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## The “*Russkij mir*” as Mission: Kaliningrad between the “altar” and the “throne” 2009–2015.

### Introduction

The rapid, yet in many ways preordained, deterioration of relations between the Russian Federation on the one side and the West on the other has revealed profound complexity and an inadmissibly low level of mutual understanding between the parties concerned. This crisis did not only result from recent tectonic changes in the post-Soviet area or any other region where interests of both parties intersect. Instead of being the root, these events may (and probably should) be construed as a catalyst of the debacle. Therefore, the origins of the crisis should be sought not only in politics as such, but in culture, history and religion – elements that complement and to significant extent shape it (even more so in the case of Russia). Incidentally, these pillars constitute the backbone of the “*Russkij mir*” (“The Russian world”) project that has in many respects reiterated/reinstated key points reflected in the Russian imperial thinking. This project is however much more complex and multifaceted than the ideology bred in Russia by the Soviets. Its comprehensive nature is based on the inclusion (but not complete denial) of religion as a bond between the Russian past and present. On the other hand, it is the Russian Orthodox creed that justifies the existence of a special historical and cultural mission of the Russian state as the main protector of the Slavic people living outside Russia. This was very well reflected in the debate between Slavophiles and Westernizers<sup>1</sup> in the second half of nineteenth century. Looking at the historical mission of Russia from two different (and to some extent conflicting) angles, both ideologies defined Orthodoxy as a key component in the formation of Russian statehood and national identity. Deeply rooted in Russian national consciousness and historical memory, it was the Orthodox faith that in many ways pre-determined the appearance and establishment of the Romanov

Dynasty (1613 – 1917). Historical experience has witnessed all the complexity these relations were destined to experience: ranging from being close to *symphonia*<sup>2</sup> to escalating into denial and oblivion.

The political crisis between the West and Russia has also revitalized another important topic that was temporarily abandoned yet nowadays appearing in the forefront of intellectual discussion: the issue of Kaliningrad Oblast and its role in “East – West” relations.<sup>3</sup> This issue appears to be of significant importance for a number of reasons in which religion has (quite unexpectedly, given local historical vicissitudes) occupied a prominent place and is being actively bound to the political dimension. Particularly marvelous has been the period from 2009 onward, during which the Russian Orthodox Church has undergone profound transformation and experienced exponential growth in power and authority. Also, this interim period has coincided with the advent of the “*Russkij mir*” ideology and its crucial meaning in conjuncture with Kaliningrad.

On the other hand, this discourse has gained a particular “zest” in the light of the conflict between Russia and the West having taken a very different course within the past three years. Its geopolitical appearance has now been supplemented by a so-called “value-based” ingredient that is being actively exploited by chief ideologists of the “*Russkij mir*”. In this juncture the westernmost Russian region has found itself at the heart of the argument, putting Kaliningrad into the avant-garde of anti-Western policies reflected in the so-called “*Russkij Mir*”<sup>4</sup> project (the term will be explained in section two). This makes Kaliningrad an “island” not only from geopolitical and ideological prospective (as was the case prior to 1991): the advent of Orthodoxy on the former Prussian soil and its transformation from an illegal (or semi-legal) status into one of the key institutions and bulwarks of contemporary Russia has added new meaning and restructured the debate in different one quite different from the original.

This article will analyze two main topics:

1. To illuminate the evolution of the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in Kaliningrad by discussing the transfer of former German-owned property to the ROC.
2. To identify the role of the ROC in the Russian ideological rift with the West and the underscoring place of Kaliningrad therein.

In order to present the most thorough outlook on the topic in question as possible, the research will employ a multidisciplinary method. It would

be particularly expedient to note that the “multidisciplinary” essence of the method of research is based on an alliance among such domains of scientific knowledge as theology, history and political science as the most comprehensive and insightful for the purpose of the present study. On the other hand, preference ought to be given to a thematic rather than strictly chronological structure of research – such approach should help to maintain ties between past and present by frequently addressing past issues and their meaning for the contemporary situation.

The paper is based on both primary and secondary sources. The former include information (in the form of both video and electronic materials) derived from the Moscow Patriarchate, Kaliningrad Diocese, as well as major forums and statements produced by figures (both ecclesiastical and lay) whose impact and influence on the topic is deemed essential. For obvious reasons, the vast bulk of sources employed contain materials in their language of origin: Russian. Topics discussed in this article have gained particular value in light of crucial events that have taken place after 2013 (the tragic events in Ukraine and the ensuing political debacle between Kyiv and Moscow). Moreover, it would not be an exaggeration to contend that this article in its present form is the first one of its kind to discuss issues related to “Church – State” relations in Kaliningrad with a (geo)political supplement.

## **The “Second Baptism of Rus’”<sup>5</sup> and Kaliningrad after 1991: building Orthodoxy on the German-Soviet foundation**

The collapse of the USSR produced a shockwave having a devastating effect on Russia and its population. Aside from huge economic losses, political miscalculations and the looming specter of territorial disintegration, Russian society lost a clear strategy for further development and desperately craved a new ideology to supersede the demised (and very unpopular at that time) Communism. The perilous position Russia found itself in urgently required overcoming anarchy, preventing further separatist tendencies and movements as well as providing the Russian population with the economic minimum necessary to avert social explosion. These needs appeared to be the first ones to be attended to, lest the state slip into the abyss of havoc.

However, the ruling elite (despite its recent Communist past) could not possibly have utterly forgotten the role of religion and the Russian Orthodox Church as a powerful institution that fostered national mobilization during the darkest periods of Russian history: Sergius of Radonezh (1314 – 1392) during the Mongol-Tatar sway over Rus', Germogen (1530 – 1612) and his role in the Time of Troubles as well as great number of other venerated Russians and their role<sup>6</sup> in national resurrection could not have been easily erased from the Russian cultural code and “historical memory”.

In 1988 the then-USSR celebrated the millennial anniversary of the Baptism of Rus'. This event came to be known as the “Second Baptism of Rus'” – a landmark episode in Russian history that not only signified the start of a spiritual renaissance of Russian society, but also clearly identified the ambitious plans of the ROC: if the first Baptism (988) took place on the territory of contemporary Ukraine, then the second one would take place in Moscow.

From this point of view, for a Russian society convalescing from decades of Communism (or at least so it was desired by its western partners) it was the ROC that was mainly perceived as a sufferer, a martyr and the prime victim of the Soviet terror. This bitter chapter of national history bestowed a particular privilege upon this institution, making it appear as the least corrupt and perhaps the most trustworthy, compared to other institutions (such as the Army, trade unions or the government).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it was the ROC (speaking through Patriarch *Alexy II*) to first explicitly condemn crimes committed by communism against its own population and other nations. This list included Germany, a country whose ideology and military forces wrought immeasurable sufferings on the Soviet population (both ethnically Russian and non-Russian) and was in return subjected to retaliatory measures leaving its capital in ruins, bleeding from heavy human losses and bereft of parts of its territories. Specifically, the former capital of East Prussia (Konigsberg with adjacent territories) became a de facto part of the Soviet Union as a result of the sweeping military offensive of Spring 1945.

For the westernmost Russian region, hereakup of the Soviet Union (1991) became one of the most decisive periods in its post-Soviet history. Similar to the mainland, it was struck by an avalanche of economic and political hardships that were exacerbated by a sense of aloofness and separation from the rest of Russia, as well as low level of cooperation with its European partners (the so-called “double periphery”<sup>8</sup>). Moreover, if in times of crisis the population

of the East Slavic countries could find some solace in addressing the church, in Kaliningrad this could not be used in full. Looking at Kaliningrad from this angle, it would not be an exaggeration to speak of a “triple periphery” that came to be seen in a broad range of dimensions. For instance, the Orthodox newspaper “The Church Herald” came into being in Moscow in 1989, whereas in Kaliningrad it was first issued only in 2004 due to the personal involvement of Metropolitan Kirill. This lack of attention to Kaliningrad was related not only to the personality of Patriarch Alexy or development of the ROC, yet greatly depended on certain historical particularities of Kaliningrad.

