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Postsoviet Challenges to the Moscow Patriarchate, 1991–2001*

ZOE KNOX

Introduction

The Soviet regime's cessation of the repression of individual believers and religious communities in the late 1980s allowed unprecedented religious freedom. The demise of materialist Marxism-Leninism and the collapse of the USSR permitted the advent of ideological pluralism. The new pluralism in the religious sphere challenged the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), the governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), to reclaim its prerevolutionary position at the centre of Russia's religious life. This paper examines the obstacles the Patriarchate encountered during the first postsoviet decade.

The ROC was highly visible in the new Russia. Its resurgence was buoyed by renewed consideration of Russian identity. Russians have long regarded the ROC as the protector of national interests and the defender of national traditions. In the uncertain socio-economic conditions of postsoviet Russia, many Russians looked to the ROC for guidance. Consequently, the ROC was frequently invoked in discussions of national identity and in deliberations over the country's future. Orthodoxy's resurgence encouraged leading political figures to identify the MP as an important ally. The influence of the ROC was further bolstered by politicians' recognition of the utility of appeals to national identity and tradition.

Thus from the weak position of a faith tolerated by an atheist regime the ROC secured a powerful and prominent position in postcommunist Russia. Although it had rivals in schismatic Orthodox groups, in other traditional faiths, and in western and, to a lesser extent, Asian denominations, the ROC benefited from the new freedoms more than any other faith. The MP reclaimed Orthodoxy's preeminence in Russian religious life. Indeed, the MP directed considerable effort toward securing a heightened influence in the pluralist religious sphere.

The number of self-identified Orthodox believers is testimony to the foremost position of the ROC in Russian national consciousness. In the Soviet period, western researchers could offer little more than educated guesses about the number of Orthodox adherents. Soviet researchers were not able to broach the subject of religious belief with the objective analysis of independent scholars. The first objective examinations of religious life in the postsoviet period revealed that the number of self-identified Orthodox believers had risen sharply. At the close of the first postsoviet decade, estimates of the number of self-identified Orthodox believers ranged from 50 million, which amounts to roughly one third of the population, to 70 million, or nearly one half of the population (Tul'sky, 2001).

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The activities of the ROC in the postsoviet period are of great political and social significance. The success of the MP's campaign to implement legislation limiting the activities of foreign missionaries and religious bodies is demonstrative of Orthodoxy's leverage on matters that extend beyond its purview and into that of political governance. The campaign, which resulted in the passage of the controversial law 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations' in September 1997 (Rossiiskaya Federatsiya, 1997), gained support from nationalist and conservative politicians, from Orthodox believers and from representatives of other major religions, who also felt threatened by the perceived interlopers. The 1997 law reduced the rights of foreign religious bodies and presented legal hurdles for most religions and denominations except the ROC. The ROC was the only faith mentioned in the law's preamble, which affirms that Russia is a secular state, but also refers to the 'special role of Orthodoxy in the history of Russia and in the establishment and development of its spirituality and culture'. The domestic political significance of the ROC was also illustrated by a leading newspaper's list of Russia's most influential political figures; the patriarch consistently ranked in the top fifteen (Komozin, 2001).

Given the large number of Orthodox adherents and the tangible authority of the MP in the social and political arenas, the ROC was poised to reclaim its position at the forefront of national spiritual life. It figured prominently in various discussions as the driving force behind Russia's renewal and recovery. In 1990 Vladimir Poresh, a former prisoner of conscience and Orthodox dissident, wrote of the challenge to the ROC: 'Never has so much been expected from it by so many people' (Poresh, 1991, p. 75). It soon became clear, however, that the leadership of the ROC could not meet these challenges, and there was increasing disaffection with the leadership for not keeping in step with the needs and wishes of its congregations (Vorontsova and Filatov, 1994). In many ways the course of the ROC in the postsoviet period has been one of struggle between competing visions of how to meet the challenges of postsoviet realities.

These challenges are best understood in the context of the religious boom in Russia. This paper begins by outlining major developments in the religious sphere, including legislative changes and the activities of non-Orthodox denominations. It identifies five key challenges to the Moscow Patriarchate in the first postsoviet decade. The first of these is financial shortages, which have frustrated the ROC's attempts to regain its former position. The second is schismatic movements, which have split the ROC and fragmented the MP's support base. The third is the so-called 'war for souls', a result of the rise of indigenous religious bodies and the influx of foreign missionaries. The final two challenges are posed by pluralism within the ROC: activism opposed to the official line of the MP within church structures, and Orthodox activism outside official church structures. This dissent has revealed a prominent, and ever-widening, division within the ROC, among both clergy and laity. The paper concludes by considering the implications of the MP's responses to these five challenges.

Russian Orthodoxy in the Soviet Union

As the postcommunist challenges to the ROC are essentially a product of the Soviet experience, the status of Russian Orthodoxy in the Soviet Union should be surveyed. From the start the Bolsheviks implemented a policy of unequivocal hostility toward Orthodoxy, fuelled by atheist Marxist-Leninist doctrine and also by the legacy of the ROC as defender of the imperial government. Initially, religious policy was solely directed toward reducing the ROC's potential to challenge the new regime (Fletcher, 1980, p. 503). Bishops, priests, monks, nuns and laypeople were persecuted on any pretext; later this extended to other denominations.

The ROC was from the outset equally hostile to the Bolsheviks. Patriarch Tikhon pronounced an anathema on the communists (Patriarch Tikhon, 1995). The sustained persecution of believers, however, made it apparent that if the ROC wished to survive as an institution it must recant this hostile position. Tikhon retracted his opposition. In 1927 his successor, Metropolitan Sergi, issued a statement on behalf of the ROC, a 'Declaration of Loyalty' to the Soviet Motherland, 'whose joys and successes are our joys and successes, and whose setbacks are our setbacks' (Mitropolit Sergi, 1995). Some viewed these efforts to ensure the survival of the ROC as an institution as spiritual corruption.

Regardless of whether this apostasy was justified, the persecution of Orthodox believers did not cease, as Tikhon and Sergi no doubt anticipated, but continued with increased intensity. The number of church closures confirms this. Before 1917, there were 50,000 functioning Orthodox churches in the Russian Empire, 80,000 including chapels and convents. In 1939, by which time some 80,000 Orthodox priests, monks and nuns had lost their lives, there were 200–300 churches open in the USSR. Of these, just 15–20 were in Moscow. When Stalin could benefit from the MP's cooperation in the Second World War, many churches reopened, so that by 1947 the number reached 14,000. A renewed wave of persecutions resulted in a drop in number by about 1000 by the mid-1950s. Khrushchev's antireligious drive resulted in 44 per cent of churches being deregistered, so that by 1966 there were just 7466 churches operating in the USSR (Davis, 1995, pp. 11–13, 23–27, 43; see also Bourdeaux, 1984, p. 26 and Pospelovsky, 1984).

Unofficial policy was ultimately directed toward achieving the liquidation of individual believers and religious communities. Despite Lenin's repeated emphasis that, as far as the state was concerned, religion was a private matter, Soviet authorities regarded worship as very much a political issue. Constitutionally guaranteed religious freedoms were manifestly incompatible with atheistic scientific communism. While the ROC enjoyed a privileged position and a greater degree of freedom than other denominations, having an official representative body, for example, there were still restrictions on Orthodox activities designed to minimise the influence of the ROC, discredit its activities and diminish its following. Though unofficial Soviet policy toward Orthodoxy vacillated between repression and toleration and, at times, even alliance, the regime's core objectives changed little. The objectives of religious policy were to reduce the influence, activity and following of Orthodoxy and, given the precarious nature of the position of the ROC, its hierarchy acknowledged that opposition would ensure the loss of what few privileges they were accorded.

Despite the persecution of religious communities, Vladimir Kuroyedov, chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA), the official body governing religious life, dismissed accusations of state-sanctioned persecution of religious groups as western propaganda. In an interview with *Izvestiya* in 1976 Kuroyedov maintained that all citizens enjoyed freedom of conscience:

Soviet legislation has established special legal norms, defending believers, religious associations and ministers of the cult [non-Orthodox religious denominations] from infringements of their legal rights. These norms make provision for accountability for obstructing the performance of religious rituals, inasmuch as they do not violate the social order and are not accompanied by infringements of citizens' rights. Any kind of discrimination against believers and any kind of violence to their consciences are categorically forbidden (Anon., 1976).

Legislation guaranteeing freedom of conscience did exist (see Konstitutsiya, 1977, p. 22). The flagrant violations of constitutional provisions by the Soviet authorities, which

nevertheless took place, are well documented. The constitutional status of religious bodies and individual believers, as well as official statements, can be disregarded as any indication of the conditions for believers in the Soviet Union.

