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Review Article

The Russian Church Since 1917 Through the Eyes of Post-Soviet Russian Historians

Istoriya Russkoi Tserkvi 1917–1997 by Protoiyerei Vladislav Tsypin (Volume IX of *Istoriya Russkoi Tserkvi* in nine volumes). Moscow: Spaso-Preobrazhensky Valaam Monastery, under the sponsorship of Patriarch Aleksii II and Yu. M. Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, 1997. 832 pp.

Istoriya Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi ot vosstanovleniya patriarshestva do nashikh dnei. Tom I: 1917–1970 by Mikhail B. Danilushkin, Tat'yana K. Nikol'skaya, Mikhail V. Shkarovsky, Fr Vladimir Dmitriyev and Boris P. Kutuzov. St. Petersburg: Voskreseniye, 1997. 1020 pp.

Russkaya Pravoslavnaya Tserkov' i Sovetskoye gosudarstvo v 1943–1964 godakh by M. V. Shkarovsky. St. Petersburg: Dean + Adia-M, 1995. Paperback, 216 pp.

These three diverse books share a common subject of investigation: the post-revolutionary history of the Russian Orthodox Church. Tsypin's book is the last of nine near-folio sized volumes (in ten books) purportedly making up a complete and definitive official history of the thousand years of the Orthodox Church in Russia – from Kievan Rus' to the post-Soviet CIS. Volume IX consists of 654 pages of the main text plus 32 pages of colour photographs of the twentieth-century patriarchs, new martyr saints, some church events and even Nicholas II. Its last two chapters deal respectively with the Russian Orthodox diaspora (with numerous errors) and twentieth-century Russian theology (mainly that of the theologians at the St Serge Institute in Paris). The remaining 180-odd pages contain various addenda of scholarly and non-scholarly nature, including indices of personal and geographical names, but no subject index and no bibliography. The press run of 50,000 copies is unrealistically huge for the currently shrinking purchasing power of the Russian educated public, although by western standards the cover price of US\$8 per gold-rimmed luxuriously bound volume with high quality paper and heavy black print is almost a giveaway.

The first eight books are a reprint of the prerevolutionary *Istoriya Russkoi Tserkvi* by Makari (Bulgakov), a conservative metropolitan of Moscow of the late nineteenth century. He begins with a study of Christianity in Kievan Rus' prior to its official conversion, where scraps of genuine historical data are mixed with legends, such as the one about the Apostle Andrew who purportedly passed through Russia on his way from the Black Sea area to Rome (a rather strange conception of geography?), and on the bank of the Dnieper where Kiev now stands raised a cross and predicted

that there would arise a great Christian empire. Authoritative historians, including Makari's older contemporary Professor Golubinsky, have dismissed the legend and established that it was a later insertion into the Kievan Chronicles. Makari prudently ends his study with the Great Schism of the seventeenth century, perhaps not daring to venture into the controversial abolition of the patriarchate by Peter the Great and the subsequent synodical system with its canonically untenable subordination of the Church to the imperial bureaucracy.

In fact, no truly scholarly work on the synodical era was published in pre-revolutionary Russia. Any such study would have had to denounce the synodical structure, and because this structure was retained by Russian monarchs in their (uncanonical) status as temporal heads of the Russian Church, any such criticism would have amounted to a criticism of the emperors themselves. Neither could any reliable scholarly studies of the Church, particularly of the period under discussion, have been published by the ideologically *engagé* Soviet historians. Russian émigré scholars produced two studies which included the synodical period: Georges Florovsky's *The Ways of Russian Theology* and Anton Kartashev's *Ocherki po istorii Russkoi Tserkvi* in two volumes. But the former treats the subject only in the context of a general Russian 'summa theologica', while the latter concludes his study with the reign of Paul I. In order, therefore, to include a scholarly study of the nineteenth century in the series under review the editorial committee had to translate the magnificent *Geschichte der russischen Kirche, 1700–1917*, by the late Russian émigré historian and professor at Berlin University Igor Smolitsch, originally written in German. This study, which begins with a detailed survey of the late seventeenth century, makes up the eighth volume, in two books. From the point of view of scholarship, this is undoubtedly the best part of the series, and the only one containing an excellent bibliography (of 94 pages).

