

Military Clergy in the Modern Armed Forces of the Russian Federation

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INTRODUCTION

The State. The Church. The Military. These three words, or to be more exact, the complex relationship between these three facets of a traditional Russian society, can encompass most, if not all the events, that have taken place in the vast geographical area commonly known as Russia. The purpose of this paper is to examine some historical and modern day relationships among the Russian State, the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (ROC MP or ROC) and the Russian Armed Forces, in order make a prediction about the future of the newly re-established Russian Military Clergy. This paper will highlight and analyze key issues related to the topic in an effort to better understand the current problems facing Russian society as a whole and the institution of the Russian Armed Forces in particular. In some respects, this particular study could be considered an ideological follow-on to the study of the Main Political Administration (MPA) of the Soviet Armed Forces because both the ROC and the MPA are viewed as critical to the institutional mission of the Soviet and now Russian Armed Forces. Curiously, Western analysts have almost entirely ignored the efforts of the current Russian political regime to find a viable replacement to the highly successful but defunct MPA in order to provide ideological legitimacy to the missions of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

The institution of Military Clergy has been authorized by then Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev on July 21, 2009 and officially put in place by the then Russian Minister of Defense, Dmitry Serdiukov in 2010. Researchers of this particular topic are given a rare opportunity to observe a life cycle of a government institution from the moment of its creation. More importantly, the re-establishment of the Military Clergy

Corps should be understood as an effort to instill order and purpose into the Russian Armed forces. As such, it is important to study a component of the Armed Forces currently credited as being the stabilizing force of a large fighting machine. It is important to study the historical and political underpinnings of this branch as it strives to grow stronger and stronger in the coming years. It might even find a way to enter into the military decision making process (MDMP) in a manner very similar to the way the leadership of the former MPA provided input into Soviet military policy.

Additionally, this study provides one of the few English-language investigations of an issue that, at first glance, might appear esoteric or exotic. But it is worth noting that the importance of this issue might be seen in the failed effort of a prestigious commission appointed by former President Yeltsin to define ‘The Russian National Idea.’ The Soviet Defense Ministry well understood the importance of ‘the moral-political factor’ in military *esprit-de-corps* among both the officer corps and the conscript population. It devoted substantial resources to this question in the form of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Armed Forces, supported by a formidable cadre of historians at the Institute of Military History. The present day inability of the Russian Defense Ministry to provide a clear and powerful ‘moral-political’ vector is virtually unprecedented in the long sweep of Russian military experience.

HYPOTHESIS

The main hypothesis of this work is that the modern Russian Military Clergy Corps is a quixotic quest. It will most likely be a prisoner of the historically interwoven relationship between the State and the Church; the closer the relationship, the worse the

outcomes for the Church institutions, including the Military Clergy. In the worst-case scenario, the Corps will be held responsible for energizing ethnically based violations of the military order and discipline, thus contributing to the overall decline of the Russian military's ability to fight-off both domestic and international threats. At best, it could become a highly politicized and a fairly marginalized department within the Russian Armed Forces structure that will always be open to criticism by those who have the power to influence public opinion. The middle-of-the-road possibility is that it would be regarded as a reincarnation of the infamous Soviet Main Political Administration (MPA); cooperation with the MPA is not welcomed but is necessary if one is to have a successful military career.

Additionally, in order for the Russian Military Clergy Corps to be successful, its host – the Russian Armed Forces – should be a stable and viable fighting institution in and of itself, with clear goals that are attuned to its true capabilities. If one views the Corps exactly for what it is, namely an enabler of the war-fighting machine, then the host must be institutionally, financially and demographically stable in order to be able to project its values and goals onto all of its subordinates. This, however, becomes a circular argument involving direction and capabilities. Namely, does religion provide the military with a 'guiding moral concept' thus enabling its functioning or does the military provide religion with the political stability of an independent State, necessary for religion to flourish?

Unfortunately, as will be shown below, the Russian Armed Forces' leadership seems to lack clearly identifiable and readily enforceable institutional philosophy. It is still battling a potentially lethal concoction of the following problems: low quality and

quantity of conscripts, and high crime, barrack violence and corruption. Of course, these problems are indicative of the problems of Russian society as a whole. Unable and/or unwilling to address deeper underlying causes, the political and military leadership decided to fix the façade and look towards the troubled Russian Orthodox Church to provide its force with ‘raison d’être’. The results of which are very questionable outcomes.

OPPOSING ARGUMENT

While researching the topic, one can easily identify a number of voices within the triad that argue that the establishment of the Military Clergy Corps will be a unifying force within an ethnically and culturally diverse Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. The Corps might contribute to the reduction in barracks violence (*dedovschina*) while raising unit morale and fighting spirit. Moreover, the force, as a whole could return to its roots as a self-proclaimed righteous fighting force. And, as it is God who gives victory, the Russian military should always expect victory. The argument also presumes that with the re-establishment of the Military Clergy Corps, the Russian military machine will only fight ‘just’ wars. Before moving on to the present day situation with the Corps, a few general observations on the nature and history of the Russian State, religion and military are necessary.

ANALYTICAL BACKGROUND

A large portion of Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet history readily lends itself to the analytical approaches first identified by Gaetano Mosca in his 1896 “*Elementi di*

Scienza politica” or “The Ruling Class.” His main contribution to the fields of philosophy and political science is the development of ideas concerning “the ruling class”, “political formula” and “elites.” Russia’s historical-political sequence of absolute monarchy, communist hegemony and post-soviet elitism, for all intents and purposes, can indeed be described as a history of the ruling class and its problems. This history, and more importantly its philosophical underpinning, has to be described and unequivocally stated before proceeding to the rest of the work. Specifically, I will address the philosophical foundations of the ruling class and its role in the history of Russian society. Next, I will address the issue of national idea as a quintessential part of a “political formula” followed by the role of religion as it relates to the idea of ruling class and the need for a political formula. Finally, given the specific topic of this paper, I will project my analysis onto the field of military doctrine and the concept of national security in particular.

The idea of ruling class is very compatible with the modern Russian society as the notion of “class” is a common ground for most post-Soviet leaders; it is Marxist rhetoric after all. According to Mosca, most developed societies ultimately have but two distinct classes – rulers and followers. The ruling class is “...always less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power...”¹ This has been true throughout Russian history although with a few notable developments in the late Soviet period when a ruling political class gave rise to a new ruling social class – *nomenklatura*. Beginning with the Rurik Dynasty and following by the Romanov Dynasty, a small number of nobility ruled millions of people for centuries. Even with the advent of the *Bolsheviks*, a numerically inferior political group, a new ruling class – the *nomenklatura* – took over and held on to

¹ Mosca, 1939: p.50.

power for over seventy years. While in power, it directed all spheres of human activity from the matters of religion to national security.

The current leadership of President Putin even further merges with Mosca's description of the ruling class. Consider the following quotes, "...in every political organism there is one individual who is chief among the leaders of the ruling class as a whole..."² and "...wealth rather than military valor comes to be the characteristic feature of the dominant class: the people who rule are the rich rather than the brave."³ Leaving aside the precise number of his personal wealth⁴, two points are clear beyond reproach. First of all, Putin is a clear, *sine pari*, leader of the ruling party *Edinaya Rossiya* (United Russia) and he is definitely better off⁵ than any present day person awarded the ultimate state recognition for personal bravery – the Hero of Russia medal. However, here lies an important barrier that currently has no obvious solution in Putin's Russia – a succession mechanism. As Mosca foresightfully predicted, "...with the death of an influential leader the power of a feudal state itself come to an end"⁶. Thus, it could be argued, that he is torn between his personal greed and his Patriotism – that is to make sure that Russia continues to be at least a regional powerhouse with nuclear weapons,

Of course, if a country truly embarks on the road of developing independent institutions capable of sustained propagation of the ruling regime, the aforementioned vices could be defeated since institutions "...enable a universal morality to curb the

² Mosca, 1939: pp.50-51.

³ Ibid: p.57.

⁴ For more information about the 'perks' available to the President of the Russian Federation see "*Zhizn' Raba na Galerakh*", a small document published by Boris Nemtsov and Leonid Martynjuk at http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/2012/120827_Russia_Pamphlet.pdf

⁵ Mosca, 1939: 57.

⁶ Ibid: p.83.

expression of individual immorality...”⁷ Unfortunately, as it is widely known, the process of developing independent institutions is not the case in post-Soviet Russian history.

Nevertheless, even in the apparent absence of institutional development there is a process that Mosca calls ‘political formula’. At first glance, he provides a fairly straightforward definition that “this legal and moral basis, or principle, on which the power of political class rests, is what we have elsewhere called...the ‘political’ formula.”⁸ However, this definition, as used to understand the present day post-Soviet reality, becomes truncated and points but to a single way that Putin’s cohort can continue to stay in power. Although the word “legal” is mentioned in the above definition, it is hard to imagine this particular mechanism functioning effectively in XXI century Russia. The Khodorkovsky affair, along with the infamous cases of Sergey Magnitsky, and the punk-rock band *Pussy Riot*, all but destroyed the belief in the ability of the Russian court system to uphold the law honestly. In a lawful society, “the social mechanisms that regulate this disciplining of the moral sense constitute what we call ‘juridical defense’ (respect for law, government by law)”⁹. If this “juridical defense” is absent or compromised, where can the ruling elite get the necessary ‘political formula’ that would provide a reasonably secure future? In the case of President Putin, and as a matter of fact in the case of his predecessor – President Yeltsin, the ‘formula’ began by focusing on the issues of morality in general and the issue of national identity in particular.

Beginning with President Yeltsin, there have been serious studies conducted in order to understand what could unite the citizens of the Russian Federation behind the leadership of the present elite. Ultimately, President Yeltsin failed in his attempt of

⁷ Mosca, 1939: p.125.

⁸ Ibid: p.71.

⁹ Ibid: p.126.

discovering a national idea, and President Putin's quest for the same, is not much further ahead. This is due partly to the fact that "...no philosophical or religious doctrine can change human nature very radically or at all permanently, if it fails to limit its propaganda to a small number of chosen individuals, or 'superior souls,' and tries to educate a whole great society and govern it by imbuing it with certain principles"¹⁰. Thus there are several questions that beg to be asked: What were the ideas that both Presidents were keen on advancing? What is the Russian Nation? How could these ideas be advanced in a society where 'juridical defense' is all but non-existent? To answer these and some other questions, a short discourse on the nature of the Russian national identity is necessary.

This debate is not new to the Russian psyche and the differences between the Westernizers and the Slavophiles are well documented. However, in light of the discussion on the need for national elites to come up with a unifying force, this debate reemerged with a new vigor. As Vera Tolz, a professor at the University of Manchester's Russian Studies program, points out, "...the way in which Russian elites and the broader public imagine the proper borders of the Russian national homeland and define membership of the Russian nation has a direct impact on the government's internal and foreign policies and in determining the future of Russia..."¹¹ Thus, this seemingly nebulous topic has a direct impact on the issue of Russian national and international security as "...the problem of Russia's relationship with its neighbors in the 'near abroad,' to Europe, and in a larger sense to the West and the rest of the world, remains

¹⁰ Mosca, 1939: p. 244.

¹¹ Tolz, 2001: p.270.

unresolved.”¹² The Pandora box of Russian national identity has been based upon two basic principles, namely “...the existence of the land based empire ...and the comparison between Russia and the West.”¹³ This is nothing new in Russian history but it does emphatically point to several important cornerstones of the modern Russian thinking. First of all, it is the notion of Empire, which automatically includes peoples other than the ethnic Slavs. Thus, since “...Russia has never been a secular nation-state...”¹⁴ any future solution by default has to be of multi-ethnic origin; that is of course if Russia’s elites want to preserve country’s current shape. Secondly, the issue of Russia and the West begins to have irredentist overtones harkening back to the doctrine of the Third Rome, that argues for Russia’s special position as a the savior of the world due to its heightened spirituality.¹⁵

What is missing in these discussions is the realization that the idea of national identity is a feat of propaganda and is a “...malleable phenomena, called into existence and influenced by specific discursive, material and historical conditions.”¹⁶ In other words, anything could be viewed as a tragedy and a triumph at the same time, and the nations that are not sure which interpretation to take-up as the ‘correct’ point of view are capable of displaying a wide range of social instability until anchoring itself to a particular point of view. Nowhere is this more evident than in modern Russia. Under President Yeltsin, there were no less than five possibilities of defining national identities.

According to Vera Tolz these were:

¹² Theen, 1999: p.43.

¹³ Tolz,2001: p.269.

¹⁴ Theen, p.43

¹⁵ The actual doctrine has been devised under Vasily III’s rule and states that Russia is the Third Rome and there will be no Fourth one. The Russian emperors used it to justify their power as God-given and tie the Russian empire to the culture of the Roman and Byzantine Empires.

¹⁶ Janack, 1999: p.11.

- “Russian defined as an imperial people or through their mission to create a supranational state
- Russians as a nation of all eastern Slavs, united by common origin and culture
- Russians as a community of Russian speakers, regardless of their ethnic origin
- Russians defined racially, with blood ties constituting the basis of common identity
- Russians as members of a civic nation of all citizens of the federation regardless of their ethnic and cultural background”¹⁷

As one could easily see, these options swung widely from social Darwinism in the case of option one to the use of biological markers in case of option four. What is more important for the topic of this particular work, is that none of these ideas were accepted by Russian society, “...Yeltsin’s government failed to formulate any notion of national goals other than material ones that could help the population cope with the sacrifices and suffering which the economic reforms had inflicted.”¹⁸ This fiasco left Yeltsin’s successor – President Putin – before the proverbial Pushkin’s ‘broken bathtub’ since neither civic nor cultural identity markers seemed to work, as “...attempts to divorce Russian national consciousness from the historical context of the supranational empire have thus far failed.”¹⁹ Furthermore, since “...the main critics of the idea of the civic nation are the intellectual and political elites of the ethnic republics”²⁰ it left Putin with only one choice to attempt to secure the position of the elites he represented. Namely, subjugation of the aforementioned ethnic elites via direct replacement, as was the case with the Governor of Tatarstan Mintimer Shaimiev, or outright purchase of the existing ones such as the case of the Kadyrov clan in Chechnya. Whatever the choice, one thing is clear – it could only be done through desecration of the aforementioned ‘juridical defense’ thus instantly limiting the available choices of advocating for national unity. In

¹⁷ Tolz, 2001: pp.272-273.

¹⁸ Ibid: p.284.

¹⁹ Theen, p.53.

²⁰ Tolz, 2001: p.280.

fact, it could be argued that the only semi-capable option of inventing and distributing any kind of morally unifying cultural idea was the Russian Orthodox Church.

Almost destroyed by the Communist regime and staunchly inward looking, the ROC has always been there to support whatever the political leadership was in power²¹. Additionally, "...untouched by scholasticism and syllogistic reasoning, is the reason for Russia's superiority to Europe."²² By employing this particular institution, the government seems to be acknowledging, *de facto*, that there is nothing in Russia's past that could take on the unifying role. Instead, there has to be a reliance on "...the veneration of the 'Russian soul,' an enigmatic spiritual phenomenon that embodies Russia's uniqueness."²³ Of course, if this is to succeed, then the question on the nature of the soul of a Buryat – an animist – has to be answered as well. What is more troubling is that by choosing one of the most conservative institutions in the country, the elite almost predetermine its policy towards the rest of the world, practically ensuring that "...the ambivalence toward Western ideals is at the heart of a potential Russian national identity."²⁴ Besides fostering animosity towards an external entity, the choice of the Church to serve as the embodiment of the national spirit brings up many internal problems as well.

First of all, as Mosca argued, "...no religion can of itself raise the moral level of an entire people very rapidly or to any great extent..."²⁵ with the key words being "very rapidly". If a country needs something to ward off an existential threat it is very often not religion but political volition of the elites that do the trick; Stalin's iron rule during World

²¹ For in-depth study of the Russian Orthodox Church please refer to Addendum 1.

²² Janack, 1999: p.18.

²³ Ibid: p.16.

²⁴ Ibid: p.23.

²⁵ Mosca, 1939: p.180.

War II and Putin's handling of the North Caucasus problem would serve as great examples of such a statement. Secondly, choosing a religion as the binding doctrine introduces an inherent split into a society. By definition, a follower of a particular religion has to believe that s/he has a special status because the 'Truth' is singular and does not belong to opposing view points, "...believers must always be 'the people' or 'the better people,' or 'progressive spirits,' who speak for the vanguard of real progress."²⁶ This obviously creates a problem in a state that wants to be touted as multi-ethnic. Furthermore, any Church is inherently conformist and not easily changed; the Russian Orthodoxy is a prime example of the Byzantine rite that has changed little in over a thousand years. There is a fine line between social stability and complete social stasis. While the former could be a desirable state of affairs, the presence of the latter speaks volumes about the level of social mobility within that particular society. While everyone wants to be safe, it is conceivable that most people also want to be sure that their hard work will be able to improve their life conditions. This requires independent thinking and the ability to learn from outside sources; this is anathema to any religious zealot since "...any glimmer of mental balance, any ray of light from other moral and intellectual worlds, that strays into one of these closed environments produces doubts, falterings and desertions."²⁷ The modern day presence of many sects and branches within all main religions is an avid example of the correctness of such a way of thinking. Moreover, there are two very specific concepts peculiar to Russian Orthodoxy that could make it impossible to fulfill the mission entrusted to her by the elites. Namely, its

²⁶ Mosca, 1939: p.176.

²⁷ Ibid: p.186.

messianic character and the “cult of suffering”; a few words should be said about each of these attributes.

