keep this secret, Tikhon refused him in his request.⁴⁰

³⁸ “Zaiavlenie 87 chlenov Sobora o neobkhodimosti bor’by s ‘tserkovym bol’shevism’,” Prilozhenie 1, Pletneva and Shul’ts, 481-482.

³⁹ Regel’son, 250. The date is August 2 (15), 1918, and it is taken from *Izlozhenie opredeleniia*, Snychev, §12. Vvedenskii, one of the liberal clergymen, claimed that Tikhon never dared to enforce this “senseless attack of the council.” Vvedenskii, 219.

⁴⁰ Trubetskoi’s anecdote originally appeared in *Rul’*, an émigré Russian newspaper, in July 1923. Aware that Bolshevik agents monitored the émigré press, he related it in an effort to aid Tikhon, who was under indictment at the time. See A.A. Valentinov, *Chernaia kniga*, 159-161. Richard Pipes suggests that the “eminent leader” Trubetskoi was referring to was Denikin. See Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, 342.

Tikhon continuously spoke against the deepening civil war on account of its violence and barbarity, which he compared to the time of the Tatars.⁴¹ However, he was no pacifist; he harshly criticized the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, which was concluded by the Bolsheviks with Germany in early March. This put him squarely in the camp of the Lenin's political enemies, which included the Left SRs and the Bukharin faction of the Sovnarkom, who had also opposed the peace treaty. In what Mikhail Shkarovskii calls his "only openly political appeal,"⁴² dated March 5 (18), 1918, Tikhon asked whether this was the peace for which the Russian people had been thirsting. He complained that

...entire regions inhabited by Orthodox people have been torn from us and given over to the will of an enemy who is alien to the faith....Kiev...the mother of Russian cities, the cradle of its baptism, ceases being a city of the Russian power. Such peace will not give the people the rest and calm they desire, it will bring the Orthodox Church great suffering and grief, and the Fatherland countless losses.⁴³

At the head of the encyclical, Tikhon quoted Jeremiah 8: 9, 11: "The wise men shall be put to shame, they shall be dismayed and taken; lo they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them? They say, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace." Over the next several years, he would sound more and more like an Old Testament prophet by uttering such quotations, which for the Bolsheviks were politically-loaded.

⁴¹ "Poslanie Sviateishego Patriarkha Tikhona pastyriam i vsem chadam Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi po povodu proikhodiashchei v strane mezhdousobnoi brani," 02(?).1918, *Akty Sviateishego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 104.

⁴²Mikhail V. Shkarovskii, "The Russian Orthodox Church," in *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, ed. Edward Acton, Vladimir Iu. Cherniaev and William G. Rosenberg (Indianapolis and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 421.

⁴³ "Poslanie Sviateishego Patriarkha Tikhona po povodu Brestskogo mira," 05(18).03.1918. *Akty Sviateshego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 107-109. Originally published in *Tserkovnye Vedomosti*, 1918, N 9/10.

Assassination of Tsar Nicholas and His Family

Tikhon was not a supporter of the monarchy like some of the more conservative hierarchs, but his reaction to the news about the assassination of the royal family in July 1918 furnished what the Bolsheviks considered as additional evidence of the Patriarch's true political colors. Tikhon delivered an emotional homily during the feast day liturgy at Kazan' cathedral in Moscow, in which he publicly denounced the killings, declaring that

Because we are obedient to the teaching of God's Word, we must condemn this act or the blood of the murdered will also spill on us, and not just on those who carried it out....The order was carried out, and this deed...was approved by the highest authorities. Our conscience cannot be reconciled with this, and we must publicly declare this, as Christians, as sons of the Church. Let them call us counter-revolutionaries for this, let them put us in prison, let them shoot us.⁴⁴

Tikhon's statements regarding the murder of the Imperial family did not meet with the approval of everyone on the All-Russian Council, which was well aware of the former tsar's unpopularity among the people, and therefore wanted to steer clear of any "political demonstrations." In the end, the Council would not issue an endorsement of the Patriarch's speech, but only a watered-down statement that "The Holy Council of the Russian Orthodox Church...testifies that in the Patriarch's sermon are expressed the very

⁴⁴ "Slovo Sviatishhego Patriarkha Tikhona, skazannoe bogomol'tsam v Kazanskom cobore g. Moskvy vo vremia torzhestvennogo patriarshego sluzheniia liturgii po sluchaiu khramovogo prazdnika, s kommentariiami k nemu chlena sobora protoiereia P.N. Lakhotskogo (vypiska iz 132-go Deianiia III sessii Sviashchennogo Sobora)," 08(21).07.1918, *Akty Sviateshego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 142-143. Tikhon's grief and outrage at the murder of the Imperial family did not mean that he approved of the former tsar's policies, and he implied as much in the homily: "We will not assess and judge the affairs of the former tsar here; the unprejudiced judgment of him belongs to history, and now he stands before the impartial judgment of God."

thoughts and feelings which all Orthodox-believing Russia should confess by its Christian conscience.”⁴⁵

Several days later, Tikhon issued an encyclical on the eve of the Dormition fast in which he called the Russian people to national repentance. Quoting Isaiah, he proclaimed that

Sin has corrupted our earth, has weakened the spiritual and physical strength of the Russian people. Sin has made it so that the Lord, in the words of the prophet, has taken away from us stay and staff, the whole stay of bread, the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder.⁴⁶

On the face of it, this appears to be a purely religious message: a pastor was reminding his flock that the ancient Israelites had also fallen on bad times, and that the way back to favor with God for them had been to repent of their sins. For Bolshevik propagandists like Krasikov, however, there was no such thing as a purely religious message. He asserted that prophets such as Isaiah were the “agitators, propagandists and political figures of their time.” He claimed that Tikhon’s quotations from Old Testament prophets were a secret political message to the masses:

In unmasking the Soviet regime and arousing the people against it in August 1918, what sins has patriarch Tikhon, using the language of the Bible, attributed to the Russian people?! Who would expect that Isaiah had foreseen the calamities which are befalling sinful Russia in 1917-1918? As it turns out, the prophet

⁴⁵ The Patriarch’s homily, which was delivered extemporaneously, was written down by Archpriest Lakhtoskii and subsequently published. Kosar points out that Lakhtoskii had proposed to have the All-Russian Church Council associated with the Patriarch’s message, but that some within the Council were opposed to this. V.G. Rubtsov of Tver’ diocese stated that the Patriarch could denounce the murder, but that the Council should not enter into political demonstrations. Kosar, 219-220.

⁴⁶ “Poslanie Sviatishago Patriarkha Tikhona ‘Vsem vernym chadam Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi’ s prizyvom k vsenarodnomu pokaianiiu v grekhakh v nastupaiushchie dni sv. Uspenskogo posta,” 26.07 (08.08).1918, *Akty Sviatishago Patriarkha Tikhona*, 146. The quotation is from Isaiah 3:1-2. The Dormition fast begins on August 1 and lasts until Dormition, which is August 15. The rules of the fast are the same as for Great Lent.

Isaiah foresaw both the destruction of Rasputin and the destruction of the Romanovs. It turns out that for our sins, god has “taken the stay and staff (obviously the staff of the autocracy) and the whole stay of bread [of] the brave man and the soldier (it would be difficult to imagine, but must be supposed, that Isaiah would consider Romanov to be brave), the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder” (Isaiah 3: 1-3). So writes patriarch Tikhon, obviously grieving over Rasputin, for who else could the diviner and elder be?!⁴⁷

This was further proof for the Bolsheviks that Tikhon was trying to return Russia to its old way of life and restore the monarchy.

The Voice of the Central Church Falls Silent

By this time, the Bolsheviks had gained the upper hand politically; the Left SRs were out of the central government.⁴⁸ The Bolsheviks had published a Constitution, which spelled out what was expected of citizens of Soviet Russia and what they would receive in turn. The clergy were considered citizens, although they were classed among the disenfranchised because it was considered that they did not perform socially useful work. Nonetheless, they were to obey the decrees and statutes of the regime, which included the decree on the separation of the Church from the State, for which the Bolsheviks, through the Eighth Section of the Department of Justice, had finally issued instructions in August 1918 specifying how it was to be implemented. The instructions made it clear that church property, including buildings and articles of worship, would be

⁴⁷ Krasikov, 176.

⁴⁸ This came about in early July, 1918, when the Left SR leaders, who had strongly opposed the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, decided to assassinate Mirbach, the German ambassador, in an effort to provoke a resumption of the war with Germany. The strategy backfired, and the Left SRs found themselves accused not just of Mirbach's murder, but of aiming to overthrow Soviet power. This marked the end of the Bolshevik-Left SR alliance. Rabinowitch, 283-309 (Rabinowitch aptly terms this chapter “The Suicide of the Left SRs”).

on loan to groups of worshippers, who were expected to maintain it and to provide a full inventory of it to the local soviets.

In response to these instructions, the All-Russian Council issued a determination dated August 24 (September 6), 1918. According to the determination, “Property belonging to the establishments of the Russian Orthodox Church constitutes its overall heritage. The Holy All-Russian Church Council has supreme authority in the disposal of church property.”⁴⁹ This was one of the final acts of the All-Russian Church Council, which closed down shortly thereafter for good, its funding depleted..⁵⁰

The Holy Synod itself barely functioned; travel to Moscow was difficult for bishops who lived in the provinces, and communications were disrupted. The central voice of the Church, as expressed through its various publications, had already long since fallen silent. The problems had actually begun in the months following the February Revolution, when the five largest Church presses had been seized by local soldiers’ deputies and police. The Church hierarchs had haggled with shop stewards over management of the presses, but had finally lost control over them. Finances were also problematic; in December 1917, the decision had been taken to cease publication of the daily newspaper *All-Russian Church Social Messenger* (*Vserossiiskii tserkovno-*

⁴⁹ “Opredelenie Sviashchennago Sobora Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi: O tserkovnom imushchestva i khozaiistve, 24 Avgusta (6 Sentiabriia) 1918 goda,” *Sobranie Opredelenii i Postanovlenii Sviashchennogo Sobora Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi 1917-1918 gg.* Vypuski 4 (Moskva: Izdanie Sobornago Sovet, 1918; Reprinted Moscow: Moskovskaia tipografiia N 2 Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk, 1994), 49-50.

⁵⁰ The pro-Bolshevik Renovationist churchmen held Councils in 1923 and 1925. These had a very different agenda from the 1917-1918 Council, focusing on issues of interest to the radical white clergy, such as the liberalization of theology, a married episcopate, adoption of the Gregorian calendar, etc. During the 1923 Council an ecclesiastical trial of Patriarch Tikhon was held; he was stripped of his title and even of his monastic tonsure. Curtiss, 155-158; 179.

obshchestvennyi vestnik). This left only the weekly journal *Church Bulletin (Tserkovnye vedomosti)* to serve as the official organ of the central Church.

The *Church Bulletin* continued to be published for nearly eight months after the October Revolution, which is remarkable considering the financial difficulties, the Church's loss of control of its main printing presses, and the Decree on the Press that the Bolsheviks had issued on October 27 (November 9), 1917. According to this decree, independent bourgeois periodicals were to cease publication, at least temporarily. That the *Church Bulletin* and other newspapers were not immediately shut down was likely due to the opposition shown by the Left SRs to the Decree on the Press. In order to convince the Left SRs to join in a coalition government with them, the Bolsheviks proposed a compromise solution that allowed most newspapers to continue to be published freely, except for those that were most outspoken against the Soviet regime.⁵¹ This allowed the *Church Bulletin* to continue publication until sometime in June 1918, when it was ceased, possibly due to a combination of financial troubles and a crackdown on papers not controlled by the regime (this coincided roughly with the final departure of the Left SRs from the government).⁵² By August, all independent newspapers and periodicals had been eliminated by the Bolsheviks.⁵³

⁵¹ For a description of the Decree and the debate that it sparked, see Yuri Felshtinsky, "The Bolsheviks and the Left SRs, October 1917-July 1918: Toward a single-party dictatorship." Ph.D. diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1988, 54-57. Albert Resis explains the compromise over the Decree that the Bolsheviks were forced to come to with the Left SRs and dissident Bolsheviks in "Lenin on Freedom of the Press," *Russian Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Jul., 1977): 286-292.