However, this review essay concerns itself with the three abovementioned twentieth-century studies. As often happens, the shabbiest looking little paperback, by Dr Shkarovsky, containing just two chapters, covering a 20-year period and in a press run of a mere 1000 copies, is the most scholarly and perceptive of them. Shkarovsky's text is also included almost verbatim in the strange multi-authored first volume of *Istoriya Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi ot vosstanovleniya patriarshestva do nashikh dnei* (at the date of this writing, volume II has not yet been published). It is an impressive-looking hardback in blue cloth decorated with gold design and an icon of a crowned Virgin with the child Jesus seated on a throne. An editorial note introduces the book as 'a fundamental study ... one of the purposes whereof is to attempt an analysis of the spiritual causes of the [national] catastrophe ... of the post-1917 [period]'.

Let us therefore examine whether and how this rather peculiar book has achieved its stated aim. The peculiarity begins with the Preface and the Introduction: both are printed in the old prerevolutionary orthography, which no one in Russia uses, not even the Russian Orthodox Church. The main text switches to modern orthography, but the Greek *theta* and *ypsilon* are used in personal names of Greek origin and even in Russian words of Greek origin, a reversion to the writing traditions of 200 years ago rather than to those of the immediately prerevolutionary period. Although there are clear signs of ideological insertions on the part of the editor – including the invention of a new name for Russians (*Rusiane*, instead of the usual *Rossiyane* or *Russkiye*) – the volume lacks text editing. There are plenty of mutually incompatible contradictions between chapters written by different authors.

The Introduction is a solid 50-page analytical survey of pre-twentieth-century

church history, indicating the author's philosophical proximity to the early Slavophiles. Very critical of the Great Schism in the seventeenth century, clearly siding with the Old Believers and condemning their persecution by the tsars, it denounces the abolition of the patriarchate by Peter the Great and the enforced 'marriage' of the Church to the tsars and their policies. The post-Petrine monarchy is criticised for its lack of faith in and aloofness from its subjects; the author reasonably believes that over-paternalistic policies had led to the alienation of a considerable part of the population from both the state and the state church.

Chapter 1, dealing with the early years of the twentieth century, contains a rather perceptive² analysis of the rapid secularisation of urban Russian Jewry, including an attempt to answer the question why Jewish radicalism and atheism were particularly militant and extreme. Then bang: all pretensions to scholarship suddenly collapse as Danilushkin (undoubtedly the initiator and chief editor of the book) introduces a two-page excerpt from *Russia on the Eve of the Second Coming*, a book of antimasonic and antisemitic ravings.³ According to the legend related in this excerpt it was not the case that the leading bishops of the Russian Church appealed to Nicholas II to restore church autonomy and to call a Local Council to elect a patriarch. The tsar, it is alleged, received a delegation of church dignitaries in 1905 and told them that he was prepared to abdicate the throne, take monastic vows and become patriarch. 'Would you want me as your patriarch?' he is alleged to have asked. Not daring to say no, the bishops fell silent. Nicholas understood that he was not wanted, coldly bowed to the bishops and silently withdrew. That, according to the story, was the real reason why Nicholas II subsequently refused to allow the convocation of a Local Council with the aim of dissolving the close ties between church and state and restoring the patriarchate. Needless to say, the whole story is an invention. Had anything of this kind happened an account of it would have found its way into the memoirs of some members of the preconciliar Office, in session from March to early December 1906,⁴ at which time representatives of the Office were received by the tsar, to whom they presented their report with the recommendation to convoke a Local Council of clergy and laity. Even the dates do not match. The book contains no other explanation as to why Nicholas II did not permit the Council. It seems then, that because of a slight to his ego the man lets the Church go to ruin!

