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Post-Christian or Post-Atheistic Society? Some Characteristics of the Russian Regime of Secularity

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The authors argue that the specificity of the Russian case of secularity is generally underestimated. This leads to two negative consequences. First, it leads researchers to consider the regimes of secularity in Eastern Europe as variations of the "Soviet model," which is false. Second, it entails inaccuracies in the analysis of the regime of secularity that has developed in post-Soviet Russia, which the authors propose to describe as "post-atheistic." The special Russian case involved the destruction of the very mechanism of religious and cultural transmission during the period of Communist rule. This destruction resulted in other features of a post-atheistic society: the relatively low relevance of religious symbols and narratives to the social fabric; the involvement of religious agency in projects of nation-building and, therefore, the predominantly ideological, rather than religious, motivation of the subjects of such agency; the top-down, rather than bottom-up, dynamic of the post-Soviet return of religion to the public sphere; the lack of broad public support for state activities in this field; and the widespread polarization of views on the role of public religion in modern society — either linking religion to cultural backwardness, or the total rejection of modernity and secular culture.

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WHEN Peter Berger put forward his idea of desecularization, it made a huge impression on the academic community (Berger 1999; Berger 2008). To be sure, doubts about the validity of the secularization hypothesis had been expressed even before Berger and his colleagues' publication. One of the first skeptics was Thomas Luckman.[1] In the mid-1980s, sociologist Roland Robertson issued a refutation of the thesis about the decline of religion's public role in the modern world (Robertson and Chirico 1985).[2] And indeed, among religious scholars there have always been people convinced that the rumors about the death of God are greatly exaggerated (Hadden 1987; Stark 1997). It was Berger's work, however, that provoked an academic discussion leading to epochal shifts in the sociology of religion. Among these shifts was the decoupling of modernity and secularity. Today, a consensus has emerged in which secularization does not always and everywhere accompany modernization.[3] In addition, during discussions at that time, scholars proposed treating "secularization" as an analytical variable. It should not act as both *explanandum* and *explanans*. The case is the same with the concept of "secularism."[4] As a British researcher noted, one cannot study the phenomenon of secularism from the standpoint of secularism (Navaro-Yashin 2002). This refers not so much to the variability of this term's meanings as to its emotional and psychological connotations. Although academic literature usually associates secularism with the state's neutrality with respect to religion, authors on this topic fall into two camps: the "secular" and the "anti-secular." While to representatives of the former, secularization and secularism are a fact requiring study and description, to representatives of the latter, both these phenomena are equated with moral relativism and value disorientation.

1. Ironically, Luckmann was Berger's coauthor for several notable early works (see Luckmann 1980).
2. For responses to the arguments made by opponents of secularization theory, see Chaves 1994 and Yamane 1997.
3. Shmuel Eisenstadt's concept of multiple modernities was a response to those (Eurocentric) theories that equated modernization with westernization. In line with this logic, the concept of multiple secularities appeared later. See Wolhrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012.
4. While secularization describes a social process, secularism signifies an ideology and a policy.

Furthermore, debates on (de)secularization relativized the idea that secularism means the distancing (neutrality) of the state with respect to religion. In particular, the work of Talal Asad, which has become paradigmatic in recent years, has demonstrated based on abundant empirical material that secularism is highly historical and contextual (Asad 2003). Behind this seemingly abstract attitude there are always specific social actors associated with certain interests and lifestyles. In some cases, this entails the preferences authorities show toward one confession over others, up to outright discrimination. In other cases, secularism results in the sacralization of the state and the fathers of the nation.[5] Lastly, the formula of Jurgen Habermas concerning "postsecularity" was a veritable conceptual discovery in the context of the debate over the role and place of religion in modern societies (Habermas 2002; Habermas 2006). This formula makes it possible to eliminate the opposition of secular and anti-secular tendencies in public life, because it asserts the *coexistence* of religious and non-religious worldviews in the same public space (for a detailed analysis of the concept of postsecularity see Uzlaner 2013a). Strictly speaking, Peter Berger himself expressed this idea while opposing the equivalence of modernity and secularization:

> Modernity is not necessarily secularizing; it is necessarily *pluralizing*. Modernity is characterized by an increasing plurality, within the same society, of different beliefs, values, and worldviews. Plurality does indeed pose a challenge to all religious traditions — each one must cope with the fact that there are "all these others," not just in a faraway country but right next door (Berger 2008, 23).