The Orthodox Church was at a distinct disadvantage in comparison to other bodies vying to influence policy-making (see Skilling and Griffiths, 1971; Hough, 1972). At the outset, it would be an anomaly to speak of Orthodox interests, as there was a profound divide between the concerns of the MP and those of the mass of Orthodox believers. Metropolitan Sergi's expression of unconditional loyalty to the regime was incompatible with challenges to regime policies, and by extension any agitation for change. The agenda of the ROC was effectively set by the regime itself.

Glasnost' and Perestroika

Although Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in March 1985, the initial years of his leadership did not produce any meaningful change in Soviet policy on religion. In 1987, despite the pardoning of religious prisoners incarcerated under certain statutes of the criminal code, there remained some 296 prisoners detained for their activities or religious beliefs (Keston College, 1987). In late 1987, however, Gorbachev introduced policies which marked the beginning of profound changes in many spheres of Soviet life, including the religious. Between 1987 and 1991 Orthodoxy emerged as a potent social force. Gorbachev implemented *perestroika* in a bid to check corruption and other bureaucratic practices detrimental to the economy. It became clear, however, that reform measures could not be implemented within the framework of the existing economic and political system, and that the Soviet assemblage was in need of systemic change. Gorbachev introduced the policy of *glasnost'* to allow for critical thinking about the new processes and for the recognition and combating of social problems. Instead of empowering society to eradicate the barriers to economic performance and social progress and to move closer to achieving communism, however, *glasnost'* ultimately contributed to the Soviet system's destruction. The new openness highlighted the USSR's economic problems, exposed political corruption and publicised the regime's control of all aspects of life. Moreover, it became clear that the existing system was inadequate to meet the challenges set by Gorbachev himself.

The CPSU's redefinition of the boundaries of the permissible and the proscribed facilitated Orthodoxy's reinstatement. Religious themes, particularly Orthodox ones, were reflected in literature, cinema, the media and politics. Judith Devlin argued that 'the recovery of national identity, through the rediscovery of the country's cultural and historical heritage' was one of the ways in which *glasnost'*, which represented the 'rebirth of public opinion and of public life', was achieved (Devlin, 1995, p. 60). The Orthodox faith was central to this recovery of identity, since any revalidation of the past could scarcely fail to incorporate the Russian spiritual tradition. The policy of *glasnost'* therefore restored Orthodoxy's position at the fore of Russian national identity and the nation's cultural consciousness.

Legislative Changes

During the 1988 millennial celebrations the Soviet authorities repeated that they were drafting a new law on freedom of conscience. There followed a great deal of discussion and debate about its provisions: the Supreme Soviet received more than 1500 comments and suggestions on the law from citizens (Novikov, 1990). The law 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations' was adopted in October 1990. The preamble

stated four objectives: to guarantee citizens' right to express their attitude toward religion, to guarantee the right to perform religious rites, to guarantee equality regardless of religious conviction, and to regulate the activity of religious organisations (Zakon, 1991, p. 4). Western commentators commended the USSR for formalising the new religious freedoms and fulfilling its international human rights obligations. (See, for example, Roth, 1990, p. 36. For an analysis of the Soviet law in light of the 1929 decree and previous drafts, see Codevilla, 1991.) The law, however, was short-lived. The dissolution of the USSR at the end of 1991 meant that the laws of the new republics superseded Soviet laws.

In the case of the Russian Federation, a religious law had already been drafted. Vyacheslav Polosin, in his role as a member of the Committee on Freedom of Conscience, Religions, Welfare and Charity, formulated a law that guaranteed even greater freedoms. The law 'Freedom of Belief' was adopted on 25 October 1990 (for the full text of the law, first published in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, see Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1991). It was widely regarded as more liberal than its Soviet predecessor. It included provisions against any form of discrimination based on religious belief or practice, notably the guarantee that '[p]ersons who on account of religious beliefs cannot serve in the armed forces in a combatant role shall ... be permitted to serve in a capacity unconnected with the use of bearing arms' (Art. 7). It reiterated that state and religious associations were separate and that the latter should not interfere with or finance state elections, secular public education, or other political affairs (Art. 8).

Most significantly for the shape of religious life, the Russian law guaranteed freedom of worship for indigenous religious associations and foreign religious associations: 'Citizens of the RSFSR, foreign citizens, and stateless persons shall enjoy the right to freedom of worship on an individual or a shared basis, by way of founding appropriate public organisations' (Art. 4). The significance of the law lay in the definition of 'worship', which comprised a wide range of activities:

Worship and promotion of faith shall be understood to include the performance of rites, the dissemination of one's beliefs in society directly or via the mass media, missionary work, acts of charity, religious instruction and education, ascetic establishments (monasteries, retreats, etc.), pilgrimage and other activities as defined by the appropriate system of beliefs and provided for by the statutes (regulations) of the given association (Art. 17).

The 1993 Russian Constitution endorsed these extensive freedoms, specifically Art. 28: 'Everyone is guaranteed freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, including the right to profess any religion individually or together with others or not to profess any religion, and freely to choose, hold and disseminate religious or other convictions and to act in accordance with them' (Yel'tsin, 1999, pp. 8–10). Both Russian and foreign religious bodies benefited from the new freedoms, demonstrated by the dramatic increase in the number of registered religious associations and the visibility of religious activity in the immediate postsoviet period.

It was not long, however, before there were calls to revise the law 'Freedom of Belief'. Criticism focused on its hasty drafting and contradictory statutes (Rozenbaum, 1997, p. 290). Soon the influx of foreign missionaries and the rise of new religious movements, both native and foreign, prompted the criticism that the freedoms guaranteed therein were too extensive. The influx of foreign missionaries aroused suspicion and resentment among many Russians, particularly Orthodox, who were affronted by their ubiquity, evangelical vigour and opulence. There were calls to regulate and to monitor, and, in some cases, to

outlaw their evangelism and proselytism. The Moscow Patriarchate led the campaign. Patriarch Aleksii stated in an address in Kostroma:

The work of the Russian Church for the rebirth of society is threatened by the expansion of foreign missions in Russia. Hundreds and thousands of very different preachers have invaded Russia. There is great tension in our country owing to divisions between people on political and nationalistic issues. There is a danger of similar division on religious grounds, the Patriarchate wants to prevent this and to help our society to be stable. So the Patriarchate has suggested to the parliament that it pass a law proclaiming a moratorium on religious propaganda from outside (Ellis, 1996, p. 175).

Evidently the law 'Freedom of Belief' required significant revision before the patriarch's proposals could be legally implemented. These restrictive proposals, which presented such an affront to the newfound freedoms in the religious sphere, were a response to the multifarious challenges faced by the Patriarchate in the postsoviet period.

The Postsoviet Challenges to the Patriarchate

Russia's traditional faith had more to gain from the new freedoms than any other denomination. There was a dramatic increase in the number of Orthodox parishes, educational institutes and monasteries. Two priests explained how already by 1993 the new freedoms had changed religious life in their region:

For a long period the Novgorod diocese, one of the oldest in the Russian Orthodox Church, had no bishop of its own and was governed by the Metropolitan of Leningrad. Only five years ago [1988] it hardly numbered 25 parishes; most of them were situated in remote villages. Recent years have brought many changes. Since July 1990 the diocese is governed by Bishop Lev (Tserpitsky) of Novgorod and Staraya Russia. The famous St Sophia Cathedral, closed in 1929, is again opened for believers; dozens [of] churches are being restored and rebuilt. There are four cloisters, numerous Sunday schools and a children's choir in the St Sophia cathedral. (Bovkalo and Galkin, 1993, p. 44)

The number of parishes reached 14,000 by 1994 (Mezhdunarodnaya, 1994, p. 640). The most significant growth was the number of Orthodox educational institutions. From 1993 to 1996, for example, the number of theological seminaries increased from 7 to 31, and continued to rise for the remainder of the 1990s.

There were dramatic changes within the institutions themselves. As theological education in the Soviet period was limited by ideological restrictions, the revival of monasteries and seminaries has been regarded as one of the ROC's greatest successes (Walters, 1999, p. 46). Previously banned subjects, such as the history of philosophy, the history of religion and the history of Russian religious thought, were able to be introduced to theological academies. The training of priests is almost as important to church life as the existence of congregations. The large growth of monasteries, which increased from 81 in 1993 to 264 in 1996, is therefore another significant development. Additionally, Orthodox religious societies grew from 4357 to 6709 in this period, reflecting the ROC's involvement in education and a range of social and welfare services. By 1 January 1998 this number had reached 8653, accounting for more than half of all religious associations (Anon., 1998a). This brief survey of the reinvigoration of Orthodox life shows an impressive increase in the ROC's activities. There were, however, significant chal-

lenges to the ROC's ambitions to regain a central position in Russia's religious life. The remainder of this paper examines five challenges.