Several other myths, some pertaining to the Middle Ages, others to Stalin's Soviet Union, all presented as if they were historical facts, mar the book. The most fantastic one relates to the Second World War. A Lebanese Orthodox Metropolitan Elijah (surnamed Saliba in Danilushkin's volume, Karam in Tsypin's!) had a vision of the Virgin Mary who instructed him to go to Russia to tell her leaders that the war would be won only if theological seminaries, monasteries and churches were reopened. Leningrad would be spared German occupation only if its icon of Kazan' were taken in procession around the city with appropriate prayers. After that the icon was to be taken to Moscow for public prayers before it, and thence to be brought to Stalingrad. The metropolitan went to Russia and retold the prophecies to church leaders and to Stalin. During the November–December 1941 battle for Moscow the icon was purportedly flown in an aeroplane over the fighting soldiers and a service held in the plane! The icon was then taken to Stalingrad and placed on the right bank of the Volga with daily devotions before it throughout the battle. That stopped the Germans! These successes allegedly led Stalin to convene the September 1943 meeting with the three metropolitans.⁵ The fairy tale ends with Stalin receiving Metropolitan Elijah (again?) in 1947, and honouring him with a mitre made of the best Russian precious stones, a solemn thanksgiving service at a packed Leningrad

cathedral in the presence of 42 Soviet leaders and the opening of 'over 20,000 churches' and monasteries across the country. The story thus relates the spiritual conversion of Stalin and the achievement of victory through a series of miracles: soldiers and battles were of little importance: the road to Moscow allegedly lay open in November 1941, with hardly any forces to defend it; yet suddenly (after the icon's aeroplane ride) the Germans fled in total panic.

How did it happen, then, that the Soviet Union lost 20 million soldiers? It is hardly necessary to present evidence contradicting this tale. A few examples will suffice. The last meeting between the patriarch and Stalin was in 1945 (as correctly stated in a subsequent chapter in the same book), not in 1947; the maximum number of functioning churches reached 14,400 in 1949, and most of them, as well as all but one monastery, were opened in territories occupied by the Germans, while fewer than 1500 churches were reopened in the Soviet-controlled part of the USSR. The surreptitious aim of the inventors of this legend is to turn Stalin into a national hero.

Along with such nonsense there is a lot of solid, well researched analytical material in the volume, for example chapter 9 on the Renovatist schism which clearly distinguishes between the genuine movement for church renewal of 1905 and the Politburo-sponsored and GPU-led Renovatistism of the 1920s. A well written and informative chapter on Patriarch Aleksii I, his leadership and his era, probably authored by Shkarovsky, should also be mentioned. Undoubtedly Shkarovsky's are chapters 14 to 18,⁶ from the church Councils of the 1940s through the Khrushchev era and to the 1970s. Particularly important and pioneering is chapter 18 with its nearly 70 pages of information on the 'Catacomb' groups, giving details on their internal divisions and the origins, policies and positions of their eight major branches. There is solid, if severely critical, analysis of the effect of Metropolitan Sergi's 1927 Declaration of Loyalty in chapter 11. The authors are very negatively inclined towards ecumenism and incorrectly blame it on Sergi. In fact ecumenical activity had begun in the Russian Church at least a century earlier and continued up to the time of the Council of 1917–18. Ecumenical contacts were particularly active with the Anglican and the Old Catholic Churches, and the prerevolutionary chairman of the Russian Synod's Committee dealing with the Anglicans was Archbishop Yevlogi, the future head of the Western European Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church. Yevlogi is not to the authors' liking either: on p. 303 he is stated to have been a mason. This disinformation comes from the late Vladimir Vostokov, an obscurantist 'Karlovtian' priest, who even accused several bishops of the Karlovtian Synod of being masons.

