

# Imperial Russian chauvinism sweeps Millennium celebrations

by Luba George

Sunday, June 12, was the high point of the "Russian" Millennium celebration, with an open air mass at the restored Danilov Monastery in Moscow. The Danilov Monastery, closed since 1917, was returned by the state to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in 1983, and is now, just four kilometers away from the Kremlin, the official seat of the Moscow Patriarchate. The entire event was carried on Soviet television, and, at its high point, all the church bells of Moscow rang out, the first such display since Czarist times. Ten thousand Russians attended the Danilov ceremony, plus the assembled Orthodox clergy and over 500 foreign guests at the Millennium.

This was the third Millennium extravaganza in Moscow to be granted full coverage by Soviet television. The combined effect of these events and the saturation media coverage has created a rebirth and outpouring of Great Russian nationalism, on a par with, if not greater than, that occurring during the Second World War.

The floodgates of Russian chauvinism were opened at the end of April, with Gorbachov's televised reception of the Russian Orthodox hierarchy in the Kremlin and his promise to them that a new law ending all restrictions on their church would be adopted. The Kremlin reception was the final confirmation that the June celebrations would not be some mere "church" festivity, but a momentous joint church-state celebration that would recreate the full aura of imperial Czarist "glory."

The weekend of June 10-12 accomplished exactly that. Gorbachov's April meeting with the church hierarchy at the Kremlin, as stunning a spectacle as it was, was only a "warm-up" to what happened over those 72 hours.

The next Kremlin reception was June 11, also televised, with Soviet State President Andrei Gromyko receiving the 227 ROC delegates to the *Sobor* (Synod or Local Council, as it is sometimes called), along with many of the 500 foreign Millennium guests. Gromyko praised the "importance of the Russian Orthodox Church" in "Russian state history and culture." In a phrase never before used by any Soviet leader, Gromyko called the Russian Orthodox Church "a multinational church," thus not only referring to its present jurisdiction over the Ukraine and Belorussia, but also clearly launching the campaign to declare the ROC the "multinational

church" for all of Orthodoxy, and by the turn of the century, a "Universal Church." One day earlier, the Soviet government newspaper *Izvestia* spoke of the ROC "now appearing in the role of a juridical person," as a means of announcing its vastly enhanced institutional status. Gromyko the next day confirmed that "this question is being studied."

The Great Russian imperial tones of the Millennium were even more emphatic at the June 10 evening gala at an overpacked Bolshoi Theater. The event, which was broadcast live in its entirety (replacing the Germany-Italy European Championship-round soccer game) was the recreation of the Czarist Empire's Byzantine-style ruling triad of state, church, and military. Led by Raisa Gorbachova, and with prominent state and *Nomenklatura* representatives in attendance, liturgical songs and the Nicene Creed were rendered by a church chorus. On the stage with the Russian Orthodox Church hierarchy and chorus was the Wood Instrument Ensemble of the Military's Kremlin Garrison, which played Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, complete with the recorded sound of cannon.

Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, which hailed "Holy Russia's" victory over Napoleon and includes the strains of the Czarist national hymn, is the embodiment of imperial Russian nationalism set to "music." This is what was seen and applauded wildly by the Bolshoi crowd and tens of millions of Russians that evening; the Czarist hymn played by the Kremlin garrison flanked by the church hierarchy on stage and "Czarina" Raisa leading the crowd.

The impact of this setting and the cumulative impact, day in and day out, of television broadcasts of church, state, and military united as they had been before 1917, seen by tens of millions of Russians, can hardly be overstated. All week long, Russians were bombarded each day with church music, church choruses, monks' choruses, the spectacle of religious leaders from around the world arriving in Moscow to pay homage to the Russian Millennium. Every day, millions watched Patriarch Pimen and the church leadership climb in and out of their chauffeured black Chaika limousines as if they were state leaders. To the average mystical Russian, the message is clear: "It's back to the 'good old' imperial traditions. A 'new dawn' for Holy Russia is arising." Exactly the

mood required to mobilize the Russian masses for the mission of world domination.

The Bolshoi Theater event, which began with the ROC hierarchy blessing Raisa Gorbachova by name and culminated in a performance of the Czarist hymn, may soon become a commonplace event in church-state unity, however spectacular on that one day.

