Rising Against the “Enemies of the Church”: The Dynamics of Russian Desecularization and the Making of Its Punitive Regime

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RISING AGAINST THE “ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH”: THE DYNAMICS OF RUSSIAN
DESECULARIZATION AND THE MAKING OF ITS
PUNITIVE REGIME

Rachel Lynn Schroeder, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University, 2016

This study makes an original contribution to theorizing desecularization, which Karpov (2010) defines as “a process of counter-secularization, through which religion reasserts its societal influence in reaction to previous and/or co-occurring, secularizing processes.” Existing theory states that desecularization is agency driven, involves social actors and activists with specific interests, ideologies and strategies. However, the theory does not explain the dynamics whereby desecularization takes place and a particular desecularizing regime—in structural and normative form and symbolic and discursive content—develops through social action and achieves hegemonic status. This dissertation fills this important gap by asking: How and why, in the anomic post-Soviet conditions, did the current desecularizing regime in Russia form? And more specifically, what role did the cultural clashes over artistic and intellectual representations of religion play in its formation? While focusing on the sociology of religion and the Russian case, these questions pertain to the core sociological debate on agency and structure.

In pursuing these questions, I revise and apply Turner’s (1974; 1980) “social drama” approach as an analytical tool uniquely situated for studying the interplay between structure and agency in a comparative-historical case study of two waves of cultural clashes over artistic representations of religion. The study employs archival research and combines “thick
description,” discourse and visual analysis to a multitude of Russian-language documents. The first wave of cases (1995-2000) took place under the Yeltsin regime and led to either mild punishment of those who challenged the emerging religious hegemony or to unresolved social dramas while “setting the stage” for the second wave (2003-2012), which took place under the Putin regime and included the “Beware, Religion!” (2003) and “Forbidden Art—2006” (2007) exhibitions, and the Pussy Riot “punk prayer” at Christ the Savior Cathedral (2012). This comparative study demonstrates how in the course of intensifying clashes between desecularizing activists and their opponents the paradigm of radical desecularization gradually crystallized into an increasingly punitive normative regime. I then analyze survey and public opinion data to assess popular support for the new regime. To interpret the findings, I develop an original theoretical framework that synthesizes theories of secularization, desecularization, an elaboration on culture wars analysis, the Durkheimian dialectic of norm and deviance, the work of Agamben and Foucault on disciplinary modalities of power, and social identity theory. Ultimately, I argue that the severe punishment of the perceived “enemies of the Church” and the public support for it reflect the crystallization of a new cultural-normative system brought about by the Russian desecularizing regime characterized by a symbiosis of the Orthodox Church and the Russian state. This dissertation thus makes an original theoretical contribution by showing how desecularization’s social actors redefine social norms by defining secularist, anti-clerical orientations as deviant and by criminalizing them.

by

Rachel Lynn Schroeder

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Sociology
Western Michigan University
August 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin by acknowledging my dissertation committee Chair and informal and formal advisor for much of my academic career, Dr. Vyacheslav Karpov. By always asking for my best work and helping me (with a great deal of patience) to achieve it over the years, you have taught me what true academic mentorship is about. I feel privileged to have had you as my teacher and mentor, and I know I am a better teacher and mentor because of it. I would also like to acknowledge my dissertation committee members Dr. David Hartmann, Dr. Elena Lisovskaya, and Dr. Jerry Pankhurst for their review of my work and their insightful remarks, and also for their unceasing encouragement and support. I am especially thankful to Dr. Elena Lisovskaya for all of her support and help (and chicken soup!) during my work on this dissertation.

I would also like to acknowledge the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Michigan and the professors and students involved in it for the excellent preparation and support I received during my M.A. studies there. The reason I could tackle the Russian language documents for this research was the language training I received through CREES (with FLAS funding), and the reason I understood the contextual elements of the cases I studied was due to the courses I took there and the opportunities I had to live and study in Russia while a student of the Center.

In regards to my dissertation research, I feel I need to thank people who I have never had the pleasure to meet but often cite throughout the text: Anna Brazhkina, the creator of the Art Protest website; the individuals that constructed the Sakharov Museum and Public Center online archives of the events surrounding the “Beware, Religion!” (2003) and “Forbidden Art—2006”
(2007) exhibitions; and the numerous others that wrote about the events, took photographs, or compiled documents available online.

Because of the work of these individuals and groups, I was able to access many rich documents that would otherwise have been lost to history.

I would further like to acknowledge all of my teachers and advisors, from elementary to graduate school. This is your accomplishment as much as mine. Thank you also to my siblings for your support, and to all of my friends for not giving up on me when I disappeared to work and write. Also thank you to L. and R. for being my social support system throughout the dissertation process.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Ken and Donda, and to my grandparents. To my parents, I can never thank you enough for all you have done for me over the years. I am who I am and I have achieved what I have because of you. To my grandparents, I am sorry you are not here to see the “little Professor” you always believed in receive her Ph.D.