From mason-bating Danilushkin and his collaborators move on to a slightly disguised antisemitism in their discussion of the 1922 trial and execution of the recently canonised Veniamin (Kazansky), the well-loved metropolitan of Petrograd. He is altogether not to their liking, because in the campaign to confiscate church valuables launched by the Soviet government he sought compromise and a peaceful solution instead of provoking confrontation. (Patriarch Tikhon, by the way, is also criticised for his declarations of civic loyalty to the Soviet state and for his condemnation of the political involvement of the Karlovtian émigré clergy). In the report of Veniamin's trial his highly prominent defence lawyer Gurovich, a Jew, is not even mentioned, nor his famous words: 'In this deeply tragic moment for the Russian clergy I, as a Jew, can witness to the whole world the feeling of sincere gratitude which the whole Jewish people owes to the Russian Orthodox clergy for their attitude to the Beilis case.' Beilis, a Jewish factory worker in Kiev, had been falsely accused by antisemites of ritually murdering a Christian baby. At his trial

Beilis was acquitted mainly thanks to the expertise of Russian Orthodox theologians who conclusively denounced as untenable the idea, enshrined in legend, that Christian blood was used in the preparation of matzos. In contrast to Danilushkin, Tsy-pin, whose book I shall turn to later, reluctantly mentions Gurovich, but does not quote any of his speech and attributes to him a secondary role in the defence counsel, although he was the personal lawyer of the most important defendant in the trial of 86 Petrograd churchmen. Apparently both Danilushkin and Tsy-pin disagree with the Orthodox theologians of 1913; this is not entirely unexpected if one takes into consideration the fact that one of Danilushkin's 'authoritative' sources is the compiler of the apocryphal *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁷ Further evidence that the omissions are not a case of simple negligence is to be found in the selective quotations from Patriarch Tikhon's appeal to the Russian nation of 8 July 1919. In both books his condemnations of Jewish pogroms have been omitted. Another illustration of Danilushkin's ideological approach is more recent. One of the most remarkable and prolific priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, Fr Aleksandr Men', who was hideously murdered in 1990 and who was of Jewish background, brought thousands of Russian intellectuals into the Church. He receives a single paragraph in the Danilushkin book, mentioning only his missionary success among Russian Jews, and caustically remarking that 'in order to attract more Jews he had proposed the decanonisation of those saints who had been martyred by Judaic fanatics'.⁸

The present writer is honoured by numerous references and even quotations in the book, accompanied by a warning, however, that his position is that of 'ecumenism and renovationism'.⁹ The volume advertises the extremely obscurantist Radio Radonezh, advising 'all Orthodox Christians' to listen to its broadcasts. The broadcasts of that radio station systematically attack the most active missionaries among the contemporary Orthodox clergy, those who celebrate church services partly in spoken Russian to make them comprehensible to the laity, who engage in charitable work and who do not shun western Christians.

As is usual with people of their ideological stance, the authors show a particular sympathy towards the right-wing Russian Orthodox émigré group nicknamed the 'Karlovtsians' after the town in the prewar Yugoslavia where their leaders, having emigrated from Russia in 1920 with the White armies, settled and eventually adopted the official name of the Episcopal Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR), which claimed legitimacy as successor to the Temporary Higher Church Administration (THCA) attached to the White armies. That claim is open to doubt: the founder and leader of ROCOR, Metropolitan Antoni (Khrapovitsky), had not been a member of the THCA; he had been in a Polish prison at the time the THCA was founded by a local church council when it met in March 1919 in Stavropol'. Danilushkin moves the event from Stavropol' in 1919 to Simferopol' in 1920 in order to turn Antoni into a participant and even its honorary chairman. Noting that Hitler built a Russian Orthodox cathedral for ROCOR in Berlin using German state funds, Danilushkin says that Metropolitan Anastasi, by then the head of the Karlovtsy Synod, sent a telegram of thanks to Hitler in 1938, but he does not quote the message, in which Anastasi calls Hitler a messenger of God and claims that people in Soviet Russia 'pray God unceasingly that He preserve you ... [and] ... bless your labours ... in creating the Empire ...'. Yet Danilushkin quotes in full an article of July 1941 by a Berlin priest, Ioann Shakhovskoy, a member of Metropolitan Yevlogi's Paris-based Russian Exarchate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in which he describes the German armies as a surgeon's knife which, however bloody the operation, is historically necessary to rid Russia of communist slavery. Had a

direct comparison been made between the content of this article and that of Anastasi's message it would not have been in the latter's favour. Ioann Shakhovskoy speaks of the German armies as instruments of historical destiny. Anastasi, by contrast, praises the Nazi system and Hitler personally.