Financial Shortages

Financial shortages posed significant obstacles to the rebuilding of the basic structures to service the faithful. The most immediate of these obstacles was the shortage of priests to administer the new parishes. One scholar compared Patriarch Aleksii's statements in the official publication *Zhurnal Moskovskoi Patriarkhii* (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*) in late 1994 on the number of parishes and on the number of serving priests and concluded there was a deficit of some 4000 to 5000 Orthodox priests in Russia (Davis, 1996, p. 282). Moreover, the training of priests was rudimentary, as a result of the low standard of monastic education in the Soviet era and the rapid training of priests to meet the new demand. A shortage of theological textbooks compounded this problem. According to an official at the Theological Academy:

We have not had time to train our priests properly. Monasteries are reopened, but we lack sufficient numbers of well-trained priests to serve in them. We have made priests of people who are poorly prepared, and this shortcoming is seriously affecting the internal life of the Church. It is crucial that the people in such positions have both an excellent education and a deep spiritual life. (Daniel, 1996, p. 375)

The phenomenon of young priests being ordained before they are adequately prepared is referred to in church circles as *mladostarchestvo* (youthful eldership), since these priests then instruct others (Snegina and Strel'chik, 1999). In addition, aged and retired priests were encouraged back into service (Davis, 1995, pp. 122–23). The poverty of theological scholarship in the postsoviet period was also a problem.

There were shortfalls in other areas of church life. In 1991 Patriarch Aleksii stated that although in three years the number of active churches in Moscow had risen from 45 to 130, 'many are in such a state that they must literally be rebuilt. And where are the craftsmen and architects capable of erecting a church to be found today? Unfortunately, their secrets and skills have been lost' (Alimov and Charodeyev, 1991). The art of ringing church bells, for instance, has also been largely lost because of the restrictions of the Soviet period. A low level of awareness of Orthodox doctrine and theology among its adherents, a legacy of the communist era compounded by inept preaching in the postcommunist era, also emerged as a major challenge to the ROC's postsoviet regeneration. The claim of Ioann Bellyustin, a nineteenth-century Orthodox priest, that Orthodox adherents did not have 'the remotest conception of anything spiritual' (Belliustin, 1985, p. 125) was not remedied by seventy years of religious persecution. This incognisance has also been blamed for the prevalence of antisemitism among Orthodox laity (see the comments of Zoya Krakhmal'nikova and the priest Aleksandr Borisov in Kornblatt, 1999, p. 425). Nonconformist priests' attempts to overcome the low level of knowledge are discussed later in this paper.

The lack of priests, the inadequate training and the loss of essential skills were not obstacles that could be easily or quickly overcome, and they further strained the ROC's financial resources. The seriousness of the lack of funds was highlighted by an appeal from the rector of the Smolensk Theological Institute in *Russkaya mysl'* in March 1994, which noted that the future of the Institute was threatened:

From the moment of its founding, it was financed almost entirely by the parishes of the diocese of Smolensk. Today the situation in the parishes is so

difficult that one can categorise it as catastrophic. Galloping inflation ever more decisively curtails the scope of donations. Simply put, we have no means of feeding our students. (cited in Davis, 1996, p. 284)

The Institute's bank account number was provided to encourage donations. In order to raise funds clergy became involved in unlikely business ventures. In 1994 bottled water from Kostroma *oblast'* on the Volga River was sold under the name 'Saint Springs' to raise funds for the restoration of churches and monasteries in the region. The label on the bottles carried a picture of an Orthodox church and a blessing from Patriarch Aleksii. The 'Saint Springs' venture has, like other church enterprises, been the subject of scandal. The profits have not been used to restore churches and monasteries in the Kostroma *oblast'*, as the label promises, but instead have been secreted away. Uzzell alleges that these profits almost certainly go to the MP, though his investigation has not confirmed exactly who receives these profits (Uzzell, 2000). The attention that the clergy devoted to raising operational funds created the additional problem of their time and energy being consumed by efforts to secure financial help and church property rather than serving their congregations.

It should be noted that the MP has been involved in financial activities, which have undoubtedly secured the church leadership a great deal of money. The MP's funding comes from a variety of sources, including a bank it founded, a factory in Sofrino, a prestigious hotel at the Danilov Monastery and, the largest known earner, the joint-stock company *Mezhdunarodnoye Ekonomicheskoye Sotrudnichestvo* (International Economic Partnership), an oil exporter, among other things. It was co-founded by the Patriarchate's Finance Department, which owned 40 per cent of its shares, and had an estimated annual turnover of US\$2 billion (Franchetti, 1999). While these budgetary contributions have long been public knowledge, a series of exposes in the media in the mid-1990s revealed hidden business activities and the state's role in according the MP financial privileges. These revelations began when dissident priest Gleb Yakunin leaked a document about the MP's import of chicken drumsticks, in which an Orthodox dignitary appealed to a government authority that the imports be given humanitarian aid status and therefore exemption from the usual customs duties (Rykovtseva, 1996). Other instances where the MP has been accorded a privileged tax status have since been revealed, most notably on the import and sale of tobacco products (Mitrokhin, 2000; Shevchenko, 1997). There is little evidence, however, that this money filtered down to the parish level to construct the basic facilities required to service Orthodox adherents.

Jurisdictional Disputes

The state-enforced unity of Orthodox jurisdictions ended with the demise of communist power. Orthodox schisms, driven underground in the Soviet period, emerged to challenge the jurisdiction of the MP. The MP had hostile relations with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA) (*Russkaya pravoslavnyaya tserkov' zagranitsa*), the émigré church which entered Russia in 1990 as the Russian Orthodox Free Church (ROFC) (*Rossiiskaya pravoslavnyaya svobodnaya tserkov'*). In the postsoviet decade the ROCA continued to spurn the MP for its capitulation to the communists. As the ROFC, it proselytised priests and parishes who, for a variety of reasons, were discontented with the MP (for a summary of the tensions between the ROFC and the ROC see Laqueur, 1993, pp. 227–31). This resulted in open, even violent, conflict. On one of the first occasions when the ROFC gained a priest, a parish and church property in Suzdal', the local bishop wrote a letter to

the city council denying that the ROFC had any claim over church property and condemning their militancy, provocation, lies, unauthorised prayers and bigotry (Nezhny, 1991). Despite this opposition, in 2001 the ROCA had 37 parishes in Russia (Anon., 2001). The prospect of rapprochement between the two churches was enhanced by an exchange of letters between Patriarch Aleksii II and the Bishops' Council of the ROCA in late 2003. The letters expressed regret for the division between the two churches and a commitment to improving relations, with the ambitious and long-term aim of achieving unity. Older schismatic churches, notably the True Orthodox Church (*Istinno-pravoslav-naya tserkov'*), also present (albeit less threatening) challenges to the MP's jurisdiction (see Moss, 1991; Shakhov, 1999, pp. 57–66; Robson, 1995).

The status of Orthodox churches in Ukraine, Moldova and Estonia remained a sensitive issue, one widely regarded as political rather than religious (Mitrokhin, 1996, p. 30). Patriarch Aleksii boycotted a gathering of representatives of the fifteen Eastern Orthodox churches in late 1995. He cited the differences between the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul and the MP over church politics in Ukraine and Estonia, and was critical of Istanbul for encouraging independent aspirations in these countries (Simmons, 1995). This dispute not only emphasised differences within the Orthodox world, it also depleted the ROC's resources. National churches claimed property and buildings that had only recently been returned to the MP by an April 1993 decree on the transfer of church buildings and property to religious organisations (Pospelovskiy, 1995b, p. 45). In addition, much to the chagrin of the MP, disenchanted clergy have occasionally left its ranks and converted to the schismatic churches. Most notably, Metropolitan Filaret (Denisenko), disappointed that he was not elected patriarch in 1990, became head of the schismatic Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate (*Ukrainskaya pravoslavnaya tserkov' – Kiyevsky patriarkhat*) after being defrocked by the MP for immoral behaviour, abuse of power and the extent of his KGB cooperation. It has even been alleged that Filaret has 'intimate links to the Kievan criminal mafia' (Pospelovskiy, 1998, p. 371).

The schisms in Ukraine were most worrying for the MP. In 1989 the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was revived and direct confrontation between Patriarch Aleksii and the leaders of the Autocephalous Church ensued as the latter declared independence in early 1992. At the centre of these tensions are the Moscow Patriarchate's concerns over the possible seizure of property, buildings and other assets, and maintaining the unity of Orthodoxy in the postsoviet area. This arises from the division of Orthodox prelates and clergy on the territory of Ukraine between the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate. The MP regards the former as illegitimate. The division has led to conflicting claims for church property, which has resulted in the loss of parishes, as well as buildings and items such as icons; all this exacerbates existing financial shortages and undermines the unity and authority of the MP.

Competition

The preeminence of the ROC was also challenged by competition from non-Orthodox denominations. Though the emphasis of this study of Orthodoxy and religious pluralism is on Christianity, it is essential to recognise the experiences of other religions and denominations in order to appreciate the diversity of postcommunist religious life. The perceived need to protect the ROC from these interlopers largely shaped the MP's responses to the new pluralism. Debate about the ROC's relations with and reactions to these non-Orthodox faiths heightened the tensions between conflicting currents in church

life. This served to exacerbate the divide between traditionalist and reformist prelates and clergy (see below).