⁵² Ekaterina Stanislavnovna Timofeeva gives June 1918 as the final date of publication of the Bulletin in her dissertation "Tserkovnye vedomosti (1888-1918), Istoriia izdaniia" (Ph.D. diss., Moscow State University, 2007). Timofeeva argues that in the last few months of its publication, the *Church Bulletin* expressed opposition to the Bolshevik regime, and had become an openly "social-political publication." Abstract to dissertation accessed and downloaded May 26, 2009 from

Without the official church press, it becomes more difficult to trace Tikhon's activities in the latter part of 1918. One of his supposed actions was a letter he allegedly sent to the Sovnarkom on the first anniversary of the October Revolution.⁵⁴ In his letter, Tikhon took the Bolsheviks to task for concluding a shameful peace with an external enemy (the Brest-Litovsk peace) while destroying inner peace and order in Russia. He alleged that the Bolsheviks had seduced the dark and ignorant people by exhorting them to violence and bloodshed without the threat of punishment. He accused the leaders of renegeing on the promise of freedom to all the people and of persecuting the Church. He complained that the Bolsheviks had executed bishops, priests, monks and nuns, "Who are guilty of nothing, but are accused groundlessly of some vague and undefined counter-revolution." He concluded the letter with the quotation, "He who takes up the sword shall die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52).⁵⁵ Shkarovskii notes, "One month later, on 24 November, the Patriarch was placed under house arrest for the first time."⁵⁶

http://66.102.1.104/scholar?hl=en&lr=&q=cache:2BwMp3x-0S4J:www.mediascope.ru/index.php%3Foption%3Dcom_content%26task%3Dview%26id%3D263%26Itemid%3D45+

⁵³ Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime*, 274.

⁵⁴ The language in this letter is different in tone from Tikhon's other encyclicals; in fact, Paul Miliukov asserts that the letter "was undoubtedly not of [Tikhon's] own composition." See Miliukov, *Outlines of Russian Culture*, 166. I include discussion of it with some hesitation, because it is of uncertain provenance and the Bolsheviks did not respond to it publicly, other than Tikhon's house arrest, which Curtiss suggests was a direct consequence of the letter. Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 65.

⁵⁵ "Obrashchenie Sviatishago Patriarkha Tikhona k Sovetu Narodnykh Komissarov v sviazi s pervoi godovshchinoi Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii," 25.10 (7.11).1918, *Akty Sviatishago Patriarkha Tikhona*, 149-151. The source given for the complete document is *Vestnik russkogo studencheskogo khristianskogo dvizheniia*, 1968, N 89/90 (a Paris-based publication). Fragments of the document from the 1923 indictment against Tikhon are also provided in *Akty Sviatishago Patriarkha Tikhona*, 151-153.

This was not the only time that Tikhon ever wrote to Bolshevik officials. He wrote a letter to Lenin to protest the campaign for uncovering saint's relic on March 20 (April 2), 1919; a letter to the VTsIK dated August 28 (September 10), 1920 to protest the closure of Holy Trinity-Sergius Lavra; and a letter addressed specifically to Kalinin, the chairman of the VTsIK, sometime in 1920 to protest his treatment during the

The Bolsheviks made no public response to the letter, other than the Patriarch's arrest. They would have considered encyclicals such as the August 1918 message on the eve of the Dormition fast to be more dangerous, because they were addressed to the people and allegedly cited them to counter-revolution.⁵⁷ Whatever the actual cause of the restriction on Tikhon's freedom, it silenced him for the time being.

Activities of Tikhon and other Church leaders during 1919 also tend to be sketchy. Members of the Holy Synod and Supreme Church Board, the two higher Church organs that were to function between the Council's sessions, had problems getting to meetings. Some had gone to their dioceses to attend to "Church matters," and return to Moscow through the fronts of the civil war proved to be too dangerous. Some were excused from attending for health reasons, and the fate of others was simply not known. Of the twenty-eight members of the Supreme Church Board, only thirteen in addition to the Patriarch were able to be present at meetings during 1919; no more than nine of them participated in the work of the organs of the upper church administration on a continuous basis. Sometimes the duties of the absent members were temporarily assigned to whoever was available.⁵⁸

We do have an encyclical that Tikhon addressed to the Orthodox faithful on July 8 (21), 1919. Although Tikhon again lamented the violence that was going on

trial of Hieromonk Dosifei and Abbess Serafima. See *Akty Sviatishhego Ppatriarkha Tikhona*, 159; 167-168; 170-171.

⁵⁶ Shkarovskii, 422.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Plaksin's statement: "The patriarchal encyclical to the believers incessantly poured oil onto the fire of counter-revolution." Plaksin, 80.

⁵⁸ A.N. Kashevarov, *Pravoslavnaia Rossiiskaia tserkov' i Sovetskoe gosudarstvo (1917-1922)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Krutitskogo podvor'ia, Obshchestvo liubiteli tserkovnoi istorii, 2005), 251-253.

everywhere, the encyclical was not identical in tone to the one issued the previous year on the eve of the Dormition fast. This time he addressed the disturbing reports in the official press that the Orthodox faithful were involved in the violence, particularly the pogroms against the Jews. Tikhon declared, “Remember: pogroms are a dishonor for you, dishonor for the Holy Church!” Quoting from the Old and New Testaments, he reminded the faithful to leave vengeance to the wrath of God; “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”⁵⁹

There was relatively little about anti-Jewish pogroms in the official Soviet press of the day. Anti-Jewish hysteria was rampant in Russian society, and the Bolsheviks may have hesitated to run the risk of having the denunciation of the pogroms backfire on them, because many people associated their regime with the Jews. When the press did mention the pogroms, it fixed the blame for the slaughter on the White armies. It also tried to connect the Orthodox Church with the White armies and the pogroms, declaring that “It is no secret to anyone that in almost all the churches of Moscow the holy fathers are conducting the most unrestrained anti-semitic, white guards agitation in their sermons.”⁶⁰

Tikhon was calling for an end to fighting by Orthodox believers in the civil war not just because it was morally deplorable, but because he realized by this time that to safeguard the position of the Orthodox Church inside Russia, he had to distance it from any appearance of support to the White armies. As early as spring, 1918, he supposedly

⁵⁹ “Poslanie Sviatishnego Patriarkha Tikhona chadam Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi, 08 (21).08.1919,” *Akty sviatishnego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 160-162.

⁶⁰ “Riasofornye pogromshchiki,” *Izvestiia*, July 30, 1919, p. 1.

refused to send his blessing to a Volunteer Army leader, but he was not consistent in this policy in the early days. His indirect contact with the tsar and his family in Tobol'sk, and his emotional homily in connection with the tsar's assassination certainly did not make him seem above the political fray in the eyes of the Bolsheviks.

Tikhon and the Church leaders were blamed for the actions of the clergy and faithful who ended up fighting in the White armies or living on territories controlled by them. According to Alekseev, a number of clergy who did not like the Soviet regime had fled to the south and joined up with General Denikin; by the beginning of 1919, there were more than 500 priests in Denikin's army or in territory under his control. Some of the priests took part in the fighting, while others served as military chaplains. Kolchak's army in Siberia also had military chaplains. Special units of them were formed with names like the Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary, and Holy Cross regiments.⁶¹ The Bolsheviks commented sarcastically about these in newspapers, seeing them as further evidence of a holy counter-revolution.⁶²

These actions put Tikhon in a difficult position: he did not want to cause a schism or destroy the unity of the Church, including the part of it that was on territories under White control. The only solution was political neutrality. "Tikhon categorically refused to support either the white or red forces. The patriarch's position seemed 'counter-revolutionary' to some Soviet government officials."⁶³

⁶¹ Alekseev, 167.

⁶² "V stane kontr-revoliutsii. Kolchakovskoe voinstvo." *Izvestiia*, July 9, 1919, p. 2.

⁶³ Alekseev, 140.

The Patriarch's stance was also unsatisfactory to the Whites, who began taking matters into their own hands. Fifty-six delegates, including eleven archbishops and bishops, assembled in May 1919 in Stavropol' for a Church Council at the initiative of Denikin's head military chaplain. Denikin himself opened the Council with a speech. The result was the "Temporary Higher Church Administration of South Russia."⁶⁴ The organization was on shaky grounds canonically. As Pospelovsky explains, "The canons require a bishop 'to be married to his diocese'—in other words, the very concept of voluntary emigration of a bishop, leaving his diocese to its own devices, is uncanonical." At first, "Tikhon did not question the sacramentality of the administration," and the church administration of the south recognized him as its supreme head. Its jurisdiction was limited to the territory of the White armies, and it was to exist only for the duration of the civil war.⁶⁵ However, it ended up as the embryo of an émigré church administration, whose pronouncements against the Bolshevik regime became more political and strident over the next few years. Unfortunately for Tikhon and those churchmen who were left behind in Soviet Russia, this made their position extremely untenable. In Curtiss's view, inflammatory statements by the Karlovatskii Sobor, which

⁶⁴ "Higher Church Administration" is Pospelovsky's translation of *Vyshee tserkovnoe upravlenie*, which I have translated as "Supreme Church Board" (in concert with other historians). There were other councils and Temporary Higher Church Administrations, as well. Prior to the Stavropol' Council was a Council in Novocherkassk. Pospelovsky suggests that the Stavropol' Council was a continuation of the Novocherkassk Council, which fell apart after Denikin's armies were evacuated. Another Temporary Higher Church Administration had also formed in 1920 in the Crimea in territory controlled by Wrangel's army. Pospelovsky, 115.

⁶⁵ Pospelovsky, 113-115.

was headed by metropolitan Antonii (Khrapovitskii), were the primary cause of the church trials of 1922.⁶⁶

Tikhon's Call for Political Neutrality, September 25 (October 8), 1919

One of the last encyclicals ascribed to Tikhon during the civil war period was issued on September 25 (October 8), 1919, as Denikin's forces were advancing toward Moscow. In it, the Patriarch noted that "Many senior pastors, pastors and simple clerics have become victims of the bloody political battle," which he attributed to the fact that "those bearers of the present regime" suspected them of a secret counter-revolution designed to overthrow the government. In an effort to preclude further suspicion and bloodshed, he exhorted Orthodox clergy and believers to "avoid involvement in political parties and actions." At the same time, they were to "'Be subject to every human institution' in worldly matters (1 Peter 2:13), do not give any pretext to justify the suspicion of the Soviet regime, subject yourselves to its commands, as long as they do not contradict your faith and piety."⁶⁷

The encyclical does not sound quite like Tikhon in tone, and Trubetskoi, who may have read the encyclical in the official press, suspected that the Patriarch was not the

⁶⁶ "The "Karlovatskii Sobor (Council)" was so-called from the Serbian town of Sremski Karlovtsy where it convened in late 1921. Among other things, the Karlovatskii Sobor called for the restoration of the Romanov dynasty and declared that the 1921 famine in Russia was a punishment visited by God on the Bolsheviks. Following the February 1922 decree on the requisitioning of church valuables, the Karlovatskii Sobor supposedly issued an appeal to the upcoming Genoa Conference calling for a military campaign to be launched against the Bolsheviks. It was these statements that Curtiss considered to have been the primary cause of the 1922 church trials. See Pospelovsky, 118; and Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 108-109.

⁶⁷ "Poslanie Sviatishago Patriarkha Tikhona s prizyvom k pravoslavnomu kliru i mirianam o nevmeshatel'stve v politicheskuiu bor'bu," 25.09(08.10).1919, *Akty sviatishago Patriarkha Tikhona*, 163-164.

author.⁶⁸ He later wrote that although he and his White Army comrades had been grieved by it, he recalled that Metropolitan Evlogii had warned in a pastoral address “against believing all too hastily the news that comes through the Soviet press about the declarations ascribed to Patriarch Tikhon.”⁶⁹ The Bolsheviks, who were no doubt familiar with Tikhon’s latest exhortation against violence and bloodshed, may have doctored an encyclical that was directed against the Whites as they were advancing toward Moscow.

For the Bolsheviks, all the violence and bloodshed was quite necessary. Civil war was an integral part of a revolution, and was required for putting down the counter-revolution that would invariably arise in connection with revolution. Lenin had identified one of the great errors of the Paris Commune as being its failure to engage in civil war: “Instead of annihilating its enemies, [the proletariat] endeavoured to exercise moral influence over them; it did not attach the right value to the importance of purely military activity in civil war...”⁷⁰ He was determined that the Bolsheviks would not make the same mistake. The counter-revolutionaries, including churchmen, would be dealt with accordingly.

Summary

The pronouncement of anathema against the revolutionaries by Patriarch Tikhon and the publication of the Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State by the

⁶⁸ *Izvestiia* carried a front page article summarizing the encyclical on October 22, 1919. This was unusual; few other encyclicals, perhaps only the anathema, were ever mentioned in newspapers like *Izvestiia*.

⁶⁹ Valentinov, 161.

⁷⁰ V.I. Lenin, *The Paris Commune*, Little Lenin Library, Volume 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1934), 20.

Sovnarkom were opening shots in the conflict between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Bolshevik State. Such a conflict had been unavoidable: Tikhon believed the Bolsheviks to be instigators of anarchy and violence that was tearing apart the moral fiber of the nation, and posed a greater threat to the existence of the Russian people than the Tatars. At the same time, he considered the Church to be above the political fray, and as a result, many of his statements and actions that were seized upon by the Bolsheviks as proof that the Church and its leaders had declared a holy war against the regime, and were behind a holy counter-revolution intended to overthrow Soviet power and return the country to its old ways.