Such is the ideological nature of a volume which, the editors boast, has been approved by the official Education Committee of the Russian Orthodox Church and recommended by Vladislav Tsypin, a member of that committee. The book is said to be intended in particular 'for students of Russian theological academies and seminaries, ... who ought to know the history of the Church, in order ... not to repeat the errors of the past and in order to achieve the unity of Russian Orthodoxy'.

Ideological bias apart, there are numerous technical problems with the book. It lacks a bibliography. Endnotes follow each chapter, which is convenient; however in chapter 19 endnotes 89 to 125 are simply missing. There is no subject index, but a detailed name index; surprisingly, however, this points not to the page where the given name is mentioned or quoted, but to footnotes; the reader then has to search in the main text for the number for the given footnote in order to find the person or the text being cited. Publication data in footnotes are often incomplete or wrong. Date errors are quite numerous. The same episodes appear in different chapters, sometimes repeated verbatim, at other times receiving different and mutually incompatible interpretations. Thus in chapter 3 it is correctly stated that Patriarch Tikhon anathematised those members of the Orthodox Church who had become the Church's persecutors, shedding the blood of innocents; then on page 188 it is stated that the patriarch anathematised 'the Bolshevik dictatorship', which is theological nonsense: a church can excommunicate only its own individual members. No distinction is made between generally recognised scholars and hack writers in their use as source references. In view of all these academic and professional shortcomings and the partisanship and antisemitism of the volume the participation of Shkarovsky, a Christian of Jewish background, is most surprising. Had this been a collection of signed essays, contradictions and incompatibilities between them would have been acceptable. As it is a collective work, however, and the writer of each individual chapter remains anonymous, all the writers must share responsibility for the whole book, its lies and myths, to the detriment of some of their reputations.

Let us now turn to Tsypin's volume. As a lecturer (*dotsent*) in Russian church history at the Moscow Theological Academy in Sergiyev Posad, the author of two textbooks, one on the twentieth-century history of the Russian Church and the other a more detailed seminary manual on the era of Patriarch Tikhon (1917–25), and now the author of a volume in what is supposed to be the official history of the Russian Orthodox Church, Fr Tsypin has to all intents and purposes become the Moscow Patriarchate's official historian.

In contrast to Danilushkin, Tsypin closely toes the official line. I have just read Smolitsch's critical analysis of the activities of Pobedonostsev, who as procurator of the Holy Synod under the last two tsars exercised despotic control over the Church and attempted to hold it back from the twentieth century by discouraging religious education beyond undergraduate level. Tsypin states that the Provisional Government 'brutalised the Church' and accuses it of the 'crime' of nationalising parish schools. Pobedonostsev's programme for parish schools, however, was to limit them to teaching basic literacy, basic elements of religion, the four rules of arithmetic and some Church Slavonic. In contrast to the state and local government primary schools, they were not to be a step towards further education. The Provisional Government agreed to leave under church administration those schools in which the level of

education corresponded to state standards. Was that an antichurch offensive? Tsy-pin denounces the right of diocesan laity–clergy conferences to depose and elect bishops, an ancient Orthodox tradition revived under the Provisional Government and confirmed by the 1917–18 Local Council in Moscow. He then undermines his own denunciation as he describes the excellent new diocesan bishops elected by those conferences, for example, Tikhon of Moscow, the future patriarch, and Metropolitan Veniamin of Petrograd and Archbishop Yermogen of Tobol'sk – both future martyrs.