It is striking, however, that participants in these discussions sidestepped the Soviet case with its ideology of state atheism. They could not, of course, fail to mention the USSR, but it clearly lies on the periphery of their attention, and appears as the subject of separate empirical, rather than theoretical, studies (Anderson 1994; Smolkin 2018; Keller 2001; Dragadze 1993; Freeze 2015; Pospielovsky 1987–88).[6]

5. An argument the president of France, Nicholas Sarkozy, once made concerning the necessity of removing a Muslim head scarf upon entering a school is indicative of this form of secularism: one removes one's shoes when entering a mosque; why not show respect when entering a temple of the Republic?

6. In Berger's above-mentioned article, the Soviet case appears as one of three types of secularism, along with the provisionally termed "American" and "French" cases. David Martin's *A General Theory of Secularization* (1978) does not analyze the case of the USSR. In the revised version of this work (2005), the post-Soviet states are mentioned only in passing; they are not included in the theoretical discussion.

Moreover, it is tacitly assumed that the Soviet space fits into the general context in epistemological terms (that is, that it can be described in the same categories as the West): in effect, the same process occurred in Soviet territory as in Western Europe (secularization)[7] — with only this difference, that in this territory secularization was "forced." Post-Soviet Russia also appears through a similar — "normalizing" — lens: it is believed that it, like its European neighbors, is experiencing "desecularization" in certain respects and, viewed over the long term, has joined the trend of transformation toward "post-secularity" (Uzlaner 2013; Knorre 2014; Shishkov 2012; Kormina and Shtyrkov 2015; Bogatyrev and Shishova 2015).

It seems to us, however, that with this approach, some important features of the state-confessional relationship in Russia during the Soviet period escape the researcher's scrutiny. In addition, we believe that this approach hinders the understanding of the regime of secularity that has formed in post-Soviet Russia. Thus, it is implied that one can regard the countries of Eastern Europe, which were part of the Soviet bloc after the Second World War (or, like Yugoslavia, were included only in the "socialist camp"), as variations within the same secularity regime that developed in Soviet Russia. It is telling, for example, that the authors of a comprehensive collection devoted to the interaction of religion and politics draw no distinctions between the USSR and its Eastern European satellites with respect to the structure of state-confessional relations (Haynes 2009). Thus, in the section on Protestantism, Paul Freston prefers to speak generally about "Marxist-inspired regimes" in general, without making distinctions between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Soviet Latvia and Estonia (Freston 2009, 37); and in a survey chapter on religion and the state, John Madeley uses the concept of "the former Soviet bloc." In his view, all twenty-two states that were behind the "Iron Curtain" can be described as "atheistic *de jure*," since the separation of Church and state there meant the "exclusion [of religion] from public life" and the "cutting-off" of religious institutions from most resources, both symbolic and material (Madeley 2009, 183, 187–88). Similarly, José Casanova writes of states that are simultaneously strictly secular and non-democratic, "Soviet-type Communist regimes" as the most obvious ones" (Casanova 2008, 112). Likewise, Pippa Norris and Ronald

7. Berger and his supporters insist that this trend does not apply to North America (see Berger, Davie, and Fokas 2008). So as not to become entangled in this controversy, we shall conduct the discussion below with respect to Western Europe, not to the West in general.

Inglehart, investigating the phenomenon of "religious revival," chose all "post-Communist countries" as the object of their research (Norris and Inglehart 2004, 111–32).

We hold, however, that the regime of secularity in the USSR, on the one hand, and in the countries in the "socialist camp" in Eastern Europe, on the other, had numerous fundamental differences.

Following Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt, by secularity we understand a set of cultural meanings, based on the differentiation between religion and non-religious spheres, and by the regime of secularity we understand the customs and practices that arise around this set in a particular country or macro-region (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, 2012).