The demise of the Soviet Union could not possibly have led to a rapid religious revival because Orthodox faith had been absent in the region, a situation which fully complied with atheist Communist ideology and the German past of the region. The subjective factors in this situation mainly had to do with the fact that this outlying miniscule portion of the Russian Federation was not destined to become a place of frequent visits from the side of the Russian Patriarch. For example, even such a symbolic event as initiation of construction of the Christ the Savior Cathedral in Kaliningrad (23 June 1996) was attended by President Boris Yeltsin and Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad Kirill (not the Patriarch himself). By and large, it would not be an error to state that the first decade following the collapse of Communism left Kaliningrad on the margin of attention from the side of the religious hierarchs – a situation in which only the figure of Kirill occupied a very distinct position. This, however, did not greatly diverge from trends observed in the realm of political developments. Tendencies prevailed in the Russian political Olympus, in which some semblance of a combat took place between liberalism (not to its benefit, as it would turn out) and conservatism (with an apparent shift toward greater centralization and establishment of the “power vertical”). In many respects, this conflict predetermined the course of development of the Kaliningrad Oblast and its fates that could be easily identified when addressed from a chronological prospective.<sup>10</sup>

Yurii Matochkin (1991 – 1996) , the first governor of post-Soviet Kaliningrad, was a progressive politician and an academic with a firm inclination toward liberal-oriented reforms who seemed to have had the misfortune of assuming his position during such a tumultuous interim. During his tenure, Kaliningrad experienced an influx of various religious confessions (both traditional and non-traditional). Moreover, members of the local Catholic community were allowed to worship in the Church of the

Holy Family (built in the beginning of the twentieth century and by far the largest church of this kind in Kaliningrad) that had managed to survive both military and non-military perils. This decision was gladly embraced by the local Catholics and at certain point construed as a possibility of regaining it on permanent basis. His successor and antagonist Leonid Gorbenko (1996 – 2000), despite sound rhetorical escapades claiming the essential meaning of Orthodoxy<sup>11</sup>, could hardly be identified as a person with any knowledge of religious matters. This was evident on numerous occasions related to the governor's deviant and scandalous behavior that included notorious corruption-related schemes, blatant anti-Semitism and addiction to alcohol. Continued growth in confessions and religious tolerance must have primarily stemmed not from the philosophical convictions of the governor but from his disinterest in many spheres of public life.

Vladimir Yegorov (2000 – 2005), the third governor of Kaliningrad, attempted to maintain an open dialogue with all religious confessions present in the territory of Kaliningrad, a dialogue which nonetheless primarily concerned the traditional religions. Unexpected (and in some sense even revolutionary) was his consent to grant the local Muslim community the right to build a mosque on the territory of the Oblast, which would have made it the first one to be built in the westernmost Russian territory.<sup>12</sup>

Diverging in nature and essence, the activities of these political figures contradicted the course that had been established in the Kremlin. The second half of the first decade of the new millennium ushered in drastic (yet in no respect unanticipated or unpredictable) changes in both domestic and foreign policy realms accompanied by a certain change of the ruling elites. These metamorphoses highlighted new trends in the domain of ideology that was reassessed and provided with new meaning. It needs to be taken into account here that ideology in contemporary Russia (given that the Russian version of "soft power" greatly diverges from American or European versions) is inseparable from religion (whose influence on society was recognized even by J. Stalin during the ordeal of the Second World War) and appeals to a very different system of norms and values than those followed in the Western world. These processes coincided with the changing of paradigms and significant transformations experienced by the ROC itself. The protracted illness of the incumbent Patriarch Alexy posed the question of his successor and the course his successor would pursue, as well as the would-be transformations in the system of relations between the "altar" and the "throne" and whether the ROC could claim powers vanquished with the advent of Communism.

For Kaliningrad, these changes opened up new prospects and it was seen that the potential advent of Kirill as a new Patriarch could become indeed crucial in many ways. It also should be pointed out that Kirill had taken part in numerous events (such as religious festivities, consecrations of newly built churches and chapels) held on the territory of the Oblast.<sup>13</sup> A new chapter signifying the growing alliance between church and state in Kaliningrad became apparent with the commencement of a very symbolic gesture on 10 September 2006 when Patriarch Alexy visited the Oblast in a Primatial Visit (Russian *Pervoosviatit`elskii visit*) at the dawn of his tenure, together with V. Putin. The patriarch consecrated the finally completed Cathedral erected in the city centre (a mere 25 meters from the place where a huge monument to V. Lenin once stood), thereby explicitly showing that Orthodoxy had assumed a strong position in this distant part of Russia. In addition, on 31 March 2009 (after Patriarch Alexy had passed away) the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church granted Kaliningrad Oblast the status of a separate Eparchy.<sup>14</sup> Particularly curious was Kirill's decision to renounce the position of Metropolitan in Smolensk, yet at the same time de facto preserving its full sway over Kaliningrad, a move which reiterated his personal interests in the Oblast.

However, prior to proceeding further with a discussion of Patriarch Kirill's activities after assuming the position of Patriarch, it would make sense to briefly outline the particularities and conditions of Kaliningrad in the realm of religious development.

Situated on the shores of the Baltic Sea, Kaliningrad indeed appears to be a unique Russian region, where the present is hardly separable from the past and where the future seems to be shaped by many aspects of previous experiences. In this light, the task of the ROC in Kaliningrad after 1991 was by far much more challenging and drastically differed from the tasks faced in the rest of Russia. During the Soviet period, the local authorities lost no opportunity to boast about Kaliningrad being the most "atheistic" city in the USSR.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, a certain loosening of the grip of the Soviet regime during the so-called "golden decade"<sup>16</sup> could not possibly have concerned Kaliningrad (at the time called Königsberg). Moreover, both Nikita Khrushchev (who promised to show the Soviet people the "last priest"<sup>17</sup>) and Leonid Brezhnev pursued a conservative line with regard to the ROC. This made the path of the Orthodox faith in Kaliningrad extremely difficult from the very beginning. Incidentally, the first religious community established in Kaliningrad (1967)

were the Baptists, whereas registration of the first Orthodox community came about only in 1985; that community initially became a part of the Smolensk Eparchy.

Another difficulty that Orthodoxy was destined to encounter was the “synthetic” composition of the local community, which was composed of residents assembled from various parts of the Soviet Union. Aside from Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians, the absolute majority of whom were either Orthodox Christians or non-believers (since many of new residents represented the poorest and least fortunate groups severely damaged by the war<sup>18</sup>), the Oblast also hosted newcomers from the Baltic States as well as a number of residents from regions in which Islam was the dominant religion. For this reason the local community did not (and could not at this point) bear the traits of a single identity and therefore, even though it consisted of citizens of the Soviet Union, did not replicate any other Soviet region which pertained to the ecclesiastical domain as well. On the other hand, having become a part of the USSR in 1945 (with civilian institutions taking precedence over military much later<sup>19</sup>), Kaliningrad did not suffer the misfortune of experiencing massive repressions as did the rest of the Soviet Union, with the result that the ROC was not considered to be a victim of Communism and therefore could not appeal to the local populace on the grounds of anti-Church barbarism committed by the Soviets. In addition, the late arrival of religion in Soviet Kaliningrad explains to a considerable degree the general lack of religious infrastructure that would have been used by the ROC to expand its activities on the territory of Kaliningrad that only became possible with first the weakening (and later demise) of the Soviet Communist ideology. In 1992 the idea of erecting a cathedral on Kaliningrad soil was first announced and it took almost three years before the first concrete steps in this direction were finally made. Only on 30 April 1995 did Kirill (at the time the Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad) consecrate a cornerstone in the foundation of the Cathedral. This event became a stepping stone toward the proliferation of the ROC’s activities in the westernmost Russian region and bore a deep symbolic meaning underscoring the Church’s concern for its flock separated from the mainland. Moreover, it seemed that it was only Kirill who could claim the role of the “voice” of Kaliningrad in Moscow, especially taking into account that local political establishment could not boast of representatives of such scale, skills and influence. It is also relevant to mention that the idea of the Cathedral (designed as a copy of Moscow’s Cathedral of Christ the Savior)



was endowed with yet another task: to underscore the region's Orthodox identity and its "Russianness" elements that were to replace (at least during this particular historical interim) the Soviet legacy. Indeed, this task did not appear to be a difficult one. The ROC did not seem to have encountered any viable competitors in its way toward spreading Orthodoxy in the former Prussian land whose population largely felt ill at ease with state-promoted atheist ideology.