The Bolsheviks had anticipated the counter-revolution, although it was not always clearly defined, and adopted measures early on to deal with it. One of the measures was the establishment of revolutionary tribunals in every province and large city of Soviet Russia. Churchmen were put on trial in front of the revolutionary tribunals by the Bolsheviks, who hoped that by unmasking their true intentions and deeds they would be discredited in the eyes of the people. The next chapter will look at the revolutionary tribunals and some of the trials of churchmen during the civil war period.

5. The Holy Counter-Revolution on Trial

The separation of the church from the state does not mean the exclusion of the clergy from the citizenry, and, as such, the constitution, and all decrees and statutes of the Soviet regime are mandatory for them. No one has the right to think that by putting on a cassock, he is immune to the consequences of not carrying out the decrees of the Soviet regime. Thief, bribe-taker, counter-revolutionary, even if wearing a cassock, it is all the same, he must obey the Soviet regime.

--“Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo.”¹

The Eighth section of the People’s Commissariat of Justice, which is charged with implementing the new line of demarcation between church and state, was established “for purposes of ensuring genuine freedom of conscience” (Constitution, article 13) and for liquidating the former Russian church-state relations (Caesaro-papism or Byzantinism). Unfortunately, one must state that the policy of the Eighth Section has deviated from its intended path and is expressed in gross interference in the sphere of religious freedom.

--Letter of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon to M.I. Kalinin, Chairman of the VTsIK, 1920 (precise date unknown).²

As seen in previous chapters, the revolutionaries did not have a precisely-formulated policy on the Church or religion, but they did hold anti-religious attitudes that were manifested in actions that had varying degrees of success. The most significant action they took with regard to religion in the first months of the new regime’s existence was the decree on the separation of the Church from the State. While it bore similarities to legislation that was being passed in Western countries at the time, it went further, specifying that religious organizations could not own property of any kind and did not

¹*Izvestiia*, December 2, 1919, p. 1.

²*Akty Sviateshego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 170.

have the rights of juridical persons. The clergy and lay leaders of the Orthodox Church, who had been in the midst of redefining the Church-State relationship, which emphasized more autonomy for the Church, suddenly found themselves faced with the possibility of disestablishment from a regime that was hostile to religion. The Church leaders reacted by calling on believers to organize in defense of the Church's property and other interests. The Bolsheviks in turn saw this as evidence of a holy war and holy counter-revolution, which were denounced in a propaganda campaign in the newspapers. Churchmen were placed on trial in front of revolutionary tribunals that had been established to deal with counter-revolution.

The nature of those trials and how they were used to confront the "holy counter-revolution" is the subject of this chapter. It will open with a consideration of early Bolshevik "law," such as it was. It will examine the early court system, which consisted of people's courts and revolutionary tribunals whose judges were instructed to make decisions based on their "revolutionary conscience." How revolutionary tribunals operated, especially with regard to the punishments they meted out, including the death penalty, will be considered, as will the question of whether the clergy were more likely to be sentenced to death or be punished more severely than other groups of people. Finally, several of the more important trials of churchmen of the period will be reviewed to gain an understanding of how the revolutionary tribunals were used to try to discredit churchmen in front of the masses.

Early Bolshevik Law

The Bolsheviks had no practical guidelines on law during the transitional period between capitalism and communism. Although “Marx had written extensively about the complex articulation of law within different modes of production,” he had written little about the role of law in the socialist state, and what he did write was “sparse, polemical, and always utopian.”³ Much as they had been left to decide what to do about religion, the Bolsheviks were left to make their own interpretations about the relationship of law and the new socialist State.

Many of the early Bolshevik writings on law sounded utopian. Petr Stuchka,⁴ one of the foremost Marxist legal theorists of the 1920s, asserted that “The concepts of ‘class’ and ‘law’ are inseparable.” He called law “the last refuge of bourgeois ideology.”⁵ Because law existed to serve the interests of the ruling class, Stuchka posited that once communism was achieved and class distinctions had disappeared, “All law will finally wither away.”⁶ Nonetheless, Stuchka was not utopian to the point of being out of touch

³ Editors’ Introduction, *P.I. Stuchka, Selected Writings on Soviet Law and Marxism*, trans. and ed. Robert Sharlet, Peter B. Maggs, and Piers Beirne. (Armonk, NY and London, England: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1988), xii.

⁴ Petr Ivanovich. Stuchka (1865-1932), was born near Riga in Latvia. He studied law at St. Petersburg University, becoming a political activist during his student years. He was appointed Commissar of Justice in Lenin’s first government in 1917, but took a leave of absence in late 1918 to return to the Baltic region where he served as the prime minister of the Latvian Soviet Republic. After the government was overthrown in January 1920, he returned to Moscow where he resumed his legal work. He was appointed chairman of the Supreme Court of the Russian Republic in January 1923, a post which he held until his death in 1932 from natural causes. Summarized from Editors’ Introduction, *P.I. Stuchka, Selected Writings on Soviet Law and Marxism*, ix-x.

⁵ P.I. Stuchka, “Marxist Concept of Law” (1922), in *P.I. Stuchka, Selected Writings on Soviet Law and Marxism*, 26; 36.

⁶ Stuchka, “Marxist Concept of Law,” 29.

with reality.⁷ He concluded that “This transitional period [from capitalism to communism] requires a special law...partly because this system does not change in one stroke and partly because the old, traditional order continues to exist in consciousness.”⁸ That is, laws and legal institutions were necessary until the achievement of communism.

The earliest laws of the new State were somewhat of a hodgepodge.⁹ Between October 25 (November 7) 1917 and July 1918, approximately 950 decrees and “other legislative devices” were issued by the Soviet government.¹⁰ These decrees did not cover every contingency, and the revolutionaries were forced to use borrowings from previous governments. Article five of the decree “On the Court” (*O sude*), dated November 24, 1917 declared, “Local courts shall be guided in their decisions and sentences by the laws of the overthrown governments...to the extent that they have not been abrogated by the revolution and do not contradict revolutionary conscience and revolutionary legal consciousness.”¹¹

⁷ The concept of “withering away of law” was characteristic of the “commodity exchange” school of legal theory, of which Stuchka was an adherent. This particular school was greatly frowned upon by Stalin and his head prosecutor Andrei Vyshinsky in the 1930s. If Stuchka had not died in 1932, he likely would have shared the same fate as another adherent of the “commodity exchange” school, Yevgenii Bronislavovich Pashukanis, who was executed in 1936. See Editors’ Introduction, *P.I. Stuchka, Selected Writings on Soviet Law and Marxism*, xi; Arkady Vaksburg, *Stalin’s Prosecutor: The Life of Andrei Vyshinsky*, transl. Jan Butler (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 126-133.

⁸ Stuchka, “Proletarian Law,” (1919), *P.I. Stuchka, Selected Writings on Soviet Law and Marxism*, 11.

⁹ One reason for this was the influence of I.N. Shteinberg, an early Commissar of Justice, and the Left SRs, who, according to Peter H. Juviler, “felt that the Bolsheviks had gone too far toward destroying the old judicial system and the old concepts of legality, which they wanted adapted and preserved.” Juviler, *Revolutionary Law and Order: Politics and Social Change in the USSR* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., The Free Press, 1976), 20.

¹⁰ Editors’ Introduction, *P.I. Stuchka, Selected Writings on Soviet Law and Marxism*, xiii.

¹¹ Goncharov and Titov, 75. The borrowings did not last very long; they were subsequently banned by the decree “On the People’s Court” (*O narodnom sude*) of November 30, 1918, in which it was stated that only decrees of the Workers-Peasants’ Government were to be used in making judgments and passing verdicts.

Such guidance may have been in line with the early utopian views of the law, but in practice it did not always work well. Sergei Kobiakov, who served as a defender in the early Bolshevik court system, related how elderly women sitting on people's circuit courts would sometimes be moved to tears by a defendant's story, whereupon they would pass sentences that were "extremely light, sometimes to the point of absurdity." In one case, Kobiakov tells how the sentence given for a Red Army man who was accused of murdering a militia man was "public censure."¹² The circuit courts were soon liquidated, leaving only the people's courts and revolutionary tribunals.

The people's courts handled "ordinary misdemeanors and non-political crimes," while the revolutionary tribunals concentrated on crimes involving counter-revolutionary activity and sabotage.¹³ Some trials involving churchmen were heard in people's courts rather than in revolutionary tribunals; one example will be given below.

If there was no appropriate decree or the existing decree was inadequate, judges were to be guided by their "socialist legal consciousness," a reiteration of the earlier guidance to follow one's revolutionary legal conscience. See Goncharov and Titov, 121.

¹² Sergei Kobiakov, "Krasnyi Sud," in I.V. Gessen, *Arkhiv Russkoi Revoliutsii*, volume 7 (Berlin: I.V. Gessen, 1922; reprint, Moscow: Politizdat, "TERRA," 1991), 248. No additional biographical information is provided on Kobiakov. Just as I have chosen to translate the term *obvinitel'* as "accuser" rather than "prosecutor," I translate the term *zashchitnik* as "defender" rather than "defense counsel." This is because in the early days of Soviet justice, anyone could serve as a defender before the revolutionary tribunals. Even though some *zashchitniki* like Kobiakov had formal legal training and were *prisiazhnye poverennye* (sworn advocate) from the old Imperial Bar, I prefer to call them "defenders" because the revolutionaries did not distinguish between them and the untrained defenders. This was part of the Bolsheviks' effort to dismantle the old Imperial Bar, which they associated with the bourgeoisie.

¹³ The jurisdiction of the two courts sometimes overlapped. Eventually, the people's court was given jurisdiction over crimes of bribery and speculation by the Third Decree on the Court of July 20, 1918. These had previously been the exclusive jurisdiction of the revolutionary tribunal. E.L. Johnson, *An Introduction to the Soviet Legal System*. (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1969), 32.

Revolutionary tribunals were established by the November 1917 decree “On the court.” The original draft decree, drawn up by Stuchka, had abolished the old court system and established the people’s courts, but it had contained no reference to revolutionary tribunals.¹⁴ Lenin, supposedly inspired by spontaneous tribunals that had been held by workers and peasants after the October revolution in Smolensk, Mogilev, Vitebsk and other places, had pushed for their inclusion.¹⁵ He chaired the sessions of the Soviet of People’s Commissars during which the draft decree on the courts was reworked. The final product included Article eight, which read:

The workers’ and peasants’ Revolutionary tribunals are established for the purpose of the struggle against counter-revolutionary forces by adoption of measures for safeguarding the revolution and its accomplishments from them, as well as for resolving cases concerning the struggle against pillaging and plunder, sabotage and other abuses of merchants, industrialists, bureaucrats and other persons. [The Revolutionary tribunals] shall consist of a chairman and six regular assessors, who shall be chosen by the provincial or municipal Soviets of workers’, soldiers’, and peasants’ deputies.¹⁶

Each provincial capital and each city consisting of 200,000 or more residents had a revolutionary tribunal.¹⁷ The seven-member panel stipulated in the original decree was

¹⁴ Johnson, 30-33; Goncharov and Titov, 73-75.

¹⁵ Lenin wrote, “The revolutionary masses, after 25 October 1917, set out on the true path and demonstrated the viability of the revolution by beginning to set up their own, workers’ and peasants’, courts even before the decrees on the abolishment of the bourgeois-bureaucratic judicial apparatus.” Lenin, *Pol’noe sobranie. sochineniia*, volume 36, 197. Lenin appears to have been inspired by older precedents, as well. Kobiakov states that the Bolsheviks called the new courts “tribunals” in imitation of the French Revolution. Kobiakov, 246. Peter Juviler suggests that Lenin was inspired by examples of popularly elected tribunals during the Paris Commune of March 28-May 28, 1871, and some of those set up by local soviets of workers’ deputies during the 1905 revolution in Russia. See Juviler, 17.

¹⁶ “O sude (No. 1) (Dekret Soveta Narodnykh Komissarov).” Goncharov and Titov 75.

¹⁷ Eugene Huskey, *Russian Lawyers and the Soviet State: The Origins and Development of the Soviet Bar, 1917-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 44.

subsequently reduced to three members, a chairman and two members, who were selected by local soviets or executive committees from a “group of responsible political workers.”¹⁸ No legal experience was required to serve on the revolutionary tribunals, just persons who were loyal to the Bolshevik regime.¹⁹

According to Kobiakov, “The Bolsheviks repealed the laws regulating punishment for each crime, and the single standard of punishment was the ‘revolutionary conscience’ of the judge.”²⁰ “Revolutionary conscience” was supposedly the natural, inborn sense of justice of the proletarian masses; as seen above, it was enshrined in Article five of the first decree “On the court.” Sentencing practices no doubt varied widely, and the VTsIK established a cassation department on June 11, 1918 to review complaints and protests in connection with cases tried by the revolutionary tribunals.²¹ This may not have made the system any fairer for the accused; Kobiakov related a case involving investigators who had taken bribes whose conviction was appealed to the cassation tribunal. When one of the accusers in the original trial turned out to be a

A Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal was also established in Moscow on May 16, 1918, for the purpose of trying cases of the greatest importance to the State, such as high treason. The sentences of this court were not approved by anyone, and could not be appealed in either an appeals court or cassation court. They were to be carried out within 24 hours. Kobiakov, 246; Titov, “Revoliutsionnye tribunaly v bor’be s tserkovnoi kontrevoliutsiei,” 156.