The specifics of the Soviet case in the context of secularization and secularism

In our view, the assertion that the Soviet case represents one of the variants of the secularization process requires significant qualification. The processes that took place in the USSR in the sphere of state-confessional relations contrast quite sharply with what transpired in Western countries.

(1) In the West, secular idioms gradually "sprouted up" into public life. In the USSR, secularism was literally implanted from above. The order the Communists established excluded both religious agency and religious symbols. Indisputably, Soviet religious policy underwent marked changes over the years, from attempts to purge completely all traces of religion's presence from public life in the 1920s and 1930s to a compromise with the Church and its exploitation for foreign-policy purposes in the Brezhnev era.[8] Nevertheless, through-

8. Throughout the two post-revolutionary decades Bolshevik authorities engaged in direct state terror against the very institution of the Church. By the mid-1930s organized religious life in the USSR was practically completely paralyzed. Public expression of piety had been made impossible. With the beginning of the war, however, the state's attitude toward religion became more pragmatic and the pressure on religion abated. The party leadership's religious policy over the next four decades was not distinguished by its consistency — one recalls a new round of anti-Church persecution under Nikita Khrushchev. Nevertheless, one can generally speak of an evolution of the state's attitude toward the ROC, from outright hostility toward a more accommodating position (with the proviso of the absolute political loyalty of religious institutions). The apotheosis of this process can be considered the censorship ban introduced in 1982 against public criticism in the Soviet press of the senior hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate (see Shkarovskii 2010, 397). The state constructed similar relations with the official clergy of other confessions.

out the seven decades of Communist rule, piety was considered socially censured behavior.

(2) In Western countries, the *continuity* of religious institutions is evident. In the twentieth century, these institutions lost their former significance, but they never disappeared from public space. In the USSR, religious institutions were *dismantled*. They have in fact been absent from the public space for four generations (except in Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, a large part of present-day Moldova and the three Baltic countries, where these institutions survived until the outbreak of World War II).

(3) Atheism's position as the *state ideology* for many generations has deeply marked both the institutional structure of society and the consciousness of citizens. In this case, the state did not simply distance itself from religion, forcing it out of the public sphere, as happened in the early twentieth century in France with its *laïcité* principle, which represented an extreme form of the privatization of religion. In France, despite the cautious, unfavorable (and even hostile — in the strict version of laicism) attitude of the state toward religion, its "privatization" was and is occurring: it is being dislodged from the public sphere into the private one, but the right to follow one's religion in the private space is *guaranteed by law*. In the Soviet case, the government sought to oust religion from citizens' lives altogether.[9] This was not the "hyper-privatization" of religion, as is sometimes argued (see Shishkov 2012, 167–68), but an approach toward it in which the state considered religious faith and practices undesirable at best. For religion, this situation signified its *individualization*, that is, the departure of believers into a voluntary ghetto, and, consequently, their (self)isolation from the socio-cultural mainstream. It should be noted that under other radically secular regimes, such as the Turkish government during Kemalist rule, no such isolation occurred: from the late 1920s to the late 1970s, the state pointedly distanced itself from religion, but it did not expect citizens to adopt atheistic views. Moreover, in Kemalist Turkey, unlike Soviet Russia, the goal was not the de-

9. One should note, by the way, that in Soviet conditions the dichotomy between private and public is problematic. Here the public does not exist as a certain special sphere outside the bounds of the family, which could not be seized by the state, over which the controlling ambitions of the state could not extend. Not without reason was "public property" something that in essence belonged to the state, and not to this or that community (cooperative). And not for nothing does the Russian language lack the concept *privacy*, while the expression *private property* is translated as "individual property (*chastnaia sobstvennost'*)." In Soviet Russia something belonging to an individual was referred to as "personal property (*lichnaia sobstvennost'*)."

struction of Islam as such, but rather its reform. The authorities expected that a modernized Islam would support Turkish nationalism.[10]

We believe that the above-mentioned circumstances necessarily exerted significant influence on the formation of the regime of secularity in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet system. In our view, it is appropriate to characterize the society that developed in Russia during this period as *post-atheistic*.

But before proceeding to demonstrate this thesis, let us compare features of the Soviet regime of secularity with corresponding regimes in the Communist countries of Eastern Europe.