Undoubtedly, the opportunities that arose for the ROC and which lay on the surface were enormous, and at the time seemed to be apropos for decisive steps. The reality turned out to be more difficult than it might have initially seemed. For instance, the local cultural landscape of Kaliningrad is unique in Russia. It still preserved visible ties with the predecessors of Soviet/Russian Kaliningrad, combining legacies of the Polish-Lithuanian and German past, which made Kaliningrad (with its historical sites) an object of international attention and an implicit source of confrontation.

## **Kaliningrad and the advent of the "Russian World"**

The chronological period of Kaliningrad history between 2005 and 2009 has a landmark significance for the Oblast in terms of relations with both the Kremlin and the ROC, encompassing political and ideological factors. The political factor chiefly consisted of completion of the process of transformation of relations with Moscow which was reflected with the advent of Georgii Boos, who was personally selected by V. Putin to become governor of Kaliningrad. Moreover, in the light of worsening Russo-Western relations this region came to be perceived as a pivot of Russian political ambitions in the Baltic region (perhaps even further). On the other hand, Kirill's involvement in local affairs in Kaliningrad and indeed the impressive advance of the ROC became conspicuous. Such decisive transformations became possible primarily due to two main factors: crucial shifts within the "altar" and the growing assertiveness of the Kremlin – both on a separate basis and in conjuncture with each other. These alterations were additionally stressed by the advent of the "Russian World" ("*Russkii Mir*")<sup>20</sup> project, which was inaugurated in 2007 in the form of a foundation under the guise of concern for the "Russian Diaspora and the Russian compatriots abroad" as well as promotion of Russian language and culture<sup>21</sup>, yet it was chiefly aimed at rectifying the "greatest geopolitical

mistake of the twentieth century".<sup>22</sup> Appealing to the distinctiveness of "Russian civilization" and its uniqueness, it was largely supported by representatives of secular and ecclesiastic hierarchs. Incidentally, the list of the most powerful stalwarts of the project also included Patriarch Kirill, who used to occupy a key position (aside from already mentioned Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad) of Chairman of the External Church Relations Department (ECRD) of the Moscow Patriarchate, which explained his pivotal role in the domain of "foreign policy" actions conducted by the ROC. Being a strong proponent of strengthening of the ROC's international positions and projecting its influence well beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union, he vested great hopes in Kaliningrad as an essential outpost of the "Russian World" protruding into the EU. The strategic importance of Kaliningrad was also based on the fact that its ethnic composition is predominantly shaped by Eastern Slavs<sup>23</sup> which, in distinction to Latvia and Lithuania (countries that do have numerous Russian communities adhering to Orthodoxy and therefore directly subject to Russian propaganda) is an integral part of the Russian Federation. Therefore, implementation of policies aimed at cultivating Orthodox faith could be conducted freely.

Reflecting upon the "Russian World" project, the place of Kaliningrad in it and the role of personality in Russian history, it is essential to take a closer look at the personality of Patriarch Kirill from an angle that is not frequently employed: namely, the striking similarity between him and Patriarch Nikon (1605 – 1681). Such petty details as the random coincidence of ethnicity of both men (they are ethnic Mordvins<sup>24</sup>) only amplifies the overall resemblance that comes into focus. In addition, both hierarchs flaunted the same stance (and practically identical steps) on consumption of alcohol by ordinary Russians – an issue that for centuries has occupied minds of Russian and external intellectuals. Furthermore, the essentiality of Ukraine for Russia has been continuously reiterated in declarations of Kirill and Nikon alike.

Moreover, the issue of liberalism (or, it was widely known previously, *vol'nodumstvo*) as an activity detrimental to both Russia as a state and to Orthodoxy should be seen as a central pillar in the outlook of both figures. From this stems the hard (and in some sense even authoritarian) stance assumed by both of them toward public protests and opposition to the government. It might appear to be a twist of history and mere coincidence, but Nikon's accession to the Metropolitan of Novgorod and Kirill's Patriarchate coincided with massive protests in Russia. In the case of the former, the famous

“copper” and “salt” rebellions; in the case of the latter, amidst global financial crisis and anti-governmental demonstrations in Kaliningrad that would later be complemented by sentiments leveled against restitution of former German property (2009 – 2010). Public rebellions in western parts of Russia must have caused very similar emotions, both in the seventeenth century when Nikon and the Tsar Alexey Mikhalovych approached *symphonia*, and in the first decade of the second millennium and the new turn in relations between Church and state in contemporary Russia. Moreover, Kirill’s attitude to the protest movement came to be known once again in 2011. He explained it with reference to uncontrollable public anxieties and stated that “genuine followers of Orthodox faith simply cannot go to demonstration”.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, he preached obedience, a quality that was gladly exploited by Communism and later used against the ROC in accusing the ROC of being an ally of the exploiting classes. Initial, weak attempts to somehow alleviate the situation would later be transformed into open support that the Patriarch granted to V. Putin as well as unmasked agitation in support of the “national leader”.<sup>26</sup> This emphasizes the fact that Kirill has sought the strengthening power of the ROC (not only as an ecclesiastical institution) and, what seems to be more important for this article, its influence in the outskirts and border territories of the Russian state. Moreover, having underscored his deep loathing of anti-government activities (or even the slightest form of noncompliance with the course chosen from above), mass protests in Kaliningrad in 2009–10 that led to the practical eviction of Putin’s protégé must have convinced the Patriarch of the acute necessity of further strengthening the ROC’s presence in Kaliningrad in order to uproot *vol`nodumstvo* in the region most exposed to external influence.

Moreover, the importance of the “*Russkij mir*” project for Kirill was additionally strengthened by the new sense vested in it, first by representatives of ecclesiastical circles and later gladly embraced by the lay powers as well: the transformation of the notion into so-called “canonical lands”. The expansion of territorial boundaries and bestowing spiritual traits upon geopolitical identity changed its essence, thereby elevating the meaning of Russian border territories and, in particular, such a unique “island” as Kaliningrad. While economic stabilization and political consolidation took firm grip on Russia, relations between Moscow and key European capitals experienced a kind of stability based on “mutually beneficial cooperation”.<sup>27</sup> Kaliningrad was temporarily perceived as a long/much-desired “bridge” between Europe and

the Russian Federation: an area (by the virtue of history exempted from the many drawbacks present in the concept of "Greater Russia") that was to have been used as a "laboratory" for the testing of models of cooperation between Brussels and Moscow.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, this honeymoon was not destined to last long enough for Kaliningrad to assume the role it was once hoped to play. The invasion of Iraq (2003), the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004–2005) and the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003) along with the Russo – Georgian military clash (2008) coupled with the outbreak of the global financial crisis that convinced Russian ruling and intellectual elites of the decadence of the West: these events undermined even the little progress that had already been achieved, whereby revealing complexity and in some sense insurmountable nature of the rift in relations between Russia and its Western counterparts. On the other hand, state-promoted imperial nationalism in Russia drew a dividing line between Russia and the abstract "West", thereby reiterating the division between "us" and "them" deeply engrained in Russian public consciousness.<sup>29</sup>