For the purposes of this paper, 'traditional' or 'established' refers to faiths that had a significant presence before the Gorbachev era. These include Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity. Christianity incorporates a large number of denominations, so the following examples from Christian denominations highlight common experiences; confessional specifics are not considered.

Like the ROC, the other traditional religions experienced a significant growth in the number of registered associations. In 1990, before the passage of the new legislation, there were 870 Islamic associations, 16 Buddhist associations, and 31 Jewish associations (Apparat, 1996, p. 244). By 1 January 1996 there were 2494 Islamic associations, 124 Buddhist associations and 80 Jewish associations registered with the Ministry of Justice. Of the traditional Christian denominations, there were 677 Evangelical Christian-Baptist, 222 Seventh Day Adventist and 183 Roman Catholic registered associations in January 1996. There are a number of factors that mean that the postsoviet experiences of these faiths differ from those of the ROC. Russia's Muslim and Buddhist populations are heavily concentrated in certain republics. There are eight Muslim republics, which together have a population of some 20 million Muslims (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Dagestan, Adygeia, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachayevo-Cherkessia). Moscow itself has a population of around one million, predominantly Tatars, the second largest ethnic group in the city. The Buddhist population is concentrated in Kalmykia and Buryatia, which border Mongolia. In 1993, 139,000, or 32 per cent, of Russia's 435,000 Jews lived in Moscow (Brym and Ryvkina, 1994, p. 23; for discussion of the difficulties in assessing the size of Russia's Jewish population see Ryvkina, 1997).

The level of religiosity is an important consideration when assessing the activities and influence of traditional religions and their perceived threat to the MP. Donna Arzt contends that

In contrast to Russian Orthodox Christians, who tend not to self-identify as such unless they are firmly committed believers, or to Soviet Jews, who until recent decades were a predominantly assimilated population, a Muslim in Russia will usually profess to being Muslim, regardless of how loosely he or she adheres to Islamic precepts and practices. (Arzt, 1999, p. 119)

There are three inaccurate statements in this extract. It has been established that self-identified Russian Orthodox adherents are usually nominal believers; numerous studies, both by Russian and western researchers, support this conclusion. An influential study of Orthodox religious life by the sociologist B.V. Dubin analysed data from surveys carried out between 1991 and 1996. Dubin reported that 7 per cent of self-identified Orthodox believers attended church once a month or more, and 17 per cent from one to several times a year, while 60 per cent replied that they did not attend church services at all (Dubin, 1996). A survey carried out in 1999 by the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Finland returned almost identical results; that survey found that 7 per cent of Orthodox believers attended church services once a month, 19 per cent several times a year, 29 per cent once a year or less and 45 per cent never. The authors concluded that church attendance in Russia is one of the lowest in Europe (Kääriäinen and Furman, 2000, p. 38). There is thus a gulf between Orthodox self-identification and active worship; one commentator goes so far as to suggest that Russia 'remains among the least pious of the world's countries' (Chinyaeva, 1996, p. 14; see also Alfeev, 2001, p. 238). It should be noted that though Orthodox adherence is widespread, active worship is the

exception rather than the norm. While it is true that Russia's Jewish population is predominantly assimilated, emigration since the late 1980s means that the proportion of assimilated Jews has increased, not decreased, as Arzt suggests (see Ryvkina, 1997; Vorontsova and Filatov, 1994). For most of the Soviet period, Jews were denied the right to emigrate, prompting the coinage *otkaznik* (refusenik). After the liberalisation of emigration policy, over one million emigrated, chiefly to Israel and also to the USA (see Brym and Ryvkina, 1994, pp. 66–93). Finally, a sociological study has concluded that 'Muslims go to mosques twice as often as Orthodox believers go to church, they pray more, and they are more diligent about observing religious rules and prescriptions' (Department, 1996). On the whole self-identifying believers of non-Orthodox confessions participate in religious life more actively than self-identifying Orthodox believers do (Dubin, 1996); in the case of Muslims, Jews and Buddhists, it is likely that this is because religion is a signifier of identity in a country where these are minority groups.

Like the ROC, other traditional religions engaged in a wide range of activities at the first opportunity, and they, too, experienced significant challenges in the new conditions. They faced challenges as minority groups. Antisemitism was a significant problem (see Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, 1997, pp. 33–122 and Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, 2001). Anti-Muslim sentiment was evident in the opposition to the building of an Islamic cultural centre in Moscow, which mobilised thousands of residents, opportunistic politicians, and even Orthodox clergy. The discourse surrounding the debate over the cultural centre was saturated with racial stereotypes and references to the Islamic threat (Musin, 1994; Various, 1994). The relationship between the ROC and individual faiths depends on a number of factors, principally the interests of the MP. For instance, the MP cooperated with Islamic leaders to lobby for a restrictive religious law. At other times, anti-Islamic statements by Orthodox clergy have soured this relationship. Other traditional religions have also been affected by attempts to promote a privileged position for Orthodoxy. The MP particularly targets Protestant confessions; Baptists, for example, are stigmatised as a cult and invaders despite their presence on the territory of modern-day Russia since the eighteenth century.

Protestant confessions such as Russia's Lutherans were particularly threatened by the influx of nontraditional religious groups. Many newcomers had modern evangelistic methods, and similar theological tenets to Russian Protestants. In addition, a lack of dynamism was characteristic of faiths subjected to prolonged repression. Traditional faiths also suffered from internal divisions (see, for example, Fagan, 2001; Shevchenko, 2000). In the Catholic Church there were tensions between Russian Catholic and Russian-Polish Catholic clergy; the former frequently claiming that the latter were anti-Russian Polish nationalists (see the comments of a Polish prior of the Dominican community in Moscow, cited in Filatov and Vorontsova, 1999, p. 99). Though tensions within denominations are commonplace throughout the world, their significance derives from the specific context: many cleavages emerged only in the 1990s, at the first opportunity to discuss religious issues openly, and highlighted the significant philosophical and theological differences within these diverse communities. The revival of Catholicism was nevertheless a significant feature of Russia's postsoviet religious boom.

In addition to the emergence of jurisdictional disputes between Orthodox churches in Ukraine, tensions resurfaced between the MP and the Greek Catholic Church (*Greko-Katolicheskaya tserkov'*) in Ukraine. These were evident during Pope John Paul II's visit to Ukraine in June 2001, in which the pontiff hoped to enhance ecumenical relations between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. While the independent Ukrainian Orthodox churches did not object, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate harshly criticised

the pope for a perceived confrontational approach and for attempting to proselytise in Orthodox lands.

For the purposes of this paper, 'nontraditional' refers to denominations that have developed a significant presence since Gorbachev's accession. The most conspicuous new arrivals were evangelical Protestant groups, predominantly from the USA, but also from Western Europe and to a lesser extent South Korea. Revd Billy Graham, who first visited the Soviet Union in the 1960s, had a highly successful tour in 1990, and was followed by innumerable American evangelicals. These preachers excited their audiences in stadiums and concert halls throughout Russia, and also bought radio and television time, which further spread their messages across the country, and into the homes of Russians who had conceivably not been much affected by *glasnost* in the religious sphere. Their messages were delivered in a very different way from the preaching familiar to most Russians. For instance, one American evangelical preacher reputedly called forth the sufferers in his audience at Moscow's October Theatre and shouted, 'I speak to back pain! In the name of Jesus, I command you to go!' (Schmemmann, 1993, p. A1). These evangelical preachers received a great deal of media coverage, almost all of it negative.

Thousands of missionaries entered Russia at the first opportunity, recruited, trained and placed by sending agencies in the West. In 1995 missionaries under the jurisdiction of the 25 largest western sending agencies totalled 3190 in the former Soviet Union, compared to just 1716 in Eastern and Central Europe (Meadows, 1995; Miller, 1995). The overwhelming majority of these missionaries were placed in Russia and Ukraine, presumably because some postsoviet states are predominantly Muslim and are culturally and geographically further removed from the West.