The countries of Eastern Europe and the "Soviet" regime of secularity

It seems to us that the countries of Eastern Europe, situated in the orbit of the USSR for four decades, do not conform to the Soviet regime of secularity. One can adduce the following arguments in support of this claim.

First, in most of these countries, a certain — at times quite high — degree of *autonomy of religious institutions* persisted.[11] There were only two exceptions: Bulgaria and Albania. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church existed under the strict control of the authorities for all the years of the regime's existence, state security organs recruited most of the senior Church hierarchs, and the state conducted aggressive anti-religious campaigns right up to the mid-1980s (Nikolov 2013). In Albania, Enver Hoxha set out to build an atheist state. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, the confessional heterogeneity of the population (70% were Muslims, 20% Orthodox, and 10% Catholics). Secondly, the attitude of the ruling elites toward Islam as a "backward" religion precluded its reform (see Buchenau 2015, 271).

The autonomy of the Catholic Church was especially great, not least for organizational reasons. As is well-known, Polish Cardinal Wojtyła was elected pope in 1978. All the Catholic episcopates located in the

10. It is significant that under Ataturk the State Directorate of Religious Affairs, while banning the recitation of prayers in Arabic, simultaneously initiated the translation of the Koran into Turkish (see Sergeev and Sarukhanian 2012, 138).

11. To be sure, one should clarify that at first after the establishment of pro-Soviet regimes in these countries most of the leftist governments waged an active attack against religious institutions, which included the repression of clergy, the confiscation of church property and lands, attempts to construct a network of agents within the church, and the like. From the second half of the 1950s, however, religious policy in most of these countries softened considerably.

territory of the GDR were part of the episcopates of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). But other religious organizations also enjoyed a certain degree of independence from the state in the countries of this macro-region. For example, in East Germany from at least the 1970s the state adopted a position of non-interference in relation to the Evangelical Church (Tyndale 2010, 216). The leaders of Romania considered it unnecessary to distance themselves from the Orthodox Church.[12] Researchers note that the pro-Soviet regime in this country instead sought the support of the Church (especially at the initial stage — when undertaking unpopular reforms such as the collectivization of agriculture or the nationalization of the economy), rather than striving to suppress it (Vasile 2013, 53; Shkarovskii 2011, 217). This stance of the authorities contrasts with the position of their Soviet counterparts in the first decades of Communist rule (as well as in the Khrushchev period).

Second, most Eastern European countries differed from their Soviet patron in terms of the *"visibility" of religion in the public space*. The Church in Eastern Europe, especially from the 1960s, was actively present in education systems and in other social institutions (healthcare, homes for the elderly, penal institutions, and the like). For example, in the GDR, one could easily buy a Bible in bookstores (something inconceivable in the USSR). From the late 1970s, Sunday services were broadcast on the radio, religious programs appeared on television, and Church publishing houses and theological schools operated (Burgess 1990, 18–19). Over the same period, the Protestant Church in East Germany patronized dozens of hospitals, homes for the disabled, orphanages, and hundreds of homes for the elderly (Ward 1978, 89). In Poland in 1956 religion lessons (albeit optional) returned to secondary schools. Although five years later schools were again declared strictly secular, the teaching of religion remained possible at catechization sites in Catholic churches until the fall of the Communist regime (Gryz 2016, 19). In addition, there were clubs of Catholic intellectuals in the country, which organized pilgrimages, concerts of sacred music, and so forth. Throughout these years, the Catholic University of Lublin functioned, and from the late 1970s the free construction of places of worship was allowed. As a result, in the 1980s Poland set a European record for the number of new churches and chapels (Gryz 2016, 28).

In other words, in Eastern Europe the *limits of secularism* were defined quite early and quite clearly. The state in the countries of this mac-

12. Soviet embassy personnel in Bucharest in 1960 informed Moscow with annoyance that the authorities did virtually nothing to oppose "the noxious influence of the clerics" (see Shkarovskii 2011, 217).

ro-region — with the sole exception of Albania, and except for a short postwar period (when the authorities, following Moscow's example, pursued a policy of militant atheism) — did not seek the full displacement of religion from citizens' lives.[13] The reasoning of the ruling elites was twofold: a) they feared turning society against themselves and (b) they considered religion an integrative component of national identity.