Rachel Lynn Schroeder
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Viktor Krasnov, a 38-year-old man without steady employment from the city of Stavropol in southern Russia was never famous. Yet, in March 2016, Russian and Western media exploded with news stories about him. At that time, it became known that Krasnov had been criminally prosecuted for stating, in a heated exchange on the popular Russian social network site *VKontakte* in October 2014, that there is no god, and that the Bible is but a collection of “Jewish fairytales.” After Krasnov’s online interlocutors, self-avowed Orthodox believers, had filed a complaint, he found himself facing up to one year in prison for publicly insulting their religious feelings. The charges were brought in accordance with the article 148, part 1, which was introduced in the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation in 2013.¹

These events took place less than 25 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the regime of official state atheism that was strictly enforced until the end of the 1980s. Thus, in roughly a quarter of a century Russia went from state persecution of the public expression of religious belief to criminalizing and prosecuting public expressions of atheism. This is a dramatic change, and it is thus understandable why the Krasnov affair became a sensation not only in Russia but also in the West.

¹ For a more detailed account of these events, see Andrei Sidorchik’s (March 4, 2016) article, “Delo est’ a “Boga net!”: Za chto na samom dele sudiat Viktora Krasnova?,” in Argumenty i Fakty, at: http://www.aif.ru/society/law/delo_est_a_boga_net_za_chto_na_samom_dele_sudyat_viktora_krasnova
How was this change possible? How did the new order of things that exalts official Orthodoxy and criminalizes public expression of atheist belief emerge after seven decades of enforced state atheism? After all, tyrannical as it is, Russia’s post-Soviet state is still officially secular according to its Constitution, and the revolution of the late 1980s–early 1990s bore no marks of an Iranian-style theocratic takeover.

Recent social science literature provides some clues as to what is going on. Its dramatic titles speak of a “desecularization of the world” (Berger 1999), of the advent of a “God’s century” and the impact of resurgent religion on global politics (Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011), of the failed “plot to kill God” (Froese 2008), of the “survival and revival” of religion after its suppression in Russia and China (Marsh 2011), and of “Russian Orthodoxy resurgent” (Garrard and Garrard 2008). A parallel literature reconsiders the once seemingly clear perceptions of secularity and secularism as supposedly universal attributes of modernity in the light of the previously unforeseen vitality and revitalization of religions (Warner, VanAntwerpen and Calhoun 2010; Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen 2011). And then there is an enormous literature that talks about the advent of a “post-secular” age, a concept harshly criticized for its fuzziness (Beckford 2012). Most recently, Peter Berger (2014), once a classical theorist of secularization and then the first proponent of the idea of desecularization, wrote about a pluralist world where secularity and religion dwell in a plurality of forms. With all the differences in interpretations, a common thread in this literature is that religion is not fading away as modernity advances, and that, on the contrary, it is capable of powerfully reasserting itself.
In this dissertation, I build on much of this literature, which does provide great insights in
the worldwide religious resurgences, including the rise of Russian Orthodoxy to its current
status. Moreover, here, as well as in my earlier work (Schroeder and Karpov 2013) I build
specifically on the conceptual foundations of desecularization theory (Berger 1999; 2014;
Karpov 2010) and its application to the Russian case (Karpov 2013). However, desecularization
theory in its current status does not answer the question that I raised in the paragraphs above.
Surely, the change that resulted in the criminal prosecution of the provincial atheist blogger
Viktor Krasnov is part of what this theory calls desecularization. Yet, the theory does not tell us
exactly how (i.e., through what kinds of specific actions and of what kinds of specific actors) this
dramatically new and so recently yet unforeseen order of things has formed? As I show in this
dissertation (see Chapter 2 on theory and method), existing theory provides necessary conceptual
tools to study the dynamics of desecularization. It views desecularization as agency driven, i.e.,
as the work of specific desecularizing actors and activists with their interests, ideological visions,
and strategies. It also says that once the desecularizing forces achieve an upper-hand they
establish a desecularizing regime, i.e., a normative system through which religion’s role is
further asserted and expanded (Karpov 2010; 2013). And yet how all this happens remains
unclear. The theory is thus well equipped to study the dynamics of desecularization and the
making of desecularizing regimes (which happen to be keywords in the title of this dissertation)
by specific actors and activists, and yet the actual dynamics and the actual process of “making”
remains elusive. In other words, existing theory stops short of explaining how the established and
enforced normative structures of desecularizing regimes result from meaningful and purposeful
actions of desecularizing actors. This question is at the center of my research here.