While Protestant individuals and groups had been translating, producing and distributing religious literature in the USSR since the 1960s, the new climate of tolerance in the late 1980s allowed such projects to be conducted openly – and in earnest. For instance, the organisation Bibles for Russia began operating in 1988 and in late 1990 expanded their activities to include a range of humanitarian projects as well as programmes designed to establish new churches and train church leaders (McCroskey, 1998). The Salvation Army, active in St Petersburg from 1913 until 1923, when the Bolsheviks forced it out of the country, resumed its work in mid-1991. *The Salvation Army Year Book* (1993) reported the Army's initial activities:

In charge of the St Petersburg corps, Lieutenant and Mrs Geoff Ryan faithfully disciplined the new converts, established a corps programme with Bible studies, preparation classes, Sunday schools, open-air activities, community work, hospital and prison visitation, leading to the enrolment of the first soldiers some months later. (Richardson, 1992, p. 87)

By late 2000 there were 93 active officers, 32 cadets, 359 employees, 40 corps, 18 feeding centres, 6 senior care centres, 2 social centres, 1 village for homeless people, 1969 senior soldiers and 546 junior soldiers (Sutherland, 2000, p. 191). The Salvation Army's emphasis on community service and welfare provision is illustrative of the contribution to an ideologically pluralist society made by the new arrivals, or, in this case, the reentry of previously forbidden religious bodies. The autonomous provision of services constitutes independent social self-organisation. In this instance, foreigners led the Russian division of the Salvation Army. The suspicion that surrounds these new arrivals is indicated by the liquidation of the Moscow branch of the Salvation Army in 1999. The Moscow Justice Department decreed that the Salvation Army was a paramilitary organisation. A Moscow court later reinforced this judgment (Slavic Centre for Law and Justice, 2002).

Denominations such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Church of Scientology, the Unification Church and the Hare Krishnas also established a significant presence in the postsoviet period. These confessions do not fit neatly into any category for the purposes of this investigation. They are generally mistrusted and/or condemned by mainstream denominations in both the West and Russia on the grounds that they are 'cults'. They have been and continue to be at the forefront of discussions about religious liberty, being the target of campaigns to restrict the access of foreign missionaries. Of these five denominations, only Scientology arrived in the 1990s. The others were present either in prerevolutionary Russia (the Jehovah's Witnesses) or in the Soviet period (the Mormons, the Unification Church, the Hare Krishnas). The Soviet authorities heavily persecuted both Jehovah's Witnesses and Krishnaites. They are included in the 'nontraditional' discussion because they did not achieve a large number of adherents in the USSR, and have increased their following exponentially in the postsoviet period (Anon., 1998a).

Initially the MP regarded Protestant missionaries as the chief threat to the Orthodox tradition. The scandal surrounding Aum Shinrikyo caused a reevaluation of the presence and the threat of nontraditional religious associations, both foreign and indigenous. Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese apocalyptic cult that promotes the violent hastening of Armageddon and the salvation of its followers alone, received a great deal of attention as a result of the extent of its Russian following and leader Syoko Asahara's contact with Russian authorities. After meeting the head of Russia's Security Council in 1992, and sponsoring a Russian-Japanese University in Moscow, Asahara spoke at the Kremlin Palace, lectured at Moscow State University, and met prominent politicians and representatives of the MP. Soon afterwards Aum Shinrikyo was officially registered. It had regular timeslots on television and radio (Morvant, 1996, p. 20), offices in Moscow and an estimated following of 30,000 in Russia in 1995, compared with 10,000 in Japan (Agafonov, 1995; Ramet, 1998, p. 317. For a different estimate of Aum Shinrikyo's following, see Filatov, 1999, p. 166). Asahara's plans for world domination came to light in March 1995, after an attack on a Tokyo subway and the discovery of a stockpile of chemicals and other toxic agents. These events prompted the scrutiny of Aum Shinrikyo's activities in Russia. Raids following the subway attack revealed a Russian military helicopter, a Russian-made military gas analyser and suspicions that the expertise for creating noxious chemicals was sold to Aum Shinrikyo by Russian experts.

The issue raised by Aum Shinrikyo's success in Russia was summarised by a journalist after relaying the findings of raids on the organisation's Russian offices:

But the most important thing is not these details, nor even the fact that the sect has three times as many devotees in Russia as it does in Japan itself – what is important is that it was in Russia (and only there) that Aum Shinrikyo operated under conditions of almost absolute freedom, winning recognition in the highest echelons of Russian government structure and enjoying the patronage of influential people who gave the sect a 'green light' in Russia's vast expanses (Agafonov, 1995, p. 1).

For those pushing for a more restrictive religion law, the Aum Shinrikyo scandal provided the ultimate justification for restricting the access of foreign religious bodies.

There were a large number of indigenous groups that fused neopaganism, Christianity and eastern mysticism. Three in particular prompted widespread concern: the Great White Brotherhood (*Velikoye beye bratstvo*), the Mother of God Centre (*Bogorodichny tsestr*), and the Church of the Last Testament (*Tserkov' poslednego zaveta*). The Great White Brotherhood, and particularly its leader Mariya Devi Khristos, received a great deal of

attention for its predictions of the apocalypse and its pilgrimage to Ukraine. In addition, hundreds of children, some as young as eleven, joined the Great White Brotherhood, and worried parents wrote to newspapers and petitioned politicians (Kolosovskaya, 1993). The Mother of God Centre was established by a former monk in the late 1980s. Ioann Bereslavsky claimed that God had chosen to reveal himself through regular visions of Mary, including during the August 1991 coup, when the Virgin Mary appeared above the White House and attempted to save Russia. The Church of the Last Testament came to public attention in 1995. It is based on the teachings of Sergei Torop, a former militiaman, who claims to be 'Vissarion-Christ'. So-called 'Vissarionites' live in accordance with doctrine based on the worship of the Earth and a return to nature. They live in settlements where they practise 'vegetarianism, accumulation of cosmic energy, extrasensoriness, urinotherapy, childbirth in the water and Zen Buddhism' (Soldatov, 1995). They reject modern culture and urban living, and have built a 'Sun City' in Siberia (Kobysh and Medvedeva, 1996). Though the guiding principles of the movement are not unlike those of hippies in the West in the 1960s and 1970s, the claim of Torop to be Christ, the complete isolation of the community, and the prevention of members from leaving the settlements illustrate a dogma that does not replicate the freedom of hippie ideals.

Faith healers have long been regarded with credence in Russia. The influence of Grigori Rasputin over Tsar Nicholas II and his wife illustrates the widespread reverence for the *starets* (spiritual advisor). While a 1994 subheading in *The Times Magazine* claiming that 'In America everyone has an analyst. In Russia they have a wizard' is overstated, it is true that faith healing has experienced a resurgence (Butler, 1994, p. 16; see also Borenstein's claim that the popularity of 'new age' movements means that Russia is becoming 'the Southern California of Europe' in Borenstein, 1999, p. 441). In 1998 Sabrina Ramet estimated that there were 300,000 folk healers, witches, wizards and psychics in Russia. There is even a test designed by the Ministry of Health which, if passed, grants wizards and witches a certificate to practise, 'in effect, a witchcraft license' (Ramet, 1998, p. 320). The degree of acceptance of these healing powers was highlighted by the success of Russia's most famous television psychic, Anatoli Kashpirovsky, in the 1993 elections to the Duma. Kashpirovsky and fellow-healers like Yuri Longo are widely known to the Russian public through their television appearances. In one instance Longo appeared in a 1990 documentary dancing around an unidentified corpse in a Moscow morgue; 'The body apparently responded to his bioenergy by raising first one hand and then the other, and finally rising jerkily off its slab' (Butler, 1994, p. 17).

Paganism is deeply embedded in Russian culture. Much has been written on this in recent years, particularly on the link between faiths which emphasise ecological concerns, such as the Church of the Last Testament, and pagan groups (see, for example, Krutous, 2000; Falikov, 1999; Kurayev, 1998). Conscious adherence to pagan worship still exists, most notably in Siberia, and experienced a resurgence in the postsoviet decade. In 1994 it was reported that

According to recent surveys by Mari sociologists, in Mari-El, 5 to 7 per cent of the population are 'pure' pagans, 60 per cent are 'dual believers' (that is how they identify themselves; dual believers go both to church and to sacred groves, believing that they are worshipping the same God in different ways), and only 30 per cent, most of them Russians, are Orthodox. The 200,000 Mari of the diaspora – in Bashkiria, Tataria and the Urals – are mainly descendants of refugees who fled christianisation. Up to 90 per cent of the diaspora are pure pagans. (Filatov and Shchipkov, 1994)

In 1991 the Ministry of Justice registered Russia's only official pagan organisation,

Oshmari-Chimari (White Mari-Pure Mari), which has its own prayer books and priests. A republican law 'The Protection and Rational Use of the Natural Environment' was adopted which stipulates that 'trees may not be cut down nor any type of work done in traditional Mari worship sites' (Filatov and Shchipkov, 1994). This law protects the sacred groves in which local pagans conduct their worship. 'Following the registration of *Oshmari-Chimari*, the aforementioned law essentially gave paganism semiofficial status' (Filatov and Shchipkov, 1994). This case is a reminder that Russia's regions are very different from the urban centres often cited as typically representative of the Russian population.