Such sentiments, perhaps somehow not given voice in the rest of Russia, were first heard in Kaliningrad, which was to experience the consequences of the brawl between Lithuania and Poland on the one side and Russia on the other as a result of visa-related issues. Moreover, a tempest that broke upon Kaliningrad during 2009 – 2010 known as the "tangerine spring"<sup>30</sup> resurrected the specter of other "color revolutions" which, in the eyes of ruling elite, was a matter of utmost concern and raised the question of Moscow's tightening its grip. This new and threatening reality demanded from the governor greater loyalty to Federal Centre and the ability to act rapidly and with sufficient firmness, actions which G. Boos (within the period 2006 – 2010 the governor of Kaliningrad Oblast) and his team seemed to be incapable of doing. The main area of criticism emanating from the Kremlin was primarily related to "liberalism and conformism" that took root in Kaliningrad (though G. Boos was by no means a liberal). In the light of these developments, Moscow had to meddle in the conflict and act as a mediator. It is worth remembering that the last such involvement at the end of the 1990s swept away the remnants of autonomy that the local elites enjoyed. On the other hand, the ROC had to intervene as well. The bone of contention emanated from the governor's lack of enthusiasm regarding the idea of transferring former German property to the sovereignty of the ROC. The roots of the initiative as well as potential risks and uncertainties were first tackled in May 2009 by the newspaper *Trideiviatii*

*Region – VIP* («Тридцать девятый регион - VIP»).<sup>31</sup> It might not have been directly related to the issue of restitution that sealed the fate of the political career of G. Boos in Kaliningrad, yet it did certainly have an impact that ushered in a new round of discussions pertaining to Kaliningrad, its place and role.

## **Fighting imaginary threats – discarding the Prussian legacy after 2009**

The deliberate and ruthless campaign launched by the Soviet authorities right after the acquisition of Königsberg known as the “eviction of Prussian Spirit”<sup>32</sup> was a peculiar combination of state-inspired/orchestrated actions aimed at the deliberate destruction of the German cultural landscape under the guise of combating the traces of National Socialism. Under this set of policies, the Royal Castle situated in the heart of the former Königsberg was turned into ruins in 1967, signifying the incessant attempts of the local authorities to erase the remains of history once and for all. Regretfully, this was not the only way the Soviets tried to get even with the German past of Kaliningrad: vandalism, reckless and unnecessary destruction of historical sites and negligence had had an equally detrimental effect. The collapse of Communism seemed to have opened a window of opportunity for Kaliningrad and the historical legacy bequeathed to it by its predecessors. As it turned out, however, one set of ideology, even though being replaced by the other set, brought little hope to defenseless monuments of history. If previously war had been waged upon ideology, which explained the extermination of material culture of the antecedent period with a necessity to fight misanthropic ideas of the Third Reich, then it would be safe to assume that complete victory over the “spirit” (religion) could be attained only with turning places of worship into dust.

All in all, by the year 1991 there were 133 Catholic and Protestant churches in Kaliningrad Oblast whose state varied from ruinous to practically untouched pieces of pre-war architecture. The departure from Communism did have a serious impact on the state of religiosity within Kaliningrad society, which related both to the ability to practice religious beliefs and to growth in the presence of the ROC. Naturally, this trend engendered discussion about the fate and legal pertinence of the former German property. Taking into consideration the comparatively low degree of the ROC’s involvement in

the life and local milieu of the westernmost Russian region (at least that was completely true for the first post-1991 decade) the aforementioned discussion was frozen at this level and did not evolve into a debate or a brawl. As stated before, the ascent of Kirill to the Patriarchate brought about decisive changes. Starting from 2009, the Kaliningrad Eparchy (with the undeniable blessing of Patriarch Kirill) began demanding transfer of ownership of a number of German buildings. This was done in spite of the fact that prior to 1917 there had been no property on the territory of East Prussia under the jurisdiction of the ROC aside from the Steindamm Church which had been used as a Russian church from during the period 1760 – 1763.<sup>33</sup> In total, the ROC claimed 11 objects that needed to be granted to it. The ROC's decision to add Königsberg Cathedral (erected within the period 1333 – 1380), the recognized symbol of Kaliningrad Oblast and a nominee for one of "seven wonders" situated in the Russian Federation, to the list was met with genuine shock and despair from the side of local citizens and external actors.<sup>34</sup> In order to understand the meaning and deep symbolism of this Cathedral for Kaliningrad and its perception as one of the main symbols of the city, one must keep in mind the fact that Patriarch Kirill personally appealed to V. Putin on this matter.<sup>35</sup> In the meantime, the legality of such a questionable transfer was raised, as well as a host of other questions pertaining to the fate of other religious confessions and congregations and their property, considering the overall drift of thought and actions of the ROC. After all, it should be mentioned that Kaliningrad Oblast is the largest hub of Lutherans (46 parishes) and Catholics (25 parishes) in Russia. This is perhaps the most solid living tie (aside from architectural monuments) between the Prussian past and the Russian present. Moreover, the act of restitution (in case of a full match between the demand and the number of objects transferred to the jurisdiction of the church) would have effectively made the ROC one of the largest landowners in Russia, putting it on the same footing with such economic giants as Gazprom and the Russian Railways, a clear parallel with the material holdings of the ROC in pre-Revolutionary Russia.

At the end of November 2010, Federal Law No. 327 ("On restitution to the religious organization objects of religious essence being in public or municipal ownership") was passed and signed by President D. Medvedev.<sup>36</sup> This piece of legislation was rapidly followed by two supplementary laws (Nos. 501 and 502)<sup>37</sup> personally endorsed by Nikolai Tsukanov (the new governor of Kaliningrad since 2010 and a stalwart of the United Russia political

party). Justifying the necessity of these laws, the governor warned that any delay in granting the Church the aforementioned ownership would stimulate “those forces from the past, who may claim these buildings”. Being equally relieved of any truth and common sense, these words did however accurately correspond to the nascent leitmotif of ideas and sentiments stemming from the ROC hierarchs and the Russian political establishment.

Such blatancy provoked sharp (and to a certain extent) unexpected reaction from the side of both local and external forces. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these negative sentiments primarily stemmed not from *what* had actually happened, but because of *how* and in *which manner* it took place, reviving the “best” traditions of Soviet authoritarianism and complete disregard for public opinion. Moreover, the acute reaction was worsened by the fact that Kaliningrad had just experienced massive popular protests (2009 – 2010) that had actually been triggered by voluntary and abrupt measures pursued by the local government. In addition, many intellectuals felt deeply offended by the open dictate and tremendous lobbying capabilities that the ROC had been able to hammer out from the secular element of the “power vertical”. This increasing interplay between the “altar” and the “throne” undoubtedly must have resurfaced unpleasant historical images and memories. On the other hand, pressing forth with legislation of this kind without taking into close account local specific traits (such as its comparatively low level of religiosity<sup>38</sup>) could not have been met without a negative response.

On 15 November 2010 the “letter of 50” appeared<sup>39</sup> which was signed by representatives of the local intellectual community. It expressed deep concern with the act of restitution per se as well as with the general worsening political climate in the Oblast and hardening anti-West rhetoric that clearly hindered normal relations between Kaliningrad and its foreign partners, especially taking into account economic dependence of the Oblast on Poland and Lithuania. Within the course of several days, the Internet-based version of the letter was boosted by the signatures of another 1600 people. On the other front, the results of sociological polls clearly stated that the act of restitution was not popular among ordinary Kaliningraders as well: approximately 70% of respondents indicated their position as negative.<sup>40</sup> The local government however failed to present any clear explanation of the haste with which the laws were passed as well as the lack of discussion of the matter. Instead, the local government operated with standard clichés such as “common good”

or “geopolitical threat”, which unambiguously suggested a growing liaison between ecclesiastical and (geo)political forces acting together.