¹⁸ Vorob’ev et al., eds., *Iz’iatie tserkovnykh tsennostei v Moskve v 1922-om g.*, 172.

¹⁹ Anatolii Levitin and Vadim Shavrov., *Ocherki po istorii russkoi tserkovnoi smuty* (Küsnacht, Switzerland: Institut Glaube in der 2. Welt, 1977. Reprint, Moscow: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvor’e, 1996), 200.

²⁰ Kobiakov, 247.

²¹ Titov, 156.

member of the cassation tribunal, an objection was raised. However, what appeared to be a conflict of interest was rejected as a “bourgeois prejudice.”²²

Even during the first years of the regime’s existence, the court system, with its people’s courts, revolutionary tribunals, and cassation tribunals, reflected the notion that “The Bolsheviks viewed law as merely an extension of political power....Legal institutions...were regarded by the Bolsheviks as inherently political bodies that were at the disposal of a country’s rulers.”²³

The decree on the separation of the Church from the State was only the first step taken by the revolutionaries in dealing with religion. After the decree was passed, the main organ that was charged with implementing the law and policies with regard to the Church was the Eighth (later Fifth) section within the People’s Commissariat of Justice. The Eighth section worked closely with the revolutionary tribunals and the investigative committees that were attached to the tribunals.²⁴

The Eighth section was established in May 1918 and headed by P.A. Krasikov from 1918-1924.²⁵ It was “better known among the communists themselves as the

²² Kobiakov, 247. Kobiakov does not give the outcome of the appeal.

²³ Huskey, 36.

²⁴ Kobiakov describes the investigative committees, stating that they were “largely made up of ‘wet-behind-the ears’ youths and young ladies with bouffant hairdos who strode about in high heels acting like they were important. They were illiterate to the extreme. Thus, one came across gross deficiencies, which were tragically reflected in the fates of the accused in the courts. In addition, the majority of investigators took bribes.” It was in fact a group of these investigators who were involved in the appeal to the cassation tribunal described above. Kobiakov, 250.

²⁵ Petr Ananievich Krasikov (1870-1939) was a long-time revolutionary and friend of Lenin’s. Before the October Revolution, he was a sworn advocate (*prisiazhnyi poverennyi* or *advokat*) and member of the Bar. In 1919, Krasikov combined his directorship of the Eighth Section with the chairmanship of the Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal. He became a Prosecutor of the Supreme Court in 1924 and Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court from 1933-1938. He was one of the few old Bolsheviks to die of natural causes.

‘Liquidation Commission’.’²⁶ The term “liquidation” was taken from the charter of the Eighth Section, which was the “liquidation of the former State-Church relationship” (“likvidatsiia prezhnykh, dorevoliutsionnykh otnoshenii mezhdu gosudarstvom i tserkov’iu”).²⁷ The Eighth section published circulars, administrative orders and instructions, and the journal *Revoliutsiia i Tserkov’*, which began appearing in 1919. These were distributed to district and local-level soviets, which established their own “liquidation commissions” where “the main burden for implementing the ‘separation decree’ was concentrated.”²⁸

Early Church Trials

Although Krylenko asserted that trials of churchmen were held in nearly every revolutionary tribunal in the country, there is relatively little information on most trials, except for a few that were singled out by Soviet commentators and scholars as examples of the early justice system. Basically, it appears that there were two kinds of church trials during the civil war period: those involving miracles such as icon renewals and visions,

Summarized from N. Maier, “Sluzhba v komissariate iustitsii i narodnom sude,” in *Russkoi Revoliutsii*, tom 8, ed. (Berlin: I.V. Gessen, 1923; reprint Moscow: Politizdat, “TERRA,” 1991), 73; Huskey, 37; Solzhenitsyn, 627.

²⁶ Summarized from Luukkanen, 63-64, and Otto Luchterhandt, “The Council for Religious Affairs,” in *Religious policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. by Sabrina Petra Ramet (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 55. Luukkanen provides a useful chart on 63, which shows D.I. Kursky as head of Narkomiust, N.V. Krylenko as his deputy, and P.A. Krasikov as head of the V/VIII section.

²⁷ See *Akty Sviateshego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 170. The term “liquidation” is more ominous-sounding to Western ears than it is to Russians, for whom it has the less menacing meaning of “elimination. There were other “liquidation commissions” within the Bolshevik government, such as the one that was set up to “review the most complicated juridical issues” arising from Russia’s responsibilities under the Brest treaty. See “Rabota likvidatsionnoi komissii, *Izvestiia*, July 5, 1918, p. 7.

²⁸ Luukkanen, 64-65.

which the Bolsheviks considered to be “religious blackmail” (*tserkovnyi shantazh*); and those that were more overtly political. Most of the examples to be examined here are of trials in which there is a clear political element, although it could be stated that all trials of churchmen were considered by the Bolsheviks to be fundamentally political because of the class element.²⁹

In the first example, an anecdote provided by Kobiakov, it is seen that “counter-revolution” could be an act not just of commission, but of omission. It also shows the procedural sloppiness of revolutionary justice (although the perception of procedural sloppiness would likely have been considered as bourgeois prejudice by the Bolsheviks):

I recall the case of the priest Z., which was heard in the cassation tribunal through a defense appeal. Priest Z. had been tried in the Vitebsk Revolutionary Tribunal. He had been accused of counter-revolution. His guilt consisted of the fact that during anti-Bolshevik disturbances in the town of Gorodka, he had refused to calm an angry mob of townspeople after the communists, who were frightened to death, had run to him for help. The Tribunal sentenced him to shooting. When the session of the Vitebsk Tribunal opened, instead of the seven judges who were supposed to make up the Tribunal, there were only six present. The Tribunal was not bothered by this and began the session. During the reading of the indictment, two more members of the Tribunal walked out, and during the [testimony] of the accused, there were only three members present. The next day the session opened in the presence of five members, and then this quantity melted away and there were moments during the [court session] when only one judge was seated at the judges’ table. The defense entered all of this in the minutes. Before the meeting I went to discuss the case with Krylenko. He acknowledged that the judges had behaved incorrectly, but he considered that this would not affect the correctness of the sentence, because the judges “had probably told each other what happened

²⁹ One miracle trial with political overtones, including the possibility of complicity with foreign interventionists, was that of the “Arkhangel’sk vision,” which was held by the Moscow Provincial Tribunal in January, 1921. I have chosen not to present it in the thesis because there was no clear connection made between counter-revolution and the vision in the verdict as it is described in the sources I reviewed.

in their absence.” I had to work very hard to convince this miserable general-procurator to speak out to change the sentence.³⁰

Here it appears that the accused was spared the death sentence because of a technicality as well as Kobiakov’s persistence and conscientiousness. Kobiakov says nothing about overturning his conviction for his counter-revolutionary action of not saving the communists from the angry mob; he also does not say whether any communists were killed or injured by the mob.

Another case that was appealed to the cassation tribunal did involve deaths of proletarians. A deacon was sentenced to death by the Tver’ revolutionary tribunal for agitating among the citizens of Plakhinskaia *volost*’ and calling for the overthrow of the local soviet. Several Red Army soldiers and peasants had been killed by the crowd that had allegedly been stirred up by the deacon. The cassation tribunal upheld the death sentence in this case, whereupon the defenders submitted a petition to the Presidium of the VTsIK asking for a pardon.³¹ There is no further information as to whether a pardon was granted.

The only case I have encountered where the defendant was given the death sentence and the reporting indicates that it was actually carried out involves a subdeacon named Ilarion Semenov, a fifty-three year old man who was accused of molesting minor boys in the local church. The trial was public; it was held in the town theater in front of

³⁰ Kobiakov, 247-248. There is no date for this, but I would say it occurred in summer 1918. It would have to be sometime after June 1918, when the revolutionary tribunals received the right to use the death penalty. Since Kobiakov probably left his post with the Ministry of Justice (and Soviet Russia) soon after the September 5, 1918, public executions in Moscow, it would not have occurred much later than that.

³¹ “V tribunalakh: v kassatsionnom tribunale.” *Izvestiia*, July 3, 1919, p. 4.

the Ivanovo-Voznesensk revolutionary tribunal. The case had come about because the fourteen-year old son of one of the local priests had complained to his father that Semenov had lured him behind the empty altar and had tried to rape him. This trial was not overtly political, although as noted above, any trial involving a churchman was considered to be political at its basis. Although it might have seemed that the churchmen and revolutionary tribunal would have been in agreement as to the culpability of the defendant, the authorities would not allow that to happen. Instead, they took the opportunity to use the trial to discredit the Church, specifically the monasteries.³² In the account published in *Revoliutsiia i tserkov'*, it was claimed that the local church had concealed this incident for a long time. When it finally came to trial, twenty of Semenov's victims, all minor boys, testified against him. "They depicted a truly horrible picture of monastic morals." At the end of the article, it was stated that Semenov received the "highest measure of punishment; that is, shooting. The sentence has been carried out."³³

³²The death penalty was not necessarily given in every instance of immoral behavior on the part of churchmen. In an editorial comment to the *Revoliutsiia i tserkov'* article cited above, there is a remark that "How the supreme hierarch in the person of patriarch Tikhon will react to this kind of monastic talent is demonstrated in the elevation of Palladii to the rank of bishop immediately after the Moscow court's guilty verdict against him." There is little information on Palladii's case, although according to V.A. Klimenko, Palladii, a friend of Tikhon's, was accused of immorality and debauchery (*obvineniu v beznравstvennosti i razvrate*) and tried in a Moscow in October 1919. See *Bor'ba s kontrrevoliutsiei v Moskve, 1917-1920* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1978), 114. In the letter to Kalinin quoted at the head of this chapter, Tikhon makes reference to Palladii's case, along with those of Samarin and Dosifei, both of which are discussed in this thesis. See *Akty sviateishego patriarkha Tikhon*, 173.

³³ "Delo ipodiakona Semenova," *Revoliutsiia i tserkov'*, Jan-Mar, No. 1-3, 1922, 71. There is no date for the trial, although other trials under discussion in this section of the journal are dated early 1921.

It is also possible that the fact that this trial was held before a revolutionary tribunal rather than a people's court, the normal venue for non-political criminal cases, may have to do more with the fact that people's courts did not have the power to give the death penalty, which was evidently the desired outcome for this case. The question comes up as to exactly how the death penalty was used by the revolutionary tribunals.

Highest Measure of Punishment: The Death Penalty

In the earliest months of their existence, the revolutionary tribunals could not even impose the death penalty, termed officially as the "highest measure of punishment" (*vyshaia mera nakazaniia*). The punishments that the revolutionary tribunals could impose were spelled out in the Instruction of December 19, 1917:

...monetary fines; imprisonment; exile from the capital, individual localities or the boundaries of the Russian Republic; public reprimand; declaration of being an enemy of the people; deprivation of all or some rights of the guilty; sequestration, or confiscation (partial or complete) of property; sentencing to mandatory public service.³⁴

Although Titov maintains that the Soviet State meted out relatively light punishments in the first months of its existence because it sought to "treat class enemies in a humane way," there are more plausible explanations for its behavior. First of all, there was the desire to present a good image at home and abroad, particularly in the beginning.³⁵ Secondly, the Bolsheviks were in a coalition government with the Left SRs,

³⁴ Titov, 154.