The reemergence of traditional religions and denominations, the reentry of previously banned religious bodies and the arrival of a range of preachers and religious workers created unprecedented challenges for the MP, the most immediate of which was defining the role of the ROC in the pluralist religious environment. The first task was to reduce the influence of perceived competitors in the 'new war for souls' (first used in the title of Witte and Bourdeaux, 1999). Predictably, the adoption by the MP of a position on the changing conditions created tensions within the ROC. The Patriarchate was forced to operate in unfamiliar conditions in the religious sphere, and was challenged by the notions of tolerance (which, in the religious context, means the acceptance of other faiths), cooperation (which manifests itself as ecumenism and interconfessional dialogue), and democracy itself (which takes the form of openness in both the religious sphere and within church structures). It is the implications of these external conditions for the internal life of the ROC, and the subsequent rift between Orthodoxy as a formal institution, represented by the MP, and Orthodoxy as informal influence, represented by nonconformist clergy and lay activists, to which this paper now turns.

Reformists versus Traditionalists

The division within the ROC between traditionalists and reformists was a product of differing convictions about how to meet the multifarious postsoviet challenges. In 1991 Veniamin Novik, an Orthodox priest, wrote: 'If one had to describe the spiritual condition of Russia in one word, that word would be "schism", a deep inner schism of Russian society, and one that pierces every Russian who has lost his identity' (Novik, 1994, p. 183). The ROC itself has not escaped this imbroglio. Highly visible divisions have developed. Each faction within the ROC has its own lay organisations, publications, journals and institutions. This is a result of different understandings of the ROC's social and political role. The following section outlines the fundamental ideological and theological disagreements that underpinned this salient division in the postsoviet decade.

Ralph Della Cava emphasises the importance of acknowledging internal church dynamics:

Largely for its xenophobic, anti-Semitic and nationalist stand, an ultra-nationalist wing of the clergy has dominated the headlines. It alone has largely given shape to the currently dominant view of the Russian Church as a proponent, ally or pawn of broader conservative and nationalist forces. In contrast, other internal Church currents go largely unnoticed or have gotten short-shrift. Moreover, 'in house' debates, especially those which on the surface seem to deal strictly with 'religious matters', go for the most part unreported – in the erroneous belief that quarrels over doctrine and practise have little relationship or bearing on society as a whole (Della Cava, 1997, p. 388).

The salience of internal church dynamics, and especially the convictions and activities of the reformist wing, is often overlooked in western analyses of the life of the ROC. As

Della Cava points out, these generally focus on nationalist and conservative Orthodox clergy. A case in point is Victoria Clark's long chapter on Russia in her book on Orthodoxy in modern Europe. Each Orthodox adherent she encounters, from prelate to priest to *starets*, is a Russian national chauvinist, or antisemitic, antiwestern or anti-Catholic, and indeed usually a combination of these (Clark, 2000, pp. 299, 301, 305, 306, 317, 322).

A division in the ROC became apparent when Gorbachev's concessions allowed open discussion of religious issues. Jane Ellis predicted a rift between hierarchs and dissidents (Ellis, 1990). This dichotomy lost currency when clergy became critical of the position of the MP for reasons as different as those of former dissident priests the liberal Gleb Yakunin and the nationalist Dmitri Dudko. The cleavages became more complex. They were characterised as rifts between modernists and traditionalists (Davis, 1996, p. 280), between reactionaries and progressives (Haney, 1995), between authoritarians and reformists (Billington, 1999), and amongst the four factions identified by Della Cava: ultranationalists, ecumenists, institutionalists and pastoralists (Della Cava, 1997). The most useful terms for this discussion are reformists and traditionalists. When the discussion surrounding a number of key issues is examined, these two opposed positions can usually be identified.

The first such issue to emerge, and one which engaged many commentators on church life, including prelates, clergy and laity, was the cooperation of church dignitaries with the KGB. One objective of Soviet religious policy was to protect the positions of collaborationist religious leaders. The extent of this was not clear until the demise of the communist regime, when the full extent of the KGB infiltration of the MP became known. The government's Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) appointed key Orthodox figures, and had the power to displace those who challenged Soviet rule. The regime and the ROC each benefited by working together to annihilate schismatic groups and sects. The church hierarchy assured the international community that accusations of religious persecution were merely antisoviet propaganda. In fact, however, churches were being destroyed, priests persecuted, and believers beaten, imprisoned, raped and murdered. The accession of the Orthodox Church to the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961, at the height of Khrushchev's antireligious campaign, the most intensive of the post-Stalin years, indicates the success of this arrangement.

The degree to which the MP had been infiltrated led to its being derisively referred to as the *Mitropoliubiuro*, an amalgam of *mitropolit* (metropolitan) and *Politbiuro* (Politburo) (Frankov, 1992). The issue of prelates' collaboration with the KGB was raised in the journal *Glasnost'*, which published accounts of KGB meetings with Patriarch Pimen, Metropolitan Aleksii and other hierarchs (Davis, 1995, p. 95), and in an interview with a former KGB general confirming the collaboration (Yelin, 1990, p. 15). The details were soon published. Three researchers had access to KGB files on the MP: Gleb Yakunin and Vyacheslav Polosin, two Orthodox priests, and Aleksandr Nezhny, a prominent journalist. They located files that detailed prelates' recruitment, their trustworthiness and the extent of their cooperation, and after Nezhny had deciphered the thinly-veiled code names, the collaborationist hierarchs were exposed in *Ogonek*, the newspaper at the forefront of *glasnost'* (Nezhny, 1992a). There followed a great deal of public debate, published in the pages of *Argumenty i fakty*, *Russkaya mysl'* and *Posev* (see, for example, the interview with Shushpanov, who worked in the Patriarchate's Department of External Church Relations, describing how he had meetings with and provided information to the KGB, including on Yakunin, in Luk'yanchenko, 1992). The MP responded by appealing to the 'accusers' to cease their denunciations and exposes. Round-table discussions in *Ogonek* and *Stolitsa* represented a range of views on the issues of collaboration, including

justifications of necessity (by Metropolitan Ioann of St Petersburg and Deacon Andrei Kurayev) and outright condemnation (by Yakunin and Zoya Krakhmal'nikova, who converted to Orthodoxy as an adult) (Nezhny, 1992b). The controversy was heightened by an interview with Patriarch Aleksii in 1991. When asked about the oath of loyalty that each head of the ROC took during the Soviet period (he did not have to take the oath as he was elected in 1990) he replied: 'As I am a churchman, I must accept responsibility for all that happened in the life of my church: not only for what was good, but also for what was difficult, regrettable, mistaken'. He apologised for the resultant suffering: 'Of those people who were pained by such concessions, by the failure to speak out, by the forced passivity and expressions of loyalty of the church leadership during that period, I ask forgiveness, understanding and prayers – not only before God, but before those people, too' (Alimov and Charodeyev, 1991).

This admission and apology were significant, and many believers, especially former dissidents, had been waiting for them for some time. They can be interpreted as Aleksii's recognition of the public support for reformists on this issue and demands for making the leadership accountable to the laity. By way of comparison, we may note that the upper echelons of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church recognised that there could be no legitimate leadership unless repentance was sought for collaboration with the communist security services, and in 1990 the church's bishops publicly apologised, with the exception of Patriarch Maksim (Radu, 1998, p. 290).

For some, the *modus vivendi* that began with Metropolitan Sergi in 1927 was necessary for the institutional survival of the church. Others were less forgiving. For Yakunin, acknowledgment and repentance were not enough. In an open letter to the patriarch he asked:

Is it not time for all archbishops and priests who cooperated with the secret police to reveal to the people of the church the truth about our church's tragic history, and to put it to that same church to judge whether it has any further use for hierarchs who are CPSU and KGB collaborators, or whether the time has finally come for them to step down and for the people of the church to exercise their right to choose their own pastors freely? (Yakunin, 1994, p. 314).

The contempt for past collusion is clear, and Yakunin calls for a more democratic and transparent leadership, and the expulsion of compromised prelates. The issue of KGB-church collaboration has, more than any other, highlighted the gulf between the hierarchy and reformist clergy, and, moreover, there appears to be no prospect for reconciliation between the two positions.

The accessibility of church doctrine was another key issue dividing reformists and traditionalists. The reformists called for changing the language of the liturgy from Old Church Slavonic, which cannot be fully understood by the average churchgoer, to vernacular Russian, to make the service more accessible for the congregation (see Kochetkov, 1993). Fr Georgi Kochetkov, well known for his evangelism and widely regarded as a leader of the reformist 'movement', introduced the reading of the gospel and other parts of the liturgy in Russian at his large Moscow parish, without the permission of the patriarch. The patriarch responded by moving Kochetkov to a smaller parish that could not accommodate his congregation. This prompted an open letter, published in *Segodnya*, by 40 priests supporting Kochetkov and condemning the patriarch's attempt to silence him (Pospelovsky, 1995a, p. 257). The letter showed that there is support for Kochetkov's initiatives among his fellow clergy, though this is far more prominent in Moscow and St Petersburg than outside the largest cities. There has been widespread support for Kochetkov from diverse sources, including from Pospelovsky, who generally

supports the patriarch on doctrinal issues. Pospelovsky wrote in an appeal to Aleksii published in *Kontinent*, citing Kotchetkov as the most prominent example: 'One's heart bleeds with each new report of persecution against the very best, the most evangelistically active and successful pastors of the Russian Orthodox Church and against the fruits of their spiritual, educational and missionary work' (Pospelovsky, 1998).