Therefore, Eastern European leaders behaved differently toward the Church (at least, when the Church was considered nation-forming) in comparison with their "elder brother" in Moscow. When the father of Romanian dictator Ceausescu died in 1972, the head of state pointedly buried him according to the Orthodox rite. We have already discussed the role of the Catholic Church in Polish society. Here, however, is another remarkable fact: since membership in the ruling party in Poland did not preclude religious affiliation, more than half of Polish Communists were Catholics. In 1986, almost 66 percent of the members of the Polish United Workers Party called themselves believers, a situation unthinkable for members of the CPSU (Gryz 2016, 37).

Religious organizations in Yugoslavia also enjoyed a high degree of freedom (Belyakova 2014, 65). This was primarily due to the heterogeneity of the federation's population in terms of confessional affiliation — under these conditions, a cautious religious policy was part of the quest for balance in ethno-national policy. After Tito's official visit to the Vatican in 1971, the Catholic Church in Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia gained permission to conduct social work among the country's youth, and the active publication of religious periodicals and books began. The Serbian Orthodox Church, which had no governing center outside the country, was more dependent on the Yugoslav authorities, but it also gradually became more free. From the late 1950s, spiritual literature (including children's literature) was published under its auspices, and seminaries and theological schools opened. And Orthodox priests known for their criticism of the authorities often became bishops (Buchenau 2005, 547).

In general, the Communist governments in Eastern European countries were quite tolerant of such manifestations of religion as religious education (at least as elective courses or Sunday schools), pilgrimages, religious processions, and so forth. One of the documents of the Czechoslovak Communist Party from 1966, which stated the need

13. Even in Bulgaria, which in its religious policy came closest to the Soviet model, the repressive course with respect to believers, beginning in the 1960s, affected mainly the Muslim population (see Buchenau 2015, 271).

"to provide citizens who have not yet cast off [their] religious prejudices the opportunity to perform religious rites," serves as an excellent expression of this accommodating attitude (Murashko 2014, 327).

A third important point is that the Church in Eastern Europe had *its own social agenda*. And it was socially active. While in the Soviet case the state harshly suppressed any religious activity that could be regarded as an encroachment on its absolute authority, in the Eastern European case the state stood in ideological *competition* with the Church.

And, finally, thanks to the preservation of relative autonomy and the existence of the Church's own agenda, the Church was able to play *a prominent role in the mass movement for democratization*. In the 1980s, the Church in several Eastern European countries (Poland, the GDR, Czechoslovakia) was an active participant in the civil resistance to the Communist government. In this respect the situation in Eastern Europe was strikingly different from that in Soviet Russia and other republics of the USSR during the perestroika period. In the Soviet Union, religious institutions, having been eradicated from the system of socio-cultural communication throughout the entire period of Communist rule, stood aside from the processes of democratization that swept society in the second half of the 1980s.

During the perestroika period, the "official" religious structures took a rather cautious, wait-and-see attitude toward what was unfolding. It is symbolic, for example, that during the August coup, Patriarch Alexii II decided to issue a very restrained appeal concerning the unacceptability of bloodshed only on the night of August 21, when the failure of the GKChP's [State Committee on the State of Emergency] plans was already more or less obvious. Of course, there were individual dissident priests in the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) who exhibited considerable civic engagement — for example, in 1988 the pressure group "The Church and Perestroika" appeared, headed by Fr. Gleb Yakunin, and some of its members later joined the Russian Christian Democratic Movement and "Democratic Russia." Nevertheless, the "liberal" wing of the ROC did not exert significant influence on the perestroika movement. The same can be said of Islam. Attempts at self-organization by Muslims, the most significant manifestation of which was the creation of the All-Union Islamic Renaissance Party in 1990, took place, firstly, without the active participation and support of the muftiates, and secondly, did not lead to the emergence of a politically significant force. In other words, the movement for democratization in the USSR remained purely secular in both its membership and ideology. This situation contrasts starkly with that in Poland (where committees in support of the main opposition force —

the Solidarity movement — were often drawn directly from church parishes and clubs of Catholic intellectuals, and Solidarity itself actively employed Christian symbolism [Kunicki 2012, 183; Meshcheriakov 2014, 250]) and in the GDR (where thousands of protest rallies in 1989 originated at the Cathedral of St. Nicholas in Leipzig).