Tsy-pin fully approves of Danilushkin's book; as mentioned above, the two share similar views in connection with the treatment of Gurovich at the trial of Metropolitan Veniamin. Tsy-pin, however, is much more cautious; his narrative is more consistent and systematic; and, of course, since it is written by a single author, the book contains fewer contradictions and factual errors than Danilushkin's. It is by no means free of them, however. For instance, Tsy-pin writes that the priest Chel'tsov, a codefendant with Metropolitan Veniamin, was acquitted, but a few pages later that his death penalty was commuted to a gaol sentence; in one place it is stated that the founder of the pro-Bolshevik 'Free Workers' Church' was Bishop Ioanniki (wrong), in another that it was the defrocked archbishop Vladimir Putyata (correct); a serious error is Tsy-pin's statement that the Patriarchal Orthodox participated in the Renovationist Council of 1925. (They did not.) There are also very many misprints. Tsy-pin's narrative is clear and easy to read, but as far as analysis and general scholarship are concerned it does not reach the standard of its immediate predecessor, the book by Igor Smolitsch. Tsy-pin's narrative is closer to a chronicle of events. Had it been more objective and detached, it would have been a classical college textbook.

As an *a priori* establishment writer, Tsy-pin has no use for dissidents. He treats the prerevolutionary movement for church renewal in such a way as to fuse it with the GPU-directed Renovationism of the 1920s. He is also critical of people like the now defrocked priest Gleb Yakunin, who in the 1960s protested against the persecution of the Church and from the late 1970s to 1986 suffered in a labour camp for having organised an unofficial Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights. Yakunin, Levitin, Eshliman and other dissidents are accused of undermining the authority of the bishops by criticising their collaboration with the regime in closing churches.

Nevertheless, there is much useful detail on this particular subject as well as on many others, from sources unavailable to non-ecclesiastic historians. Besides the archives which have been opened since the collapse of communism, and which Tsy-pin has used rather sparingly, he has obviously had access to the internal archives of the Patriarchal Synod and to other internal sources. That is probably why some of the most interesting details on the bishops' 1965 protest movement that triggered off the Yakunin–Eshliman letters protesting against the persecutions are not footnoted: 'ordinary mortals' should not know where the documents are.

Perhaps the most valuable parts of this book are the Addenda, particularly the list of bishops who officiated in the Patriarchal Orthodox Church after 1917, many of whom were martyred. No bishop was executed after 1948,¹⁰ and none died in prison at least after 1949; but if we examine the fate of the bishops before 1949 we find that even though the cause of death of some of them remains unknown, 178 (that is, over 33 per cent) of the bishops known to us were either executed or died in prison. If we limit our calculation to the period 1918–40, the proportion of bishops killed by the state, directly or indirectly, would probably have exceeded 60 per cent.

Next to such solid and properly documented information, however, the Addenda include such strange sections as a 'chronology of appearances of the Holy Mother of

God and of her glorification in the miracles and icons of the Russian Orthodox Church', which records historical events, such as the restoration of a church or the handing back of an icon, along with unverifiable stories such as that of the appearance of the Virgin at the battle of Kursk in 1943, or her above-cited appearance to the Lebanese Metropolitan Elijah. In Tsypin's volume the tale is limited to a brief mention of her prophecy of Soviet victory to the metropolitan; but even so such 'miracles' are presented without any documentation or references to trustworthy individuals.

It is not my intention here to ridicule miracles or cast doubt on their existence; but the experience of a miracle is strictly personal and subjective, and may be included in a scholarly text only as a story told by an identified source or as an illustration of local beliefs.