The messianic message has been alluded to before, in the brief mentioning of the doctrine of the Third Rome. Here, several other features must be brought to light as well. First of all, this message highlights both the perceived superiority and imperialism of those who subscribe to this vision, “...Tsar Alexander I considered it Russia’s mission to rid the world of the anti-Christ (Napoleon) and serve as the gendarme of Europe.”²⁸ Of course, no one is calling Putin’s Russia “the gendarme of Europe”, but his aspirations to maintain Russia’s *status quo* in the post-Soviet space should give pause to even the most ardent supporters of Russian benevolence. If “God’s mission” is still the case, then Russia’s ethnic elites mentioned at the beginning of this chapter have a really good point in their aversion to the current state of the Federation.

The second point that also has to be discussed is the idea suffering, “...the significant presence of the topos of Suffering may indicate the potentially important role that the Church has in Russia’s national identity development.”²⁹ Christianity is full of suffering, beginning with Christ himself. However, unlike the Western view of the matter, which tends to concentrate on the “...efforts to avert suffering...”³⁰ the Russian Orthodox Church tends to dwell on it. Without going too much into a theological debate, it would suffice to say that this is very different from the most celebrated Western Christian work on the nature of suffering and the ability of a human being to rise above it – Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. What is important in the scope of this paper is that the Russian context projects the idea of individual suffering

²⁸ Janack, 1999: p.98.

²⁹ Ibid: p.230.

³⁰ Ibid: p.230.

onto the whole country. In other words, instead of having a personal relationship with God and perhaps understanding the nature of one's misfortunes, the 'victim's complex' becomes *modus operandi* for the entire country³¹. As an important component of the national psyche, this obsession on concentrating almost exclusively on national suffering calls for statewide irredentist measures designed to 'fix' the perceived injustices. And what better way of dealing with 'injustices' inflicted upon the national psyche than through the power of the State's military.

What is the main purpose of any military? It is to win the wars of its government³². To be more precise, there are four doctrinal tasks for the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, "...1) deterrence of military and military political threats to Russia's security or interests; 2) protecting the economic and political interests of Russia; 3) conducting military operations in peace time; 4) the conduct of combat operations."³³

Given the fact that military service is directly connected to physical violence against fellow human beings, several factors have to be discussed within the scope of this work. Namely, the philosophical relationship between military and religion along with relationship between military and the ruling class. First of all, "...in spite of numerous examples to the contrary supplied by the warlike Middle Ages, the ecclesiastical calling has by its very nature never been strictly compatible with the bearing of arms..."³⁴ There are many Russian saints that were renowned warriors during their time on Earth: Prince Aleksandr Nevsky and Generalissimo Aleksandr Suvorov to name just a few, but the

³¹ A good further reading on this particular topic could be Olga Shevchenko's *Crisis and the Everyday in Postsocialist Moscow* (Indiana U. Press, 2009)

³² The word "government" is used deliberately to underscore that it is not a "nation" that decides to go to war but a rather small elite group as discussed extensively in the passages above.

³³ Kipp, 2011: p.112.

³⁴ Mosca, 1939: p.141.

most religiously revered figures continue to be the epic elders of various monk orders in ancient Russia. The story of Sergii Radonezhsky who blessed Prince Aleksandr Nevsky to fight the Mongol Horde continues to be taught to young Russians. Nevertheless, the job of killing people because a ruler orders to do so, is not readily compatible at least with the Orthodox Christian values. Thus having a religious component as an integral piece of national identity instantly creates a dilemma for those wishing to become military officers. There are several ways to sidestep the dichotomy. The first is to twist the religious doctrine until it is possible to convince the masses that it is conceivable to unite military service and religious zeal. A second way is to keep general population uneducated enough so they would not be able to question either religious or political authority. Since the notion of education for the purpose of this paper stems from the Western experience that relies on syllogism and rhetoric, it is quite evident why anti-Western attitudes could be convenient for the certain social and political groups within Russian society. Finally, a state could hire mercenaries to do its dirty work; this would spare the population oscillations between patriotism and religiosity.

Another problem that a military could face in a society based on religious values stems from the fact that religious dystalgia continues to play an important role in Russian society. In fact, "...Russian history consists of a series of attempts to repudiate historical epoch."³⁵ It is not a secret that all major religious communities in modern day Russia are somewhat hesitant about their past. The Orthodox Church continues to denounce its subjugation by Peter the Great as well as its almost complete destruction during the Soviet times. The Jewish community continues to remember the *pogroms*, and the Muslim Tartars are still viewed as a prize of Ivan IV's military escapades. Moreover, as

³⁵ Janack, 1999: p.242.

mentioned earlier, there is a feeling of cultural irredentism that in certain way breaks continuity with the past in order to re-invent the present. After all, "...social elites (politician, historian and others of influence) construct a sense of nationhood through, among other things, 'remembering' particular events and phenomena and 'forgetting' others."³⁶ However, the military has to approach the subject matter of history in an entirely different way. It has to remember the past in all of its totality. It has to remember its failures in order to prevent them in the future and it has to remember its victories in order to nourish its *esprit de corps*. The world outlook of a religious and a military establishment are, in fact, on the opposite sides of the spectrum. On the other hand, military and ruling elites have much more in common; although one should never forget that the military exists for the needs of the elite class and not vice versa. So what is the military's role in modern society in general and today's Russian State in particular?

Besides fighting wars, the military has to provide its elites with the best assessment of possible threats that might challenge ruler's *status quo*; this is done through the establishment and dissemination of a National Security Concept with a Military Doctrine as an integral part of the document, "...mastery of the art and science of war was the most sacred charge of the General Staff, and its officers firmly believed in the military doctrine as the crucial foundation of the state's approach to preparations for and conduct of war."³⁷ However, as of this time, the Russian General Staff (organization entrusted with producing initial drafts of both documents) has not done a very good job of it, partially due to the currently prevailing political culture within the country itself, "...the anti-democratic nature of those relations [civil-military K.T.] and the reliance of

³⁶ Janack, 1999: p.9.

³⁷ Kipp, 2011: p. 72.

both sides of this dyad on the incessant invocation of foreign threats contribute in many ways to the fact that Russia, as such, intrinsically remains a risk factor...³⁸ There are many reasons for that unfortunate result but mainly they are political, "...post-Soviet Russia received its first published military doctrine, not as a result of open debate but through a concealed power struggle between the Security Council and the Ministry of Defense..."³⁹ In fact, since Russia became independent, the situation has become even worse because: "...Yeltsin, Putin and now Medvedev have created a situation whereby they now stand face-to-face with the military, with only the instruments of personal control rather than a transparent, strong, legitimate government institution..."⁴⁰ This is a very disturbing fact on many different levels.

First and foremost, from the elite's point of view, due to such personified control of the CMO, there are no guarantees that with the eventual end of the Putin epoch those in charge of the military will not threaten current elite's social and economic positions. Secondly, because there is a great reliance on the concept of external enemy, it makes it that much more difficult to legitimately work on solutions to any number of the pressing political and military problems. For example, if international terrorism is indeed such a threat, then it would only make sense to coordinate efforts in eradicating it. However, given that there is an irreplaceable need for having an external and international enemy it makes it that much more difficult to foster the much needed spirit of cooperation. This leads to the condition of permanent attack and defense instead of a possible break and stability that is needed for economic and social development, "...as in the past, so in the future, NATO and the United States were assumed to be the primary potential

³⁸ Blank, 2011: p.57.

³⁹ Kipp, 2011: p.69

⁴⁰ Blank, 2011: pp. 9-10.

enemies.”⁴¹ In addition, the fact that military concepts focus on the perceived threat from the outside takes away from internal security; since the tactics, techniques and procedures of dealing with external threats are very different from the tools used to defeat internal enemies. Even as recently as the year 2000, “...internal instability and separatism were much more immediate threats than external foes.”⁴²

Finally a few words have to be said about the military’s delayed reaction the realities of XXI century; specifically, that today’s world is not bi- or even unipolar any more. Any action concerning actors outside of national borders (and in some instances within, as well) has to be made with the direct permission of the international community via the United Nations Security Council or at least with a tacit understanding of the major international power players. The current Russian military thinking defies such conventions. Recently, at the urging of President Medvedev an amendment to the Russian Law on Defense has been approved by the Russian legislators that “...provides a basis for justifying the offensive use of Russian force against every state from the Baltic to Central Asia on the self-same basis of supposedly defending the ‘honor and dignity’ of Russian citizens and culture from discrimination and attack.”⁴³ This unilateral bellicose rhetoric is disturbing not only because it undermines international security but because it has the potential to destabilize the Russian Federation itself. First and foremost, unilateral action challenges the authority of the Security Council to act as the sole authority authorizing international military actions. With its role reduced, Russia could lose its status as a veto holding power thus actually reducing its status from that of at least a regional power to the much-dreaded “Upper Volta with nuclear weapons”, an apt

⁴¹ Kipp, 2011: p. 118.

⁴² Ibid: p. 90.

⁴³ Blank, 2011: p.51.

description given to the then Soviet Union by former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. Secondly, the terms “honor”, “dignity” and “culture” are not clearly defined even for those currently living within the geographical borders of the Russian Federation and an attempt to project these onto people who live in non-Slavic lands could prove dubious at best.

So what is there, philosophically, at the end? There is a small group of people – the elite – that is not sure how to hold on to power since it has but a singular leader and no proven mechanism of transferring of power. There is a society that is not sure of its role in the world. Finally, there are a number of groups that are willing to raise irredentist rhetoric in lieu of providing a clearly defined goal. With all that in mind it is time to turn the issue of military clergy in the armed forces of the Russian Federation.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Although the word ‘triad’ has been mentioned before, it is a not an equilateral but rather an isosceles triangle, with the State and the society that it represents taking up the apex of this structure, closely corresponding to Clausewitz’s “Holy Trinity” of “...People, Army and Commander...” with the latter being political leadership. Thus, a few things must be mentioned about the society in which the new institution of Military Clergy is trying to take root.

Modern Russia is a post-imperial federation of mostly Russian Slavs – about 81%⁴⁴ where “...those who made themselves rich ... crave recognition”⁴⁵ thus perfectly contributing to the political theory of legalized crime and corruption. Historically

⁴⁴Federal’naia Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoi Statistiki.

http://www.gks.ru/bgd/free/B12_00/IssWWW.exe/Stg/dk04/8-0.htm (accessed 08 10, 2012).

⁴⁵Trenin, 2007: p.18

however, "...the Russian nation-state is not being constructed on the basis of national consciousness among ethnic Russians..."⁴⁶ It would be a safe argument that geographical vastness and the presence of many smaller ethnic groups would be a more accurate description of the Russian State rather than the notion of being a Slav. There is a famous adage of a pre-Soviet Russian Prime Minister – Count Witte – that the Russian Empire can only exist as an empire; no empire means no Russia, or as Dmitry Trenin eloquently put it: "...A 'Muscovy' ... would be *Russian but not Russia*..."⁴⁷ Certain ideas such as the Urals and Siberia are entrenched in the Russian psyche more than the notion of being a Slav, thus purely ethnic self-identification plays a secondary role in the establishment of national and cultural markers. Having geographical awareness as a major part of national self-identification results in unwillingness to compromise on a state's physical borders and security. Given this fact, along with a number of attempts by the Western powers to subjugate Russia and the Soviet Union, there is an inherent distrust of the West and of many things that the West holds as self-evident truths, including many democratic and liberal values.

Under the reign of Vladimir Putin, the idea of conservative nationalism seems to have been artificially brought to the forefront and is attempting to take a firm hold in Russian society. For better or worse, the religious leadership did not stay away from the government's political projects and embraced them along with its traditional longing for monarchical form of government.

⁴⁶Trenin, 2007: p.60.

⁴⁷Trenin, 2002: p.11.

Throughout its tumultuous history, the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate⁴⁸ (ROC MP) was never an organization of institutional strength and independence. From the early, politically calculated, conversion of Prince Vladimir of Kiev to the Church's subjugation by Peter the Great and later almost complete annihilation by the Bolsheviks, the Church has been a tool of the ruling government; the classic academic term of *caesaropapism*⁴⁹ fits perfectly in the current discourse. In the Russian historical discourse, it is customary to speak of the doctrine of "symphony of power", where the Church and the State share the power each attending to its own sphere of responsibilities. In real life, however, this was not the case as the Church was easily subjugated first through the use of various economic tools and later through the brute political power of a current hereditary ruler or *basilevs*. This resulted in multiple schisms within the Church, the Old Believers being the most famous ones. It also made the Church a scapegoat for many atrocities committed by the Czarist regime. There is a current conservative discourse that Russia has always been an Orthodox country; this is only partially true. It is hard not to be an Orthodox Christian if religious conversion to any other faith is punishable by death, which was the case for ethnic Slavs until late into the czarist era. Given a chance in 1917, the same "God loving people" violently rid themselves of their monarchical and religious yoke. Under the Soviet government, the Church leadership had been forced to work under the auspices of the KGB, leading to more and more renegades founding 'catacomb' churches. In its long history, the ROC never learned how to withstand competition from the other Christian denominations

⁴⁸ This is the name given to the institution after 1941 when Joseph Stalin allowed it to come back into the Soviet political arena. Prior to this, the institution has been known as the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church.

⁴⁹ The term *caesaropapism* refers to a combination of secular and religious powers into a single political entity. The best example of this trend would be the Catholic Pope during the Medieval Ages.

(especially the Catholic Church) and now solely relies on the Russian government's protection via the law that establishes only four traditional Russian religions – Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. This makes it really difficult for everyone else to exist within the legal framework of the host country; legalized and non-transparent tax exemptions also likely play a large role in the shadowy world of the Church's finances. Also, as mentioned above, although almost 80% of Russia's Slavic population professes Orthodoxy as their religion, only "...3-4% know the Ten Commandments and the Symbol of faith..."⁵⁰. The vast majority have very little religious awareness. Some writers describe it as superstition rather than true religiosity. Additionally, as University College London's historian Geoffrey Hoskins suggested, it seems that the Russian population does not see the traditional Orthodox Church capable of fulfilling its spiritual needs thus further undermining nationalist claims to the existential need for a wide spread presence of the Church in the Russian society. Also, Olivier Roy, a professor at the European University Institute and a pre-eminent scholar of religion and society, made a great point when he said, "...fundamentalism is the religious form most suited to globalization, because it accepts its own deculturation..."⁵¹ In our case it could mean that although used in a nationalist context, the ROC is an *ad hoc* creation of various political and cultural expediencies, *ergo* it cannot be fundamentalist, even if it tries.

Beginning with Ivan IV's sacking of Patriarch Philip and the further suppression of religious autonomy by Peter I via the establishment of the Holy Synod, the ROC became a political arm of the Russian State. It is a well-known fact that the official

⁵⁰ Zaitseva, Iu. <http://www.religiopolis.org/publications/4710-mif-o-duhovnom-vozhrozhdenii.html> (accessed 06 14, 2012).

⁵¹ Roy, 2010: p.5

Church almost disappeared under the Soviet rule until Joseph Stalin decided to resurrect it for his own, non-fundamental, purposes in 1943. And here hides the ultimate problem for the Church in that it has to make a choice between its religious roots – thus becoming a-cultural – or getting permanently fixed to the idea of “*Russianness*” and thus give up any hope of attracting converts from other parts of the world. If there ever was a “devil’s bargain”, this has to be the one. At some point, the Church will have to choose between proselytization and local power; most likely it will not be able to do both. Moreover, in the context of this particular research it is not sure that the military would trust or even want to have cosmopolitan religious purists among their personnel. Global appeal is not something to be desired if there is a need or want for a heightened cultural absolutism.

The military is a distillation of the trends described above. It is important to realize that the modern Russian military is a direct descendant of the Soviet military psyche but not necessarily of the Soviet conventional military capability. It lacks the mass, quality and technological edge of the Soviet conventional capability. Of course, the destructive power of nuclear warheads remains unchanged, regardless of political regime. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, local *voenkomats*⁵² perpetually struggle to conscript enough healthy young males to maintain the desired million man army. The once mighty military machine continually battles corruption at all levels of leadership. The issue of *dedovschina*⁵³ has been the late Soviet and modern Russia’s “premier” issue

⁵² *Voenkomat* is a military conscription office entrusted with the responsibility to keep track of military age males for conscription and/or mobilization purposes.

⁵³ *Dedovschina* is a uniquely Russian problem of barrack violence where those conscripts who have served the longest claim the right to establish, and violently enforce, the rules of day-to-day activities. Under this way of life, conscript’s “status” changed every six to eight months giving him more and more authority and protection from the law. Many times, this situation has been accepted by the commanding officer who would delegate the responsibility of maintaining “law and order” to these “old-timers” in return for guaranteed discipline and permanent non-disclosure of various forms of physical and mental abuse. Most experts consider this institution as an unintended consequence of the 1967 military reform when the term of

for a number of years, resulting in over one and a half thousand people experiencing its negative effects in 2011 alone⁵⁴.

Additionally, the Soviet and later Russian military force has been a multi-ethnic force that presented its own peculiar problems to military leadership. And, if under the Soviet command structure, most of the issues have been under control thanks to the use of over 80,000 *zampolits*^{55, 56} and the policy of extraterritoriality (where a conscript would have to serve as far away from his birth place as possible); the current ethnic situation in the military is bleak. Demographically, it is harder and harder to find enough fit, young Slavs. The barracks life is experiencing a rise in organized crime based on *zemlyachestvo* (home-of-record geographic location of conscripts), according to Chief Military Prosecutor Sergey Fridinsky "...the amount of crimes done by the conscripts in 2010 increased by 18%..."⁵⁷ Unable to stem the disdain between the Slavs and the conscripts from the North Caucasus, the military leadership decided to stop conscripting or hiring young males from the latter region, thus putting even more stress on the traditional Slavic regions to provide the required number of conscripts. An unending battle between weapon manufacturers and military leadership continuously leaves the Armed Forces without modern military equipment thus further degrading its conventional capabilities. In terms of religious convictions, "...the overall number of military believers is almost

service has been shortened from three to two years. However, on a larger scale, I would argue that the reform simply brought to the fore a problem of a Russian/Soviet psyche, namely a certain sense of entitlement and unwillingness to live by the rule of law; instead, living through the semi-criminal notion of *poniatii* (understanding).