³⁵ This was evident in the trial of Countess Sofia Panina, one of the first cases heard by the Petrograd Revolutionary Tribunal in December 1917. Panina, a well-known philanthropist and minister in the Provisional Government cabinet, was accused of taking 93,000 rubles from the Ministry of Education. The

who, as Ger Van den Berg notes, insisted that the death penalty be abolished “at the war front” (it had already been abolished at the home front by the Provisional Government). This policy went against Lenin’s contention that “no revolutionary government can do without the death penalty,” because it was a necessary weapon in the class struggle. This was not a problem, because a workaround had been found: the Cheka began carrying out summary executions.³⁶

The executions, or “extrajudicial reprisals” (*vnesudebnye raspravly*), as they were euphemistically termed, were given impetus by the February 21, 1918 manifesto “The Socialist Fatherland is in Danger,” which was issued at a point when peace negotiations with the Germans had broken down and there was the threat of invasion by German forces. The manifesto stipulated that “Enemy agents, profiteers, marauders, hooligans and counter-revolutionary agitators and German spies are to be shot on the spot.”³⁷

According to I.N. Steinberg, who was Commissar of Justice at the time (and a Left SR),

spectacle of the trial foreshadowed later political show trials. It was held in the music room of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich’s palace to accommodate the large group of spectators who had been admitted by ticket. There was media coverage by both the Russian and foreign press; among the foreigner journalists present was John Reed. In the end, Panina’s sentence was a fine in the amount of what she was accused of embezzling from the Education Ministry and public censure. Bessie Beatty, a reporter from San Francisco, wrote that she had been relieved that Panina’s trial had not been the beginning of “terror with guillotines,” as she and the residents of Petrograd had feared in the days preceding it. See Bessie Beatty, *The Heart of Red Russia* (New York: The Century Company, 1919), 297; Adele Lindenmeyer, “The First Soviet Political Trial: Countess Sofia Panina before the Petrograd Revolutionary Tribunal,” *Russian Review*, Vol. 60, No. 4, (Oct., 2001), 505-525.

³⁶ Ger P. Van den Berg, “The Soviet Union and the Death Penalty,” *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 35, no. 2 (Apr 1983): 155. Van den Berg notes that the first summary executions carried out by the Cheka “were directed not against overt political opponents but rather against bandits, speculators and blackmailers.” This suggests that they began before the February 21, 1918 manifesto.

³⁷ “Sotsialisticheskoe otechestvo v opasnosti!” *Pravda*, February 22, 1918, p. 1.

this instruction “justified and incited summary shootings, cleared the way for the Cheka terror.”³⁸

Although the Cheka was energetically carrying out extrajudicial reprisals, the fact that the revolutionary tribunals still could not pass the death sentence troubled some. Titov maintains that “In the opinion of critics, [this] had an adverse effect on the efficacy of the struggle against counter-revolution....Only on June 16, 1918, did the revolutionary tribunals receive the right to use the highest measure of punishment—shooting.”³⁹

It is difficult to determine exactly how often the revolutionary tribunals made use of the death penalty, although it is possible to get a general idea. According to statistics provided by D. Rodin, during the years 1920 to 1922, the percentage of those who were sentenced to be shot by provincial revolutionary tribunals never exceeded three or four percent of those convicted; the percentage of those sentenced to imprisonment was about ten times greater.⁴⁰ While the overall number of trials heard by the various kinds of tribunals is stated in Rodin’s article, the actual numbers of those convicted, who received the death penalty, or the kinds of crimes where the death penalty was given is not

³⁸ I.N. Steinberg, *In the Workshop of the Revolution* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1955), 146.

³⁹ Titov, 154-155. The first use of the death penalty by a revolutionary tribunal, in this case the Supreme Tribunal (*Verkhovnyi Tribunal*), was against Admiral Shchastnyi, who was tried for treason because he had defied an order by Trotskii, then Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs. See Kobiakov, 261.

⁴⁰ Other punishments were imprisonment for various terms, which ranged from twenty to thirty-nine percent of punishments during the three year period; “forced labor without imprisonment,” which ranged from three to six percent of punishments; “fine,” which ranged from three to forty percent (forty percent was in 1922). One-third to more than half of all punishments were categorized as “other and unknown” during the three year period. From “D. Rodin, *Revoliutsionnye tribunaly v 1920-22 gg.*,” *Vestnik statistiki*, no. 1-3 (1923), reprinted in *Vestnik statistiki* (Moscow), Vol. 8 (1989): 54-55. The statistics are provided in separate columns for provincial, military, and railroad tribunals; there is also a column for “twenty-six separate provinces.”

provided.⁴¹ Neither, for that matter, is the number of instances when the death penalty was actually carried out, except for the military tribunals.⁴² Death sentences imposed by revolutionary tribunals were not always carried out, either because of appeal to a cassation tribunal or on account of an amnesty.⁴³

The death penalty was nonetheless considered a crucial weapon in the class struggle, and the ability to apply it, whether it was carried out or not, was deemed essential for the revolutionary tribunals. The question comes up as to whether the clergy was more likely to be sentenced to death by revolutionary tribunals than other groups, and once sentenced, whether it was more likely to be carried out on them. Once again, it is difficult to find answers. Titov claims that “General statistics on the activity of the revolutionary tribunals in curbing the church counter-revolution were not kept.”⁴⁴

Apparently the cassation tribunal kept more precise statistics:

During 1919, the Cassation tribunal reviewed seventy-eight cases involving counterrevolutionary actions against the Soviet regime whose instigators and active leaders were clergy. Of these, sixty-eight actions took place in the village. By comparison with similar counter-revolutionary actions without clergy involvement, the Cassation tribunal noted that they were distinguished by their

⁴¹ There were three systems of revolutionary tribunals. Military tribunals were formed in the summer of 1918 in areas where fighting was going on with White armies. Railroad tribunals were established by railroad transport units, and were closely affiliated with the military.

⁴² The numbers were “a little over 6,000 for 1920; about 5000 in 1921; less than 4,000 for the first half of 1922.” Rodin, 55.

⁴³ These are the trials considered most significant by the Bolsheviks and by later Soviet historians. It is possible that when the death penalty was given by provincial tribunals, there was less likelihood of amnesty or appeal to a cassation tribunal.

⁴⁴ Titov, 156. Titov asserts that “[I] was unable to find any general information about the activity of any revolutionary tribunals in the struggle against the church counterrevolution in the materials of the central and local archives.” Krylenko claimed that stenograms were not made for many important trials, including Admiral Shchastnyi’s, because they took place “in the very beginning of the activities of the Revolutionary Tribunals.” See N.V. Krylenko, *Za Piat’ Let: 1918-1922* (Moscow, Petrograd: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel’stvo, 1923), 5.

great degree of violence and the difficulty of putting them down. The revolutionary tribunals that tried these cases passed thirty-nine sentences of capital punishment against those churchmen who headed the actions, of which the Cassation tribunal upheld thirty-six sentences.⁴⁵

Even though the Cassation tribunal complained that counter-revolutionary actions where clergy were involved were more violent and difficult to put down, this still tells us very little. Even if we assume that the thirty-six sentences which were upheld were carried out, it cannot be stated with certainty whether churchmen were more likely to be sentenced to death than other groups by revolutionary tribunals, or more likely to have the death penalty actually carried out against them.

It is in fact possible to state that the overwhelming majority of executions of the clergy during the civil war period came at the hands of the Cheka. Natalia Krivova offers the following statistics based on her work in recently opened archives:

According to the data from the VChK [Cheka] of that time, which is far from complete, in 1918 827 ordained clergy were shot; in 1919, 19 were shot, while sixty-nine were imprisoned. The latest statistics on persecutions against the Church, compiled by the Orthodox St. Tikhon Theological Institute, depict a bloodier picture of the first wave of persecutions: the total number of repressions was 11,000 persons, of these, 9,000 were shot. In 1918, there were 3,000 shootings and 1,500 other kinds of repressions of the clergy, while in 1919 there were 1,000 shootings and 800 other kinds of repressions.⁴⁶

Figes asserts that Lenin had quickly become disappointed in the revolutionary tribunals, which “turned out to be highly inefficient instruments of the Bolshevik

⁴⁵ Titov, 159.

⁴⁶ N.A. Krivova, *Vlast' i tserkov' v 1922-1925 gg.: Politbiuro i GPU v bor'be za tserkovnye tsennosti i politicheskoe podchinenie dukhovstva* (Moscow: Seria "Pervaiia Monografiia," AIRO-XX, 1997), 14-15.

Terror.”⁴⁷ If one goes strictly by body-counts, that might be true, but this does not mean that revolutionary tribunals were considered by the Bolsheviks to be without utility.⁴⁸ They were kept around through 1922, and used to try important political cases such as the Tactical Center, the Right SRs, and the Moscow and Petrograd churchmen. The fact that the Cheka carried out more executions lends strength to the argument that the revolutionary tribunals were intended for a different purpose, that of enlightening and educating the masses. One of the lessons was that different punishments were meted out based on a person’s social class. The revolutionary tribunals could be merciful towards those who acted against the regime through no fault of their own, but had been exhorted to do so by class enemies such as churchmen.

Although it is not possible to state that churchmen were more likely to be sentenced to death by revolutionary tribunals, Titov suggests that the punishments received by them during trials tended to be stiffer than those received by other categories of people such as workers or peasants. He quotes from *Sputnik kommunista* of 1923:

In the matter of repression, People’s courts and tribunals distinguish two elements...in the trials: the consciously counter-revolutionary (churchmen, professors, barristers, former tsarist officials, engineers and speculators, who carried out their counter-revolutionary policy under the banner of the church), and the uneducated, non-fanatic people among the ordinary city and village-dwellers whom they deceived. With regard to the first category, repression was applied ruthlessly and decisively with complete justification; with regard to the second

⁴⁷ Figes, *A People’s Tragedy*, 534.

⁴⁸ On occasion, revolutionary tribunals could be very effective instruments of terror. Peter Holquist tells how during the process of de-Cossackization of the Don territory, the Koper extraordinary tribunal handed down a total of 226 death sentences in a one-month period in March 1919. See Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge, MA, London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2002), 182-183.

category, the courts took into account the lack of education, ignorance and the strength of ancient prejudices by virtue of which the agitation of the churchmen could have had harmful influence on them.⁴⁹

The best way to check Titov's assertion is by examining group trials involving churchmen and other groups such as peasants. One of the first such trials was the "Zvenigorod case," which was held from August 15 to September 6, 1918 by the Moscow provincial revolutionary tribunal. It was an example of one of the peasant "uprisings" that were blamed on the clergy, although there were only four clergymen (no lay leaders) among a total of approximately twenty-nine accused in the actual trial.⁵⁰

The Zvenigorod Case, August-September 1918

The accusation, according to the official account, was as follows: When a group of representatives from the local soviet went to requisition grain and property from the Savvino-Storozhevskii monastery in the Zvenigorod district of Moscow province on May 15, the people who lived in the vicinity were summoned by the monastery church's bells to defend it. In the fighting that followed, a commissar from the local soviet, Makarov, was killed.⁵¹ From the testimony, it was established that there were several motives for the murder: the committee from the soviet had confiscated grain from the peasants previously, for which the peasants had wanted revenge. More importantly, "[The murder

⁴⁹ Titov, 157-158. He is quoting from *Sputnik kommunista*, Izdanie Moskovskogo Komiteta RKP 1923, No. 19, p. 35.

⁵⁰ This information is from a list provided by Archdeacon Sergii Golubtsov in *Moskovskoe dukhovstvo v preddverii i nachale gonanii, 1917-1922* (Moscow, Izdatel'stvo Pravoslavnogo bratsva Sporuchnitsy greshchnykh, 1999), 59.

⁵¹ According to the monastery's records, priest-monk Sergii was also killed, although the circumstances were not elaborated. It was not noted in any "official" account of the uprising. See Golubtsov, 59.

and fighting] was the result of secret work of the clergy who had prepared the action by creating a union for defense of church and monastery property, and who had taken advantage of the resentment of certain segments of the population toward Makarov.”⁵²

While the “official” version focuses on Makarov’s assignment to confiscate the monastery’s grain holdings, he was also charged with inventorying the monastery’s valuables, which may have provoked as much if not more anger on the part of the monks and inhabitants of the surrounding villages and towns. The monastery’s abbot, Makarii, had received preliminary notification about the inventory from the Zvenigorod Executive Committee on March 28, 1918.⁵³ The most valuable item in the monastery, from the perspective of the monks and local inhabitants, were the relics of St. Savva, a 14th century monk for who the monastery was named, which were kept in the monastery church.⁵⁴ The local inhabitants were informed that the monastery’s bells would be sounded as an alarm if the Bolsheviks showed up with the intention of taking away the saint’s relics, which was the biggest fear of the monks and local inhabitants.⁵⁵ Father Vasiliï (Derzhavin), a priest in a nearby village church, had preached a sermon in his church

⁵² “V gubernskom revoliutsionnom tribunale: Zvenigorodskoe delo,” *Izvestiia*, August 20, 1918, p. 2. The “union” referred to is the “Council of united parishes” (Soviet ob’edinennykh prikhodov

⁵³ Golubtsov, 58.

⁵⁴ The material in this paragraph is taken from “Istoriia zakrytiia Savvina Storozhevskogo monastyria po materialam Gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, No. 2, 1998, 57-66. There is an editorial comment at the bottom of the first page that “Unfortunately, the author of this wonderful, highly professional study is not known. The material was provided to the editorial staff by abbot Feoktist, the head of Savvino-Storozhevskii monastery.” The publication of the article was in conjunction with the restoration of the monastery in 1997.