Reformists place primary importance on grassroots work in parishes. The work of slain priest Aleksandr Men' continues to inspire reformists. His emphasis on parish life and his inspirational preaching, which brought literally hundreds of thousands to the church, is regarded as a model for modern ministry. Yakov Krotov, a frequent commentator on religious affairs who was converted to Orthodoxy by Men' and maintains a website on him, notes:

The real meaning of Fr Alexander is his symbolical position in the mass media. Many of his parishioners, acquaintances, and readers still work as journalists. When they need to name someone as an exemplar of 'good Christianity', they name Men. Who else? Yakunin is too politicized a figure and he is still alive; so he is not as good for a myth. The majority of the intelligentsia is peacefully minded, and Men carries quite a peaceful name: he didn't struggle with the Patriarchy and didn't collaborate with the KGB either. So his name symbolizes for the audience of mass media ... the non-aggressive, non-politicized, non-silly, non-ghetto, non-fundamentalist Russian Orthodoxy. (Krotov, 2001)

Yakunin's initiatives stand in stark contrast to the non-politicised and non-confrontational nature of those of Men'. The radical changes that Yakunin believes would achieve greater accessibility were evident when in 2000 he established the Orthodox Church of the Resurrection in cooperation with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate and the True Orthodox Church. His initiatives included making fasting voluntary, replacing Old Church Slavonic (not necessarily with Russian; the language is determined by the language of the congregation), and reducing the length of services. A greater level of accountability was guaranteed by Yakunin's decision to make the financial records of the church readily available. These initiatives were all directed toward making Orthodoxy more accessible, including the radical move of repositioning the altar in the middle of the church floor, closer to the congregation. Yakunin's church is ready to engage in dialogue with other Orthodox denominations with a view to reforming the Orthodox tradition and making the faith more open and transparent (Krotov, 2000b). Traditionalists regard these initiatives as heretical. In a highly controversial move, Yakunin 'canonised' Men'. This was criticised as unfaithful to the memory of Men'; Krotov commented 'Nothing could be farther from Men's spirit than his canonisation to spite "official Orthodoxy"' (Krotov, 2000b), particularly as Men' emphasised the unity of the church and distanced himself from politics.

The MP's stance towards other Orthodox jurisdictions also contributes to the division within the church. Reformists regret the schism in the church that has emerged in the postsoviet period, which the priest Georgi Chistyakov believes has led to 'the loss of the most important virtue we [Orthodox] possess, the loss of the catholicity of our faith' (Chistiakov, 2001). This statement is of a tenor very different from that of the hostile statements about other Orthodox jurisdictions made by the MP. Reformists regard the disintegration of the Orthodox world into competing factions as a regrettable product of the church leadership's competitive and pragmatist policies.

Reformists argue that relations with non-Orthodox denominations should also be strengthened. Chistyakov laments:

Today Orthodox religiosity includes, as an almost inseparable component, a struggle against Catholics and Protestants, an attempt to expose them as enemies of our faith and of Russia, as well as complete rejection of ecumenism and of any openness towards other confessions. The very term 'ecumenism' has become pejorative and an accusation of affinity towards it is seen as evidence of a certain betrayal of Orthodoxy. (Chistyakov, 1997, p. 9)

Chistyakov continues to condemn religious intolerance and appeals to believers to embrace ecumenism and enhance interconfessional understanding. He laments the fact that self-righteousness and exclusiveness plague the ROC (Chistyakov, 1997, p. 9). Though Patriarch Aleksii has experience in ecumenical bodies, including his experience as president of the Conference of European Churches, his promotion of the aim of protecting Russia from other faiths has led reformists to regard the ROC as hostile toward interdenominational cooperation and dialogue. Tensions over the ROC's membership of the World Council of Churches, arising out of disagreements over feminist and homosexual issues, led to a temporary lapse in the ROC's active participation in that body (on tensions over WCC membership see Anon., 1998b). Reformists also argue for the relaxation of restrictions on women, such as the wearing of headscarves, skirts and dresses in churches, and for the adoption of the Gregorian calendar instead of the Julian calendar. The congregations of Yakunin and Kochetkov continue to be markedly different demographically from typical ROC congregations, characterised by younger and more intellectual worshippers. Their followers and supporters have contributed much to Orthodox life through lay activism.

The schism between reformist and traditional elements was highlighted in mid-1998 when books by Orthodox theologians, among them Aleksandr Men', were burned by order of the local hierarch at a theological seminary in Yekaterinburg. The books were denounced as 'heretical'. One commentator concluded: 'Now the appalling philosophy of schism within Orthodoxy is upon us and is taking hold in parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church ... Active efforts are under way to divide members of the Orthodox community into "clean" and "unclean"' (Shevchenko, 1998).

Lay Political Activism

For believers, the most profound changes accompanying the new pluralism lay outside the official church structures. Religious issues were publicly debated and religious participation was no longer hazardous. For the purposes of this examination, lay activists are those persons identifying Orthodox precepts as central to their political cause. In addition, lay activism can include the political activities of clergy or their involvement in projects unrelated to church life. As Fogarty explains, "The "laity" in this case includes members of the clergy who may, for instance, enter politics on the same footing as laymen, leaving behind for that purpose the special authority of their clerical office' (Fogarty, 1957, p. 4). This activity takes place outside official church structures.

There was heated debate about the political involvement of clergy following the Holy Synod's November 1993 resolution that priests would not be permitted to stand for political office. This was inspired by events during the political crisis of October 1993, when priests elected to the Congress of People's Deputies 'literally ended up on opposite sides of the barricades: Fr Aleksii Zlobin was in the White House, and Fr Gleb Yakunin was with the president' (Makarkin and Pashkova, 1999). The involvement of priests in the world of politics prompted the patriarch to put the choice to four clergy standing in the December 1993 Duma elections that they could retract their candidature or continue to run

for election and be defrocked. Yakunin was the only priest to choose the latter option. There followed the publication of a number of open letters: from Yakunin to Patriarch Aleksii arguing that his defrocking was uncanonical and condemning the conservatism of the MP ('The church is cutting itself off from the life of society; it is ossifying, turning into a marginal, ritualised structure'), from Aleksii to the Duma chairman denouncing Yakunin's schismatic mission ('Members of the State Duma ought to know that G.P. Yakunin is actively working to create schism in the Russian Orthodox Church and thereby promote division in our society'), and a number of other (increasingly bitter) correspondences (see four documents related to the case in *Religion, State & Society*, vol. 22, no. 33, 1994, pp. 9–21). The conflict turned violent when in 1995, during a debate in the Duma, Nikolai Lysenko, a nationalist deputy, tore Yakunin's cross from his neck and swung it around his head, refusing to return it. A brawl ensued as other deputies defended the two men (Barkhudarov, 1995). The Holy Synod's resolution that clergy cannot be involved in politics makes a clear distinction between those acting with the censure and those acting with the commendation of the official church.

Orthodox laypeople, including some of the best-known, such as the human rights activists Zoya Krakhmal'nikova and Aleksandr Ogorodnikov, have been involved in a wide range of political projects. In some instances they claim that Orthodoxy is the foundation of their political principles. They believe that Orthodoxy as a faith can and should aid the development of democracy in postsoviet Russia, and lament that the official structures of the ROC have not been able to facilitate this positive influence.

Yakunin has been described as the 'chief democrat in the Church' (Devlin, 1999, p. 62), a fair description, except for the fact that Yakunin is no longer 'in the Church', having been defrocked by the MP for his political activities in 1994. He later joined the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate, under the leadership of the controversial Metropolitan Filaret. Yakunin's involvement in various radical democratic parties, election blocs and alliances testifies to the primacy he places upon the role of religion in the development of democracy. Likewise, Krakhmal'nikova has emphasised that religion can play a valuable role in increasing the prospects for democracy: 'We have to create ethical, religious and humanitarian programmes. This will help the democratic parties to produce people capable of becoming genuine democrats in action' (cited in Tselms, 1999). Activists like Krakhmal'nikova have been involved in a range of overtly political activities, such as the political movement *Net* (No), which advocated boycotting the 1995 and 1999 elections to the Duma to protest against some elements in the electoral programmes of major parties. A similar emphasis upon religious tolerance is evident in an interview with Krakhmal'nikova following the publication of her volume *Russkaya ideya i yevrei: rokovoi spor: khristianstvo, antisemitizm, natsionalizm* (*The Russian Idea and the Jews: a Fateful Controversy: Christianity, Antisemitism, Nationalism*) in 1994. This was a response to Igor' Shafarevich's influential antisemitic text *Rusofobiya*, which had been circulating in *samizdat* since 1982 and had been published in *Nash sovremennik* in 1989 (see Horvath, 1998). Khrakmal'nikova explains:

The book was conceived ... as a Christian alternative to the threat of Russian fascism, which might don the uniform of the totalitarianism that Russia has not yet overcome, this time fitted out with an aggressive, nationalistic idea. It is no accident that this new type of fascism is trying to create a religious ideology. Its components are 'patriotic nazism', antisemitism and pseudo-Orthodoxy (Rishina, 1994).