⁵⁴ *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*. <http://www.ng.ru/nvo/news/2011/10/13/1318508215.html> (accessed 06 21, 2012).

⁵⁵ Odom, 1998: p.204.

⁵⁶ *Zampolit* is a Deputy Commander for Political Matters. During the Soviet Union this personnel was more closely associated with the KGB than the Soviet Ministry of Defense.

⁵⁷ http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2012-05-25/3_imam.html (accessed 07 19, 2012).

30%...within each military category over 60% of the conscript force and about 15% of the Officer Corps view themselves as believers...⁵⁸

With all of this in mind, along with many more secondary and tertiary effects of the aforementioned issues that have not been mentioned due to the scope of this paper, let us take a closer look the institution that is supposed to stem most of the aforementioned problems as they crystalize within the military structure of the Russian Armed Forces.

THE MODERN MILITARY CLERGY

The entire modern history of the Russian Military Clergy Corps can be described as a state of flux. March 02, 1994 was the watershed event in the re-emergence of the cooperation between the Church and the Military. On that date, Patriarch Aleksii II and Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev signed a joint communiqué consisting of six paragraphs that outlined all further joint activities⁵⁹; this document is still evoked by both the Orthodox clergy and the modern day military leadership. The document, like many other groundbreaking documents, is fairly vague. It opens by calling for the establishment of a coordinating committee headed by General-Lieutenant Mikulin and *Protoierei* Pavlucheko in order to develop a plan for further interactions. The rest of the document spells out the spheres of interaction; these would include charity work among the servicemen and their families; helping wounded and retired military and also helping families of servicemen killed in action. The committee would also be entrusted with developing a plan to “...reintroduce the Russian spirituality and the tradition of

⁵⁸ Institut religii i politiki. <http://i-r-p.ru/page/stream-event/index-19652.html> (accessed 06 19, 2012).

⁵⁹ Aleksii II, Patriarkh Moskovskii i Vseia Rusi and Ministr Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii Grachev P.S. <http://www.atheism.ru/archive/archive.phtml?id=23> (accessed 07 06, 2011).

righteously serving the Fatherland...”⁶⁰ Additionally, a very specific choice of words had been used to phrase paragraphs four and five; both of which deal with conducting religious services and educational seminars. These paragraphs begin with the words “*предложить*” and “*по желанию*” which respectively mean “to offer” and “if wished”; in other words, the presumption is that cooperation is not mandatory and all participants are volunteers. However, the Russian and previously the Soviet experience with military volunteers has a dubious past. What if the Minister of Defense decides to cooperate with the clergy, would this mean that all of his subordinates are now facing the dilemma of whether to continue wavering or begin supporting the Minister by actively participating in religious activities? As we shall see later, most of the time, the servicemen chose the second option.

In 1996, a new and much more detailed document was signed by Patriarch Aleksii II and the Russia’s Minister of Defense Rodionov. This document, also consisting of six paragraphs, offers the first and fairly detailed path to the future re-establishment of the Military Clergy Corps. The titles of these paragraphs are: 1) Patriotic upbringing of servicemen; 2) Moral upbringing and religious education of servicemen; 3) Social protection of servicemen and their families; 4) Realization of religious needs of servicemen; 5) Reconstruction of religious structures; 6) Organizational activities⁶¹. Each paragraph has its own subparagraphs, some of which must be specifically mentioned. Paragraph 1 cites plans to promote “...moral motivation of military

⁶⁰ Aleksii II, Patriarkh Moskovskii i Vseia Rusi and Ministr Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii Grachev P.S. <http://www.atheism.ru/archive/archive.phtml?id=23> (accessed 07 06, 2011).

⁶¹ Aleksii II, Patriarkh Moskovskii i Vseia Rusi and Ministr Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii Rodionov. <http://www.atheism.ru/archive/archive.phtml?id=24> (accessed 05 22, 2012), p.3-6

service...”⁶² and “...continued relationship between the conscription centers and the eparchy...”⁶³ This already poses problems to the non-religious majority. First of all, it presupposes that the Church will support continued conscription practices of the military and will offer moral arguments to the conscripts instead of fiscal or legal incentives. With this argument, the creation of a professional army is not possible. As a matter of fact, even today there are numbers of high-ranking military officers that still proudly support the idea that a professional Soldier is nothing more than a mercenary, incapable of sacrifice. This seems to stem directly from the Soviet principle that service in the Armed Forces is a ‘sacred duty’, payment for which is unpatriotic. As a matter of fact, if it is a duty then there is no need to pay for it, or at least not that much. The notion of ‘duty’ automatically presupposes conscription because there exists a diametrically opposite relationship – choice-compensation. Since the Soviet times, there has been an emphasis on cultivating the spirit of fiscal indifference. Not that the Soviet citizens did not want to get paid, in fact they did, but a number of things were taboo as far as fiscal compensation was concerned and involuntary military service was one of them. The Church, with its emphasis on reward in the Kingdom of God and not necessarily here on Earth, is particularly well suited to promoting idea of duty rather than the idea of fair compensation. As a matter of fact the Church has been supporting this idea since the czarist times. Therefore, in order to instill the notion of “duty” rather than “compensation”, both the military and the Church must work in unison promoting this vision among the young males of pre- and conscription age. If successful, a young

⁶² Aleksii II, Patriarkh Moskovskii i Vseia Rusi and Ministr Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii Rodionov. <http://www.atheism.ru/archive/archive.phtml?id=24> (accessed 05 22, 2012), p.4

⁶³ Ibid.

person will not even raise the question of being a professional serviceman because it would simply be “immoral”.

Returning to the 1996 document, Paragraph 2 contains a number of very important vectors for the future Military Clergy Corps. Namely, they are “Using the power of clergy in the process of improving moral climate...military discipline...uprooting non-regulatory [*dedovschina*]⁶⁴ relationships, suicide inclinations and other negative events.”⁶⁵ The aforementioned spheres are the key in arguing in favor of the re-establishment of the Corps. The problems of low morale, *dedovschina*, suicide and others are the curses of the Russian military. Young men do not want to join the military because it is not prestigious and one can end up with a permanent injury from the regular beatings just by living in the barracks. Suicide, within the context of Russian reality, is just a symptom of these problems. Both the Military and the Church will give their own explanations of these problems and these will be addressed later when discussing present day situation (2009-2013). At this point in time, from the late 1990s until the mid 2000s, the Military Clergy Corps still was not an official entity. At best, these were *ad hoc* relationships between a particular clergyman and a commander of a local military unit. However, this situation changed in 2003 when the recently created “Synodal office of cooperation with the armed forces and law enforcement agencies”, under the leadership of *Protoierei* Dmitriy Smirnov, established and published certain recommendations and requirements for the Orthodox clergy in order to help them establish a more meaningful relationship with military commanders. These recommendations were meant for the curators of the local regional offices (*eparchia*)

⁶⁴ Comment by Tsekanovskiy.

⁶⁵ Aleksii II, Patriarkh Moskovskii i Vseia Rusi and Ministr Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii Rodionov, I., <http://www.atheism.ru/archive/archive.phtml?id=24> (accessed 05 22, 2012), p.4

entrusted with developing interactions between the Church and the military; three of the eight recommendations present a particular interest to us.

First of all, it is advisable for the head of the local church-military office to “...visit all military bases, located within the eparchy, with the suggestion to designate a cleric whose duty would be the patriotic, spiritual-moral instruction to the assigned military personnel and providing religious service to the personnel and their families.”⁶⁶

This “suggestion” raises at least two questions and one conclusion. Why would the clergy go out of their way to visit all the military bases and why did not a particular Commander visit a local church and ask for the services? One possible conclusion is that a rank-and-file commander did not see the need to do so for personal reasons –remember more than half of military servicemen are not all that religious to begin with – or a particular commander could think that bringing a singular religious person into the military abode could spark an ethnic division with the questions like “If there is an Orthodox priest, where is my Imam, Rabbi, etc.?” However, even more puzzling and disturbing is the second “recommendation” of Father Smirnov.

Namely, “The commander of a military unit presents to the eparchial leadership a letter, asking to provide a permanent clergy personnel ...this verbiage will prevent any unfounded claims from the representatives of different religions and the atheists.”⁶⁷ This is an amazing passage. First of all it clearly shows that ROC MP does understand that the practice of having a priest at a military base could lead to the renewal of ethnic violence and possible lawsuits. The statement also implies that the Moscow Patriarchate will

⁶⁶ *Sinodal'nyi Otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata po vzaimodeistviu s Vooruzhennymi Silami i pravookhranitel'nyimi uchrezhdeniiami*.www.pobeda.ru/recomendation_eparhiyam.doc (accessed 01 10, 2013), p.7

⁶⁷ Ibid.

actively seek out a way of getting into the military side of the government, but when it finds an accepting ear, will take a step back and present military personnel as the initiators of the whole process. So now, if there is an increase in the ethnic violence or any other negative publicity that even remotely could be attributed to the religious component, the Eparchy has a bulletproof argument in that officially it was the commander who asked for their presence and not the other way around.

Another question that could be raised in response to this paragraph could be “Why would a military commander go down this road, signing a paper that could potentially make him a target of an investigation?” To be sure, each has its own motives, but if a Minister of Defense – be it Grachev or Rodionov – signs a memorandum stating that the military will cooperate with the Church; does a local commander have a choice? The answer is no; not in the Russian reality.

As a matter of fact, a unit commander is caught between a rock and a hard place. If he does not sign the agreement, he breaks the communiqué signed by his highest commanding officer. If he does sign it, he becomes a scapegoat if there are any investigations relating to the religious sphere.

The third and final “suggestion” that requires a short comment is the “suggestion” to conduct “...semiannual eparchial meeting of clerics serving military personnel in order to jointly discuss arising issues...”⁶⁸ This is important because it shows that the Church, in the best of its historical traditions, is on the way to institutionalize the experience of dealing with the military. In other words, as early as 2003 the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate already was collecting and analyzing data trying to help its personnel to gain

⁶⁸ *Sinodal'nyi Otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata po vzaimodeistviu s Vooruzhennymi Silami i pravookhranitel'nyimi uchrezhdeniyami*. www.pobeda.ru/recomendation_eparhiyam.doc (accessed 01 10, 2013), p.7

access to military bases and conduct its pre-planned activities. This raises a question of the nature of the activities that should be conducted by the Orthodox personnel once the commander “asks” for the presence of a religious personnel and it brings us to the next section. What are the goals of the Church in this endeavor?

According to the “recommendations” issued by *Protoierei* Smirnov, “...a clergyman on a military base...is a missionary, an apologist. Therefore, it could be said that clergyman’s main goal today...to teach military that God exists.”⁶⁹ This could be considered an important insight into the true intentions of the religious presence of the Moscow Patriarchate. If the primary purpose is to proselytize, thus increasing the number of believers – with all the associated benefits for the future of the Church – then, all the announcements about helping the Military with *dedovschina* and morale by definition have to take a back seat.

Of course, those in favor of the military clergy can argue that by becoming more religious, the aforementioned problems will decrease, but what about the experience of the post-WWII Soviet Army, a largely non-religious force? From personal discussions with a few former Soviet Soldiers who served in the Soviet Air Force and the Navy between 1960s and 1990s, it is quite certain that the issues affecting the current Russian military are there not because of the lack of religiosity among the members, but, rather due to the overall political and economic situation in the country; of course, this would be a topic of an entirely different paper. Besides proselytizing, Father Smirnov had other proposed recommendations. Among the fairly simple and self-explanatory duties such as meeting the local commanders and presenting a plan of action for the official approval;

⁶⁹ *Sinodal'nyi Otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata po vzaimodeistviu s Vooruzhennymi Silami i pravookhranitel'nyimi uchrezhdeniiami*. www.pobeda.ru/recomendation_eparhiyam.doc (accessed 01 10, 2013),p.8.

Paragraph II, Section 1 included recommendations to begin one's cooperation with the "consecration of the unit's flag, battle equipment and armament, and barracks."⁷⁰ Additionally, the unit's spiritual advisor should be present during "...oath ceremonies, beginning of teaching period, the Unit Day, the Branch Day, the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland, the Victory Day, etc.⁷¹..." These celebrations are among the most important ones in the Military structure and their celebration is very dear to every person who has ever served in the Soviet or Russian military. It could be said that celebration of these days provides the needed continuity within the Armed Forces, and the presence of the religious personnel of course in and of itself is not bad. However, if the clergy's number one goal is to proselytize, then everything else becomes suspicious. The topic of religions other than the Russian Orthodox will be discussed below, but a few things are worth mentioning right now, especially the relationship between proselytizers and the others. It is not a secret that the modern Russian military force is multiethnic, multi-religious and has a large atheistic segment. So, when a non-Moscow Patriarchate Soldier prepares to participate in the Military Oath ceremony, what are his thoughts and feelings when he promises to protect not only his country and his family but a flag of his unit that is flying under the blessing of something totally foreign and may be even offensive to him?

On July 21, 2009 the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev publicly announced that he supports the official establishment of Military Clergy under the structure of the Ministry of Defense and ordered the Minister of Defense, Anatoly

⁷⁰ *Sinodal'nyi Otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata po vzaimodeistviu s Vooruzhennymi Silami i pravookhranitel'nyimi uchrezhdeniiami*. www.pobeda.ru/recomendation_eparhiyam.doc (accessed 01 10, 2013), p.8.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Serdiukov to work out its implementation. The result of this directive was a very important document titled “The Directive about organizing work with religious military personnel of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation”, issued on January 24, 2010. This document opened the floodgates of events and discussions that remain unresolved to this day; but, before delving into these issues, a few words must be said about the document itself.

The document outlines the structure of the newly created organization, spells out the specific requirements that a clerical candidate must meet prior to employment, provides a basic job description, but most importantly it officially establishes the Military-Church relationship. Of course, even before this directive, the Russian Ministry of Defense, and its Personnel Office in particular, already had a department dedicated to working with religious personnel headed by retired Lieutenant-Colonel Boris Lukichev. Nevertheless, this structure, as the main interlocutor between the Moscow Patriarchate and Ministry of Defense, moved from being an *ad hoc* creation to a fully constitutional part of the organization. So, what are the key highlights of the document?

First of all, Section I, Part 1 states that this document is created in order to allow “...religious military personnel the right to have freedom of consciences and freedom to practice religion...”⁷² Furthermore, Section I, Part 3 states that officials representing different religions must interact with each other in a dignified manner and not interfere with each other’s job of helping religious military personnel⁷³. Next, the document reserves the Minister’s right to appoint a particular cleric based on the ROC MP’s recommendations. Finally, Section VI provides the insight that clergy will be hired as

⁷² Ministerstvo Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii. <http://kapellan.ru/polozhenie-po-organizacii-raboty-s-veruyushhimi-v-vooruzhennyx-silax-rf/> (accessed 01 26, 2011), Section I, Part 1.

⁷³ Ibid: Part 3.

contract personnel⁷⁴ and the Ministry of Defense will “provide living quarters, medical services, salary and other social benefits...”⁷⁵ All of these statements brought the discontent that had been simmering underneath the lid to a boiling point.

The first argument against the previously mentioned pro-clerical view is that the Church and the State could hardly be called ‘independent’ if one pays the salary of the other. Some of the taxation benefits enjoyed by the Church have been mentioned above, but in case of the military clergy, each of them will be paid between 25 and 40 thousand rubles a month⁷⁶. The entire spiritual force will cost the taxpayers and the Ministry of Defense around 57.6 million rubles a year⁷⁷. While the religious component might not substitute the State, it is quite obvious that in this arrangement they are not as separate as the Constitution requires. Equally dubious is the argument regarding Section 8 about the “Status of Military Personnel”. According to Lieutenant-Colonel Ovcharov, “...the law talks not about the prohibition of religious activities in military organizations by the already-established, outside of the military bases religious structures...but about the creation of new religious organizations inside a particular military base...”⁷⁸ In other words, if a religious entity existed prior to this law – and remember from the previous discussion, these have to be registered, officially recognized, etc. – they have the right to work directly inside a military organization; this is confusing to say the least. First of all, this reasoning directly shields the ROC MP from being uprooted by some other religious following, and secondly, it does not address the main question of why does the religious

⁷⁴ “Polozhenie po organizatsii raboty s veruiushchimi voennosluzhashchimi Vooruzhennykh Sil Rossiiskoi Federatsii”, Part 17.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Part 20.

⁷⁶ Agentstvo religioznoi informatsii Blagovest. <http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index/php?ss=2&s=3&id=32352> (accessed 04 26, 2011).

⁷⁷ *Kommersant-Dengi*. <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc-rss/1609675> (accessed 07 10, 2011).

⁷⁸ Ovcharov, O. <http://iam.duma.gov.ru/node/2/4591/16060> (accessed 02 06, 2011).

element have to be inside the military institution? In short, if this is the best justification one has to offer, it falls well short of being a convincing justification that does not raise any other questions.