3
Speaking more broadly, my dissertation deals with a core issue of sociological theory since its inception -- the interplay of social structure and agency. In Berger and Luckmann’s (1989 [1966]: 18) famous formulation that obviously draws on Weber and Durkheim, “The central question for sociological theory can then be put as follows: How is it possible that subjective meanings become objective facticities? …How is it possible that human activity (Handeln) should produce a world of things (chooses)?” [emphasis in original]. Recent theory has recognized that any answer to this central question necessarily points to the processual nature of the (re-)constitution of structures by meaningful social actors. However, as I argue in Chapter 2, attempts to theorize this fundamental process have so far resulted in abstract schemas (e.g., Giddens’s “structuration”) that reveal the “duality” of social structure that underlies its processual nature, but are still insufficient for explaining the actual process that brings social structures into being through social action.

In this dissertation, I thus directly examine the process whereby subjective meanings become objective facticities in an attempt to bridge the gap in an important literature on religion and social change. However, I do not engage here in abstract meta-theorizing that in recent decades proved insular to the needs of empirical inquiry. Instead, I do this through the examination of the following specifying questions: How and why, in the anomic conditions of the post-Soviet period, with their competing secularizing and counter-secularizing currents and forces, did the current desecularizing regime in Russia form? And more specifically, what role did the cultural clashes between actors and activists over artistic and intellectual representations
of religious themes play in its formation?² Ultimately, in the place of offering a general theory of these processes I instead propose a method of studying this process that draws on Victor Turner’s social drama approach.

Victor Turner’s (1974a; 1980) method (which I describe in Chapter 2) is better known to anthropologists than sociologists. Yet the method has an underutilized potential to help us understand how important structural changes happen as a result of multi-stage clashes between specific actors whose actions are inspired by root paradigms – scripts that place the actors’ goals in culturally rooted and thus broadly appealing meaningful frames. The clashing paradigms are not simply proclaimed; they are acted upon and embodied in action. Furthermore, they are dialogically adjusted, revised and solidified as paradigm-bearers clash. Moreover, the paradigms are imbued with growing passion and certitude as social dramas intensify, which hastens their crystallization. Social dramas are started by a breach of the status quo that creates liminality (normative indeterminacy) and leads to a crisis in which actors use repressive mechanisms to achieve a re-integration of a changed normative order that affirms the prevailing root paradigm and thus functions as its crystallization.

In this dissertation I critically adopt Turner’s method rejecting some of its problematic aspects and adjusting it in the light of further theoretical-methodological and empirical work, especially that of Jeffrey Alexander (2006; 2011) and Wagner-Pacifici (1986). I argue that utilization of this method in my research will allow us to make a first approximation of the theoretical elements of the process of desecularization, while further implementation of this

² As I explain in Chapter 6, these clashes resulted directly in the making and enactment of the new law that criminalized insults to religious feelings, and this law, in turn, is an important tool of subversion of any further resistance to desecularization, not only in the artistic sphere, but also in many other domains of public life.
method in future research will allow us to in turn form a more specific theory of the process of structuration both as it relates to the dynamics of desecularization and other more general social contexts. This dissertation research is thus necessarily a theory-building, not a theory-testing enterprise, and it is an enterprise in which theory and method are deeply intertwined.

Since this is a theory-building rather than a theory-testing endeavor there are no hypotheses that I test. Instead, I look at numerous sources that document culture clashes in Russia from 1994–1995 to 2012–2013 in order to: (1) specify activists and actors involved in the clashes, (2) trace their actions that breach the status quo and reactions to the breaches, (3) explore the activists’ manifestos, interviews, slogans and banners (often not metaphorically, but quite literally, by looking at photographs that depict rallies, pickets, artistic actions, and so on) in order to detect the changing paradigms that animate the struggles; (4) monitor the unfolding of the crisis in which actors are involved and their search for redressive mechanisms, (5) detect the involvement or un-involvement of more powerful social actors and their role in the choice and/or making of redressive mechanisms; (6) look at the consequences of the application of redressive mechanisms at the reintegration phase and assess if, to what extent and in what way the underlying root paradigms are embodied in the norms affirmed through redressive acts; and finally, (7) trace the movement towards a new act of the social drama where the protagonists try to launch counter-offensives or solidify their gains.

Thus I implement the social drama approach to theory-building by conducting a comparative case study of a series of clashes that involved controversial artistic representations of religion and reactions to them. My choice of cases follows very simple principles that I lay out in greater detail later in the dissertation. In brief, following the social drama approach, I chose
cases that invoked strong passions, heightened tensions, were greatly publicized, and directly involved issues pertaining to the place of religion in Russian society. It is these kinds of dramatic cases of contestation where root paradigms are likely to surface and crystallize in consequential and transformative ways. Furthermore, my selection was based on a simple social-constructionist principle: cases belong together if their participants themselves think that they are, and my research shows that the cases I study, from the earliest to the latest, were indeed seen by their protagonists on both sides as developments of one and the same struggle (this is most clearly shown in Chapter 6).