Tsypin is an apologist for a nationalistic empire, and his objectivity as a historian is thereby undermined. He denounces the unilateral declaration of ecclesiastical autocephaly in 1917 by the Georgian Orthodox Church as uncanonical, but says nothing of the 1811 liquidation of that Church's more than millennial autocephaly by the Russian Imperial authorities despite their original promise to respect it. He speaks of new ecclesiastic administrations, separate from the Moscow Patriarchate, arising in territories alienated from Russia after the First World War as a result of 'unfair' borders. But what is an unfair border to historiography? Borders are the result of wars lost and won. They can be strategically convenient or inconvenient; they may not correspond to ethnic divisions and may appear to be unfair from the point of view of a given nation. In Tsypin's case 'fairness' seems to be determined by Russian state interests, and in a statist sense even by Soviet interests. Thus, although he condemns Soviet terror and calls it totalitarian, the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states and of western Ukraine was in Tsypin's view liberation. As to the liquidation of the Ukrainian Roman Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite (the so-called Uniate Church) and its enforced fusion with the Russian Orthodox Church under Stalin and Khrushchev, Tsypin admits that there were arrests of innocent people, but he welcomes the event and even accepts uncritically the official claim that 78 per cent of the 1270 Uniate priests joined the Orthodox Church, while ignoring the fact that some 800 Uniate priests had by then already been imprisoned for refusing to do so, a fact which reduces the proportion of the total clergy joining the Orthodox Church to approximately 48 per cent. He then presents the May 1946 L'vov unification Council as entirely valid, although it was chaired by recently consecrated Orthodox bishops (former Uniates), whereas church canons require that the presiding bishop be of the same faith as the members of a council. Neither is there any mention of the letters to the patriarch from Fr Kostel'nyk (the chairman of the Action Group for the Reunification of Uniates with the Orthodox) prophetically warning him that such a terror-enforced unification would fall apart once political conditions allowed.¹¹

The most disappointing part of Tsypin's book, then, is that concerned with the postcommunist era in the history of the Russian Church. The Church is being torn apart by internal conflicts and schisms. The mass return of churches, requiring a corresponding increase in the number of clergy, has resulted in the ordination of thousands of theologically ignorant neophytes, often yesterday's Komsomol members with a Bolshevik totalitarian mentality, internal insecurity, careerist ambitions and intolerance of those truly dedicated, well-educated and creative priests who attract large and educated congregations. Consequently, such priests and their flocks are persecuted. From the highest point of its popularity between 1987 and 1992 the Church is progressively marginalising itself in contemporary Russian

society. Internally weak and materially impoverished, unable to stand up to the challenges of mushrooming sects and foreign missions, the church seeks state support in restricting other religions. A Church which by its martyrdom had attracted almost universal sympathy only a few years ago is now ignored or even rejected by many because it now advocates religious repression.

None of this is properly reflected in Fr Tsy-pin's smooth narrative.

Let us now turn to Shkarovsky's little book. We find here neither myths nor attempts to please. Of its 216 pages, 101 consist of archival documents appropriately selected.¹² Like my own research, Shkarovsky's indicates that the wartime about-turn in Soviet religious policy was too sudden for the communist activists, used as they were to an all-out war against religion. No sooner had the war ended than local party administrators began to close churches again in their expectation that the policy change had been meant only for the duration of the war. This situation led Stalin to appoint Mikhail Suslov (the ideological boss under Khrushchev and Brezhnev) as Central Committee secretary in charge of religious policies, instructing him 'not to ignore atheistic propaganda' but to remember that this was not for the moment the highest priority (p. 40). Related to this subject are two documents regarding the League of Militant Godless, the activities of which had been suspended during the war but which tried to start work again in 1947. In a report to Stalin of 11 January 1947 Suslov advises him to close that organisation down in the light of improved education in the natural sciences. One month later the Central Committee resolves to support Suslov's recommendation. The functions of the League were to be transferred to the All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge (the *Znaniye* Society), which was officially established in July.

There are 14 pages of reports from the Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs (CROCA) on the preparations for a planned World Council of Orthodox Churches in Moscow, at which the plan was to transfer the leadership of Orthodoxy from Constantinople to Moscow. The Council was to mark the 500th anniversary of the autocephaly of the Russian Church in 1448 and was to be preceded by an inter-Orthodox preconciliar consultation in the autumn of 1947. The latter did not materialise because of Greek protests from the Ecumenical Patriarchate that organising inter-Orthodox meetings was its prerogative. Consequently instead of the 1948 Council there were merely jubilee celebrations and a conference of those Orthodox Churches whose countries were under communist control.

