

cloistered analysis of literary theorists' inner worlds consequently suffers from a shortcoming common to intellectual histories which portray ideas arising in a vacuum, regardless of the arguably greater influence of material conditions. Nietzsche, after all, wrote that philosophy begins in the gut, and so it may have been that access to rationed goods played a bigger role than 'Mozartianism' in assuring allegiance to RAPP's literary prescriptions.

To be fair, however, Dobrenko's brief monograph (excellently translated by Savage) is intended to be a corrective, rather than definitive, statement on Socialist Realism's literary/historical origins, and so there's no reason to demand a repeat of explanatory formulas that have been around for years. His take on the matter is also made unique by his treatment of Socialist Realism as a present-day rather than *passé* phenomenon, as he seems to be trying to prove his argument through praxis, rendering himself indistinguishable from the text he has created and which the reader may be said to be creating. For those seeking a multilayered and challenging discussion that reinvents a well-mined topic, this is a must read.

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Zoe Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia after Communism*, London, New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005, xi + 257, with index.

Zoe Knox's conclusion – that liberal reformist elements in Russian Orthodoxy have fostered the development of civil society in post-Soviet Russia, while the official church hierarchy has stymied the same – comes as no surprise. This study's strength is the thoroughness with which this conclusion is demonstrated. This well-researched study describes a dynamic state of affairs, still unfolding. Zoe Knox examines the church's activity in three major domains: politics, society, and its internal mechanisations; and around two pivotal pieces of legislation: the 1990 law 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations', and the 1997 law 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations'. If the former represents the renunciation of Soviet-era anti-religious policies and characterises the relative openness of the time, the latter controversial legislation – in violation of provisions of the Russian

Constitution on the separation of church and state – imposed restrictions on the activities of religious minorities and cemented Russian Orthodoxy's privileged position in regard to the state.

Zoe Knox maintains that, after the capitulation and compromises of the Soviet years, the reemergence of Orthodox Church as a prominent force in Russian society was in no way predetermined. The author also rejects theories that Russian society and institutions, the Orthodox Church included, are inherently autocratic and conservative, as 'overly deterministic' (p. 38). She argues that circumstances in post-Soviet Russia and the Moscow Patriarchate's desire for political influence promoted a conservative agenda (p. 189). While making the case for dynamism and heterogeneity within the Orthodox Church, the author documents how, in the conflict between progressive Orthodox priests and laity who advocate ecumenism and modernisation of the liturgy in the vernacular, and those who regard such notions as apostasies, the latter conservatives have prevailed.

Two of the six chapters of Knox's study provide theoretical and historical background; specifically, a discussion of the role of the Catholic Church in Poland and Liberation Theology in South America in the cause of social justice, and a survey history of the evolving relationship of the Soviet regime with the Orthodox Church – from concerted persecution, to limited tolerance, to the pragmatism of Gorbachev, who recognised that the values taught by religion were not incompatible with the aims of Soviet society. The topics of subsequent chapters are also grounded in theory and history. Before examining the appropriation of Orthodoxy by national chauvinists, for example, Knox reviews definitions and types of nationalism, its historical precedents in nineteenth century Russia (the Slavophiles, the 'Russian Idea', Black Hundreds); the resurrection of traditional rural values by twentieth century village prose writers, and prescient Western studies that predicted a new Russian nationalism would supplant moribund Marxism-Leninism.

If the Orthodox Church's activities in charitable causes, healthcare, environmental issues and the like are found commendable, the symphonic relationship the church has cultivated with the state 'is incompatible with civil society and religious pluralism' (p. 105). Among illustrative examples of the church's collusion with the state, the author notes the construction of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour; favourable tax status and dubious commercial activities; the introduction of Orthodox chaplains in the armed forces (while

those from other faiths are excluded); tacit support for government policy in Chechnia; government acquiescence to the church's concerns over reburial of the Romanov remains; the presence of prelates at state functions, and state awards to church officials. In Knox's estimation, the Moscow Patriarchate failed to meet its historic challenge to be a force for positive change, but instead retreated into tradition and conservatism and, to this end, sought alliance with the government. While documenting how the current state of affairs came to be, the author points to missed opportunities on the part of the Moscow Patriarchate and makes recommendations: the Patriarch, rather than make concessions to anti-Semitic and nationalist elements within the Church, for fear of their defection, 'could throw his weight behind religious, social and political forces that seek to strengthen civil society' (p. 180); rather than be dismissed or silenced, the views of liberal dissenters 'could be welcomed as part of the freedom to debate and discuss' (p. 182).

Zoe Knox has synthesised a wealth of information in this thoroughly documented study, which includes 54 pages of notes, 80% of which are simple citations of sources as recent as 2003. What is couched as 'analysis' often reads more precisely like survey or discussion, and the book is rather overwritten and too self-referential. The focus of Chapter 5, for example – the appropriation of Orthodoxy by national chauvinists – is overtly restated no less than five times in the chapter's opening pages, and reiterated thrice on the final two (pp. 131-37; pp. 154-55); a misnamed Conclusion summarises the book's content chapter by chapter. Such excessive reiteration and summation diminishes the authority of an otherwise solid discourse. The book's merits outweigh these shortcomings, however; it will find avid readership among students and researchers of the recent history of the Russian Orthodox Church and its role in Russian society.

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Wade, Rex A. (ed.), *Revolutionary Russia: New Approaches*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004, xxii + 273 pp.

This volume, which appears in the series 'rewriting histories', is a collection of 'revisionist' views of the Russian Revolution. It consists of