This picture would be incomplete without mentioning the revival of the old rift between Catholic and Orthodox Churches, with Kaliningrad now moving to the center of the debate. Vexed by the legislation stipulating restitution of former Catholic property to the ROC, Paolo Pezzi (head of the Catholic Church in Russia) accused its hierarchs and the Kaliningrad Eparchy of worsening inter-Church relations and debilitating the progress that had been achieved.<sup>41</sup> The answer of the Kaliningrad Eparchy came before long and seemed not to have contained sentiments that could have alleviated the antagonism: “For the past 60 years due to a number of well-known reasons ethno-religious image of Kaliningrad region has undergone complete change. Currently, the absolute majority of local residents strongly associate themselves with the Orthodoxy. Therefore, Kaliningrad Eparchy is acting out of this reality, whereby trying to accommodate to the real interests of the believers. That is why it appears to be a task of prime importance to provide the Church with additional space”.<sup>42</sup> This statement encounters two main contradictions First, by 2013 the ROC accounted for 25.000 newly erected church buildings, which is a record-high rate in the entire history of Orthodoxy. Second, the Eparchy’s statement did not correspond to the level of religiosity of the local community: only 58% of Kaliningraders were interested in religious matters<sup>43</sup> (which is, incidentally, the lowest rate in the Russian Federation). On the other hand, this message should be perceived from the point of view of the two main aspects it encapsulates. Not only did it equalize the notion “Russian” with “Orthodox” (an understanding which does not fully correspond to reality), it subsequently revived the notion of “spiritual security”<sup>44</sup>: a notion based on a necessity of “protecting” Orthodoxy via increasing pressure on other religions present in Russia (with particular emphasis on non-traditional confessions). The unilateral decision of the ROC (ardently supported by the Kremlin and local authority in Kaliningrad) to go ahead with restitution posed a host of questions, thereby revealing conflicting issues and leaving room for reciprocal claims and demands. First, it is hardly explicable why the ROC is entitled to claim former German property if the law concerns only those objects that had been in its possession prior to the year 1917. Prior to this date, Kaliningrad /Konigsberg had not been an integral part of the Russian Empire (aside from a brief spell during the Seven Years`



War). Establishment of the *real* legal successor would most certainly call for the establishment of a plenipotentiary international commission assembled from lawyers, historians, specialists in theology and culture. Undoubtedly, this endeavor would have taken years to achieve, whereas the final decision (in case it had been taken properly) seems doubtful that its results would have been unconditionally embraced by either party concerned. Second, the act of restitution revisits historical conflicts that are still pending final resolution. For instance, the legal status of Kaliningrad as such could be questioned on an international level. On the other hand, opening this Pandora`s box might over time lead to questioning certain aspects (and actions of individual states) of the Second World War currently employed by Moscow in terms of national myth-building and the consolidation of the nation.

Additional source of concern is chiefly related to the fates of those objects that managed to escape the lot of the others due to the advocacy from the side of the international community, which intervened and made Moscow put off the claims of the ROC. In this context it is appropriate to mention the Kaliningrad Cathedral, which was literally “saved” through the involvement of Angela Merkel and other high-ranking German figures<sup>45</sup>, or the house-museum of Kristijonas Donelaitis, which required the personal involvement of the head of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Lithuanian Parliament Emanuelis Zingeris, as well as the Consul General of the Lithuanian Republic in Kaliningrad, Vaclav Stankevici.<sup>46</sup> The question was not resolved, but was merely postponed. It should however be taken into consideration that this came to be possible at a time when relations between the Russian Federation and the EU remained at a tolerable level. Now, when relations between two actors have foundered, the fate of disputed cultural sites seems to be unclear. Finally, the act of restitution might very well cause an implicit (yet no less detrimental) effect on dozens of remaining German architectural objects in Gur`yevsk and Chernyakhovsk (towns situated in Kaliningrad Oblast). In these places, such objects have become major centres of the local cultural life, tourism and (what appears to be more important) financial means emanating from EU-based funds. With their transfer to the jurisdiction of the ROC, they will be barred from receiving these funds, which would be tantamount to their physical destruction and passing into oblivion. One of the most apparent negative results is the case related to the Arnau Chapel that passed to the ROC`s jurisdiction in 2010 (an action which was vehemently disputed by both local community and German investors). As a results, unique 14<sup>th</sup> century

frescoes of were practically annihilated, with only approximately 2 -3 % remaining intact.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, local activists and members of the intellectual community on numerous occasions have warned that the situation with German cultural and architectural sites is developing from bad to worse. For instance, Anatolii Bakhtin (a local historian and the chief archivist of the State Archive of Kaliningrad) claimed that the situation is indeed appalling<sup>48</sup> and the within the next five years, the Oblast can lose the lion`s share of its historical legacy.<sup>49</sup>

## **The breakup with the West, the Ukrainian crisis and repercussions for Kaliningrad**

V. Putin`s return to the Kremlin in 2012 brought up the issue of “conservatism” as a new dominant force in Russian domestic discourse and a response to growing protest movement overlapping with decreasing popular support for political elites. In this regard it was the Russian Orthodox Church and Patriarch Kirill who affirmatively supported the political course pursued by the President. This changing (challenging) environment highlighted the new role of the “*Russkij mir*” concept and the powers or hopes that the Kremlin vested in the ROC. In the light of growing “conservatism” and greater assertiveness in the domain of foreign policy, Russian elites largely misunderstood and misconstrued events in Kyiv at the end of 2013. Moreover, both Kirill (who had previously claimed Ukraine to be an essential part of the ROC`s “canonical territories” and had even visited Kyiv on 26 July 2013 commemorating the Baptism of Kievan Rus` (988) and V. Putin (for whom Ukraine was a key element in geopolitical calculations expressed by his famous regret over the disintegration of the Soviet Union) felt deeply offended by events in the Ukrainian capital. It was construed as an explicit involvement of the West in a self-proclaimed Russian “sphere of influence”.

Even though Kyiv and Kaliningrad are separated by a significant distance, the impact of rapidly worsening relations between Russia and its former partners was heralded in the westernmost Russian region with particular acuteness. This could be traced through numerous, sometimes hardly discernible, details. After all, the 2009–2010 protests resulting in the dismantling of the incumbent governor (and his team) as a creature of the

Kremlin still occupied the minds of many politicians in Moscow. On the other hand, events in Kyiv were presented by the Russian mass media as a “Fascist coup” organized by the West. These events coincided (and in many respects were easily justified) with a Moscow-promoted set of decisions, initiated in 2008/9 onward, aimed at increasing the military capabilities of Kaliningrad. This strategy obtained a new, distinctive facet: previously presented as a response to NATO eastward expansion, it would be later supplemented with an ideological surcharge in which militarization would be perceived as a necessary alliance between the “cross” (Orthodox faith) and “sword” intended to guard the “Russian island” against the formidable menace coming from the West. This could be seen in the growing “militarization” of the Church in Kaliningrad: by the end of 2013, the Kaliningrad Oblast was home to the greatest number of military priests (120 persons) in all the regions of Russia, a point joyfully announced by Kirill during the convention of the Supreme Church Council of the Russian Orthodox Church. Moreover, Orthodox chapels currently are situated on the territory of 8 military regiments permanently stationed in Kaliningrad Oblast in addition to field churches (“походные храмы”) deployed on the corvette “Soobrazitelnyy” and the large amphibious battleship “Kaliningrad”.