The second argument is that having military clergy is plainly unconstitutional. According to *Fond "Zdravomyslie"*, "...appearance of clergy among Ministry of Defense's personnel ...violates Paragraph 14, Section 2 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation that states: "Religious gatherings are separated from the State and equal in front of the law..."⁷⁹. Additionally, according to the critics, the same directive violates Section 8 of the Federal Law "About the Status of Military Personnel" because the law prohibits the presence of religious institutions on military bases "...directing the military personnel to participate in religious ceremonies only as private individuals."⁸⁰ These charges have been around since 1994 when the original Church – Military document had been signed; the Moscow Patriarchate had a long time to prepare a response. Oleg Ovcharov – a Lieutenant-Colonel, a military lawyer and a faculty member at the Military University of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation⁸¹ – writes one of the better legal arguments arguing in favor of the Church. Specifically, he argues that the presence of clerics on military bases does not violate the aforementioned Chapter 14, Section 2 of the Russian Constitution because religious personnel "...will not take up a space or duties of any government employee, there will be no military personnel under his command."⁸² But this argument has at least two weak points. First of all, while it is true that officially no cleric will be issuing orders, a religious component

⁷⁹ Fond «Zdravomyslie». <http://zdravomyslie.ru/zayavleniya-o-svyaschennikah-v-armii> (accessed 05 06, 2011).

⁸⁰ Zaitseva, Iu. <http://religiopolis.org/news/2209-nezakonnoe-kapellanstvo.html> (accessed 04 26, 2011).

⁸¹ More information about the school could be found at <http://www.vumo.ru/index.php>

⁸² Ovcharov, O. <http://iam.duma.gov.ru/node/2/4591/16060> (accessed 02 06, 2011).

will nevertheless be introduced into the military decision-making process. This problem begins very early, with the notion of the Military Oath. The text of the current Russian military oath that can be found on the Russian Defense Ministry's website contains the following words "...I swear to execute the orders of my commanders and *managers*⁸³ ..."⁸⁴ While the word *manager* refers to the Russian word *nachal'nik*, the following point is important. A manager is a civilian figure as opposed to the uniform wearing military commander. The military clergy, who will not be military personnel but still hold the title of a Deputy Commander thus ideally fit into the definition of a manager or *nachal'nik*, hence making him a figure of authority, by definition. In other words, any decision will be scrutinized not only on the basis of the military necessity and the Law of Warfare but, also, on the basis of its righteousness. This does not necessarily have to do only with purely military decisions, such as when to order an artillery raid, but rather with day to day social interactions, the results of which will inevitably find their way to reflect on one's military readiness. The latter, is a complex interaction of social and technical variables capable of improving or destroying unit's *esprit-de-corps*. The issue of military readiness becomes even more intricate in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious force and so it is a good time to examine the situation with the non-Orthodox religions in the Russian Armed Forces.

Finally, an interesting and possibly damaging development took place recently, on June 28, 2011, when Boris Lukichev announced: "We are not building the Chaplain

⁸³ Italics added for emphasis by Tsekanovskiy.

⁸⁴ Ministerstvo Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii. <http://recrut.mil.ru/career/conscription/oath.htm> (accessed 01 10, 2013).

Corps but rather the institute of military clergy.”⁸⁵ This is amazing, after years and years of talking about the Chaplain Corps, there is a turn-around (although the official website is still using the word *kapellan*, which is Russian for chaplain). What is the difference between a Chaplain and a Military Clergyman? The key difference should concern subordination and ascending into the force, as well the legal status. A Chaplain is a military officer, someone who wears a military rank and has a clear path of joining the military force and follow-on promotions. A military clergy on the other hand, is first and foremost a religious person; someone who does not wear the military uniform and someone who gets his main guidance from the religious structure rather than the military. Additionally, if military clergy decided to walk away from their assigned duties (as discussed above) they will not be considered deserters but rather a person who broke a business contract; something much better in the eyes of the law.

NON-ORTHODOX RELIGIONS IN THE RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES

The opening salvo into this discussion should be a remark by the former Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, and the current Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia Kirill, when he said, “We have to abolish the commonly used description ‘multi-confessional country’: Russia – is an Orthodox country with national and religious minorities.”⁸⁶ Thus, from the very beginning, he argues that there should be no other leadership but the leadership of the ROC MP. As mentioned earlier, there are four

⁸⁵ *ReligioPolis: tsentr religiovedcheskikh issledovaniy*. <http://www.religiopolis.org/publications/2842-voennye-svjaschenniki-vmesto-kapellanov.html> (accessed 06 29, 2011).

⁸⁶ Inozemtsev, V. <http://www.religiopolis.org/publications/2889-vlast-ot-boga-bog-ot-vlasti.html> (accessed 07 06, 2011), p.2

'traditional' Russian religions. Besides the Russian Orthodoxy of the Moscow Patriarchate, there are Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. Each of these has to be represented in order for the "new" Chaplaincy to be successful. Let us take a brief look at the modern state of affairs for each of these facets.

Islam is the second largest religion in Russia, and due to the certain political and cultural sensitivities, probably is as visible as the Orthodoxy. The Muslim leadership, such as chair of the Central Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Russia, Supreme Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin, Republic of Tatarstan's First Deputy Chair of the Office of the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims, Valiulla Khazrat Yakupov, Deputy Supreme Mufti of the Chechen Republic Usman Utsievich Abdullaev, and Mufti of the Perm Region Khuzin Muhamedgali, understand that in light of the recent legal developments and the continued strengthening of the Orthodox position within the Military they cannot simply be bystanders. However, their path towards having full-fledged military mullahs is very different from that of the ROC MP.

First of all, Muslim clergymen are much less public than their Orthodox colleagues. There has been but a handful of their public interviews and statements regarding the topic of military clergy; and their tone is distinctly different. First of all, the current Muslim religious leadership does not have a problem of supplying religious personnel. Since the official threshold for the presence of clergy is 10%, the total population of Muslim clergy only has to be "...about a few tens..."⁸⁷ Moreover, it seems that the leadership chose the path of the least resistance and instead of creating specific 'militarized' education they will simply employ retired military officers because they

⁸⁷ Maiakova, L., and V. Mal'tsev. http://religion.ng.ru/events/2011-06-15/2_army.html (accessed 01 06, 2013).

“...may pass our courses in the Russian Islamic University. Everyone can do this. It is possible to send such people there who know the situation...”^{88, 89}. This seemingly simple solution, however, is an act of necessity. The problem lies in that “...most of the Islamic religious schools in Russia are under the control of ...pan-Turkic groups...”⁹⁰ In a tightly controlled society, which is modern Russia, this fact represents a major concern.

Pan-Turkism developed in late XIX century in Turkey and calls for unification of all Turkic groups in Europe, the Middle East and Asia under a single government. To that effect, there is a concerted effort on the part of previous and current Turkish governments to instill a sense of Turkish national identity in countries as far away as Mongolia. This is done through the establishment of educational institutions of different levels whose main goal is to raise the level of nationalism and political activism; it is understandable why this project is not in favor in Moscow. Any project that leads to political empowerment of regional and ethnic groups could be considered a threat to the unity of the Russian Federation; the mark of Chechen rebellion is still too fresh. In relation to the issue of military clergy, this issue could be even more troubling because it introduces non-conformist religious ideologues into an institution capable of either supporting or toppling the current regime.

On the other hand, approaching the problem from the position of hiring ‘vetted’ individuals would definitely alleviate the issue because former officers already have

⁸⁸ Maiakova, L., and V. Mal'tsev. http://religion.ng.ru/events/2011-06-15/2_army.html (accessed 01 06, 2013).

⁸⁹ The Russian Islamic University is an Islamic educational institution located in Kazan', Russia. Its main goal is to prepare Islamic religious officials for the needs of Russian Umma. It is partially sponsored by the government of Tatarstan. More information can be found at <http://e-riu.ru>.

⁹⁰ Mukhamedgali, Kh. <http://www.pobeda.ru/content/view/6140/> (accessed 03 07, 2011).

security clearances and know how to behave themselves.⁹¹ But even this measure could face a number of unintended problems; the story of General Dudaev could serve as an enduring example that anyone can become disillusioned with the current political regime. Given the tight security control in the Russian Federation, many Muslim clerics would be potentially disqualified from serving in the military due to the security concerns. This is not so much due to the notion of pan-Turkism but, rather, to the general wariness of all things Muslim. This could be confirmed thru the Russian media outlets that have recently reported of a secret directive to stop conscripting Muslim youth, and those from the Dagestan area in particular. According to Ruslan Gereev, the head of the youth sphere monitoring of the Republic of Dagestan, "...in my view, reduction of conscription [from the North Caucasus region] has to do with the export of salafism. Religious youth conducts missionary activities in the Armed Forces, and increases the number of Russian religious cells..."⁹²

Given this fact, the Muslim leadership takes steps to address the issue from a different side; namely, the attitude that the Commander of a military unit should enjoy increased respect and obedience. To that extent, there are official voices within the Islamic leadership that argue "...one of the ways to solve the problem...is elevating the role and authority of Commanders among the subordinates."⁹³ This is markedly different from the ROC MP's point of view where the role of commander is only discussed in terms of the required cooperation. Lastly, the absence of a widespread public relations campaign and the insistence on an elevated role of a military commander provides

⁹¹ It is a standard practice for a retiring military officer to sign a non-disclosure statement for a period of 10-25 years.

⁹² Sumnina, Katia. <http://lenta.ru/articles/2012/02/16/dagestan/> (accessed 06 19, 2012).

⁹³ Abdulaev, U. <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/7321> (accessed 04 26, 2011).

grounds to argue that the Muslim leadership is much less concerned with the issue of military clergy than their Orthodox counterparts. They do, of course, take steps to educate and supply the required personnel because it is the law and they do not want to be left behind; currently the only way of doing it efficiently is to confirm a religious degree onto several former military officers and use their experience to evaluate the requirements for the future appointments.

The Russian Buddhist Sangha's view on the issue is fairly unknown. Most of the Russian Buddhists live along the border with Mongolia in Buriatia, Tuva and Altay. These people, ethnically, are of Mongolian descent and their views are not widely represented within the standard Russian media outlets. As far as the military clergy is concerned, there are sporadic bits and pieces of information, but definitely not enough to form a conclusive opinion. Of course, the lack of information could be considered information in and of itself, but at this point it is safe to argue that the presence of military llamas is not a big deal to the Russian Sangha; there is no single person entrusted with the Sangha-Military cooperation along the line of Father Smirnov for the ROC MP. Although, there is a religious leader of the Russian Buddhists – Bair-llama Damba Ajushev, his role in the issue – so far – is pretty nebulous.

Judaism would rate just above Buddhism in terms of exposure and influence. The key that sets Judaism's position apart is that there is an organization in charge of the Jewish-Military cooperation. The Federation of the Jewish Communities of Russia for interaction with the Armed Forces, the law-enforcement agencies and the Emergency Situations Ministry existed since February 2006 and is headed by Rabbi Aaron Gurevich. Unlike his Orthodox and Muslim colleagues, he is facing a unique set of challenges; it

stems from the number and distribution of Jewish personnel in the Russian Armed forces. The Jews are a small minority of the Russian populace and accordingly they are a fairly small community in the military as well. Additionally, according to the Rabbi Gurevich “There are almost no Jewish conscripts, they are either cadets or officers.”⁹⁴ This of course makes the job both easy and hard. The easy part is that there are fewer people to worry about, less media exposure, less scrutiny and criticism and this is reflected in the issues that Rabbi Gurevich works on. He is not necessarily concerned with finding and educating military clergy and he is not concerned with elevating the status of a military commander. Rather, he would like to focus on educational activities by publishing “...a brochure, that is based on the work of Hovst Khayam, a famous Talmudist of the early 20th century...”⁹⁵ The hardest part of his situation is two-fold. First of all, he does not have a supporting structure and has to fall under the wing of a larger organization such as the ROC MP⁹⁶; of course this is not a problem if the ROC MP would share the reins, but this seems to be unlikely and will be discussed further below. Secondly, because Rabbi Gurevich heads a fairly small operation, if the need arises, it would be hard for him to raise public attention to push his desired agenda. It looks that right from the start his office is relegated to the secondary position at best, and some cynics could actually argue that he is included in the re-established structure only because of the Russian Constitution and not because of the overwhelming need for his services. Nevertheless, while analyzing the current situation of the Chaplain Corps it clear that the Russian Orthodox Church is also facing some difficulties in implementing its goals.

⁹⁴ *Vestnik voennogo i morskogo dukhovenstva* <http://kapellan.ru/glavnyj-voennyj-ravvin-rossii-o-specifike-svoej-raboty/> (accessed 01 31, 2011).

⁹⁵ Gurevich, A. “Doklad Predsedatelia Otdela po vzaimodeistviu s VS i MChS RF ravvina Aarona Gurevicha (FEOR) <http://www.pobeda.ru/content/view/6142> (accessed 03 07, 2011).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

ROC MP EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

ROC MP continues the effort to position itself as the vanguard of the military clergy institution. This active search for a leadership comes with a great deal of responsibility and challenges; some of the most pressing ones being recruiting and sustaining a large pool of well-educated and well-qualified cadre. The first and the most important challenge is educating the clergy capable of serving in military units, as well as educating the future and the current military officers on the basis of Orthodoxy. To this extent there have been some recent developments; namely introduction of religious classes in various military academies. For example, the Military Academy of the Strategic Rocket Forces houses a department of the Orthodox Culture⁹⁷ and there is a similar structure in the Academy of the General Staff. However, the goal of these two structures is to bring up righteous Christian Officers and not clerics. As mentioned above, currently there is a Synodal department in within the ROC MP that deals with these issues, and there is an Orthodox believer, Mr. Lukichev, who single-handedly heads the MoD RF's religious department. The current plan is to build a structure with the "top-down" approach. Specifically, after the structure within MoD RF, there will be a structure within the Central Staff of a military district which "...besides a manager – a civilian personnel – will feature three clerics."⁹⁸ Only after that, the "official" clerics will reach the "front lines" at the brigade and university level⁹⁹ (the last two levels have a roughly similar ranked commander in charge).

⁹⁷ *Sinodal'nyi Otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata po vzaimodeistviu s Vooruzhennymi Silami i pravookhranitel'nyimi uchrezhdeniiami*. <http://www.pobeda.ru/content/view/11166/252/> (accessed 02 10, 2011).

⁹⁸ Murzin, E. <http://www.pobeda.ru/content/view/12036/1/> (accessed 04 20, 2011).

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Additional problems stem from the ROC's medieval way of existence; female emancipation is one such problem. There are a number of speeches and statements by the members of all levels of religious hierarchy that could be considered offensive to women and those associated with their cause for equality. A good example of such primitive outlook could be *Protoierei* Smirnov's view of problem of single parent families and their relationship to the overall decline of Russia's military *esprit de corps* when he says, "Almost all boys are the only children in the family, and 40% of them grow up without fathers...female upbringing at home and at school (over 90% of teachers are females) suppresses in the boys the military spirit."¹⁰⁰

Not only does this denigrate women as incapable of raising good citizens but it also raises questions about the suitability of women in the armed forces, if they are lacking the ability to teach the "fighting spirit" are they capable of serving in the military at all; can they be good soldiers? This is especially interesting question in light of the timid efforts to have a professional rather than conscript-filled military, but this is a question for different research. Nevertheless, this attitude indicates that even among the top ROC MP leadership there are forces that tend to be divisive and who are still clinging to the past. What is more troubling is that there are a number of clerics who support this position and go even further. For example *Episkop* of Ivano-Voznesensk and Kineshma Iosif, not only argues that having female teachers deprives society of the notions of "will" and "responsibility"¹⁰¹ but that the only way to get acquainted with these principles is through the military service¹⁰². If that is the case, than a valid question could be asked

¹⁰⁰ Smirnov, D. <http://pobeda.ru/content/view/7568/21/> (accessed 03 07, 2011).

¹⁰¹ Iosif, Episkop Ivano-Voznesenskii i Kineshenskii. <http://pobeda.ru/content/view/7560/21/> (accessed 03 07, 2011).

¹⁰² Ibid.

linking civil society and bellicosity. Namely, could non-military components of Russian society develop a citizen capable of contributing to this society through personal will and personal responsibility, or this is the prerogative of military barrack lifestyle?

Additionally, what about an alternative military service? Are these people less capable of loving their motherland? Are they less moral than the ones enduring the hardships of *dedovschina*? It seems that the current view of the Church is that the country is riddled with feminine pacifist males that are waiting for the moment when someone shows them the path to having the proper bellicose spirit. If that is the attitude, then it is hard to find the right type of young students to fill the ranks of military clergy.

Education takes a long time and the Church cannot wait; there is an effort to send existing clergy into certain military bases in order to get the process started. According to General-Lieutenant Burutin, "...in 2009...there are already 13 positions...4 in the North-Caucasus military district and ...9 in...the military bases located outside of RF. This is Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Armenia and Tadzhikistan."¹⁰³ But these are fairly simple – *ad hoc* – solutions; a long-term solution will have to involve more thinking and bureaucracy. Therefore, not only there is a shortage of qualified personnel but, also, the few people who are qualified are distributed mostly outside of the Russian Federation. This raises a very important question – why go abroad instead of staying within the geographic and political borders of the Russian Federation? There are at least three possible reasons.

The first reason is a fairly simple and down to Earth explanation – it creates more publicity. The Russian military contingents stationed abroad, in countries such as Abkhazia or Armenia, are messengers of goodwill and having a cleric, dressed in a

¹⁰³ Burutin, A. <http://www.pobeda.ru/content/view/11197/1/> (accessed 03 07, 2011).

traditional garb with a large crucifix adorning his chest is a message that the Church supports these “goodwill” actions. This message is important for both the Russian military personnel and the remnants of a local Russian population. A second reason could be that these garrisons are often located in or near local conflict zones and having a religious presence would prove to the doubters that the Church goes where its people go, even though it might be dangerous. Another explanation is that there are soldiers serving at those bases who do genuinely require and appreciate religious services afforded to them by the presence of religious personnel. However, there are still a few other possible reasons, and these are somewhat disconcerting.

