

Mother Russia by Luba George & Carol Greene

Reviving the Third Rome doctrine

Third of a series on the 1988 celebrations of the 1,000th anniversary of the Christianization of Russia.

The Soviet Union's justification of the 1983 Korean Airlines slaughter and the more recent murder of U.S. Major Arthur Nicholson—supported by the Russian Orthodox Church—can only be understood in the context of the “Holy Mother Russia-Third Rome” cultural matrix which has kept the Soviet people in a Dostoevskyan irrationalist, chauvinistic, “blood and soil” state of mind, before and after the communist revolution.

The “Third Rome” theory was concocted in the aftermath of the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-41), to which the Russian Church responded with a denunciation of the *Filioque* clause—the foundation of Western civilization and Christianity—refusing unification on that basis.

The “Third Rome” doctrine was developed under the guidance of the main center of the world oligarchy at the time of the Council of Florence, Venice. It was based on the tradition that the historical prerogatives of the Roman Empire as a world empire were transferred by God to the Byzantine Empire of Constantinople. After the latter fell in 1453, these prerogatives were handed over to the Emperor of Muscovy and to Moscow itself as the Third Rome.

The term “Third Rome” first found its expression in the “epistles” of the *staretz* (elder) Philotheos, a Hesychast monk belonging to the Eleazar monastery in Pskov. Philotheos based his theocratic ideas on the ideology

and experience of the first “Slavic” Empire, the Bulgarian Empire(s) of the 13th and 14th centuries.

The Rasputin-like Philotheos, in an address to the Russian czar in 1511, laid out the Third Rome thesis as follows: “It is through the supreme all powerful and all supporting right hand of God that Emperors reign . . . and it has raised thee, most Serene and Supreme Sovereign and Grand Prince, Orthodox Christian and Czar and Lord of all, who art the holder of the dominions of the holy thrones of God, of the sacred, universal and apostolic Churches of the most holy Mother of God . . . instead of Rome and Constantinople. . . . Now there shines through the universe, like the sun in heaven, the Third Rome, of thy sovereign Empire and of the holy synodical apostolic Church, which is the Orthodox Church faith. . . . Observe and see to it, most pious czar, that all the Christian Empires unite with thine own. For two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and a fourth there will not be; for thy Christian czardom will not pass to any other, according to the mighty word of God.”

Philotheos added that Russia was the kingdom mentioned by the prophet Daniel, “which shall never be destroyed.”

The transformation of this idea into a political principle of the Muscovite Church was effected under the regime of Ivan the Terrible (1533-84), by the Metropolitan Makary (1542-63).

Makary, a monk trained at the Mount Athos monastery in Greece, cooked up the hagiographical, genealogical, and historical data for the rising Muscovite Empire to support the Third Rome thesis.

The importance of the 1988 millennium celebrations of the Christianization of Rus for the Russians, is that Kievan Rus provides the chief “blood” link for the Russian Orthodox Church in the theory of Moscow's succession to the power of Rome.

In his genealogical study, *Steppannaya Kniga*, Makary created the still-popular legend that the family of the Muscovite czars was directly descended from Prus, a legendary brother of the Roman Emperor Augustus. Augustus supposedly assigned Prus dominion over the region of the Vistula, and “from Prus the 14th generation was Rurik”—hence the Rurik Dynasty, the founders of Russia. Volodimir Vsevolodykh—Grand Prince of Kiev and ancestor of the later Suzdal dynasty, who brought Christianity to Kievan Rus—was said to be the blood link between the Moscow rulers and the Byzantine Empire.

In June 1983 Archbishop Pitirim, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's publishing department, while visiting West Germany, reaffirmed Russia's commitment to this oligarchist doctrine: “The history of the Russian Orthodox Church is an unbroken one. . . . The ROC has a 1,000-year history. In 988, the Russians in Kiev, which was the principal city of the Great Russian principality, accepted the Christian belief that decided many pages of further history of the state and its culture. In 1988 we will celebrate the 1,000th-year Jubilee of this memorable event. . . . The Russian Orthodox Church sees its destiny clearly. We want to attain our goal of seeing the results of our spiritual activity.”