The denunciation of 'pseudo-Orthodoxy' demonstrates her concern that nationalistic elements within the ROC seek to use Orthodoxy for exclusivist ends. Krakhmal'nikova is

also concerned about its appropriation into a new chauvinistic formulation of the Russian Idea. She warns: 'a vast panorama of ominous signs of a new "Russian Idea" that is aggressive and anti-Orthodox is opening up before us'. Krakhmal'nikova's conception of Orthodoxy is a constructive one. This translated into direct action when in September 1994 she was a founding member of a committee formed to promote democracy and oppose political extremism in response to the rising influence of neonazi and other extreme right groups (Guliyev, 1994).

Orthodox laypeople were principal voices in opposition to the restrictive law 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations', passed in 1997. This is the foremost issue sustaining debate about the ROC's postsoviet role. Krakhmal'nikova is a fierce defender of freedom of conscience and spoke out against the patriarch and Yel'tsin for supporting the legislation: 'Freedom of conscience ... cannot be bought or sold, nor is it granted in exchange for certain services. It is above any table of ranks. It is an absolute value' (Krakhmal'nikova, 1997). A number of clergy have been driven out of official church structures as a result of their opposition to this legislation. Fr Veniamin Novik, who was ordered to resign from his teaching position at the St Petersburg Theological Academy for speaking against the 1997 law and other violations of Orthodox doctrines, and for sending a letter of protest to the Yel'tsin administration, wrote:

The new law in spirit not only eliminates the possibility of ecumenism and religious reconciliation in Russia, but also further forces apart and separates a multiconfessional society. Only a rather low level of religiosity in society, and the social marginalisation of religion, can assuage the social consequences of this law. (Novik, 1999, p. 361)

The different approaches to this legislation have exacerbated existing divisions between reformists and traditionalists. This has pitted those who favour an emphasis on ecumenism and interconfessional dialogue against supporters of the restrictions. Yakunin, long outspoken against restrictive legislation, stated that the 1997 law would not rid Russia of dangerous cults and disruptive sects and ensure that the state had total control over the religious sphere; it would, however, damage the credibility of the ROC and ultimately disadvantage it (RFE/RL, 1997).

Although opposition to the MP is not a defining characteristic of lay activists, many are in fact hostile toward the MP, primarily because of its reluctance to regard their concerns as important to the role of the ROC. Krakhmal'nikova published a number of articles as a book, entitled *Bitter Fruits of Sweet Captivity*, devoted to problems of religion and the ROC. The main foci of her writing are the struggle against fascism and antisemitism in the ROC, and the spiritual rebirth of Russia. She is scathing in her criticism both of the compromises of the MP in the Soviet period and of the pragmatism with which contemporary politicians regard Orthodoxy (Rishina, 1994). Opposition to the MP has also to do with the dissident roots of many lay activists: Yakunin was in a labour camp from 1979 to 1987; Krakhmal'nikova from 1982 to 1987 for compiling a *samizdat* religious journal; and Ogorodnikov from 1979 to 1987 for his involvement with the discussion group the Christian Seminar.

The politically active clergy and laypeople mentioned here wish to see the church leadership take a more active role in fostering tolerance and democracy, crucial to the development of pluralism. Some of the most respected rights activists identify themselves as Orthodox. For them, the preoccupation of the MP with disciplining reformist priests and protecting Russia from the incursion of foreign missionaries denies Orthodox believers affirmative leadership and denies the institutional church itself a positive stake in Russia's postsoviet development. The overall effect of this lay activism has been to

create internal fronts that further weaken the ROC's claim to hegemony. The inability of the MP to meet postsoviet challenges and to lead the country's recovery has led to widespread frustration, as noted by Dimitry Pospelovsky, who opens his article 'Impressions of the contemporary Russian Orthodox Church' with the comment: 'The Russian Orthodox Church has failed to find in itself the living force to lead Russian society morally or spiritually, as was hoped by both believers and nonbelievers when the collapse of the Soviet state had become obvious' (Pospelovsky, 1995a, p. 249).

Conclusion

The intensified religious activity during the 1990s created a plurality of the kind that is essential for the development of democracy. The discussion of the 1997 legislation demonstrated that Orthodox activists and reformist clergy have done much to encourage rights for believers of all denominations, and have advocated an inclusive understanding of freedom of conscience that helps to build religious pluralism. However, this pluralism has created significant problems for the ROC. The MP's lack of funds and its competitors in the 'war for souls' have been significant barriers to its aspirations. Even more damaging have been the splits, schisms and tensions within the ROC itself. Dmitri Gorin, a frequent commentator on church affairs, points out an ironical aspect of the ROC's existence in the postsoviet period: though the state has ceased its antireligious policy, and the MP is independent from state control, there has been heightened scandal and schism within the ROC (Gorin, 1999).

Reformists have taken directly oppositional stances to the MP on key challenges the ROC faces in the postsoviet period. They have been pushing for *perestroika* within the ROC since the first revelations of the extent of the leadership's collaboration with the KGB. They believe that the church is for the people, and argue that its clergy should be accessible in order to fulfil a meaningful social role. Meanwhile traditionalists have condemned all attempts to update church practice; they have viewed these initiatives as heretical and as attempts to destroy church unity. They regard the primary task of the church as the recovery of tradition, including the restoration of a privileged position in a secular state. Patriarch Aleksii is forced to negotiate between the two conflicting currents in church life, and concessions to one inevitably lead to criticism from the other.

The assumption that there could be a singular understanding of Russian Orthodoxy is naive. Gary Bouma, a sociologist of religion, notes in his article on managing religious diversity that

Diversity is now so pervasive that religious groups are internally diverse and many do not provide embracing, overarching, totalising meaning for their adherents. Their meanings have become one set among others, which is made even more complex by the rise of profound levels of internal diversity within religious groups. (Bouma, 1999, p. 21)

This religious diversity is characteristic of all modern societies. It is therefore not surprising that different visions of Orthodox life have emerged in postcommunist Russia, especially as there was limited opportunity to conduct dialogue about religious issues in the USSR. The growing strength of these unofficial currents in Orthodox life is testimony to the presence of a plurality of opinions within the ROC itself. Though there is nothing as coherent as a grass-roots reform movement, a variety of critics of the MP, and supporters of these reformists from outside the ROC, comprise disconnected dissent from the MP's line.

The sudden renaissance of the ROC in the late Soviet period indicated that the MP would become a significant political and social actor. While many Orthodox dissidents dismissed the MP as a weakened and demoralised body, the majority of commentators – political, social and cultural – had great expectations of the ROC. That Russia was a multid denominational and secular state did little to dampen the widespread enthusiasm for the rehabilitation of the country's spiritual life, with the regeneration of Orthodoxy at its core. The ROC was expected to be a guiding force, not only in the religious sphere, but also in the political realm, despite the fact that the official line was that both prelates and clergy stand above the political fray. Moreover, a minority of Russia's population comprised active Orthodox believers who possessed a basic knowledge of church canons. It thus emerged that self-identifying as an Orthodox believer was as much – if not more – a result of Orthodoxy's synonymy with Russian national identity than it was an indication of piety or adherence to the rules and practices of the ROC.

In the postsoviet period the ROC has attained a prominent and privileged position. Patriarch Aleksii is a highly visible national figure. Orthodoxy's elevated position is supported by the MP's close cooperation with the state on issues that are in the realm of governance, not of faith. The law 'Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations', the reconstruction of Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, financial privileges accorded by the state, and church-state collaboration under the Putin administration demonstrate that the ROC enjoys a favoured status with the political leadership (Knox, 2003).

The implication of the ROC's position for the institutionalisation of ideological pluralism in the postauthoritarian state is salient. The freedoms of the *perestroika* years brought this issue to the forefront of political and social debate. The potential importance of the role of the ROC lay in Russia's status both as a fledgling democracy and as a country that was instituting modern religious pluralism where it had no precedent. The activities of the MP threatened this precarious balance. Its efforts have been largely directed towards securing an advantageous position in the pluralist religious sphere. The MP had the potential to become a powerful independent actor, contributing to the growth of civil society and thus to the amelioration of some of the problems faced by Soviet (and subsequently Russian) society. This paper has suggested some reasons why the MP did not rise to this challenge in the decade following its liberation.

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