Two questions should be asked, one – why is the Church trying to be so close the military, and who exactly serves in the Russian contingents stationed in various dangerous areas? A statement from *Protoierei* Smirnov gives us very good insight into the first question when talking about the present day Russian military personnel: “This is a group of people are absolutely healthy men – medically, psychologically and physically. This is the largest group of people with two college degrees...this is why we see our army as our hope.”¹⁰⁴ However disturbing this social profiling can be, it should be taken to its logical conclusion that – if the Church views the military as an elite portion of the Russian society, where would one find the elite portions of the Russian military? The answer is – the Airborne Forces, the Strategic Rocket Forces and the Nuclear Submarine Forces. However, due to the secret and sensitive nature of the nuclear forces, only the Airborne branch is capable of acting as a public harbinger of the things to come. It is, after all, the President’s strategic reserve and its missions are not as sensitive as the other two previously mentioned military branches. The “winged infantry” is entrusted with

¹⁰⁴ Smirnov, D. <http://pobeda.ru/content/view/11188/1/> (accessed 03 07, 2011).

several missions that put them outside of the Russian Federation's political borders. These extraterritorial bases contain the Airborne, the Special Forces, and some professional "contract" soldiers; in other words, the elite. Another reason is purely religious and has to do with the ongoing feud between the ROC and some local Churches as to who is the only 'true' Church in the region. These tensions include Patriarch Kirill's vision of having authority over Abkhazia and South Ossetia along with a few sites in Armenia. Military bases provide the Church with a convenient excuse for conducting its mission in the areas outside of their jurisdiction. But who are the people within the ROC's rightful jurisdiction? Who are these one million soldiers that the Church is willing to go to such great lengths to help?

According to the 2010 statistics from the Russian Ministry of Defense, "...two thirds of military personnel call themselves religious. Of those, 83% -- Orthodox, 8% -- Muslim and 9% -- followers of other religions..."¹⁰⁵ This means a full third of military personnel do not call themselves religious. Moreover, these numbers are not equally distributed across the force. For example, "...in the Far Eastern military district, Orthodox organizations make up 39% of the registered religious institutions...the Volgo-Ural district reports that 50% consists of Muslim, 40% Orthodox..."¹⁰⁶ This indicates that there is no standard solution in dealing with social and ethnic problems within the force. Furthermore, there are "...200 000 non-reporting conscripts that ignored the conscription centers' notices to report..."¹⁰⁷ and those who do report still have to face the infamous *dedovschina* which increased by one third; 90% of these crimes are committed by the

¹⁰⁵ Institut religii i prava. <http://news.invictory.org/issue27550.html> (accessed 02 09, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ishchenko, S. <http://svpressa.ru/society/article/39111/> (accessed 03 07, 2011).

conscripts¹⁰⁸. The situation with the clergy is not much better. Yes, there are 530 working churches on the territories of the Ministry of Defense¹⁰⁹ that house 850 volunteer clerical personnel¹¹⁰ but as seen from the statistic above, they do not seem to make a lot of difference. In addition, the public relations campaign that some of the handpicked Orthodox clergy are already serving in the North-Caucasus military district, is hitting a snag. When the religious personnel had to participate in the field training exercises (FTX), according to Patriarch Kirill, "...most of them simply left the exercises, explaining that they cannot handle this type of service."¹¹¹

Finally, what do the regular Russians think about the institute of military clergy? According to a 2010 poll, 45% of think Chaplaincy is a must¹¹² but this is lower than the 2006 figure when 53% of people supported this idea¹¹³. Equally important is the social breakdown of the respondents. According to the same document, most of the people who were in favor of religious-military cooperation were women, people over 35 and those with low educational levels¹¹⁴, while those who are under 35 and with high levels of education do not see a purpose in this venture¹¹⁵. In other words, those who are liable to serve in the military do not see the need for having a military cleric in their possible military career. The final section addresses the eternal Russian question "What is to be done?" Although a number of things could be done, the main effort of this work is not

¹⁰⁸ Ishchenko, S. <http://svpressa.ru/society/article/39111/> (accessed 03 07, 2011).

¹⁰⁹ Agentstvo religioznoi informatsii Blagovest. <http://www.blagovest-info.ru/index.php?ss=2&s=3&id=32352> (accessed 04 26, 2011).

¹¹⁰ Plugatarev, Igor and Dmitrii Smirnov. <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/6570> (accessed 06 21, 2012).

¹¹¹ Klin, B., "Polkovykh sviashchennikov priravniali k uborshchitsam." *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*. (03 14, 2011). <http://kp.ru/daily/25650.5/814475> (accessed 03 16, 2011).

¹¹² Khamraev, V. "Rossiiane ne protiv armeiskih kapellanov" *Kommersant*, March 2, 2010. <http://www.kommersant.ru/Doc/1330327> (accessed April 26, 2011).

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

necessarily to provide policy recommendations. Instead, if the Russian legislature really wants to create a holistic and successful policy, there is the need to solidify various amorphous pitfalls for each of the three institutions involved. Additionally, the section below could serve as an *ad hoc* Measure of Performance and/or Measure of Effectiveness for the effort in question, thus providing future researchers with a base line for future investigations.

CONCLUSIONS

As mentioned in the opening sections, the issue of military clergy involves three distinct agencies, namely: the State, the Church and the Military. Therefore any way forward has to involve an assessment of each of these institutions.

The role of the State is the central to the entire process; it sponsors both the Church and the Military and as such, the most important and systemic change needs to take place within this particular pillar of the Russian society. Throughout history, the closer the State kept the Church, the more detrimental this relationship was for the Church. Therefore, if the State wants to have a Church capable of integration, it should begin adhering to its policy of separating the State and the Church, thus becoming a truly secular country. This will go a long way to ushering in reforms in every other sphere. However, this is a very unlikely course of action. Since President Putin ascended to power in 2000 and re-ascended to power in 2012, his personal involvement in all social and political spheres is as strong as ever. He definitely understands what components make up his power, the Church being one of them. Thus he would have to make a conscious decision to let go of a sizable fraction of his power base and this could not be done unless he is sure that the other components will not view this move as a sign of him

being a ‘lame-duck’ president. As a matter of fact, if he ever decides to let go of the Church it could spell further tightening of his control over the other parts of his fiefdom such as the Military or civil society. Nevertheless, the possibility of a true secular society should be considered and paid attention to for several reasons.

First of all, it will provide concrete proof that Russia is a constitutional country; no person or a group has an advantage before the Letter of the Law. In the end, this would actually prove to be beneficial to all organizations, including the religious ones. Since no religious group has an advantage in the eyes of the Law, there is no real sense of belonging to one unless it really coincides with a person’s personal interests. There will be no such thing as joining a Church simply because the boss goes to the same one.

Secondly, having a secular society will force Russia to finally come face to face with the question of national identity. As mentioned earlier, there were several attempts under President Yeltsin in an effort to come up with one that is not based on a negative outlook (us vs. the West; black vs. white, etc.) but to no avail. Putin could not and did not want to wait and decided to fall back on the XXI century version of Count Uvarov’s ubiquitous “Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality”. However, this presents a problem because at the very least, the above slogan represents an imperialist State of the late XIX and early XX century. Is that what modern Russian Federation aspires to be? To be sure, the ‘spoked wheel’ design of an empire is still well present in today’s Russian Federation; Moscow is still the political, economic and logistical hub of the entire country as everything has to pass through its vetting process. However, there is a way to lessen this apparent imperialism, as the State should not call itself an Orthodox country since there is a sizable portion of the population that is non-religious and non-Orthodox. These

proclamations only divide people and give them an opportunity to talk about the Great Russian cultural insensitivity. These are fairly major issues that deal with the absolute foundation of the Russian nation. However, these are the matters of the State's realm of responsibility and as such, they have to be overarching and defining. The Church's role is much less global and deals specifically with certain issues currently affecting the Church.

Unfortunately, the most important thing for the Church is also the hardest and most likely will not be done. Namely, the Church should consider stepping out from the umbrella of the State. This step must be taken in order to establish the Church's legitimacy, and the only way to do it is by supporting a secular State. In other words, projecting Olivier Roy's argument, the Church needs to go global (may be even to the point of shifting its center to outside of Russia). Since the time of Peter I, the Church had been seen as an arm of the government. If the government fumbles, the Church suffers; if government succeeds, the Church's role is only secondary in the success. Moreover, if the Church acts independently from the State, then its attempts to enter peoples' lives will not be viewed as the government's invasion or an unwelcomed push into one's private life. Most importantly, "going global" will increase the Church's leverage against the State's dictatorship as it will be much more interconnected internationally, thus making it more resistant to local political pressures. The same idea made it possible for the Church to exist under the Soviet regime.

Secondly, assuming that there is a genuine need for religious activities within the Armed Forces, there is a need for a careful examination of the Church's strategic goals. If the overarching goal is to secure a position at the government table then the current

course of action is correct. It provides the Patriarch with an opportunity to directly access the President as well as a possibility to access a large audience via several state run television channels such as *Pervyi Kanal*, for example. This gives the top clergy enormous power to affect national conversations regarding things it considers important, national identity is being just one of them. However, when it comes to tactical decisions, clerical leadership begins to get bogged down pivoting towards the familiar existence under the governmental umbrella. In regard to the nascent military clergy it means the top down approach. This, of course, will do little for a conscript dying from pneumonia in a run-down military clinic somewhere in Siberian taiga. It will however look good in officially sanctioned history books. The main point here is that there seems to be a disconnect between strategic and tactical thinking in the modern clerical leadership, akin to Lenin's decision to forgo the capitalist stage of societal development. The Church has made a great deal of progress projecting itself as a powerhouse, but not enough to show the evidence of it. In the military context it means that there is a large structure within the Ministry of Defense, but not enough personnel at unit level. It is hard to conceive a process where a single cleric assigned to serve at a Brigade level or above can really make a difference.

However, having a military clergy present beginning at a Battalion level is an expensive proposition. Even in its current form, as was mentioned above, the price tag will reach tens of millions of rubles providing the Military not with Officers skilled, among other things, in divine worship, but with personnel not skilled in anything else but the divine. Even worse, if this particular clergyman does indeed have a military background and decides to use it during an active military campaign, it would directly

violate the Geneva Convention and remove his status as a non-combatant. This would be a problem for him personally and, if it becomes a public fact, a possible embarrassment for Russia. However, if the ROC MP decides to sponsor its military clergy then those present within military units would not be considered federal employees, thus alleviating numerous problems with their legal status.

Third, currently there are no higher religious educational institution entrusted with preparing military clergy, but at the same time the ROC MP needs to introduce military disciplines into its seminary curriculum if it wants to prepare personnel for future deployments. Thus a conundrum begins to take shape. Namely, the ROC has no quick fix for the situation but to introduce a heavy dose of religion into the established military educational institutions, such as the Rocket Forces Academy for example. More importantly, this makes the Church involved in various security issues and have a direct access the 'hearts and minds' of cadets, whose cultural and political worldview might not yet be complete or capable of careful and critical dissection; when a Russian cleric says to a cadet "the West is bad" it might have a different connotation for the cadet than it does for the cleric. This, potentially, could be a big problem. The other side of the coin is that military academies begin to take on various religious issues as a part of their approved curriculum. Most importantly, unable to come up with an independent and valid idea of national identity and citizenship, it has to rely on the Church to provide it. The Church, in its turn is not independent and cannot solve the issue by itself, thus necessitating the need to look to the government to do that and the State, ultimately, is incapable of solving the problem too. It is a truly vicious circle, where the government

denies the two institutions the right to establish their own bedrock foundations but at the same time remains incapable of doing it for them.

Of course, in order to come up with an overarching national idea, the Church would have to change internally. Accepting Olivier Roy's argument mentioned above, the institution would have to make a conscious decision to become a global force thus sacrificing a large part of what makes it "Russian". This would also mean finding a way to reconcile with other Christian denominations within the Russian Federation because there are many Baptists and Mormons serving within the ranks and they all should be treated equally and fairly. This would result in many visual images of reconciliation that could, theoretically, alienate the most extreme fringes of the Church but in turn could result in something much greater. Therefore, within the religious community, a rabbi could be as influential as an orthodox cleric.

The Military should realize that several far-reaching steps could ensure success or failure of its newest section. The main issue lies in the area of the so-called "Chain of Command". The Ministry of Defense needs to realize that in the case of military clergy, it becomes an employer and as such has the right to demand and establish structures that precisely meets its goals. As an example, a serious discussion could take place on the issue of legal and religious differences between a military clergyman and a Chaplain. Specifically the issues of personal and professional accountability of an officer and a cleric could shed a light on the nature of such relationship.

Secondly, as discussed earlier, the issue of selecting and training religious personnel should be addressed. Special attention should be paid to the balance between religious and military education and staying within respective boundaries. Opening

religious departments at military academies is hardly a viable solution (in a multiethnic organization riddled with fiscal constraints) to allow for fair representation. There have to be other solutions that would ensure cadets' strict adherence to the already well-defined idea behind any military education, namely "...the main goal of educational work is the continuous formation of the scientific outlook by the military personnel, which is based on patriotism, professionalism, morality and respect for the law..."¹¹⁶ as well as one's spiritual well-being.

As the Military, among many other duties, serves as the Great Equalizer where a teenager from the Caucasus has the same responsibilities as a teenager from Western Russia then this could be extenuated to the entire ministry. In other words, the notion of 'foundational' religions is a possible point of contention and its necessity should be closely evaluated. The divisive 'us versus 'them' verbiage of foundationalism could bring more negativity than solutions.

Of course, breaking away from foundationalism would mean the representation of religious personnel at the main directorate in Moscow would be 1:1. Meaning, that a Rabbi would have as much weight in the decision-making process as his colleague Imam, and a Buddhist Llama, and would have an equal opportunity to serve his followers as does an Orthodox priest. Presently, however, neither system is capable of recognizing such equality. The fact that the top leadership in the new section is Orthodox speaks for itself.

Thus, the Russian Ministry of Defense, an institution with unclear strategic vision and doubtful record in many civic categories, has many questions that it needs to

¹¹⁶ Ivaneev, Sergei. <http://www.religiopolis.org/publications/3046-batjushka-komandiru-ne-pomoschnik.html> (accessed 06 21, 2012).

truthfully answer, first and foremost for itself. In regards to the idea of military clergy, the most important question is the contract nature of this process. It is not a secret that the MoD RF has had a plan to establish the contract system for its military personnel, but as of 2013 without much success. The idea first came out in 1990s as a result of the Lopatin committee that recommended "...a gradual shift to a much smaller professional military, manned entirely by volunteers..."¹¹⁷ Certainly, some people are serving in the force under the contract, the Pskov VDV division for example, but their future is hazy to say the least. Obviously, the exact nature of this type of employment has not been fully studied and its premature usage within other parts of the Ministry could be disastrous. The failure of the contract system could spread the notion that serving in the Military is not beneficial in terms of social benefits and prospects of promotion, therefore not attracting the best and the brightest, but serving as an institution of the last reserve. The same question would face the future military clergymen. Is it beneficial to work in the military, or is it safer and better to continue a civilian way of life? The notable difference between the notions of 'serving' as it relates to the military personnel and the notion of 'working' as it would relate to military clergymen is also important and should be fully investigated as well. At the very least, the fact that the contract system requires a much higher qualitative level of military life should become the bedrock of any future reform.

Lastly, there has to be a clear and logical explanation to itself, to military personnel and to society as a whole why there is the need for religious personnel on military bases. As of the present time, there are no concrete scientific evidences that the often-cited lofty goals of increasing the level of patriotism, reducing the cases of

¹¹⁷ Odom, 1998: p.187.

dedovschina and suicide, helping the military personnel deal with stress are indeed within the reach of the Russian military clergy's capabilities. However, international experience does seem to support the notion that better Officers, viable NCO Corps, less corruption, contract Soldiers, better living conditions, more accountability, more pay and clear goals, among other conditions, are indeed possible solutions to the aforementioned problems. Within the social and political context of modern day Russia, international experience could be very valuable and serve as a stepping-stone before moving to the controversial re-establishment of the Military Clergy Corps.

PARTING WORDS

The process of re-introducing clergy into the Russian military structure is a utopian and divisive course of action spearheaded by the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. A religious organization, although somewhat large, but with a dubious history and unsettled relationships with the other religions present in Russia. The best that the State and the military can do is to halt the process of military clericalization, while determining and identifying the country's strategic internal and external goals, concentrating on refining its military structure and equipment. Additionally, deeper and much more systemic problems have to be addressed by the State. In the current political, social and military situation, re-introduction of the government-sponsored clergy should be the last step of the military reforms.

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ADDENDUM 1

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

The Russian Military Clergy Corps is a fascinating topic because it is a fulcrum of all the things mentioned above: the State, the Church and the Military. This triple nature of the topic requires the study of literature from all three sides and this is where the problems begin. First and foremost, it is hard to do this type of research in Russia because most of the documents required to conduct primary source investigation are located in the State or Patriarchal archives. In this case, almost all of the documents are located in the Russian State Archive in Moscow, the Saint Petersburg State Archive, the Main Archive of the Russian Armed Forces and the Archive of the Moscow Patriarchate. Needless to say that access to these archives is more than troublesome. While under certain circumstances it is possible to visit the Moscow or the St. Petersburg archives, conducting research in the Armed Forces archive is almost out of the question for a person without special connections on the inside. While working in the US Embassy in Moscow, the author attempted to gain official access to the military archives using one of the embassy offices that conducted research in this particular archive but to no avail. After spending almost three months in the country, no access had been granted. As a matter of fact, even the office that conducted research activities in the military archives employed local researchers had only rarely personally visited the site of the archive. A similar situation takes place in the Patriarchal archives. Without going much into the details, it would be sufficient to say that the Moscow Patriarchate remains a tight-knit organization that closely guards its archives and opens them only when it deems

necessary. This means that this archive is mostly open to Patriarchate's own Master and Doctoral students along with some Russian Orthodox scientists who have a clearly defined pro-Church position.