On 6 December 2014 (the date commemorating the saint Alexander Nevsky) yet another visit of Patriarch Kirill to Kaliningrad began. During the eparchial assembly of the Kaliningrad Diocese he pointed out in particular that:

Memory of the saint Alexander Nevsky must be especially strongly cherished by the people that reside here on the western border of Rus` on the shores of the Baltic Sea... It is remarkable that here as I have already said, on the western border of Russia a new temple in the name of pious Alexander Nevsky has been consecrated. Let us pray so he could protect Russia and especially this land from external aggression...<sup>50</sup>

As a reinforcement of the previous hypothesis, this speech particularly emphasized the special meaning of Kaliningrad not only as an integral part of the Russian Federation (whose status must not be questioned by any external actor) due to its geopolitical position, which pre-determines its mission as the avant-garde of the “Russian World” in Europe. Incidentally, this logic of this view fully complied with the essential perception of this land by the

Soviets, yet from a somewhat different angle. On the other hand, the Patriarch deliberately equated such distinct notions as “Rus’” and “Russia” (effectively implying that it was the North-Western Rus’ that inherited special mission from Kievan Rus’), thereby underscoring historical continuity between two territorial entities. The Patriarch highlighted the personality of Alexander Nevsky (although a figure of great historical controversy) who acquired particular fame and veneration for protecting the western regions of Rus’ (Novgorod and Pskov) against the Swedes (July 1240), the Teutonic Knights (at the so-called “Battle on the Ice” which began on 5 April 1242) and the “Lithuanian Quest” (1245): all representatives of the “Western world,” and forces that in their contemporary incarnation reportedly organized and carried out the coup in Kiev and launched an anti-Russian crusade.

## “Kirill’s doctrine” and changing historical paradigms

On 22 January 2015 an event of immense importance took place that may have caused profound changes in the Russian political environment: for the first time in Russian post-Soviet history<sup>51</sup>, the Patriarch took a stand in the Russian Duma (Parliament). The speech given by Kirill appeared to be quite perplexing both in essence and in the choice of wording, yet at the same time it was logical. The Patriarch summarized previously expressed thoughts and ideas, thereby managing to ascertain the positive effect of each and every period of Russian history. Particularly curious were Kirill’s thoughts about the major traumas experienced by Russians, since these ordeals have fostered solidarity and nurtured “Russianness” as a distinctive feature of the Russian nation that has been able to preserve core Christian values. Reflecting on the historical past and matching this experience with the one Russia received as a result of the demise of the Soviet Union, Kirill ascertained three key periods of Russian history, each of which has a decisive meaning for the process of formation of the Russian state and nation<sup>52</sup>:

1. **Ancient Rus’** (Holy Rus’) – sanctity and exaltation of the human spirit leading to “*faith*” as the dominant quality absorbed by Russians.
2. Accession of the **Romanov Dynasty** (1613) and the actual creation of the Russian state (“*autocracy*”)

3. Drive to “justice” from the side of ordinary people embedded in the **October Revolution (1917)** And two additional phases that had had instrumental meaning for contemporary Russia:

4. “Solidarity” with the **USSR** as the main embodiment of this quality

5. “Dignity” – as the core aspect characterizing **contemporary Russia**

This periodization presented Russian history as a homogeneous, continuous and complementary process. Moreover, the Patriarch admitted the possibility of a certain infringement upon freedoms in Russia, justifying this view with historical experience and the reportedly detrimental results that liberalism has brought to the West, resulting in moral degradation and inferiority for Russia. Looking at this speech from historical prospective it is curious to see Kirill reiterating (naturally, with amendments of his own) the famous formula pronounced by Count Sergey Uvarov at the dawn of growing Russian imperial nationalism mixed with conservatism as a new category of Russian national being. Kirill identified the main pillars constituting the architecture of the Russian state as “Solidarity, Sobornost` and Consensus” – elements that have guarded the Russian nation from external malaises and adverse ideologies. Equally important was the reaction of political groups representing various ideological camps: the speech was ardently supported by forces ranging from Konstantin Malofeev (the so-called “Orthodox oligarch”<sup>53</sup>) and S. Glaziev on the one side<sup>54</sup> and Gennady Ziuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) on the other, who expressed full support and solemnly urged that the ROC be granted more power.

A small (although by no means less significant or meaningful) replication of this event took place on 14 March 2015 when Kaliningrad hosted the Forum of the *World Russian People’s Council* – the first one of its kind to be held on this former German land. It assembled representatives of the Russian political establishment (both local and from the Federal Centre) and hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Forum was opened by the Patriarch’s speech entitled “Borders of Russian statehood: global challenges, regional responses”.<sup>55</sup> Among other crucial things it stated: “Kaliningrad is the edge where the Russian land ends. Russia is a country-civilization whose scopes and meaning of existence are stipulated by non-material values, ideals, historical and cultural sites, holy places and objects”. Kirill explicitly pointed out that it has always been the “Russian people” acting in alliance with the Orthodox creed who have come to be known as both the chief founder of the Russian state and a force that actually created a united, central government.

The hierarchy traditionally emphasized Orthodoxy as an element that has always protected the state and its people from various types of external aggressions: equally from that posed by the Teutonic Knights to more elaborate propagandist methods including religion acting in this capacity. Naturally, the very fact that such an event took place in Kaliningrad predetermined its main focus and direction. The Patriarch emphasized the “border status” of the region in two main senses: geopolitical and non-materialist (based on a distinctive set of spiritual values). Notably, the peoples populating the region were presented as the main source of identity. Taking into consideration its general treatment and attitude toward the German historical and cultural legacy, the overall tone of the discussion seemed to have contained ominous cues:

it would not be right to pay too much attention to the stones lying in this land... Oblast must become spiritual fort post of Russia in Europe... It is imperative to equip this land as Russian without overemphasizing German cultural legacy... We need to build our Russian architectural-cultural landscape emphasizing our values and principles...<sup>56</sup>

Reflecting upon Kaliningrad, its distinctiveness and historical mission the Patriarch highlighted its importance not only for Russia itself (a view which was not new) but for Europe as well. The argument went so far as to claim the region as having the potential to become a shrine of Christian values (which are naturally preserved by Russian society) and for disseminating them beyond state boundaries upon decadent Europe suffering from the cult of hedonism and habits unnatural to human nature. It was also implied that this challenge could not conceivably be overcome by Europe alone. Russia (acting via Kaliningrad as its agent) is to provide its neighbors with an example to follow, thereby accomplishing its historical mission as the last bulwark of genuine Christian values, a statement which reiterated points once presented by a certain Hegumen Philotheus of Pskov in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Somewhat similar (yet much harsher) sentiments were presented in the Forum by representatives of Russian political establishment. The special role of Kaliningrad and the acute necessity of transforming it into a bastion (both military and ideological) in order to forestall the ongoing aggression of the West were stressed practically in each statement. These sentiments were particularly noticeable in the speeches of Sergey Glazyev (co-founder of

the nationalist "Rodina" party and advisor to V. Putin), who stated that the rapidly approaching collapse of the West was closely related to widespread immorality and lack of values. Leonid Reshetnikov (Director of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies) accused NATO and the EU of waging a war against Russia. In very similar yet less aggressive terms, Alexander Zhukov (the First Deputy Chairman of the State Duma) and Sergey Naryshkin (Chairman of the State Duma) placed special emphasis on maintaining the spiritual values, norms and principles which made Kaliningrad distinctive from Europe. Alexander Yaroshuk (mayor of Kaliningrad) underscored the deep symbolism between the final takeover of Königsberg that coincided with the festivity of Annunciation as a harbinger of the Victory, referring to the Great Patriotic War (1941 – 1945) and Kaliningrad as its legacy. Vsevolod Chaplin (at that time the chairman of the Synodal Department for the Cooperation of Church and Society of the Moscow Patriarchate) pointed out that the new "European Spring" (viewed as an answer to the "Arab Spring") could receive a powerful impetus from Kaliningrad as a land that should become a factor of renovation for other European states.

The Forum in Kaliningrad once again underscored prevailing sentiments in both political and ecclesiastical circles. It also finalized completion of the system of relations between the two institutions of "altar and throne" in the period 2009 – 2015. Similarly, an event of such scope and level of representation not only reiterated the strategic importance of Kaliningrad, but also markedly pointed at the crucial meaning for the ROC of this small, distant and geographically separated piece of Russia. Regrettably, a forum of this caliber and importance exploited the dark side of the alliance between the "throne" and the "altar": anti-Western sentiments were channeled into a malignant call for a crusade, with Kaliningrad playing the role of a "new battlefield" and "bastion". In some sense this was a reiteration of a misfortune that befell this part of Russia during the Soviet period. Moreover, those calling upon Kaliningrad to assume such a disgraceful role must have forgotten that this place once was a "bastion" for the Crusades and to the end to which they led.