Post-Christian vs. post-atheist society

When observers describe European societies as post-Christian, they mean the following: institutionalized Christianity (the Catholic and Protestant Churches) in our day has ceased to play the role it played two centuries ago. Christianity as a symbolic system retains its significance for public life, however. Symbols and narratives associated with Christianity are part of the daily routine. The structure of weekends, the radio broadcasts of Sunday sermons, the virtually obligatory *communion* ritual in schools, the names of political parties, religious allusions, plots, themes, and imagery in show business, and much more all indicate that society, no matter how religiously indifferent it may be today, remembers what it was yesterday.[14]

In our view, it is impossible to place contemporary Russia in the same category as post-Christian Europe. It is more appropriate to describe present-day Russian society in other terms, namely, as a post-atheist society.

There are several reasons for this.

(1) Reconstructed institutions differ from institutions that have existed continuously, in much the same way as a "modern replica [*novodel*]" in architecture differs from surviving authentic structures. "Restored" buildings can, of course, make a certain impression on viewers, but they lack the unmistakably discernible aura that historical buildings have. With this metaphor we would like to emphasize the thesis advanced above concerning the reconstruction of institutionalized religion in post-Soviet Russia.[15] A situation in which religious sym-

14. Of course, the degree of this indifference varies greatly. While in some Western countries the proportion of people who consider themselves agnostics constitutes approximately half the population (as in Great Britain or France), in others non-believers form a relatively small proportion. For example, 72 percent of Italians declared the importance of religion in their everyday lives (see European Commission 2009, 11).

15. It is important to emphasize here, that "institutions" in the understanding we espouse are not only establishments (or, in other terminology, "formal institutions"), but also practices that had become habitual (so-called "informal institutions"). And while the former in the Soviet period were reproduced, albeit in extremely truncated form, the reproduction of the latter was disrupted.

bols and narratives are routinely present in the life of a society (even if they have lost their former significance) is not the same as one in which these symbols have "returned" to public life (and this is precisely what unfolded in Russia in the early 1990s). At first glance, the presence of religion in the public sphere in contemporary Russia is a sign of its normalization, when viewed from the perspective of the version of "normality" that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century in Western Europe. In both Western Europe and Russia, one sees the officially sanctioned celebration of Christmas and Easter; religion classes in schools; theology faculties at universities; priests on radio and television; chaplains in the army; and churches' charitable work in orphanages, homes for the elderly, and the like. Religion's removal from public life for seven decades, however, could not but affect how its return appears in the social communication space.

This return has given and still gives the impression of artificiality. It seems to us that the discrepancy between the actions of the state and the level of public demand for the presence of religion in public space produces this impression. To be sure, it cannot be said that this demand was entirely absent.[16] The further the 1990s receded into the past, however, with their characteristic striving to fill the spiritual vacuum that arose after the collapse of the Communist project, the clearer it became that the initiative in the process of "religious revival" came more from the authorities than from society. Both the introduction of religious education in schools and the opening of theological departments and colleges in universities did not happen thanks to demand from below — they were dictated from above.[17] Society was either indifferent to this bureaucratic dictate or responded to it with protests.[18]

16. The early 1990s were quite rich in grassroots initiatives for the revival of Orthodoxy as the national religion. In this regard one may recall the society "Radonezh," known for its eponymous Orthodox radio station, which has subsisted since its creation on donations from its listeners, as well as the appearance of organizations such as the "Orthodox Political Caucus," the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods, and so on. Later, in 2000, the movement "For the Right to Live without a TIN (Taxpayer Identification Number)" arose, which opposed not only the state, which had introduced the TIN, but also the patriarchate, which held an excessively liberal position on this issue according to the participants in this movement. For more details on the history of these kinds of organizations and public initiatives, see Verkhovskii 2003.