Notwithstanding, it is still possible to gain the required primary source knowledge because, as it will be discussed below, there is a fairly limited amount of official documents on the topic and most of the books or dissertations tend to use the same documents, quoting the same passages. So what is available? As mentioned above, the Corps is a fulcrum of three very different institutions and so all sources could be broken down into the following categories: State, Church and military documents. The documents within each of these categories have been published primarily for the use by a specific group of readers.

The State literature on the topic of the Russian Chaplaincy is by far the least voluminous and the most legal. This body of literature contains the decree of Peter the Great that officially establishes the Russian Chaplain Corps; a few decrees proclaimed by the Russian monarchs slightly adjusting a few technical details of the Corps; Lenin's decree that officially dissolved this branch and finally a law signed by President Medvedev authorizing the establishment of the Russian Military Clergy. All of these documents can be found in the Russian State archive and Medvedev's decree is available on the Kremlin's official web site.

The volume of Church documents relating to the topic is impressive. All of them can be divided into the following categories: documents of the pre-Peter I era, documents of the Holy Synod era, documents of the Soviet era and finally documents of the post-Soviet era. The original documents of the pre-Peter I era can be found only in

the archives and they include religious histories of various Russian military campaigns written by, both the monks and some other religious personnel who had always accompanied the troops. Although full documents are not readily available and are written in the Old Slavonic, it is still possible to get a glimpse into their content because they are often quoted in both the documents of the Holy Synod and the post-Soviet eras.

The documents of the Holy Synod era are massive and include official decisions and communications within the Patriarchate. Also, it is during this particular time that the Orthodox Church enjoys high levels of philosophical and religious thinking. The postulates that have been created during this time will be discussed below, but it must be mentioned that the same postulates are widely used in the post-Soviet era in order to provide historical and philosophical basis for re-establishing the Corps. Some of these documents are available to the general public via books that are produced by the various publishing companies associated with the ROC MP. Recently there has been a significant effort on the part of the Church to publish books that show its positive role in many important events that took place in Russia. These events of course include various wars and as such, these books are an invaluable, although a highly partisan, source. This is most visible in the Church's treatment of the Soviet era.

The vast majority of the current Orthodox press books that highlight the connection between the Church and the military during the Soviet era, deal with the Church's role during the Great Patriotic War. This is not surprising, as this war has been the single most defining feature of the Soviet era and the Church's ability to prove its importance during this dark time, as we will see in later on, is vital to its plan of attempting to resurrect the Russian Military Clergy.

The Church literature that deals with the post-Soviet period is fundamentally different. If most of the sources described above are well-researched books and publications sponsored by the Church, the information that deals with the post-Soviet time often comes as compilations of speeches and documents available in both print and online. Also, there are a number of Internet resources dedicated exclusively to the issue of military clergy. The most important of these resources are www.pobeda.ru and www.kapellan.ru, which contain the latest information about the function of the Church's Synodal Department of the Relationship between the Armed Forces and Correctional Institutions, including some original signed documents as well as academic dissertations. The main difference between the two is that the former seems to offer strategic information, whereas the later contains more operational information.

The military resources available on this topic are fundamentally different because the primary mission of the military is not to write books and dissertations but rather is to fight and win nation's wars using all available methods. This means that most of the available military resources can be broken down into just two large categories. The first category can be found in the military archives and includes military reports and assessments, personnel rosters, award nominations, casualty names, disciplinary actions and other documents. These can be traced from about the Peter I era to the modern day. The other set of military documents is very modern and up-to-date. It consists of speeches and articles published by high-ranking military personnel in various journals and Internet resources. Needless to say that the archival documents are very tightly controlled and fairly inaccessible, so a researcher is forced to use speeches and presentations conducted at different venues as the primary sources.

To summarize the previous section, there is a large body of literature that does exist. Some of it is locked in the archives and is not available to the general public; most modern scholarly books and publications on this topic come from the Moscow Patriarchate's printing presses. Speeches and official statements of government, Church and military officials are readily available via digital sources. Official government decrees and laws are also readily available in digital format.

In order to support my main thesis that appears in the opening pages of the main body, a researcher must have a good grasp of the history of the institution entrusted with the task of 'saving' both the State and military from the deep crisis of legitimacy that the two institutions currently find themselves in. In order to do this, one must begin from the very beginning, namely with the history of the Russian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (ROC MP) or the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church as it was known prior to the October Revolution of 1917.

PROTO - CHAPLAINCY

So, what was the state of the Russian proto-Chaplaincy, i.e. the relationship between the Church and the military during that time period? At this point it is fairly easy to do because the head of the State was at the same time a military leader who directly led his troops in wartime. When Aleksandr Nevsky came to St. Sergii Radonezhsky asking him whether or not to fight the Mongols, the advice given to him was, in fact, an act of Chaplaincy. From the time of Vladimir the Red Sun to the time of the first Muscovite Czar, this clerical advice was fairly independent and based on religious rather than secular principals. This freedom of guidance was there because

during the time of the Kievan Rus', as mentioned above, the Church lived in unison with the State (though being financially supported most of the time) and thus was free to make religious advice to the Warrior-ruler. The same situation continued during the Mongol era, although the underlying basis for the decision-making was completely different. During the time of the Mongols, the Russian Church could be independent in administering religious advice and services to the Russian military leadership because the Church's freedom has been guaranteed and enforced by the Mongol overlords. During this time, the Church served a fairly mono-ethnic military force composed mostly of Slavic people who lived either under the Kievan Princes or, later, under the Vladimir/Suzdal and Muscovite Princes. Most people would not dare to act against the will of the Church supported by such powerful rulers. But this would not last for long. The Muscovite Princes became the supreme rulers and the power of the Church has never been the same.

ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

The history of the Church spans over 1,000 years and what is now known as the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate not so long ago celebrated 1,000 years since the conversion of Ukrainian Slavs to Christianity in 988 c.e. Obviously, there were many events that shaped this institution; some of them could be considered good and some of them could be considered bad. The author would like to state unequivocally that the purpose of the following section is not to conduct a 'witch hunt' but rather to provide an objective historical overview of an ancient institution and show that is not a solid institution. The Church has its fair share of schisms and undercurrents that continuously

weaken its authority and claims of superiority. The history of the Moscow Patriarchate can be divided into the following sections: 1) the pre-Kievan period; 2) the Kievan Rus' period; 3) the Mongol Horde period; 4) The Moscow Patriarchate period; 5) The Synodal period; 6) The Soviet period; 7) The Post-Soviet period.

PRE-KIEVAN PERIOD

As early as VI century c.e, the Church has been associated with the central government. At that time it was not bad or good, it simply co-existed. In the beginning there was no such thing Orthodoxy. There was one Christian Church. This Church from the very beginning was formed around the idea of episcopate that the head priest –Bishop – was responsible for a certain geographic area and the people who lived within it. Any decision that concerned the Church could not be unilaterally decided by a single Bishop but had to be addressed by the Council of Bishops. Because bishops were very important people they would not meet to make these important decisions in just any random town. Meetings had to be conducted in a capital of a province where a particular bishop resided. These towns were given the Roman name of *metropolia* and the Bishop who resided within this city received an honorable title of *Metropolitan*. At first, there were only two metropolitan areas, namely Alexandria and Antioch, because these were the two largest and most important cities in the first Christian Empire – the Christian Byzantine Empire. Later on, the Roman, the Constantinople, and the Jerusalem metropolitan areas were added and these five seats of power received the name of *Patriarchate*. Once these Patriarchates had been set up and the Byzantine Empire officially became a Christian nation, thanks to the “Edict of Milan” in 313 (c.e) that pronounced “...the official

toleration of the Christian faith.”¹¹⁸, there were several monumental events took place over a few hundred years. These collectively became known as the Seven Councils. The first six, took place between 325 and 681 c.e and ultimately set in stone the Dogmas that are followed up to this day. Namely, “...the councils defined...the Trinity and the Incarnation.”¹¹⁹ Also, the Second Council decided to move the primary patriarchal seat from Constantinople to Rome. However, it must be noted that after this decision, the Second Council denied the Roman Patriarch (or the Pope, as he later became known) the ability to raise above all others in power, and its position as first among equals “...owed its primacy to the position occupied by the city of Rome in the Empire...”¹²⁰ The Third through the Sixth Councils occupied themselves with important theological ideas that concern the nature of God, the Will of Christ, etc.; the ideas that are beyond the scope of this paper. During the Seventh Council “The Iconodule position was upheld...”¹²¹ thus allowing icons to appear in churches. It is important to realize that even at that early time the Church already had its dissenters, the Arians, Nestorius and the Iconoclasts to name just a few; in order to overcome this, the idea of Orthodoxy had been introduced. It specifically argued that the most important things, in fact the core of the Christian Faith that has been decided during these seven councils, were agreed upon because “...imperfect humans were guided by the Holy Spirit.”¹²² Of course, all of these events did not take place in a vacuum. The Church occupied a certain geographical area; this area was under control by particular civil leadership. In order to survive and prosper, the Church had to engage with the civilian leadership within their episcopate or patriarchate.

¹¹⁸ Ware, 1997: p.18

¹¹⁹ Ibid: p.20

¹²⁰ Ibid: p.28

¹²¹ Ibid:, p.31

¹²² Ibid: p.36

During the times of the Seven Councils, it appears to be fairly easy. Ever since Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity, "...between the two there was a 'symphony' or 'harmony' but neither element exercised absolute control..."¹²³ This age of innocence, however, would soon end; and the end did come rather sooner than later.

In 1054, messengers from the Pope (who at that time began associating with the West while the other four Sees were a part of the greater East) came to Constantinople and presented a Bull of Excommunication by placing it upon the main altar of the Patriarchal Church. This ushered the new era in the Church's history and two new words, Catholic and Orthodox began describing the followers of a particular Patriarch. The reasons for the schism were both religious and political. On the religious side, the Pope could not agree with the other four Patriarchs on the concept of *filioque*¹²⁴. On the political side, as the western side of the Holy Roman Empire disintegrated into a number of warring states, "...the Papacy alone which could act as a center of unity..."¹²⁵. This of course immensely raised its prestige and the Pope of course wanted more and more political power and the ability to act as a monarch. The Churches of the East continued to hold conversations and have more theological discussions among themselves. As the Catholic Church was mostly preoccupied with securing its political clout and uniting the warring states, the Eastern Church, now solidly established and understanding its mission, began the process of proselytization. Because of cultural and geographical differences, the first targets were the Balkan states, namely Greece and Bulgaria. Only in

¹²³ Ware, 1997: p.41

¹²⁴ This is theological question of where the Holy Spirit is coming from. The West assumes that it comes from both the Father and the Son, while the more traditional East holds on to the idea that it comes only from the Father.

¹²⁵ Ware, 1997: p. 47

988 c.e did the pagan Kievan Rus' abandon its God of Sun – Perun – in favor of the Holy Trinity of the Orthodox Church; but this conversion did not come peacefully or easily.

KIEVAN RUS' PERIOD

First of all, contrary to the popular belief, the Bulgarian missionaries Kirill and Methodius did not literally bring Christianity or alphabet to the Kievan Rus'. Instead, they translated the Bible from the Greek language into one of the existing Slavic dialects (that later became the Old Church Slavonic language) in order to make it more understandable to the tribes of the Eastern Europe. Both of them died well before 988 c.e. thus never personally converting any of the Kievan sovereigns. Vladimir the Red Sun has adapted Christianity of the Eastern Rite after a careful consideration and choosing what was right for him namely "...adoption of Christianity opened for the Slavic tribes an opportunity to join a large number of great civilizations, of which the most important we the byzantine one..."¹²⁶. What followed was a forceful conversion of pagan peoples living in his domain; it is simply wrong to assume that Christianity met no resistance in Vladimir's fiefdom.

What does seem to be true is that the period of the Kievan Rus was the most beneficial period for the Russian Orthodox Church. During this time it enjoyed a high degree of freedom and absolute support of the State, as a matter of fact "...Vladimir through a special decree ordered to give her [the Church K.T.] one tenth of each Prince's income..."¹²⁷ At that time, it was the only way the Church could survive. Later on, the Church gained the right to own land and collect taxes on this property and people that

¹²⁶ Loginov, A.V., 2005: p163-164.

¹²⁷ Ibid: p.177

lived in the villages on the Church's land. Thus, it must be pointed out that the Church, yet again, became closely connected to the State and only thru this channel became connected to the people. First and foremost, this was the State's Church and the situation continued until the Mongol invasion.

THE MONGOL HORDE PERIOD

The Mongol invasion brought an end to the Kievan Rus' and many deaths and much suffering to the Slavic people. However, this was not the case for the Orthodox Church. It is safe to argue that from the time Kiev fell to the Mongols and to the time when Prince Aleksandr of Vladimir (later known as Nevsky) won independence for the Russian people, the Russian Orthodox Church received immense gains in terms of power, prestige and money. Because many of the Russian Princes became vassals of the Horde, they had to adapt and enforce the rules that were placed upon them. The Mongols, although not Christian by any stretch of imagination, adopted the attitude of not offending religions of the conquered people. They were shamanist in their beliefs, but decided that there is never too much of a good thing and required that all religious personnel in the conquered lands prayed for the well-being of their leader¹²⁸. In return for prayers, the Church received truly enormous rights, benefits and protections. The clergy, their families and those living on the lands belonging to the Church were freed from "...all types of taxes...commercial taxes...support of Horde's administration...military and horse relaying service...and from other duties"¹²⁹. In other words, the Church had an enormous advantage over its former secular supporters because

¹²⁸ Chingis Khan at first, followed by Batii, etc.

¹²⁹ Loginov, A.V., 2005: p.213

the Princes not only had to provide material and personnel resources to the Horde, they also had to off-set the presence of Orthodox institutions on their lands by providing even more resources. So while the city of Vladimir and other Muscovite Principalities along with their people suffered, the Church continued to prosper. The Princes and people never forgot that injustice and when Aleksandr Nevsky overthrew the Khan, the Princes and the people began "...taking away from the clergy some of the privileges granted to them by the Khan's earmarks."¹³⁰; sometimes by law, sometimes by force but the Princes gained most of their power back.

THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE PERIOD

The post-Mongolian Yoke history and the way it relates to the notion of military clergy should begin with Ivan IV or as most of the people know him – Ivan the Terrible¹³¹. Roughly the first half of Ivan IV's reign developed along the traditional Church-State relationship. That is, Metropolitan Philip (the head of the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church at that time) was a close friend of Ivan IV and tried to function in the traditional Byzantine and Kievan 'Symphony of Power' way of life. This was not successful as Ivan IV viewed this as an attempt to limit his sovereign power. In order to protect his caesarian supremacy, Ivan IV dismissed Phillip and appointed Metropolitan Makary as the Head of the Church. Although "...metropolitan Makary was one of the most prominent writers and political figures of Russia XVI century..."¹³² it was this Metropolitan who seems to be the first to succumb to the State power by beginning to

¹³⁰ Budovnits, I., 1975: p.103

¹³¹ "Terrible" is not the correct translation since it does not project the true meaning behind the Russian word "Грозный". A more proper translation should be something closer to Fearsome or Bodeful.

¹³² Budovnits, I., 1975: p.125.

hail the Czar instead of holding a high moral ground. Metropolitan Makary devised an argument that Ivan IV was “...not only a successor to the fine deeds of his forefathers – the Muscovite Princes, but a direct descendant of the Roman and Byzantine Emperors.”¹³³ Needless to say that both the Roman and the Byzantine Emperors were considered living Gods; therefore, Ivan IV was also a living God. His power and decisions were granted and thus approved by God; a very powerful justification indeed. Until the second Russian Revolution the Russian population believed that the right to govern the Russian Empire has been given to every Russian Monarch by God. This leads into the next period in the history of the Russian military clergy– the Synodal period – and the man most closely associated with it; the man who still evokes far from positive remarks from the modern clergy; the man who is probably the greatest Russian rulers of all time – Peter Alekseevich Romanov or simply Peter the Great.

THE SYNODAL PERIOD

The Synodal period is the true birth time of the Chaplaincy¹³⁴; it is the time of the greatest schisms in the history of the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church and the time of some of Russia’s greatest war victories and losses. This is the period that requires close attention because modern clergy constantly refers to the decisions and ideas that took place during this time in order to provide arguments for the existence of today’s military clergy. In short, this is the most important historical period to study for a student of the Russian Chaplaincy history.

¹³³ Budovnits, I., 1975: p.129

¹³⁴ The word “chaplaincy” is used here intentionally since that is the name used to describe the institution at that time.

January 25, 1721, Peter I finally was able to subjugate the Orthodox clergy when he announced the creation of the Holy Synod and the Governing Senate. From then on and until the second Russian Revolution of 1917, all matters of governing the Russian Empire were divided between the secular and the clerical institutions. The most important feature of this set up was that both institutions were a part of the State bureaucracy and reported directly to the Monarch. In other words, the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church became an official arm of the State. The Sovereign, from then on, was always able to pressure the Church in order to support a particular policy or a decision. From this time forward, the Church lost its independence and began to drift further and further from the common people.