The Forum that witnessed an exponential transformation of the role of the ROC in Kaliningrad gave a foretaste of a number of activities endorsed by the ROC, whose purpose and compliance with Orthodox faith are hardly explicable. One such action commenced on 17 June 2015. A religious procession blessed by Fr. Seraphim<sup>57</sup> appeared to be nothing but some sort of a mockery

and twisted joke that included bikers with priests carrying religious symbols as passengers. It was organized and performed by the “Night Wolves” – the motorbikers’ band closely associated with V. Putin, Ramzan Kadyrov as well as other reactionary elements within the Russian civil/political establishment and constituted an integral part of the “anti-Maidan movement”<sup>58</sup>. This gruesome and largely grotesque event underscored the cordial relations between ultra-conservative (even reactionary) political forces and the ROC in Kaliningrad (as a small model of the larger Russian reality).

Moreover, the altered status of the ROC in Kaliningrad has been reinstated on a legal level which arrived with the adoption of the “Concept of Spiritual and Moral Development and Education of the population of Kaliningrad” (16 December 2015).<sup>59</sup> This document particularly stresses the vital need of fostering a spiritual and cultural identity commensurate with the Russian national identity, in which special attention is to be paid to work with the younger generation of Kaliningraders (from kindergartens to primary schools).<sup>60</sup>

Cumbersome, chaotic and somewhat confusing, this document should not be taken for granted since it has effectively strengthened the legal status of the ROC in Kaliningrad. The document extensively refers to V. Putin’s speech aiming to discuss the roots and essence of Russian civilization<sup>61</sup>, as well as his article entitled “Russia: the national question”<sup>62</sup>. These mutually complementary reflections identified “the Russian people” as “clay” that holds together unique Russian civilization – a thesis that was once applied by the leader of the USSR.<sup>63</sup> Secondly, it was clearly stated that cooperation with religious confessions traditional in Russia and above all with the Russian Orthodox Church as a key partner of the Russian state in such domains as social policy, education and mass media<sup>64</sup> was to be expanded and proliferated. For this purpose, the Coordination Council on moral and spiritual education was inaugurated. It is not superfluous to mention that the document envisaged a record number of projects to be conducted jointly by the local administration and the Kaliningrad Eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church, numbering 19 in all.<sup>65</sup>

## **Instead of a conclusion**

The intensified activities of the ROC in Kaliningrad have taken place over a relatively short period of time, rendering it premature to draw far-reaching



conclusions. This is especially true in the light of the rapidly changing international milieu and Russian domestic affairs. Rather, it would be more prudent to leave room for further discussion by providing another example. During 6 – 9 August 2015 Kaliningrad was to host the popular Russian rock festival KUBANA (founded in 2009), which was personally invited to the Oblast by N. Tsukanov. This decision was immediately challenged by Fr. Seraphim (head of the Kaliningrad Eparchy), who launched an assault against the festival claiming that he was shocked by its agendas stimulating complete degradation, malfeasance and alcoholism.<sup>66</sup> However, the governor did not express any sentiments regarding this challenge and stated that the event would take place as scheduled. The hierarchs of the ROC apparently were not satisfied with this and took the side of Fr. Seraphim: during his visit to Kaliningrad, Kirill had had an extremely chilly meeting with Tsukanov.<sup>67</sup> In the end, after protracted debate, the idea of holding the festival in Kaliningrad Oblast was dropped, and the event took place in Riga.

On 26 August 2015 the governor met with representatives of the Kaliningrad Eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church in a meeting that took place in the conference hall of the Christ the Savior Cathedral. The governor thanked the clergy for the work and significant input in development of Kaliningrad Oblast, especially in light of the worsening geopolitical situation.<sup>68</sup> Finally, in September 2015 N. Tsukanov was re-elected as a governor of Kaliningrad Oblast. At his inauguration ceremony it was Fr. Seraphim who was the second person (after the plenipotentiary representative of the Russian President in the Northwestern Federal District) to address the newly elected governor. In his address, Fr. Seraphim addressed Tsukanov with the following words: “In the minutes of crisis ask: Please God give me a thoughtful heart”.<sup>69</sup>

The trajectory of development of relationships between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state in Kaliningrad is distinctive for various factors, of which *rapidity* could be identified as the central one. Within merely six years (2009 – 2015,) the ROC has been able to achieve unparalleled strength in comparison with its previous experience. Undoubtedly, this has not had exclusively to do with Patriarch Kirill (as a strong proponent of Kaliningrad Oblast), but also with overall development patterns of the Russian Federation within the aforementioned period: its relations with the “outer world” and its changing self-perception based on its growing assertiveness. However, the advent of the “*Russkij mir*” project and the ideology encapsulated in it has been one of the key factors that determined the nature of the transformations

in Kaliningrad and the altering perception of it by Moscow. Nevertheless, by and large an expressly noble cause that claimed promotion of Russian culture and rooting Orthodoxy in the westernmost Russian region as a means of uplifting morale and Christian values has been reshaped and distorted. First, instead of fostering tolerance and forgiveness as the central pillars of Christianity and overcoming genuinely flagitious stance assumed by Soviet Communism toward local history and material culture, the ROC has done very little to rectify historical injustices and to preserve the very little that is still left from the historical past of the region. Second beginning in 2009 Kaliningrad has been rapidly become a Russian military bastion and is widely hailed as a “pistol” aimed at the temple of Europe. In this regard, the hierarchs of the ROC have explicitly called upon turning Kaliningrad into a new “ideological battlefield”, wrongfully accusing the West of losing Christian values, thereby providing the Russian population with a distorted and adverse image of western countries. This gruesome and in many ways disappointing trend has led to the distortion of the exalted Mission of the Church and sets the wrong example for other forces within Russian society, thereby widening the rift between Russia and the West. Unfortunately, Kaliningrad has not been able to fulfill the role of a cultural bridge between two centers of power. It has been turned into a new flashpoint rather than into a bridge between two civilizations.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Hamburg* 2006, 126 – 130.
- <sup>2</sup> *Zen`kovskii* 1996, 560.
- <sup>3</sup> *Sukhankin* 2016.
- <sup>4</sup> *Gorynov* 2015.
- <sup>5</sup> *Vtoroe kreshchenie Rusi*, 2013.
- <sup>6</sup> *Melnikova* 2002.
- <sup>7</sup> *Tulskii Mikhail* 2000 .
- <sup>8</sup> *Fedorov* 2010, 5 - 15.
- <sup>9</sup> *Murtazaev* 2012.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ginzburg* 2012.
- <sup>11</sup> *Gorbenko* 2000.
- <sup>12</sup> Gubernator Kaliningradskoy oblasti obeshchal pomoch v stroitel'stve pervoy v Kaliningrade mecheti. 2003.
- <sup>13</sup> *Kaliningradskaya eparkhiya: tridcat let spustya* 2015.