17. Researchers have even proposed characterizing this process as "desecularization from above" (see Karpov 2013).

18. While the introduction of lessons on the "Foundations of Orthodox Culture" in the schools or the establishment of theology in the higher education system met only minimal protest activity, in numerous cases linked to the erection of churches in recreational zones or the transfer of museums to the property of the church, protests were massive.

(2) It is important to emphasize that the reconstruction of institutionalized religion, the matter at issue, is an inherent component of *nation-building* projects (Agadjanian 2015). Hence a specific feature of the activity of the Orthodox revival's agents (whether operating from "above" or "below"): this activity is often motivated and rationalized by *ideological* rather than religious considerations. As for the "higher-ups" of reconstructed Orthodoxy, one must mention the skepticism that the current primate of the Russian Orthodox Church evokes among many observers. According to Sergei Filatov, "Kirill and his associates preach not faith in God, but a neo-Slavophile ideology of national rebirth, secular in its essence" (Filatov 2012, 34). With respect to the "grassroots," by them we mean neophytes, as a rule, who categorically reject the values of secular society and are convinced that secularization was imposed on Russia from outside. We shall call them Orthodox radicals (to avoid the term "Orthodox fundamentalism"). There are quite a few groups in these circles united by an aggressive rejection of the "West" and of "liberalism," allegedly a Western product, latent or overt anti-Semitism, and hostility to secular culture. Members of these groups periodically participate in demonstrations, such as the disruption of civil initiatives opposing the construction of churches not approved by residents, or riots against art exhibitions. Nationalist rather than Christian ideas have inspired these actions. It is no coincidence that various kinds of ultraconservatives — of both the "statist" and ethnonationalist strands — appear as allies of Orthodox radicals. In the ideological cocktails they produce, the symbols of Orthodoxy mingle with blatantly profane images (so that icons depicting Stalin do not seem an oxymoron to those who use them).[19]

(3) Moreover, a characteristic feature of post-atheistic society is widespread dissemination of inadequate conceptions of religion's public role in the modern era. Seven decades of state atheism necessarily affected the thinking of both the majority who adopted the dominant ideology and the believing minority. After the delegitimization of religious institutions and symbols during the Soviet period, very peculiar ideas about the relationship between the secular and the sacred (as well as about the meaning of both) emerged in society. These ideas were extremely schematic, abstract, and, as an attentive researcher noticed, fantastical (Agadjanian 2006). Thus, in Russia, within the framework

19. The erotic militarism of Alexander Prokhanov is in the same vein. Religious images perform a supporting role in this writer's ideological fantasies — the primary significance here belongs to sacred Russian weaponry and the Russian victory achieved with it.

of the narrative of "religious revival" both modernity and secularity appear to be synonymous with falling into "unspirituality" and "detachment from [one's] roots." Correspondingly, returning to the roots and finding spirituality is regarded as aggressively anti-modern. Curiously, however, the opponents of religious enthusiasts in Russia — "anticlericalism" activists — also operate with fantastical images: in their eyes, religious adherence symbolizes backwardness, rejection of modernity, and unwillingness to keep pace with the progressive secular West. Alexander Agadjanian attributes both these phantasms to "specifically post-Communist naïveté." Since the mechanisms of transmitting cultural experience were destroyed during the years of Soviet rule, there were virtually no agents of "religious transmission" in society. But secularism also essentially did not exist, because "the thing that gave it meaning, religion, had been artificially suppressed" (Agadjanian 2006, 172).

(4) *Last but not least*, it is impossible not to mention the social climate formed during the years of the Soviet regime, with its "militant" atheism, glorification of people in black leather jackets, and a frankly unchristian way of solving problems ("one has to meet violence with violence"). This, of course, does not mean that Gospel principles prevail west of Russia in solving social problems (not to mention that social climate does not lend itself to any reliable measurements). Nevertheless, we believe that the heightened degree of aggression inherent in the public rhetoric of the Russian political and cultural *beau monde* bears a direct relation to the atheistic period in Russian history, giving reason to characterize post-Soviet society as post-atheistic as opposed to post-Christian.

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