⁵⁵ The sounding of church bells as an alarm calling the people to defend the monastery was a centuries-old tradition, going back to the time of the Tatar yoke. A decree of the Sovnarkom dated July 30, 1918 made it illegal to use church bells, whistles, or messengers to assemble the population; violators were to be brought before the revolutionary tribunal. Goncharov and Titov, 100.

during which he had gotten down on his knees to beg the people not to allow what would undoubtedly be a desecration of the relics.⁵⁶

As the “primary culprits of the counter-revolutionary revolt,” Abbot Makarii and Father Vasilii, together with Vasilii Petrovich Deshevoi, the “ringleader” of the crowd (and a layman), were sentenced to “life imprisonment with hard labor and deprivation of the right to have contact with family.” The other sentences that were received were as follows:

Eight of the accused who conducted anti-soviet agitation and who had participated in assault and battery against representatives of the Soviet regime were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labor for a period of ten years; another six persons were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labor for a period of three years. Seven criminals, who had slight involvement in the uprising, were fined 15,000 rubles “with a mutual guarantee.” In case of insolvency and nonpayment of the fine within the period of a month, the guilty were subject to imprisonment for a period of six months. The other five persons were acquitted. Court costs of 3,621 rubles ten kopecks were recovered from those who were convicted.⁵⁷

Golubtsov notes that priest-monk Feofan was one of the six persons who were sentenced to three years in prison, and deacon-monk Amvrosii was one of the seven who received a fine (apparently he was unable to pay, so spent six months in jail).⁵⁸ Although most of the sentences handed down seem stiff, it appears the harshest sentences were indeed given to the two highest-ranking clergymen (and one layman). Nonetheless, it is curious

⁵⁶ “Istoriia zakrytiia Savvina Storozhevskogo monastyria,” 60. Eventually the reliquary was opened and removed by the Bolsheviks nearly a year later; what occurred during the opening of the reliquary became a topic of discussion in a subsequent trial held in January 1920.

⁵⁷ Titov, 157.

⁵⁸ Golubtsov, 59.

that even though a communist was killed as a result of the “uprising” by the peasants, no one was sentenced to death.⁵⁹

One other thing that should be mentioned about the Zvenigorod trial is the indirect implication of Tikhon in the events. One of the “witnesses” declared that “There is clear evidence that the main culprit...is Patriarch Tikhon, who has planted [defense] unions throughout all of Russia for the defense of church property, but which really have another purpose: fighting against the Soviet regime.”⁶⁰ Tikhon was blamed for much of the counter-revolutionary activity among churchmen throughout Russia at this time, although the Bolsheviks did not move to put him on trial. If they were planning to do so, there were more significant events that postponed any such action.

On August 30, 1918, Uritskii, the head of the Petrograd Cheka, was assassinated, and an attempt was made on Lenin’s life later in the day.⁶¹ Following this, shootings were carried out by the Cheka throughout Soviet Russia.⁶² On September 5, the day before the conclusion of the Zvenigorod trial, a mass public execution of more than eighty persons, including several former ministers from the Provisional Government, was

⁵⁹ It is worth noting that this “uprising,” which occurred in part over the issue of grain confiscation, took place before the regime’s imposition of the system of grain assessment, or *razverstka*, which was introduced in the second half of 1918 and became official policy in January 1919. This was the centerpiece of what was later termed as “war communism.” See Lars T. Lih, “Bolshevik Razverstka and War Communism,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Winter, 1986): 673-688.

⁶⁰ “V gubernskom revoliutsionnom tribunale: Zvenigorodskoe delo,” *Izvestiia*, August 20, 1918, p. 2.

⁶¹ Steinberg, *Workshop of the Revolution*, 147. Lenin’s would-be assassin was Dora (Fanny) Kaplan, a former Anarchist turned Socialist Revolutionary who believed that Lenin had betrayed the revolution. She was taken to Lubyanka, tortured and shot on September 3. Figs, *A People’s Tragedy*, 629.

⁶² In Petrograd alone, the Cheka immediately executed 512 bourgeois “hostages.” Steinberg, 147-151.

carried out by the Cheka, reportedly Chinese riflemen, at Petrovskii Park in Moscow.

The “Red Terror” was finally unleashed in full.⁶³

Allegedly, one of the victims of the September 5 executions was Archpriest Ioann Vostorgov, the former dean of St. Basil’s Cathedral at the Kremlin and an outspoken conservative churchman who had been arrested on charges of speculation in June 1918.⁶⁴ Following a preliminary judicial investigation, the Presidium of the Cheka had declared that there was such a preponderance of evidence that “By revolutionary laws the persons who are guilty of such crimes are subject to the highest administrative punishment” [that is, death]. However, “In view of the exceptional political significance of this case, the case shall be transferred to the Revolutionary Tribunal for public court examination...so that the faithful themselves may make impartial judgment about the degree to which their pastors follow their pastoral duties.”⁶⁵

⁶³ It should be noted that Rabinowitch argues that the assassination of Uritskii and the attempt on Lenin should not be seen as the sole or direct cause of the Red Terror. He asserts that “undeclared Red Terror in all its forms had been under way in Moscow and other Russian cities for months.” Instability was building up in the country; the regime was faced with threats from the Whites on different fronts and the landings by Allied interventionist forces in the northwest, which reawakened the danger that Petrograd might be occupied by the Allies or even the Germans. “The drift to Red Terror in Petrograd and other Russian cities during the late summer of 1918 grew out of the insecurity caused by these ominous developments.” Rabinowitch, 313-314; 330.

⁶⁴ See Kobiakov, 275; A.A. Valentinov, *Chernaia kniga*, 39; Metropolitan Evlogii, *Put’ moei zhizni*, 185. Also among the victims of the September 5 shootings were two of Kobiakov’s clients, whom he was preparing to defend before the Supreme Tribunal. After an unpleasant confrontation with Krylenko, who asked why the fact that his clients were shot without trial should bother him, Kobiakov’s narrative breaks off. He may have left Soviet Russia shortly thereafter.

⁶⁵ See “Delo Protoiereia Vostorgova i K^o,” *Izvestiia*, June 29, 1918, p. 4. This instance seems to support Figes’s assertion that because Lenin considered the revolutionary tribunals to be “ineffective instruments of terror,” the local Chekas gradually took over the work of the revolutionary tribunals. I go along with Titov who argues that although the Cheka sometimes usurped the responsibilities of the tribunals, as in this case, this was only a temporary situation driven by events. See Figes, *A People’s Tragedy*, 534; Titov, 155.

If Vostorgov's trial had been held, it may very well have been the first large political show trial of churchmen. Patriarch Tikhon would likely have been dragged into it; the newspaper articles leading up to the trial had made reference to "the commercial transaction of patriarch Tikhon, Vostorgov and Co."⁶⁶ The charge was that Vostorgov had sold a missionary society home allegedly to raise funds that were to be given to "a certain person who was going East" who would in turn hand them over to Nicholas Romanov.⁶⁷ The implication was that the Patriarch supported the return of the monarchy. Only Vostorgov had gone to prison, with the Bolsheviks leaving Tikhon alone for the time being, although it was already quite clear that the Bolsheviks had the Patriarch in their sites.

Trial of the Former Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod Samarin and Others, January 1920

Tikhon was not directly involved in what Krylenko referred to as the "trial of the former chief procurator of the Holy Synod Samarin."⁶⁸ He was, however, in the background throughout the proceedings of what might be considered as the most important trial of churchmen during the civil war period.

Although Titov asserts that "This trial was to a certain degree typical for that time," and that "Similar trials occurred in other cities," the circumstances surrounding it

⁶⁶ Metropolitan Arsenii of Novgorod, one of Tikhon's competitors for the post of Patriarch, would likely also have been charged.

⁶⁷ "Patriarkh Tikhon i fond dlia Nikolaia Romanova," *Izvestiia*, June 13, 1918, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Krylenko, 57-87.

indicate that this trial was far from typical.⁶⁹ Samarin and Professor Kuznetsov were two of the most prominent lay leaders in the Church; there was fairly extensive coverage of the trial in major Soviet newspapers; and it was considered by Krylenko, the chief accuser, to be one of the most important cases he tried during his five years with the revolutionary tribunals. During his closing speech at the trial, Krylenko predicted that “In the annals of the history of the Russian Revolution and struggle of the workers’ and peasants’ masses for their emancipation from age-old oppression, this case will be given an appropriate place.”⁷⁰

Indeed, the trial should be seen as the high point of the prosecution of churchmen by revolutionary tribunals during the civil war. It was an amalgam of all the accusations of the Bolshevik regime against the Orthodox Church to date, including charges of forming counter-revolutionary organizations for the purpose of overthrowing the government, accusations against the clergy of being Black Hundredists who inspired pogroms against Jews, accusations that allegations of persecution of the Church constituted slander against the State, false testimony by clergy against the Bolsheviks, and the like.

The trial setting was very similar to later show trials. It took place in the Blue room of the House of Unions, the former Nobles’ Assembly, in Moscow. Smirnov, the

⁶⁹ Titov, 159.

⁷⁰ Krylenko, 61. Krylenko grouped the 13 trials discussed in *Za Piat’ Let* into three categories: political trials, trials relating to the struggle against economic dislocation, and “miscellaneous.” He wrote that the “case of the former chief procurator of the Holy Synod Samarin” belonged to the category of political trials (p. 5).

chairman of the Tribunal, was described by journalist Edwin Hullinger, who met him in the early 1920s, as “the matinee idol of Moscow court fans. A young man, with well-formed features, clean shaven, dark eyes, black hair, he sits at the bench like a Savonarola come to justice....To watch him try a case is more entertaining than many a theater. The women are ‘crazy’ about him.”⁷¹

Nonetheless, it was not a slick, well-run show in every respect. The opening day of the trial illustrated once again how sloppy the judicial process could be in the revolutionary tribunals. *Izvestiia* noted that of the sixty-four witnesses called to appear at the tribunal, only thirty-two showed up. Even some of the accused failed to appear: “At the suggestion of Krylenko, the Tribunal decreed that the priest Polozov, priestmonks Iosif and Iliodor, and Evgenii, the treasurer of the Sofiiskii monastery, none of whom appeared, would be tried *in absentia*, and that they would be fined 500 rubles apiece.”⁷²

In all, there were approximately eighteen clergy, monks, and laymen who were tried. The two most prominent defendants, Samarin and Kuznetsov, were examined on the first day of the trial. They stood accused of heading a counter-revolutionary organization, the “United Parish Councils.” Both men had been lay participants in the All-Russian Church Council and members of the delegation that had gone to the

⁷¹ Edwin Ware Hullinger, *The Reforging of Russia* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1925), 239-240. Hullinger contrasts Smirnov, a former baker but whom he considered as “above the average judge in native intelligence,” with an unnamed “justice who condemned the ill-fated priests to death,” whom he described as “a coarse, rough laborer with no culture....His mentality was clearly that of a fanatic, a protagonist, not a judge” (240). It is not clear which trial Hullinger is referring to where the priests were condemned to death.

⁷² Moskovskii Gubernskii Revoliutsionnyi Tribunal: Delo tserkovnikov kontr-revoliutsionerov,” *Izvestiia*, January 13, 1920, p. 2. Even in later cases like that of Metropolitan Veniamin of Petrograd in 1922, some of the witnesses did not show up.

Sovnarkom in March 1918 to discuss issues and try to find a *modus vivendi* between Church and State. Following the issuance of the decree on separation of the Church from the State, they had spearheaded the organization of the “United Parish Councils” for the purpose of protecting people and property in the face of anarchy, violence and robbery.⁷³ The Bolsheviks considered these unions to be counter-revolutionary organizations that were established to impede efforts to make inventories of church property and to confiscate it in accordance with the decree on the separation of church from the state.

The *Izvestiia* article noted that Samarin did not admit his guilt, “insisting that his activities as the chairman of the council had nothing to do with politics and were directed exclusively toward the revitalizing of religious feeling of the popular masses.” Samarin claimed that “the goal of the council was to unite parishes on purely ecclesiastical foundations alien to any politics.” He denied trying to overthrow the existing regime by means of armed uprising, explaining that the Patriarch’s bodyguard had consisted of unarmed volunteers who mounted a round-the-clock watch at Tikhon’s residence in shifts for the purpose of protecting the Patriarch’s person.⁷⁴

In his concluding speech, Krylenko, the main accuser, zeroed in on the subject of the bodyguard. Krylenko argued that “Samarin [is] a political figure who led his entire life in the service of the tsarist regime and was an eyewitness to all the business of the

⁷³ The Council of United Parishes had been established on January 30, 1918, or perhaps even earlier, at a meeting of the Council of clergy and laity, of which Samarin was chairman and Kuznetsov the deputy chairman. Golubtsov, 57.