### **Pimen hails Gorbachov**

Earlier that day, Patriarch Pimen effusively praised Mikhail Gorbachov in a signed letter, addressed "Dear Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachov," at the conclusion of the four-day (June 6-9) ROC Synod in Zagorsk. Pimen wrote, "May the Lord bless you and your works for the well-being of our beloved Fatherland. . . . We are pleased that the Leninist principle towards religion have been restored, and believe that this will serve to strengthen the unity of our people and the dignity of our homeland." *Perestroika* stems from the efforts "to realize the ideas proclaimed by the great October Revolution, under new circumstances. . . . In that, we, as Christians, participate in this historical restructuring, we express to you, the leadership, at whose head you stand, and to the undertaken course of renewal of the moralistic and spiritual life in our society, to the social-economic development of our country and to the perfection of socialist democracy, our support."

One of the main items before the *Sobor* at Zagorsk was the adoption of a new statute, drafted by the 227 delegates, called the *Ustav*. The *Ustav* elaborates the church's rights under the new law, which Gorbachov had promised in his April reception with ROC leaders. The ROC has now proclaimed—before the state's official announcement of the law—their new rights and privileges. According to the new 34-page statute, the church expects its clergy will no longer be classed only as civil servants, but as "spiritual and administering leaders" of the parish, with the right to conduct religious education, the right to build, buy, and sell property, and to engage in charity, all forbidden under present Soviet law.

On one leading question, the issue of succession in the Russian Orthodox Church, the *Ustav* stated that the patriarch—the church's highest official—may retire, though retaining patriarchal rank for life. This measure doubtless reflects the concern over the ability of Patriarch Pimen to rule in a "Time of Troubles," given his age and very poor health. There have been rumors about his possible retirement for some time. Another sign of things to come was the insertion of a new clause into the procedures, upon the death or retirement of a patriarch.

The *Ustav* states that a candidate for patriarch must be a bishop of the ROC. The original draft, discussed by the March 28-31 Council of Bishops, specified "a diocesan bishop," but the word "diocesan" has been crossed out in the final edition of the new statute, thereby opening the way for a suffragan or vicar-bishop to be a candidate for patriarch. The

obvious contender in this category is Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk and Yuriev, chairman of the Publishing Department of the Moscow Patriarchate. The elevation of Pitirim to patriarch would have a great deal to do with Moscow's imperial plans to absorb West Germany: Pitirim not only entertains very close relations with West Germany's Protestant, political, and commercial elite, but is also a key architect of the "Common House of Europe" idea, under which the Russians have the right to claim Europe as "theirs."

### **Church charity for military wounded**

With respect to the issue of "charitable activities," e.g., fundraising, the ROC has already used the Millennium to technically break the law—of course, without fear of repercussions—by staging a "benefit" concert for the Afghanistan war wounded and independently raising 200,000 rubles for the war wounded. In fact, to demonstrate even more strongly Church solidarity with the *military*, at the *Sobor* itself, a special memorial mass was celebrated for the "warriors who fell in battle in Afghanistan." Thus, together with the extensive praise for Gorbachov, a distinct reminder that he has to deliver what he promised in April was made: Just as with Stalin in 1943, a deal with the ROC is a two-way street.

The fact that the law banning church charity is now a dead letter was confirmed by Gromyko at the June 11 Kremlin event. Gromyko replied to a question that the Church engagement in charitable activities will be permitted "on a case-by-case basis."

The restrictions on physically expanding the church have also been removed. So far, during 1988, the number of churches has increased by 60. On June 10, the cornerstone was laid for a new cathedral in Moscow, the first since 1917, and as of June 12, as the celebrations move to Kiev, Vladimir, and Leningrad, the famous Kievan "Monasteries of the Cave," which was made a museum in 1917, will be returned to the church.

At the close of the *Sobor*, Metropolitan Filaret gave a press conference where, answering a reporter's question, he acknowledged that the just-concluded Synod, in addition to criticizing Stalin for the persecution of clergy and believers, also criticized Lenin for "the creation of church-state tensions." This is unprecedented. The motive of the past months' attacks on Stalin in the Soviet media, leading to a "balanced" view of his achievements and crimes, is now being extended to Lenin, where Soviet readers are now being told that mass slaughter of peasants and other crimes began long before Stalin, under Lenin, during the 1918-22 period of "war communism."

Here we see that the recent emergence of Soviet press attacks on Lenin, as in June's *Novy Mir*, have nothing to do with "liberalism." Timed with the Russian Millennium celebrations, the post-1917 pantheon of "heroes" is being removed to make way for a "hero" cult for the "greats" in the pre-1917 Russian state, literature, and church.