The most sensational of Shkarovsky's findings in the St Petersburg State Archives are secret reports to the MGB/KGB by Aleksandr Osipov, a theology professor at the then Leningrad Theological Academy. In 1959 he officially broke with the Church, declaring himself an atheist. The Moscow Patriarchate dared at the height of the new persecutions to excommunicate not only Osipov and three other renegade former theology teachers at other seminaries, but also 'all those former members of the Orthodox Church who have blasphemed the name of God' (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, February 1960). Implying also those communist leaders who had been baptised in the Orthodox Church, this was a repetition of Patriarch Tikhon's excommunication encyclical of 19 January 1918, although phrased in a circumlocutory manner. Shkarovsky's archival findings now reveal that Osipov had been a secret MGB/KGB informer at least since 1951. His reports are full of the venom of a man devoid of moral scruples, who led a double life for at least eight years, until in 1959 his secret police bosses instructed him to scandalise the Church by a public renunciation. Locally it had a shock effect; but in the longer term the Soviet anti-religious media were to discover that the renunciation of faith by some 200 priests in

those years had very little effect on believers. Questioned by the media, most believers responded: good riddance, those priests used to cheat us, now they will be cheating you.

Shkarovsky's book deals with only a very limited period. Nevertheless, of the three books reviewed here only his can be considered a definitive study. The other two fall far short of such an appellation.

Notes and References

- ¹ Contrary to contemporary rules, names of nationalities, even in adjectival form, and names of months are capitalised throughout.
- ² Although mildly antisemitic: for instance, Judaism is called a materialistic religion.
- ³ *Rossiia pered Vtorym Prishestviyem* (Svyato-Troitskaya Sergiyeva Lavra, Sergiyev Posad, 1993). The legend comes from *Na beregu bozh'yei reki* by S. Nilus, the pathologically antisemitic compiler of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.
- ⁴ The book under review incorrectly states that the preconiliar Office was in session from 1906 until the Council of 1917.
- ⁵ The historically true 4 September 1943 meeting, at which Stalin allowed a limited church revival including the election of a patriarch, restoration of a Synod, a periodical and theological education on a limited basis. See D. Pospelovsky, 'The "best years" of Stalin's church policy (1942–1948) in the light of archival documents', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1997, pp. 139–62.
- ⁶ The latter is an expanded version of pp. 90–91 of Shkarovsky's own book, also under review here.
- ⁷ Moreover, the addenda at the end of the book include two 1913 documents – a letter by a certain Fr Prozorov to Metropolitan Flavian and an article from the right-wing *Novoye vremya* newspaper – disagreeing with the Beilis verdict and claiming that ritual Jewish murders of Christians did take place and that ritual use was made of their blood.
- ⁸ In particular Gavriil of Belostok and Yevstafi of Vil'no. These are semi-legendary figures whose canonisation had been disputed by numerous Russian theologians.
- ⁹ The absurdity of the allegation that I am a Renovatianist is demonstrated by my article 'The Renovatianist movement in the Orthodox Church in the light of archival documents', *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 39, Winter 1997, pp. 85–105. In calling me a Renovatianist the authors contradict their own earlier distinction between the 1905 movement for church renewal and the GPU-led movement of the 1920s.
- ¹⁰ According to unconfirmed information many of the imprisoned bishops and priests who had refused to promise to accept Patriarch Sergi's policies as a condition for release were liquidated between 1945 and 1948.
- ¹¹ See Pospelovsky, 'The "best years" ...', pp. 148–49.
- ¹² They include Khrushchev's 1945 letter to Stalin on the technology of the projected liquidation of the Unia. Like Tsy-pin, Shkarovsky uncritically accepts the official figure of 78 per cent of the Uniate clergy joining the Orthodox Church.

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