Peter I's goal was to bring Russia from isolationism and make it a Western European country; modernizing the Russian Military was an important part of his reform. As a part of this reform, for the first time, the State ordered the clergy to be present at every large military unit and "...from the first quarter of XVIII century appointments of clergy ...become regular"¹³⁵ So, roughly at the same time, two new religious institutions were created: the Holy Synod – ruled by a secular government employee named *Oberprokuror*, and the Chaplain branch ruled by *Obersvyaschennik*¹³⁶; the latter was eventually renamed as *Protopresviter*. Since both institutions were brand new, there was a fair amount of confusion concerning the structure of subordination and the levels of authority. This was due to the inherent structure of the Church. Institutionally, the Church had a very ridged top-down hierarchy where a particular Metropolitan had the

¹³⁵ Kapkov, K2008: p.29.

¹³⁶ Both of these were a part of the "White" clergy, meaning they did not have to live in celibacy and could have a family and children. In contrast, the "Black" clergy were celibate monks. Canonically, only the "Black" clergy can achieve the highest religious positions.

absolute authority within his geographical area of jurisdiction. This means that all clergy who find themselves in that particular area have to pay respect, dues and recognize authority of that particular Metropolitan. This is very difficult to do for the chaplains because they were constantly on the move with their unit; they would regularly find themselves under different religious authorities with different rules and regulations. Although one of the Holy Synod's duties was to rule upon these difficulties, it was often unable to respond and so Peter I's grandson Pavel I officially established the office of *Obersvyaschennik* on April 4, 1800¹³⁷; this is the watershed event in the history of Russian Chaplaincy. Pavel I's decision brought together all three sides of the Empire. The newly created office was under the direct control of the Emperor, resided within the General Staff, and referred to the Holy Synod for religious guidance only. Let us take a closer look at each of these three relationships.

The Chaplain Corps was another State institution (created and financially supported by the State) created for the good of the State. The Head of the Chaplain Corps – *Obersvyaschennik* or later on *Protopresviter* was a political appointee confirmed by the Monarch him/herself. He had the duty of managing all sides of the Chaplain Branch, which at that time included the Ground Forces, the Navy and the Elite grenadier regiments. *Protopresviter* had the obligation to report directly to the Monarch about the state of the affairs within the Branch. It is important to realize that only a handful of people had the same right; for the purposes of this paper it is sufficient to say that the other people were the Minister of Defense and the Head of the Holy Synod – *Oberprokuror*. The Chaplaincy Branch has truly been a government institution because it was completely subsidized by the government in the form of a budget. At first, the

¹³⁷ Капков, 2008: p.29

salary for chaplain was not great, only about 24 rubles a year¹³⁸ but as the time went on, salaries and the prestige of the job was raised considerably and "...at the beginning of XX century material level of a rank-and-file clergy became fair and close enough to that of an officer's salary"¹³⁹ and they even received a pension. Additionally, the Office of *Protopresviter* received government money to have its own bureaucracy. The purpose of the Office of Protopresviter was that of any other State office. It kept track of its employees, their qualifications, deployments, awards and punishments. It made decisions concerning job conditions and requirements. It also served as a liaison between its workers and the military offices. Employees of the Office received government decorations and monetary awards. Because the Chaplain Branch was a government institution directly accountable to the Ruler, the branch's power and influence sometimes varied from czar to czar based on a religiousness of a particular ruler. Unfortunately, as it was the case with the larger Orthodox Church, the closer Chaplaincy came to the czar, the more disastrous were the results. Probably, the best illustration of this could be the relationship between Czar Nikolas II and military Chaplains. Nikolas II was one of the most religious Romanovs. Due to his nature, spousal influence and overall family situation, he became a fairly religious military Supreme Commander. Unfortunately, his time as the Supreme Commander saw a number of disastrous military campaigns such as the Russo-Japanese war and WWI. During both of these conflicts, Nikolas II relied heavily on religion as the way to win these wars but "...icons and blessings proved a poor substitute for shells, guns, and rations"¹⁴⁰ and, as it will be discussed below, brought a real devaluation of the prestige and importance of the Chaplain branch among the

¹³⁸ Kapkov, 2008: p.55

¹³⁹ Ibid: p.57

¹⁴⁰ Garrard and Garrard, , 2008: p.213

military leadership and regular soldiers. The relationship between the Holy Synod and the Office of *Protopresviter* were just as complex.

The Holy Synod, under the leadership of *Oberprokuror*, a civilian personally appointed by the Ruler for leadership and oversight purposes, was the absolute highest religious authority in Russia. The Office of the *Protopresviter*, as a government's religious institution, had to consult with the Holy Synod on all issues concerning the matter of Faith. These included, but were not limited to, canonical promotions, clerical awards, and certain punishments. However, there was a certain problem that kept the two offices at constant warring, thus always playing in favor of the czar. The issue was that according to the Church law, only episcopate, the "black" clergy, were allowed to convene the Synod and produce decisions. However, the *Protopresviter*, who by the Emperor's edict had to be present during the Synodal sessions, was of the "white" kind and thus was really out of place in the Holy Synod. This work will not delve into the old Orthodox debate about the nature and importance of each of these ways of life.

Nevertheless, it is sufficient to say that both types attracted devout and sometimes truly scholarly people; some of them had great ambitions and so the stand-off continued although, religiously, the "black" clergy was always a winner because of the Church's doctrine. What made this particular standoff so prominent and important, is that it was forced upon the Synod by the Czar and now the "black" had to share its power, that was dwindling anyhow, with yet another state employee and thus "...ober-svyaschenniki almost continuously participated in highest Church administration..."¹⁴¹ This of course played to the Czar's favor because it further divided the religious establishment thus giving the monarch even power strings. Another twist to this story has already been

¹⁴¹ Alekseeva, S., 2006: p.240

mentioned above. Namely, *Protopresviter*, a person already, anti-canonically raised to the level of the “black” clergy, had the right to inform the Sovereign in person. To put this in perspective, in the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church, only the Patriarch had this privilege. If this was not offensive enough, the *Protopresviter* had the authority over all military Churches thus acting as an Episcopo with a few, canonical exceptions. Of course the Holy Synod tried to fight this situation in order to uphold the Canons, increase control and raise its prestige; this was not successful because too many other powerful ministries were not interested in empowering the Synod. The Czar’s ‘divide and conquer’ policies have been mentioned above, but the Ministry of Defense was not too far behind. Generals of the General Staff office were very wary of the “black” clergy and their ambitions. Moreover, “...[black] clergy’s separation from the acute social and political problems, absence of the system in daily chaplains’ life, that prevented them from conducting their function as the servicemen’s religious mentor...”¹⁴² all played against Synod’s wishes of control. The Russian Ministry of Defense continued to control most of the Chaplain Corps activities. So what was the relationship between the Military and the Chaplain Corps?

This relationship must be viewed and discussed based on the tasks and goals that the Military presented to the branch. There were seven basic duties of a Chaplain:

- “1) at the exact time ordered by the Commander conduct liturgies on Sunday and Holidays;
- 2) upon agreement with Regimental Command at a particular time prepare servicemen for confession and confirmation services;
- 3) conduct personal services for servicemen;
- 4) conduct Church’s choir;
- 5) teach all military ranks about Christian faith;
- 6) support and advise the sick, burial services;

¹⁴² Alekseeva, S., 2006: p.241

7) teach Church Law and upon Commander's permission conduct volunteer seminars on this topic."¹⁴³

From the opening sections of these duties and responsibilities, it is evident that the military assumes direct and all-encompassing control of the Corps. This control extended into all spheres of the Corps. Although, from the previous discussion about the Corps-Synod relationships, some religious matters were outside of the military grasp, a Commander's simple decision about the timeliness of a particular service could easily nullify any clerical efforts. Furthermore, these duties gave very wide latitude to a particular commander to influence the content of a particular liturgy, based on his view of the unit's morale, needs and composition. The unit Chaplain could inform his Commander but could not make decisions. The unit Commander also exercised control over the unit's church building and all of its fiscal activities. Furthermore, a lot depended on the personal relationship between a commander and a chaplain, and most of the times this was a very tense and unequal one, "...because commanders treated the clergy as one of their subordinates and did not tolerate any diminishing of their power."¹⁴⁴ The root of this problem stems from the nature of the Russian society as whole. The Officer Corps, for the most part, consisted of privileged nobility and intelligentsia. Highly educated, proud of their lineage and financial stability are just some the characteristics of the Russian Officer Corps. The Chaplain Corps, if not diametrically opposite of the Officer Corps, at the very least was very far apart. The majority of the clergy did not come from nobility but, rather, from the peasant and artisan backgrounds. Military clergy was a bit unique in their statue because the job became hereditary. The State and the military established numerous special schools and seminaries for the Chaplains' children. While

¹⁴³ Kapkov, 2008: p.51

¹⁴⁴ Ibid: p.34

the education was fairly good and many educated people came out of this system, the prestige of these schools could not be compared to that of the schools available to the children of military officers. Moreover, the situation was even worse in case of the “black” clergy assigned to the naval forces. The “black” clergy came from the monastic ranks and generally had very good religious education but their secular education left much to be desired. The situation became so bad that *Protopresviter* G.I. Shavel'sky instructed “...a monk or a clergy that did not receive complete religious education, should not engage in religious discussions with doctors and officers...”¹⁴⁵

Notwithstanding these difficulties and sometimes humiliations, the job of a chaplain was prestigious and enviable. This was a religious person's simple chance to rise in importance and power. As time went on, and the Russian Empire took part in more and more armed conflicts, the responsibilities of the Chaplain Corps increased and shifted to the more pragmatic duties of helping hospital personnel in administering first aid and conducting all non-medical mortuary affairs, including family support¹⁴⁶. However, the military was a part of Russian society and every social upheaval that took place in the civilian world also was felt in among the military ranks; therefore, a few words must be said about the relationship between the Chaplain Corps and the regular soldiers in the context of wider Russian history.

In short, contrary to popular belief, this relationship was not good and as time went on, became progressively worse. For the better part of Russia's history, this ‘God-loving’ military has consisted of serfs and artisans who were conscripted into the military

¹⁴⁵ Kapr'kov, 2008: p.50.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid: p.52

against their will¹⁴⁷ and so here lies the root of the problem in the relationship between the peasantry and the clergy; a child growing up in the countryside observes these interactions and most of the time follows the path even as a conscript. For the most part, the peasants did not like the clergy, dealt with them only when they had to, and got rid of them if they could. This was especially true of the relationship with the “black” clergy. The Russian peasants learned that the appearance of a single monk in their village would most likely lead to the creation of a monastery. This would cause the Church to claim the land as its own, thus effectively taking it away from the peasants. If that was not enough “...the founders of the northern monasteries...often tried to take already cultivated plots of land...”¹⁴⁸ Of course, the peasants tried to fight off this invasion and there were a number of court cases where a village tried to get its land back, but unfortunately, armed with money, influence and various Imperial decrees, the Church would almost always win. Moreover, the peasants and artisans who too eagerly defended their livelihood were arrested and thrown in prison. At that time, most prisons were located either in fortresses or monasteries; so an inconvenient person would actually be punished by the same organization that caused the upheaval in the first place; but land was not the only issue. Until the end of XVIII century, conversion by a Slav from the Greko-Kefalic Christianity to any other religion (including Catholicism, Islam, etc.) was punishable by death. Additionally, while those born into Islam, Buddhism or Judaism were safe from prosecution, other Christian sects were always in danger, especially the ‘Old Believers’ who lived mostly East of the Ural Mountains. Additionally, the Church did not support

¹⁴⁷ Most of the times, parents who had more than one son would had faced a grim task of deciding which son to send in. The life of this child would be changed forever because he would either die for his Czar, Faith and Fatherland, or, after serving the mandatory 25 years, would come back to his village where no one is expecting him and not willing to share their land plot with him.

¹⁴⁸ Budovnits, I., 1975: p.116.

the abolishment of serfdom that took place in 1861. The Holy Synod tried actively to interfere with Aleksandr I's Manifesto, but to no avail.

Another proof of the rocky relationship between the lowest classes and the clergy is the sheer volume of anti-clerical jokes and saying that existed at that time. A famous Russian linguist V.I. Dal' collected a vast number of them in his "Proverbs of the Russian People" but the Church prohibited its publication until much later¹⁴⁹. Another famous work belongs to A.S. Pushkin, "The Tale of the Pope and his servant Balda"; in this story the Pope is represented as a greedy and dumb "white" clergy who enslaves hard-working Balda; this story was not published until the Soviet Union appeared on the political scene.

Another alienating feature of the official Church was that before WWI "...among 242 Russian Holy Persons that are venerated by the Russian Orthodox Church, only three were peasants, and the rest – czars, princes and princess, boyars and members of the High Clergy."¹⁵⁰ In order to be fair, it must be stated that all of the above refers to the relationship between the lower classes and the 'official Church.' A person could retain his religious feeling but still express views against the clerical establishment. So how did these negative relationships translate into the relationships between the Chaplain Corps and the soldiers?

As Russia became more deeply entangled in various wars, the soldiers became angrier and more disillusioned with the government and its branches. The main reason for their ever-increasing hostility towards the Church was the Church's unvarying support for all government activities, including the wars¹⁵¹. The Chaplain branch, canonically tied to its Mother Church had to follow the path and continue preaching

¹⁴⁹ Emeliakh, L., 1976, p.7.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid: p.8

¹⁵¹ Ibid: p.49

support of the war as the ‘righteous’ thing to do. Obviously, the Soldiers who saw the blood and misery of the First World War’s trenches could not disagree more. There are plenty of historical reports, filed by the Chaplains, that sound very similar to the following “...morning and evening mass are abandoned, only a few people visit the church; attitude towards the Church clergy is not only irreverent but simply hostile...”¹⁵² This trend was notwithstanding many heroic deeds performed by the chaplains. The Corps was truly trying to uphold its status as the moral compass of the fighting force and it reflects in that only during WWI there were at least 1,700 chaplains who received some kind of official award (either secular or religious)¹⁵³; but this was to no avail. The Government and the Synodal practices did not satisfy the needs and the wishes of regular peasants who later became soldiers and sailors; in the words of the White General A.I. Denikin “...as a moral element supporting the moral spirit of the Russian troops, faith did not become the starting point, evoking them to commit acts of bravery or forbidding the developing animal instincts in them”¹⁵⁴. The Russian October Revolution took place on November 7, 1917¹⁵⁵ and the Imperial Military was dissolved by a Bolshevik decree in 1918. The Chaplain Corps that had been a part of this institution for over 150 years also ceased to exist. Ultimately, it had failed, but its history will continue in the XXI century and will be discussed below. Before discussing the Chaplaincy in the context of the XX – XXI centuries, the role of the other Russian religions within the Chaplaincy should be mentioned.

¹⁵² Emeliakh, 1976: p.67.

¹⁵³ Kapkov, 2008: p.96

¹⁵⁴ Ibid: p.116

¹⁵⁵ Julian date October 25, 1917

As stated above, Russia was and is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. With the destruction of the Mongol Horde, Ivan IV annexed the area around modern Kazan thus bringing into his empire people of at least one other religion – Islam. As the Russian Empire expanded East and South, more and more religions became a part of Russian society; the two main ones were Buddhism and Judaism. Thus, the four main religions prior to the October Revolution were the Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. Also, there were a large number of different Christian denominations and sects. The three largest ones were the ‘Old Believers’, Catholics and Protestants. The relationship between the Synod and the other Christian denominations was riddled with problems and grand plans of subjugation of one by the other and vice versa. Since the Chaplain Corps, fundamentally, was a governmental Christian institution it could not make the decision of allowing other faiths to provide religious services to the military. This decision had to come for the Synod, the Government and the military. Although the Corps was organized in the XVIII century, it was not until the reign of Alexander I in the early XIX century that the first representatives of the other religions began appearing within the Corps. The first were the Catholics priests in 1803¹⁵⁶, followed by a mullah in 1813¹⁵⁷ and a llama in 1839¹⁵⁸. The ‘Old Believers’, the most widely persecuted faction of the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church, were not admitted into the ranks of the Chaplain Corps until 1913¹⁵⁹ and even then it was a secret decision that featured “...[the] Emperor’s resolution ‘Not For Public Distribution’.”¹⁶⁰ When discussing the issue of non-Orthodox chaplains, several things must be mentioned for they will be very

¹⁵⁶ Kapkov, 2008: p.43

¹⁵⁷ Ibid: p.45

¹⁵⁸ Ibid: p.46

¹⁵⁹ Ibid: p.47

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

important in the discussion of the present day military clergy. First of all, the overall numbers of these personnel was fairly small (a few thousand Orthodox priests versus a hundred or so of the others) and their place of duty was removed from the rank and file soldiers. If a Russian Orthodox priest was working at a Battalion level, his colleagues were stationed at the Corps and Military District level. While this might not have presented a problem during peacetime, various deployments and field exercises undoubtedly put a strain on the system. Secondly, one of the reasons why, even in such small numbers, non-Orthodox clergy were still able to function is because during that time period the Russian military (especially the Land Forces) was organized by the 'home district' principle. This means that a majority of people came from the same general area, most likely holding similar beliefs and having similar life experiences. When looking at the names of the Russian military units, it is not uncommon to see names such as 5th Bashkir Regiment, the Kazan Garrison, the Tashkent Garrison and the like; it is much easier to control and support a mono-ethnic or mono-cultural fighting unit. The final feature of this relationship is that, ultimately, all of these non-Orthodox clergymen played a subordinate role within the Corps. Moreover, since the Corps itself was a governmental institution that reported to the Holy Synod (among others) it meant that these mullahs, llamas and the others were one way or the other under the control of a quasi-governmental institution of a different faith.