### 'Beware the rise of the Third Rome'

*The following appeared in the Sunday Telegraph of London, June 11, 1988, under the heading, "Church may answer Gorbachov's prayer," by Anthony Hartley. This article, and the commentary below, mark the first Western voices besides EIR to point out the real message of the Millennium.*

There could not have been a more auspicious occasion than last week's celebration of the millennium of the Russian Orthodox Church. Or so it seemed. . . .

Yet as the Archbishop of Canterbury greeted the Patriarch Pimen, he must have wondered . . . what was the real nature of the implicit bargain between church and state in the Soviet Union. . . .

In his opening message, Konstantin Kharchev, the head of the State Council for Religious Affairs, talked of a "common history, one fatherland and one future." "One fatherland". . . . The history of the Orthodox Church has been entwined with that of Russian nationalism. It was a monk who first expressed the sense of mission, of the special quality of Russia, which informs its history and was transmitted to its Communist rulers. "Two Romes have fallen, the Third stands and there shall be no fourth." The ruler of Moscow was "the only emperor for Christians in the whole world."

Orthodoxy justified Russian imperialism and the suppression of other creeds within its frontiers. Over centuries, Russian church leaders gave slavish obedience to an autocracy which allowed no rights to the individual. Dr. Runcie has spoken of the contrast between gold and splendor and blood and suffering in Russian church history. But blood and gold flowed from the same source—the deeds of an inexorably tyrannical state.

Archbishops might be banned or rolled downhill in nail-studded barrels, but churches and monasteries had gold lavished on them by repentant autocrats. The Russian state found some of its most ruthless servants in the ranks of Orthodox churchmen, such as the Procurator of the Holy Synod, Pobedonostsev, whose record of intellectual oppression could have inspired Zhdanov or Brezhnev. . . .

It is precisely this tradition of subservience to the state and identification with Russian nationalism which makes the Orthodox Church a useful ally for any Russian ruler wishing to rally popular support. If Mr. Gorbachov needs the Church's support for perestroika and is prepared to pay a price for it, he is doing no more than Stalin did at the crisis of the German invasion. The Orthodox Church has recently enjoyed sym-

pathy on nationalist grounds even in the KGB, as the tolerance extended to a chauvinist movement like Pamyat shows. . . .

[It] is, and always has been, an authoritarian church in an authoritarian state. . . .

But Mr. Gorbachov's tolerant attitude raises another question. If communism is weakened as an instrument of social control and if the main opponents of perestroika are to be found within the party, has he not much to gain by an appeal to the country at large in the name of Russian patriotism and history?

In that process, the Orthodox Church could play a major part, although it has little to offer in the way of tolerance or liberalism. By rebuilding a sense of national community, patriotism could easily relapse into traditional xenophobia.

*In the same edition, chief editor Peregrine Worsthorne writes under the title, "Beware the cross added to the hammer and sickle."*

It was the cause of Holy Russia that helped Stalin to win the fight against Hitler, just as it helped Tsar Alexander I to win the fight against Napoleon. Now it looks as if Mr. Gorbachov may intend to tap the same kind of neo-religious, patriotic, Slavophile emotions in his fight for glasnost and perestroika. . . . The rest of the world would do well to remember that the Russian Orthodox Church has never been in the least democratic or pacific; rather less so, as it happens, than is the Communist Party. A greater degree of influence for the Church in Russia, therefore, might make that country even more autocratic and chauvinistic than it is today, by releasing forces deep in the soul of the Russian people which Communism has never been able to reach in peacetime, let alone harness.

So far as the United States is concerned, this might not seem a dangerous development. Communism is what worries the United States. So long as the Soviet Union seemed dead set on converting and subverting the rest of the world to Communism, so long could Washington be relied upon to prevent that happening. But how will Washington react if Moscow contents itself with the more traditional aspirations of pan-Slav Russian expansionism largely directed at its European neighbors? Western Europe might have every reason to find a reversion to this Holy Russia type of foreign policy even more worrying than the present Soviet type of foreign policy aimed at world revolution. . . .

It is not unreasonable to suppose that the American desire to withdraw its troops from Europe—already strong—would become overwhelming. . . .

What if to [Russia's] overshadowing geographical mass is now added the historic magnetism of Holy Russia? There were dupes aplenty even for Communist Russia in its ugliest, most Godless days. How many more may there not be of a Russia armed with the Cross as well as the Hammer and Sickle?