- 14 *Istoriya eparkhii*
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 Pravoslavie.ru 2015.
- 17 *Dymarskiy.*
- 18 *Kostyashov* 2000.
- 19 *Kostyashov* 2002.
- 20 *Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federacii* 2007.
- 21 *Kudors* 2010, 2 – 5.
- 22 *Putin* 2005.
- 23 *Vserossiyskaya perepis naseleniya* 2010.
- 24 *Bykov* 1891, 6.
- 25 *Gazeta.ru* 2012.
- 26 *Kirill (Gundyayev)* 2012.
- 27 *Sukhankin* 2013.
- 28 *Sukhankin* 2014.
- 29 *Sukhankin* 2015.
- 30 *Maytakova* 2015.
- 31 *Shmidt* 2003.
- 32 *Kostyashov* 2003, 9 – 80.
- 33 *Pamyatniki istorii i kultury. Kaliningrad* 2005, 123.
- 34 *Vesti.ru* 2008.
- 35 *SOVA Center* 2009.
- 36 *Federalnyy zakon Rossiyskoy Federacii* 2010.
- 37 *Zakon Kaliningradskoy Oblasti* 2010.
- 38 *Novyy Kaliningrad* 2016.
- 39 *Pismo 50-ti* 2010.
- 40 *Credo.ru* 2010.
- 41 *Pezzi* 2010.
- 42 *SOVA Center* 2010.
- 43 *Finansovyy Universitet pri Pravotelstve Rossiyskoy Federacii* 2016
- 44 *Blitt* 2010. 379.
- 45 *Rugrad.eu* 2010.
- 46 *Ryabushev* 2010.
- 47 *Kishkovsky* 2014.
- 48 *Bakhtin* 2014.
- 49 *Evdokimova* 2015.
- 50 *Russkaya Narodnaya Liniya* 2014.
- 51 In September 1990 Patriarch Alexy took part in a session of the Supreme Council of the USSR in discussion pertaining to the legislation concerning religious organizations.
- 52 *Russkaya Pravoslavnaya Tserkov* 2015.
- 53 *Telegina* 2015.
- 54 *Zubov* 2015.
- 55 *Kirill (Gundyayev)* 2015.

- <sup>56</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup> *Novyy Kaliningrad* 2015.
- <sup>58</sup> *Antimaydan*.
- <sup>59</sup> *Shchegolev* 2016. See also: *Gorodskoy Sovet deputatov Kaliningrada* 2015.
- <sup>60</sup> *Administratsiya gorodskogo okruga "gorod Kaliningrad"* 2015.
- <sup>61</sup> *Putin* 2007.
- <sup>62</sup> *Putin* 2012.
- <sup>63</sup> *Nevezhyn* 2005.
- <sup>64</sup> *Gorodskoy Sovet deputatov Kaliningrada*, 9.
- <sup>65</sup> *Soviet Deputatov Kaliningrada* 2015, 18 – 22.
- <sup>66</sup> *The Moscow Times* 2015.
- <sup>67</sup> *Petin* 2015.
- <sup>68</sup> *Kaliningradskaya eparkhiya* 2015.
- <sup>69</sup> *Medvedeva* 2015.

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## Tiivistelmä

### Sergey Sukhankin, *Missiona "Russkij mir". Kaliningrad "alttarin" ja "valtaistuimen" välissä 2009–2015*

Artikkelissa tarkastellaan Venäjän ortodoksisen kirkon (VOK) roolia Kaliningradissa ja kuinka se sieltä käsin osallistuu venäläiseen lännen vastaiseen ideologiseen pyrkimykseen.

Neuvostoliiton romahtamisen jälkeinen Venäjän ja lännen suhteitten huonontuminen johtuu poliittisten tekijöitten lisäksi toisiinsa kietoutuvista kulttuurisista, historiallisista ja uskonnollisista syistä. Poliittinen kriisi on nostanut uudelleen keskusteluun Kaliningradin alueen merkityksen idän ja lännen välissä. Kaliningradin alueella uskonto on yllättäen saanut näkyvän roolin ideologisissa pyrkimyksissä. Neuvostoaikana paikalliset viranomaiset ylpeilivät sillä, että Kaliningrad oli ateistisen kaupunki koko Neuvostoliitossa. Ortodoksinen kirkko rekisteröitiin alueella virallisesti vasta vuonna 1985.

Kommunismin romahtamisen jälkeen ortodoksisen kirkon johto ei alkuun osoittanut suurtakaan kiinnostunut Kaliningradin aluetta kohtaan. Ensimmäisten Neuvostoliiton jälkeisten kuvernöörien myötämielisyys mahdollisti monien perinteisten ja uudempien uskonnollisten ryhmien järjestäytymisen Kaliningradissa. Luterilaiset ja katolilaiset ovat alueella perinteisesti enemmistönä. Alkuun Kaliningrad näyttäytyi Eurooppaa ja Venäjää yhdistävänä alueena, jossa Brysselin ja Moskovan yhteistyön toimivuutta olisi mahdollista testata. Irakin miehitys (2003), Ukrainan oranssi vallankumous (2004–2005), Georgian vallankumous (2003) ja myöhemmät sotatoimet Georgiassa (2008) kuitenkin kiihdyttivät Venäjän ja lännen eroa.

2000-luvulla uskonnon ja VOK:n merkitys valtiollisen ideologian yhteydessä vahvistui. Uuden aikakauden alkamista symbolisoi patriarkka Alexein ja Vladimir Putinin yhteinen vierailu Kaliningradiin syyskuussa 2006. Keskeiseksi henkilöksi Kaliningradin alueen ja etenkin sen kirkollisten suhteitten kehittämisessä nousi Smolenskin ja Kaliningradin metropolitta Kirill, joka valittiin Moskovan patriarkaksi vuonna 2009. Kirill tuki vuonna 2007 aloitettua "Russkij mir" (Venäläinen maailma) -projektia, jonka tavoitteena on tukea venäläisen identiteetin säilymistä Venäjän alueen ulkopuolella asuvien venäläisten keskuudessa – ja samalla edistää Venäjän poliittista vaikutusvaltaa maailmassa. "Russkij mir" -projekti heijastelee venäläistä imperialistista ajattelua. Venäläisellä kulttuurilla, historialla ja ortodoksisella uskolla on projektissa keskeinen merkitys.

Vuonna 2009 patriarkka Kirill hyväksyi Kaliningradin hiippakunnan vaatimuksen siirtää joukko saksalaisomisteisia rakennuksia kirkon haltuun. Vaatimukset herättivät hämmennystä ja vastarintaa, sillä VOK:n omaisuus Kaliningradissa rajoittui ennen vuotta 1917 vain yhteen kirkkorakennukseen. Marraskuussa 2010 presidentti Medvedev allekirjoitti lain, jonka nojalla vaatimukset omaisuuden siirtämisestä voitiin toteuttaa. Enemmistö Kaliningradin väestöstä vastusti luovutuksia ja katolinen

kirkko toi näkyvästi esille huolensa kirkkojenvälisten suhteitten huonontumisesta. VOK:n vastauksessa todettiin, että VOK toimii reaaliolanteen ehdoilla: enemmistö Kaliningradin alueen tukee ortodoksista kirkkoa ja omaisuuden siirtäminen takaa sille riittävät tilat. Lausunto osoittaa, että VOK identifioi Venäjän ja ortodoksisuuden toisiinsa, ja pyrkii toimillaan suojelemaan ortodoksisen kirkon asemaa muita kirkkoja ja uskontoja vastaan.

Kiovan kansannousu vuonna 2013 tiukensi Kremlin otetta Kaliningradin alueesta. Samalla kirkon piirissä alettiin voimakkaammin korostaa Kaliningradin merkitystä. Puheessaan Venäjän duumassa vuonna 2014 patriarkka Kirill loi kuvan Venäjän yhtenäisestä poliittisesta historiasta, joka alkoi ”Pyhästä Venäjästä” ja on johtanut nyky-Venäjäan. Keskeisenä aikakaudet yhdistävänä pyrkimyksenä on ollut turvata Venäjän kansaa ulkopuoliselta uhalta. Vuonna 2015 Kaliningradissa pitämässään puheessa patriarkka painotti ortodoksisuuden keskeisyyttä Venäjän historiassa ja Kaliningradin tärkeyttä Venäjälle sekä alueen nykyistä asemaa venäläisyyden etuvartiona ja kristillisyyden turvasatamana Euroopassa. Vastaavia näkökulmia on nostettu esille valtion- ja paikallishallinnon edustajien puheenvuoroissa.

Vuosien 2009 – 2015 aikana VOK on noussut voimakkaaksi yhteiskunnalliseksi, poliittiseksi ja ideologiseksi toimijaksi Kaliningradissa. Samalla Kaliningradista on tullut sotilaallinen linnake, joka sillanrakentamisen sijaan herättää uudenlaista levottomuutta Euroopassa.