⁷⁴ “Moskovskii Gubernskii Revoliutsionnyi Tribunal: Delo tserkovnikov kontr-revoliutsionerov,” *Izvestiia*, January 13, 1920, p. 2.

tsarist butchers and secret police.” Because of Samarin’s background, Krylenko implied that the bodyguard was no innocent group: “Is it possible to believe that the watches were set up only for the purpose of socializing with the patriarch and having a conversation with him over tea? To what purpose are these deceptions and charades?”⁷⁵ Krylenko went on to conclude that Samarin had exploited the ignorance of the people by establishing the bodyguard under false pretenses.

Kuznetsov followed Samarin in the questioning before the tribunal; he was identified as a former professor of church law. Like Samarin, Kuznetsov did not admit any guilt, which was typical for early trials.⁷⁶ “He characterized himself as a scholarly man, alien to politics,” according to the *Izvestiia* account. Furthermore, “Believing religion to be above all political parties and being an advocate of freedom of conscience, the accused considers it his inalienable right to criticize the decree on the separation of the church from the state.” In particular, Kuznetsov had insisted on “the necessity of preserving the property law of the church,” and had presented this point in the discussions with the Sovnarkom representatives during their March 1918 meetings.

But the real reason that Kuznetsov had been dragged before the tribunal was not for his stubbornness during the March 1918 meetings with Sovnarkom, but rather his

⁷⁵ Krylenko, 69-70.

⁷⁶ In a letter to a journal called *Samizdat* in conjunction with 1966 trial of Andrei Siniavskii and Iulii Daniel, an anonymous author observed “the trial of S. and D. was the first political trial to be held in public since 1922 at which the accused had carried themselves with dignity and had not ‘confessed’.” See Marc Jansen, *A Show Trial under Lenin: The Trial of the Socialist Revolutionaries, Moscow 1922*. Trans by Jean Sanders (The Hague, Boston, London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), Preface, ix. Julie A. Cassidy observes that “The defendants in these early Soviet show trials rarely confessed their guilt.” Cassidy, *The Enemy on Trial: Early Soviet Courts on Stage and Screen* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 49.

[Kuznetsov's] involvement in the protest over the desecration of the relics of St. Savva, which had been uncovered and taken from the Savvino-Storozhevskii monastery in March-April, 1919. This was the strange, tenuous connection between the previous "Zvenigorod case" of August-September 1918, where people had defended the relics and were accused of an "uprising," and the present trial, which involved the charges against Samarin and Kuznetsov of heading a counter-revolutionary organization.

Neither man had been present at the opening of the reliquary, which had taken place on March 17, 1919. Abbot Iona, who was present, claimed that one of the Bolshevik representatives had picked up Savva's skull and spat in it.⁷⁷ The Bolsheviks had then propped up the bones in what they considered to be the most amusing pose, and invited local townspeople come in and look at them so that they would understand how they had been fooled by the monks. Instead, the reaction of the people was shock; one peasant called as a witness at the trial said that he had wept. The relics were finally removed from the monastery church on April 5 and transferred to a museum in Moscow, after which 113 people, including six monks, three instructors at the local seminary, and inhabitants of Zvenigorod and other surrounding towns signed a petition of protest that was handed over to the local authorities. On April 15, several parishioners from the monastery church went to Moscow to professor Kuznetsov and asked him to report the events that had occurred in the monastery to the Sovnarkom. Kuznetsov went the next day to Sovnarkom and presented a protest of the removal of the relics, requesting that an

⁷⁷ Iona had replaced Makarii as abbot after the latter's conviction and imprisonment following the September 1918 trial.

inquiry into the matter be held and the guilty parties held accountable. In the protest, Kuznetsov declared,

The relics of Saint Savva, although they are bones, are sacred for the Russian people, and for many centuries have been located in the cathedral church of the monastery. To remove them wrapped like ordinary things in a table-cloth and newspaper for placement in a museum cannot be called a correct action with respect to the Orthodox people; it clearly insults the religious sentiment of the people.⁷⁸

During the prosecution's examination of Kuznetsov, "Krylenko established that Kuznetsov described events in his various complaints that he had not witnessed."⁷⁹ In his closing speech, Krylenko slammed Kuznetsov's character—much as he had Samarin's—asserting that he was “not only a professor, but a lawyer” who had supposedly gone to the Sovnarkom [in March 1918] to “seek the truth and to submit petitions....But if you, Kuznetsov, went to the Sovnarkom in the same way that you went about the case involving the relics of St. Savva, then it was not truth that you were seeking!”⁸⁰ In other words, Krylenko was attempting to discredit the churchmen's assertions that the Church was being persecuted by arguing that it was actually the Bolshevik regime that was being damaged through the slander of the churchmen.

Even though Samarin had not been directly involved in the protest over the desecration of St. Savva's relics, Krylenko tied Kuznetsov and Samarin together,

⁷⁸ From “Istoriia zakrytiia Savvina Storozhevskogo monastyria,” *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii*, 2-1998, 60-62.

⁷⁹ “Moskovskii Gubernskii Revoliutsionnyi Tribunal: Delo tserkovnikov kontr-revoliutsionerov,” *Izvestiia*, January 14, 1920, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Krylenko, 73.

declaring that it had been established during the tribunal sessions that “The actions of one and the other are identical; they are thick as thieves. To a certain extent they personally blended, because both Samarin and Kuznetsov were members of [the All-Russian Church Council and the Council of United Parishes] and, consequently, it is not possible to distinguish their actions separately.”⁸¹

In the end, the revolutionary tribunal found Samarin and Kuznetsov to be inspirers of church counter-revolution and evident enemies of the Soviet regime, and sentenced them to be shot. The sentences were eventually commuted to “imprisonment in a camp for counter-revolutionaries until the final victory of the workers’-peasants’ regime over world imperialism, with public censure.” The others who were tried were sentenced to various terms of punishment; five of the accused received suspended punishment.⁸²

The Patriarch may not have been directly involved in the trial, but again he was mentioned as one of the “main culprits.” During his closing speech, Krylenko declared:

The [preliminary inquiry] against the main culprits has been completed; the only thing remaining is to transfer it to the revolutionary tribunal. [It is] only because of those very principles which are set out in the Decree on the separation of the

⁸¹ Krylenko, 73.

⁸² Krylenko, 87. According to various sources, Samarin served in Taganskaia prison until 1922, after which he was freed. He was rearrested in 1925, exiled to Siberia for three years in the company of his daughter Liza, and freed in 1929. He died in Kostroma in 1932 of natural causes at the age of 64. Prilozhenie 2, from *Akty Svyateyshego Tikhona*, 888. Kuznetsov served in prison until he was amnestied by the VTsIK in December 1921. He was called upon to testify as an “expert” at the trials of the Moscow churchmen in the spring and autumn of 1922. He appears to have taught academic courses periodically throughout the 1920s, although he was rearrested in 1924 by the OGPU, sent into exile for two years, and returned to Moscow. He was rearrested in 1931 and again exiled from Moscow. According to one source, he died in Kzyl-Orda in January 1930; others sources say he died in 1936. See Golubtsov, 169-170.

church from the state [that] we are leaving these people—our class enemies—in peace for the time being, but we are watching their activities.⁸³

In a way, Samarin and Krylenko, both laymen, were being tried as proxies for the Patriarch and other Church hierarchs. There were other trials, as well, where there were stand-ins for higher-ranking leaders of the Church.

Trial of Hieromonk Dosifei and Abbess Serafima

In light of all the accusations in the press against Tikhon of being involved in speculation, inspiring counter-revolutionary organizations to combat the Bolshevik regime, and supporting the return of the monarchy, it is ironic that the Patriarch's first actual appearance in a Bolshevik court was in connection with miracle fraud. Tikhon was called to the Moscow People's Court in June 1920 to testify at the trial of Abbess Serafima of Vladimir-Ekaterina monastery and priest-monk Dosifei of Donskoi monastery. The two were charged with faking a miracle-working icon and other relics to attract pilgrims to Serafima's monastery for the purpose of producing income. Serafima had gone to Moscow to receive the icon and relics from Dosifei and Bishop Nazari, who were representatives of the Patriarch. According to Jennifer Wynot, "Although these two individuals stood trial, the minutes of the proceedings make it apparent that the real people on trial were Patriarch Tikhon and Bishop Nazari." In the end, Abbess Serafima was sentenced to ten years of hard labor, "but in deference to her age, the court commuted the sentence to one year working at the Department of Social Security."

⁸³ Krylenko, 67. The editor remarks in a footnote that Krylenko's reference to "the main culprits" (glavnykh vinovnikakh) is a reference to Patriarch Tikhon.

Dosifei, who originally received five years of hard labor, was amnestied because of his proletarian background. The accused had been let off lightly in order to assure ordinary believers that Bolshevik justice was merciful and fair to those who did not know any better. The Bolsheviks were after bigger prey, the ones who exhorted people to actions such as miracle fraud: “The court...stated that it would pursue a case against Tikhon and Nazari.”⁸⁴

Tikhon protested the conduct of the trial in a letter to M.I. Kalinin, the chairman of the VTsIK. He complained that although he had been called to testify at the trial of Serafima and Dosifei as a witness, Galkin, the accuser (and former priest), had treated him like one of the accused and his testimony like an interrogation. Furthermore, Shpitsberg, had accused him of speculation and religious blackmail, and he, Tikhon, had been refused permission to respond in his own defense.⁸⁵ The actions of Galkin and Shpitsberg constituted violations of the article 13 of the Constitution of the RSFSR. “The policy of the Eighth Section has deviated from its intended path and is expressed in gross interference in the sphere of religious freedom,” the Patriarch asserted.⁸⁶ This was not

⁸⁴ Jennifer Jean Wynot, *Keeping the Faith: Russian Orthodox Monasticism in the Soviet Union, 1917-1939*. (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 43.

⁸⁵ Ivan Anatolievich Shpitsberg (1881-1933) was a former sworn advocate who had worked in marriage-divorce affairs for the Holy Synod. Following the October Revolution, he had become a staunch atheist and foe of the Russian Orthodox Church. Archdeacon Sergii Golubtsov, *Moskovskoe dukhovstvo v preddverii i nachale gonanii, 1917-1922 gg.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Pravoslavnogo bratstva Sporuchnitsi greshnykh, 1999), 60.

⁸⁶ Pis'mo Sviateshego Patriarkha Tikhona Predsedateliu VTsIK M.I. Kalininu, 1920 (unknown date). *Akty Sviateshego Patriarkha Tikhona*, 170-171. Article 13 of the Fundamental Law of the RSFSR of 1918 states: “For purposes of ensuring genuine freedom of conscience for the workers, the church is separated from the state and the school from the church, and the freedom of religious and antireligious propaganda is recognized for all citizens.” See Goncharov and Titov, 48.

the declaration of someone who felt he had the upper hand in a confrontation, but of someone who was frustrated, who had fought long and hard in what felt like a losing battle. In actual fact, the Church had won round one of the struggle against the new regime.

Summary

In spite of the decree on the separation of the Church from the State, which deprived the Russian Orthodox Church of special privileges and property, and in spite of the revolutionary tribunals, which combated the alleged counter-revolutionary activity of the clergy and sought to discredit them in the eyes of the people, the Church was not completely destroyed as an institution during the civil war period, and religious belief still persisted. Curtiss observed that “The Russian church apparently survived the period of revolution in a strong condition....The vast majority of the population were still strongly religious...and the dioceses and the central administration of the church were operating with some effectiveness.”⁸⁷

The struggle against the Church and religion would take more effort than the Bolsheviks had originally anticipated. They would change tactics, focusing on better-organized anti-religious propaganda and education under the auspices of the Chief Political Education Committee (*Glavpolitprosvet*).⁸⁸ They would continue to use revolutionary tribunals to try churchmen. This time the “counter-revolution” was more clearly defined. Round two of the church trials would come in the wake of the 1921

⁸⁷ Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 104-105.

⁸⁸ This was established in November 1920 and headed by Lenin’s wife Krupskaja. Shkarovskii, 424.

famine on the Volga and the campaign to confiscate church valuables in early 1922. Several of the bigger church trials that were held, such as those of the Moscow and Petrograd churchmen, took their place among the most notorious trials of the revolutionary tribunals, if not the entire Soviet justice system.

6. Conclusion

The earliest trials of churchmen during the civil war period had taken place at a time when the Bolsheviks were not certain of their power. They had no centralized, coordinated policy for dealing with the Church or religious belief. The only thing that seemed clear to the Bolsheviks at that point was that the Church was a competitor for influence over what each side termed as the ignorant masses.

A number of the earlier trials contain references to the “united parish organizations,” which the Bolsheviks saw as clear evidence that the clergy and lay leaders were trying to organize the masses against the regime. Although such organizations had grown out of the diocesan congresses of clergy and laity that had formed spontaneously following the February Revolution, the Bolsheviks could not believe that ordinary people would voluntarily take part in them without coercion by some external group. They charged that the Church leaders were exhorting people to oppose the revolution through these groups, to overthrow the regime.