So, how could one summarize the state of the Chaplain Corps on the eve of the Russian October Revolution of 1917? From the discussion above, it is quite certain that the Chaplain Corps was a very unique institution since it was a part of the Holy Synod and therefore a governmental institution organically tied to the Russian Greko-Kefalic

Church; their relationships were rocky because of the conflicts of interests and personal ambitions. The Corps also had a direct responsibility to its military command in terms of military discipline and fiscal reporting. The Head of the Chaplain Corps – *Protopresviter* – had the right to brief the Emperor directly, thus circumventing the other two reporting channels. The Corps consisted mostly of the Russian Grek-Kefalic priests of the approved denomination; the other major religions and Christian denominations were represented but at a much smaller scale. Because the Corps was an integral part of both the military and the Church, it shared the fate of both of these institutions when the *Bolsheviks* came to power in October 1917. Namely, when the *Bolsheviks* outlawed and dismissed the Russian Imperial Army, the Imperial Chaplain Corps ceased to exist as well; its 118 years of official history had ended. Enter the Soviet period.

THE SOVIET PERIOD

Actually, to be correct, the next period should be entitled Soviet – early post-Soviet period and should include the events that took place from 1918 to 1994. The Soviet sub-period of this era turned out to be the most tragic period in the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church's history. During this time, the Church almost completely disappeared as a religious and political institution. Notwithstanding the harshest prosecutions, it survived and even began to prosper after the fall of the Soviet Union. It is of paramount importance to study this period of the Church's history if not for the specific military clergy related information but – rather – in order to understand what mechanisms the Church used to survive and the consequences of these battles for survival. These are absolutely important questions because they lay the foundation for the most major issues

that are present in the modern day Church and definitely affect the re-establishment and functioning of the neophyte Military Clergy Corps.

As the Bolsheviks came to power, they readily began dismantling as much of the old regime as they could, including the Church as a part of it. Marxism and the Church simply could not co-exist in the same country. Churches and monasteries were closing on a massive scale, "...peasants ...also began seizing Church's lands."¹⁶¹ Additionally, many clergymen were arrested and killed, "...at the end of 1917-1919 period... 20 thousand clergymen and laypeople undergone the repressions, of which 15 thousand had been executed..."¹⁶². Seeing this massacre, some of the clergy decided to flee Russia and seek a less dangerous place to worship; the two most common destinations were Europe and the United States. Once outside of Russia, these people established their own confessions and using Patriarch's Decree Number 362¹⁶³ established what is became known as the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA) and the Russian Orthodox Church in America (ROCIA). These were the first structural splinters of the Russian Greko-Kefalic structure and there will be much more to come. Although under severe attack, the Church led by Patriarch Tikhon continued to exist. A part of his strategy was to use all means possible in order to assure the Soviets that the Church is not an enemy and is willing to work with the new government. Additionally, in order to protect the Church's hierarchy, Patriarch Tikhon issued a decree proclaiming that due to the unpredictable nature of the political situation around him, he has the right to appoint a *locum tenens* or an Acting Patriarch. In case a canonically chosen Patriarch will be

¹⁶¹ Shkarovskii, M., 2010: p.69.

¹⁶² Ibid: p.83.

¹⁶³ This decree gave permission to the Bishops who had left Russia to establish their own Church institution in case they were unable to receive canonical guidance from the Moscow Patriarchate.

unable to discharge his duties, *locum tenens* will perform all the associated tasks until the time a new Patriarch could be chosen via the established religious procedures. This decree will also play an important role in the future and will cause yet another division within the Church. But this would be later; in the 1920s the Church was trying to preserve its hierarchy, because without it, there is no Church. Unlike some of the other religions, the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church posits that only through the properly ordained episcopate can a layperson achieve salvation. This is an important point to see and realize that during the times of prosecution, the Church's number one priority was to preserve its top cadre and the vertical leadership structure. This is exactly what Patriarch Tikhon was doing. His efforts were somewhat successful because in 1922 the Soviets admitted "...the need of constant and direct party control..."¹⁶⁴ and took the Church under their leadership. Thus the Church yet again became a part of the Government, although not as a glorious part by any stretch of imagination. This fact of course played a huge role in further fracturing within the Church as some saw Tikhon's efforts as appeasement of the ungodly government. To be fair, the newly created government commission – called "The Antireligious Commission" – also started dealing with all the other religions and sects that were present within Russia. Patriarch Tikhon continued to work with this commission until 1925 when he died of natural causes. Just prior to his death, he evoked the previously mentioned decree and named Metropolitan of Krutitsy and Kolomna Peter as the future *locum tenens*. Since a Patriarch has to be elected and the Soviet government did not allow any religious gatherings to take place, the Soviet Union would not have another Patriarch until 1943. The figure of Metropolitan Peter is the key to the rest of the Soviet clerical history. Because he was an Acting Metropolitan, he too

¹⁶⁴ Shkarovskii, 2010: p.97.

had the right to name another Acting Patriarch candidate in case of arrest or death. However, he did not do so, and when he was arrested and sent to a Northern labor camp, the Church was left without a leader. This was an unfathomable situation. At this precise dark period of the Church's history one of the people whom the late Metropolitan Tikhon named as a possible candidate for *locum tenens*— Metropolitan Sergii of Nizhniy Novgorod – decided to take charge and act as the Head of the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. The biggest problem was that in Patriarch Tikhon's original document, Metropolitan Sergii was third person in the line of succession. According to the decree, Metropolitan Peter should have designated Metropolitan Sergii as his successor, but Peter never did that. So, in the eyes of many thousands of believers, Metropolitan Sergii simply took the reins without having the canonical permission. This was the second major division within the Church and those who followed Metropolitan Sergii became known as the *Sergievtsy*. The present day Russian Orthodox Church is of the '*Sergievtsy*' type because "...Metropolitan Sergii...chose the path of collaborating with the authorities in order to protect 'lawful' Christianity"¹⁶⁵. This was the only way to survive while protecting the Church's superstructure, and that is precisely what the Church did until 1943; this particular year became the turning point in the Soviet period history of the Orthodox Church.

On September 4, 1943 Joseph Stalin made the decision to halt most prosecutions of the religious personnel, allow Metropolitan Sergii to become a Patriarch and include the Church into his overall plan of governing the Soviet Union and spreading its communist ideology throughout the world. At the same time a decision was made to rename the Russian Greko-Kefalic Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in the Russian

¹⁶⁵ Shkarovskii, 2010: p.117

Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. But Stalin was no saint; he "...was guided first of all by his pragmatic calculations..."¹⁶⁶ and had the following problems that he was trying to solve by shamelessly using the Church. First of all, notwithstanding decades of harsh prosecutions, there were still many religious people who were serving on WWII frontlines; their fighting spirit must be raised and maintained by any means possible. Secondly, the large Western and Southern part of the Soviet Union was under the Nazi occupation and the fascists definitely had a plan to use religion as a combat multiplier. There is a famous "Operational Order #10" published by Reinhardt Heidrich that precisely outlined Adolf Hitler's plan for the Orthodox Church; in short, his idea was to divide and conquer. Hitler's idea was not to proselytize but to support as many confessions and religious movements on the occupied territories as practically possible; thanks to the Soviet religious policies of the past few decades, the Nazis had plenty of opportunities to do just so. Besides the *Sergievtsy* schism, there was schism between the Moscow and the Kievan Metropoly. Additionally, canonical relationships between Moscow and the Baltic countries were not settled. As if that was not enough, after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union received territories that contained a large number of Roman Catholics and Lutherans. All these factors were in addition to a large number of the 'catacomb' dissenters that were present within the Soviet Union. In short, the Nazis had a ripe opportunity to drive the divided parties even farther apart and Stalin had to control this situation.

Another reason why Stalin had to take the step of legalizing the Church was international pressure. The Allies put forward a demand to normalize the religious situation within the Soviet Union and tied this request directly to their decision to open

¹⁶⁶ Shkarovskii, 2010: p.211

the Second Front and the Lend Lease program. Stalin needed both of these to take place and so he had no choice but to agree; although, ultimately, on his own terms. With the recognition, came the status of a legal institution and thus the increased ability to reach out to the masses.

To be sure, from the very beginning of WWII the Church began reaching out to the Soviet people and soldiers through religious services and voluntary money collection. The liturgies that took place were asking for the victory for the Soviet Union and complete destruction of the fascists; the money that was collected was used to pay for the procurement of military equipment for the Soviet troops, "...according to the Moscow Patriarchate, by the summer of 1945 there were over 300 million rubles collected..."¹⁶⁷ Thanks to having a legal status and a bank account, some of these funds were used to sponsor a tank column "Dmitrii Donskoi"¹⁶⁸ and an air squadron "Aleksandr Nevsky". These two acts became very powerful tools in raising public awareness of the Church's role and contribution to Soviet Victory. Of course, there was no organized military clergy to speak of during this time period. However, the Church was present at the frontline. One of the reasons that the Church was still alive even after all the Soviet persecutions was that there still was a large number of religious people in the Soviet Union. During WWII, the majority of these people were fighting the fascists while still holding on to their beliefs. Additionally, after 1941, many clergymen that had been sent to labor camps in Siberia and Northern Russia were released and sent to the frontlines. The Partisan Movement was a very good avenue for a clergymen to support the war effort and fight the fascists; people like *Protoierei* Aleksandr Romanushko "...personally

¹⁶⁷ Shkarovskii, 2010: p.155

¹⁶⁸ 40 tanks in total.

took part in military operations...”¹⁶⁹. This large presence of religious personnel and feelings gives an opportunity to say that even though the Church was not present on the frontlines through the military Clergy Corps during WWII, the spirit of religion was definitely there ; although as usual with the official nod from the State. Later, the modern Russian Orthodox Church used this theme as one of the cornerstones for its effort to resurrect military clergy; although, as of today the Moscow Patriarchate has not answered the questions about the role of the “other” Orthodox movements in the Soviet Victory over Nazism. Nevertheless, on May 9, 1945 the Great Patriotic War came to an end the Russian Orthodox Church emerged from this conflict in a much better shape than before. To be sure, the repressions and general exclusion of the Church in the Soviet Union never really stopped until 1991, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist. Nevertheless, the Church’s role and importance was ever-growing especially since the *Politburo* finally decided on the role the Church would play in the Soviet Union’s politics.

In the new, post-WWII era, the Russian Orthodox Church was instructed to enhance the image of the Soviet Union as a peace loving country. To this end, the Moscow Patriarchate began close interaction with the other churches and confessions around the world. This then led to the establishment of close relationships between the Soviet and foreign clergy. Once this took place, the Soviet leadership could not freely oppress the Church any longer or cause extreme hardship to its leadership because it would raise a storm of protests around the world. As a matter of fact, “...using his international contacts...the Dean of the Leningrad’s religious educational institutions *Arkhiepiskop Kirill (Gundyaev)* was able ... to open the church singing college under the

¹⁶⁹ Shkarovskii, 2010: p.147

auspices of the Leningrad's Seminary..."¹⁷⁰. Because of these international interactions, the KGB closely monitored most of the Church's activities; this included vetting the Church's leadership and functionaries; some of which are still at the very top of the Moscow Patriarchate in 2013. Of course, these very secular activities could not help the image of the Church in the eyes of some very passionate episcopos and believers. These "heretics" could not peacefully survive in the areas where Moscow Patriarchate's power was too great and so they were forced to establish their religious centers elsewhere, "...mostly in eastern and southern directions..."¹⁷¹ Of course, since the Moscow Patriarchate was the official religious 'face' of the Soviet Union, these schismatic movements were never officially recognized. In fact, the government tried to prosecute them as much as they could in order to further bolster the position of their 'chosen' movement, the one they could control. This shows that religion was still alive in the Soviet Union, although not necessarily within the *Politburo*'s predetermined path. The key is to realize that the followers of all Christian factions within the Soviet Union were true believers; only some of them were able to follow the branch that was a part of the government employing KGB appointees, while the others could not.

THE POST – SOVIET PERIOD

The true renaissance of the Moscow Patriarchate began in 1988 when Mikhail Gorbachev allowed Patriarch Aleksii II to celebrate 1,000 years of Christianity in Russia (including the Kievan Rus' of course). This was a grand event that was sponsored not only by the Church itself but also with the help of local governmental officials; probably

¹⁷⁰ Shkarovskii, 2010: p.396

¹⁷¹ Ibid: p.239.

one of the most famous supporters was the former Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. When the Soviet Union ceased to exist in 1991, the Moscow Patriarchate really came out of the shadows, but unfortunately not into its own. In the new – post-Soviet – era, the Patriarchate has two main problems. The first and most pressing one was to secure its domination over the Orthodox Christians within the former Soviet Union, especially Russia. A law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations” was passed in 1990 c.e., allowing all religions and sects to come to Russia and proselytize as they wish. The most problematic of these ‘newcomers’ were those non-Orthodox Churches that had the most prestige and money to conduct such activities, namely the Roman Catholic Church and the various Evangelical Churches from the West. The Moscow Patriarchate was waging a losing battle; it simply did not have the prestige or the influence to maintain its status quo. It had but one choice, come back under the auspices of the government, and that is exactly what took place in 1997. That year, the Russian Duma passed a new and revised version of the 1990 law, it “...declares that Russia is a secular state, but gives a privileged place to Orthodoxy as a coterminous with the state from its very beginnings.”¹⁷² In particular, this law

“...defined three different groups of religions in Russia...the Russian Orthodox Church...enjoy full legal privileges and certain financial, material and other benefits from the state; various ‘traditional Christians’, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists groups, who would have full legal privileges but fewer benefits from the state; all other religious groups and individuals, who would in theory have freedom of worship and of conscience, would receive no state benefits and would be required to register each year.”¹⁷³

¹⁷² Garrard and Garrard, 2008: p.173

¹⁷³ Wallace, 2006: p.70-71

So, in the losing battle of 1990s, in order to survive, the Moscow Patriarchate had to turn to the same institution that had caused it so much grief and become a part of the government, yet again.

The second problem for the Patriarchate was fiscal limitations. During Soviet times it was directly sponsored by the State, maybe not fully but definitely enough to maintain international activities, which was the main purpose of the Church under the Soviet Union. In the new era, under the free market rules, the Patriarchate was short on cash to pursue its lofty goals. Patriarch Aleksii II found a solution to this problem by yet again contacting the State and successfully lobbying for an amendment to the country's tax law. According to this law, specifically the Tax Law of the Russian Federation, Chapters 30 and 31, the Russian Orthodox Church does not have to pay taxes on the land they own, the buildings they use or the money they make through various business activities. This was a very welcomed decision that helped the Church to be more financially sound.

At this point it would be beneficial to take a quick look at some statistical data about modern Russian society and its military. According to Russian law, a general census takes place every ten years. The latest one took place in 2010 and so in-depth data analysis is not yet available. What is available is an in-depth analysis of year 2000 census and some *ad hoc* data compiled and analyzed by various agencies; in our case the Moscow Patriarchate and the military. Let us take a look first at the 2000 data. According to the Carnegie Moscow Center, "...majority of ethnic Orthodox, about 95%, -- representatives of three nationalities (the Russians, the Ukrainians and the

Byelorussians)...”¹⁷⁴ Therefore, in a multinational country – Russia – if one meets a non-Slav, most of the times this person will not be an Russian Orthodox follower.

Secondly, when one discusses the issue of being a Russian Orthodox follower, there are two things that must be addressed. First, if one calling oneself a Russian Orthodox believer and the second one is actually being Russian Orthodox; the primary difference between the two is simply wearing a cross versus going to church regularly, paying the dues and being a part of the local religious community. This religious participation is called *votserkvlennie* and it is the most important criterion when discussing the religious situation in Russia. In 2008, about 73% of Russian citizens called themselves believers¹⁷⁵ but more significantly, only about 6% of the Russian Orthodox believers go to Church more than once a month¹⁷⁶. In other words, out of every one hundred people only six could be called ‘true believers’, because in the Orthodox tradition one must go to church regularly in order to be a Christian. So, what about the military?

According to 2009 study conducted by the Synodal Office of the Moscow Patriarchate in dealing with the Military and Law Enforcement Agencies, over 52% of respondents identified themselves as “wavering”¹⁷⁷, meaning not religious but not necessarily atheist. If one adds atheists – about 1.6% and those indifferent – about 12.3%¹⁷⁸ the population of “not religious” becomes close to three quarters of the entire military population; of the one quarter population left, there are followers of the

¹⁷⁴ Safronov, <http://krotov.info/history/20/1990/safonov.htm> (accessed 05 20, 2012), p.8.

¹⁷⁵ Andreeva, <http://www.religiopolis.org/documents/2130-religioznyj-tip-studenchestva-v-sootnoshenii-s-religioznym-tipom-rossijan-mezhdu-rehristianizatsiej-i-sekuljarizatsiej.html> (accessed 03 09, 2011).

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p.4

¹⁷⁷ Sinodal’nyi Otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata po vzaimodeistviu s Vooruzhennymi Silami i pravookhranitel’nyimi ucherezhdenniami. <http://www.pobeda.ru/content/view/9989> (accessed 07 05, 2011).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

“traditional” Russian religions of Christianity (to include the Catholics, the Protestants and others), Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. Looking at these – fairly low – numbers, a question arises “Why is there the need for the Chaplain Corps to exist if the number of true faithful is not so great?” Welcome to the present day history of the Russian Military Clergy Corps.

Undoubtedly, there were and still are some very religious personnel, and some of them are indeed in command of military units, but based on the national statistics discussed above, these people are the absolute minority.

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Please see the complete bibliography of the main work.