The Church hierarchs had never envisioned the Church as a political rival to the State. Since the time of Catherine the Great, the clergy had been prohibited from expressing independent political or social views in sermons or publications. But at the same time, they had been expected to act as the State’s agents, the first line of defense against rebellion, as well as educators, census-takers, and even medics. Church leaders

found this subservient position to the State to be unacceptable, especially given the pressures of a rapidly changing society. During the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-1918, they sought to transform the relationship of the Church and the State based on the Byzantine ideal of *symphonia*. That is, the Church would be responsible for matters of faith and moral discipline, and the State for political and civil administration. Church and State would interact in a complementary manner, but within their own separate spheres.

Church leaders saw Tikhon's election as patriarch, the first in over two hundred years, as the keystone of what would be the new Church-State relationship. The patriarch of the modern era was not intended to be an ecclesiastical monarch or despot, but rather the first among equals in a Church guided by the democratic principle of *sobornost'* (conciliarity). While Tikhon saw his role as a spiritual and moral leader of the country, this was not necessarily how others perceived him. Ordinary people considered him as a substitute for the tsar; his enthronement at Uspenskii cathedral certainly reinforced this view of him. Similarly, the Bolsheviks saw him as a relic of the tsarist past, and the clergy and lay leaders as ministers and court officials who would do his bidding. For them, the Church was a political, counter-revolutionary organization, and Tikhon, the substitute tsar, was its personification.

A number of accused churchmen during the church trials of the civil war period (as well as the 1922 church trials) tried to use political neutrality as a defense. For the Bolsheviks, such a claim was ludicrous. At the trial of Samarin and Kuznetsov in January 1920, the accuser Krylenko did not buy Samarin's claim that "the goal of the [united parish] council was to unite parishes on purely ecclesiastical foundations alien to

any politics.” This was not possible, Krylenko asserted, because “Samarin [is] a political figure who led his entire life in the service of the tsarist regime and was an eyewitness to all the business of the tsarist butchers and secret police.”¹ The argument was that political figures were incapable of non-political actions. Society under the Bolsheviks was undergoing unprecedented politicization, and soon everybody was a political figure. At the trial of metropolitan Veniamin (Kazanskii) of Petrograd in June-July 1922, the prosecutor Krasikov declared, “Is there a political struggle here? Of course it is political. No one who lives in society can be a stranger to politics: whether passive or active, a person will always cooperate with one side or the other, this or that camp.”²

Another tendency of the church trials of the civil war and later period was that the accused usually did not acknowledge guilt in the charges against them. This was seen in the January 1920 trial, when the *Izvestiia* account made a point of reporting that neither Samarin nor Kuznetsov had admitted guilt; apparently, neither did many of the churchmen in the church trials of 1922.³ This was also true of other trials; Jansen notes that the right SRs had not “confessed.”⁴ Maier related a case that was tried by a provincial people’s court where peasants who were accused of withholding grain used the trial to discredit the appropriateness of the *razverstka* process, drawing on the testimony of a former member of the local requisitioning commission to help make their case. In

¹ “Moskovskii Gubernskii Revoliutsionnyi Tribunal: Delo tserkovnikov kontr-revoliutsionerov,” *Izvestiia*, January 13, 1920, p. 2; Krylenko, 69-70.

² *Revoliutsiia i tserkov’*, Nos 1-3, 1923, 86.

³ For example, during the trial of metropolitan Veniamin of Petrograd, it was reported by *Revoliutsiia i tserkov’* that all the pleas were “not guilty.” There were a total of 86 accused. *Revoliutsiia i tserkov’*, Nos 1-3, 1923, 67. According to another account, there were two “guilty” pleas. “*Delo*” *mitropolita Veniamin Petrograd, 1922 g.* (Moscow: Studiia “TRITE”, Rossiiskii Arkhiv, 1991), 24.

⁴ Jansen, ix.

the end, the court acquitted the peasants.⁵ Regime policies were negotiable, at least some of the time. People did not just accept them without question in the beginning, and sometimes saw the court setting as an opportunity to fight back. This had all changed by the latter part of the 1920s, beginning with the trial of the Shakhty engineers.⁶

There were differences between the trials of churchmen during the civil war period and those in 1922. For one thing, the charge of “counter-revolution” was more clearly defined in the later trials. The 1921 Volga famine offered a perfect opportunity for the Bolsheviks: they decreed the confiscation of church valuables, ostensibly so they could be sold to raise cash to feed the victims of the famine; when Church leaders protested, the Bolsheviks charged that they had incited the people to resist confiscation of church valuables.⁷ Under the new Criminal Code that had come into effect on June 1, 1922, and the churchmen were usually accused of violating Articles 62 and 119 of that Code. Article 62 addressed the “participation of the accused in an organization that was operating for counter-revolutionary purposes by inciting the population to massive unrest to the obvious detriment of the proletarian revolution,” while article 119 spoke of the “exploitation of the religious prejudices of the masses for the purpose of overthrowing

⁵ Maier, 93.

⁶ In writing about the trial of the Shakhty engineers in March 1928, Arkady Vaksburg claims: “It was at this trial that the seed was sown which was soon to germinate and produce shoots in profusion: all the court’s attention was concentrated not on analyzing the evidence, but on securing from the accused confirmation of their confessions of guilt that were contained in the records of the preliminary investigation.” Arkady Vaksberg, *Stalin’s Prosecutor: The Life of Andrei Vyshinsky*, trans. Jan Butler (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 45.

⁷ There are a number of accounts available on the 1921 famine, the lead-up to the confiscations of church valuables, and the church trials of 1922. See, for example, Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 106-128; Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime*, vol. I, 93-112; and most recently, Krivova, *Vlast’ i tserkov’ v 1922-1925 gg.*

the workers-peasants regime.”⁸ Thus, “counter-revolution” was no longer quite as vague a concept as it had been in the earlier years.

Another difference was the nature of the revolutionary tribunals themselves. Revolutionary tribunals were in the process of being phased out in 1922. Although the new Criminal Code had come into effect, the draft of the Code of Criminal Procedure did not come into effect until August 1, 1922, the “Regulations for Revolutionary Tribunals” were followed for the 1922 trials.⁹ Proletarian judges still served on revolutionary tribunal panels; however, Krivova maintains that the 1922 trials, at least the important ones, were actually run by the public prosecutors who were sent from Moscow.¹⁰

Impact of Revolutionary Tribunals on Orthodox Church

The question arises as to what kind of impact the revolutionary tribunals had on the Orthodox Church as an institution, its leaders, and religious belief in general. Titov, a Soviet scholar of the late 1980s, concludes that the revolutionary tribunals had been instrumental in breaking the back of the Church counter-revolution. He asserts that “The Soviet state made broad use of trials in the revolutionary tribunals for unmasking the church counter-revolution in front of the people.” Furthermore, he argues that the trials “in many ways contributed to the break-away of the religious masses from religion,

⁸ Jansen, 188. The “crimes” of Metropolitan Veniamin and his fellow Petrograd churchmen were committed before June 1. Jansen points out that in a traditional legal system, this would be considered a violation of the principle of *nulla poena sine lege* (no punishment without law).

⁹ Jansen, 55. Jansen is speaking of the Socialist Revolutionaries’ trial, but the same was true for the churchmen’s trials. In fact, it appears that all the church trials, even those held in early 1923, were tried by revolutionary tribunals. See, for example, Francis McCullagh’s description of the revolutionary tribunal at the trial of the Roman Catholic clergy in Moscow in March, 1923. He remarks sarcastically that the Bolsheviks saw the revolutionary tribunal as “ultra-modern and Futurist.” Francis McCullagh, *The Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1924), 125.

¹⁰ Krivova, 146. The same might be said for some of the more important earlier trials of the civil war period, such as the Samarin trial where Krylenko was the main accuser.

because the believers were persuaded that the clergy were engaged in matters that had nothing to do with religion.”¹¹

In fact, the institution of the Church turned out to be a more robust entity than the monarchy had been, a situation that surprised the Bolsheviks. Its new-found vitality, as seen in the lead-up to and during the 1917-1918 All-Russian Church Council, enabled it to withstand the initial assaults of the Bolshevik regime. However, the Church was weakened, and the institution all but disappeared during the 1930s. It is likely that objective factors (that is, the deprivation of special privileges, income and property; the loss of printing presses and other means of communication, etc.) were more directly responsible for bringing this about. Ideological factors, which include propaganda campaigns and trials by revolutionary tribunals, had a more indirect role, but did serve to discourage overt displays of religiosity. The objective and ideological factors converged and finally took their toll on the institutional Church.

Whether the Church leaders were discredited by the revolutionary tribunals in the sense that it made people less likely to trust them is difficult to say. The clergy in the countryside had never had a high reputation (see Chapter 2); now they were knocked down even further, and tied in with the kulaks.¹² The clergy in the cities, especially the hierarchs, may not have suffered as much in reputation.

¹¹ Titov, 168.

¹² See, for example, an article that appeared in *Pravda* in January 1929 that declared, “[It is necessary] to intensify the anti-religious struggle, to ruthlessly expose in front of the broad poor-middle peasant masses the anti-proletarian, counter-revolutionary essence of the white and ‘red’ priests and sectarians, reveal their connection with the kulak.” “Krepche udarim po kulaku i tserkovniku: Usilim nastupleniye,” *Pravda*, January 11, 1929, p. 3

Tikhon seems to have come out rather well after his release from house arrest, which lasted from May 1922 to June 1923. He had been awaiting trial, which was supposedly put on indefinite hold as a result of the international outcry over the conviction and execution of Monsignor Budkiewicz, a Polish Roman Catholic clergyman, by the Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal in March 1923. Great Britain in particular threatened to withdraw its diplomatic mission in Moscow if the Patriarch were not released. Tikhon was set free in June 1923, but was required to make a “Confession,” in which he apologized for his anti-Soviet activity, including his January 1918 anathema, his address on the Brest peace, etc. “I assure the Supreme Court that I am henceforth not an enemy of the Soviet government. I finally and decisively dissociate myself both from foreign and from internal monarchist-White Guard counter-revolution.”¹³ He emphasized his civic loyalty to the Soviet government in an encyclical he issued on July 15, in which he reiterated his dissolution of the émigré Karlovatskii Church Synod because of its political resolutions and support for the return of the monarchy in Russia.¹⁴

In spite of all that the slanderous statements the regime had made against him over the years, and in spite of his concessions to it in the end, Tikhon had not lost face in the eyes of the people. As Fletcher remarks, following the Patriarch’s release, “The laity flocked to the patriarchal churches.” Thus, it might be said that while the Bolshevik campaign against the Church, including the trials, did not discredit Tikhon or other

¹³Tikhon’s “Confession” dated June 16, 1923. Quoted in William C. Fletcher, *A Study in Survival: The Church in Russia 1927-1943* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 20.

¹⁴ Pospelovsky, 59.

Church leaders, it caused them to change their behavior. The Russian Orthodox Church never challenged the Soviet (or Russian) State again.

The revolutionary tribunals seem to have had the least effect on individual religious belief. Curtiss commented that “Faith was far from dead in Russia. In fact, there were some indications of a distinct religious revival after the civil war.”¹⁵ Curtiss notes that there was a revival especially among the educated classes, who had previously been indifferent to religion. People filled churches in town and country.

This did not last, however. By 1930-31, journalist Maurice Hindus noted a significant drop-off in church attendance when he visited his native village by comparison with his previous visit five years earlier (obviously the revolutionary tribunals had not had any impact on church attendance in this village). “Even the women...were now being shaken by doubt.”¹⁶ From Hindus’s description, the situation he encountered appears to have been the result of subsequent atheistic propaganda campaigns, especially among the children of the village. The collectivization campaign was also taking its toll; people were too busy trying to survive, and few went to the trouble to go to the village church, which was too far away.

At any rate, the drop-off in church attendance did not necessarily mean a disappearance of religious belief in the Soviet Union. The 1937 census contained a question concerning religious belief, to which nearly fifty-seven percent of all Soviet

¹⁵ Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, 104.

¹⁶ Maurice Hindus, *Red Bread: Collectivization in a Russian Village* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 39-44.

citizens over the age of sixteen responded that they were believers. The census was declared invalid and never made public.¹⁷

It might be said that while the trials by revolutionary tribunals did not completely destroy the Church, they did help to change the behavior of its leaders. The Russian Orthodox Church inside the Soviet Union never again challenged the State outright. Following the rapprochement of Stalin with the Church and his restoration of the patriarchate in September 1943, the Church once again became the obedient servant of the State.

¹⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance & Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 204. Admittedly there is another way to look at this data. Fitzpatrick points out that seventy-eight percent of those in their fifties responded that they were believers, while only forty-five percent of those in their twenties did. This seems to indicate that anti-religious policies were having an effect on the population, but not as quickly as the authorities would have liked.

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