The cases that I study took place between 1994–1995 and 2012–2013. This time interval makes sense because it would be difficult to pinpoint cases of overt challenges to desecularization and, specifically, to the growing influence of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) on society and politics prior to 1994, and by 2012/2013 Russia’s new normative regime that suppresses public criticisms of the ROC’s hegemony was practically formed. This is a relatively lengthy interval, and Russia was undergoing a spectacular transformation throughout it. This made it necessary to consider the social drama that I analyze in a broader context of socio-political and religious change, and the reader will see that chapters 3 through 6 that are devoted to the social drama’s major acts consider the events in these changing contexts. Thus, as a result, this study is not solely a comparative, but rather a historical-comparative study, in which the history of the formation of Russia’s desecularizing regime is seen as an integral part of the country’s overall historical transformation.

How does my comparative-historical and theory-building study relate to existing sociological knowledge in the area of Russia’s post-Soviet religious transformation? The
literature in this field is rapidly growing and specializing and my research has greatly benefitted from existing work in the area. In this brief overview I will comment primarily on the work that directly influenced my research, as well as on the scientific directions to which I hope to contribute by this dissertation. In particular, Nathaniel Davis’s (2003) valuable account of the Soviet pre-history and early history of Orthodoxy’s post-Soviet resurgence alongside Michael Bourdeaux’s (1990) study of the place of Orthodoxy in the perestroika reforms provided a much needed socio-historical context to my work and helped me realize the intricacies of the complex relationships between the ROC and Soviet and post-Soviet political establishments, while Christopher Marsh’s (2011) work highlighted the historical pattern of religion’s survival and revival after communist suppression through a comparison of Russia and China. Large-scale survey research by Kaariainen and Furman (1999) and Furman, Kaariainen and Karpov (2007) demonstrated how rapid growth of the prestige of Orthodox Church and Orthodox social identity was accompanied by persistently low levels of church attendance and doctrinal belief. I fully take this research into account when I discuss the social-identity aspects and mass reactions to the social drama that I explore in this dissertation. Four volumes of The Contemporary Religious Life of Russia (2004) and three volumes of the Atlas of the Contemporary Religious Life in Russia (2005) by Burdo (Bourdeaux) and Filatov provided a wealth of thoroughly researched empirical information, and some of it (especially that pertaining to Russia’s semi-official and unofficial Orthodoxy) directly contributed to my empirical analyses, especially in chapters 3–5. Also extremely valuable in this regard was the work of Alexander Verkhovsky (2009) on radical Orthodox and nationalist groups in Russia. Furthermore, the volume by Roudometoff, Agadjanian, and Pankhurst (2005) helped me better understand the formation of post-Soviet
Orthodox identity and its relation to Russian nationalism from a broader, global context, as a response to the encounter with the “other” (and, especially, the Western other) in the context of globalization. This dissertation shows the relevance of these ideas.

My study was also informed by the work of Zoe Knox (2005) and Irina Papkova (2010) both of who contributed greatly to the understanding of the political role of Orthodoxy as well as to the internal differentiation in the ROC and the formation of the liberal, traditionalist, and fundamentalist orientations within it. Let me remark that one of my findings in this regard is the connection between unofficial radical Orthodox groups and the (presumably) mainstream officialdom of the ROC, whereby the latter embrace and strengthen the root paradigm of the former. These tendencies may not have been as strong and clear when Knox and Papkova wrote their respective volumes.

Important contributions to the field that are directly relevant to my work were made by those researchers who focused on the nature of contemporary Russia’s culture wars and their relationship with politics (Anderson 2012; 2014; Robinson 2014). I address this work in Chapter 2.

Jerry Pankhurst’s recent work that brought together researchers of Russian Orthodoxy’s impact on a variety of dimensions of Russian society, including politics, national identity, law, foreign policy and others, contributes greatly to the development of the area. In his recent publication (Pankhurst and Kilp 2013) he raises issues that are of central importance for my dissertation. These include the convergence of religious and secular interests, the complexity and contestation of Orthodox identity, the fuzzy nature of church-state relations in Russia that seems to defy clear-cut notions, and the need to further develop theoretical interpretation of the ongoing
change, including ideas about desecularization. Contributing to the collaborative work spearheaded by Pankhurst, Papkova (2013) notes that our understanding and theorizing of Russia’s desecularization as part of the global resurgence of religion needs to include a focus on secularist, anti-clerical resistance and the nature of the ongoing confrontation between the ROC and its secularist adversaries. I see my dissertation as contributing directly to and addressing this need.

This dissertation was greatly influenced by the work of Vyacheslav Karpov and Elena Lisovskaya on desecularization of Russian society and education and its impact on the formation of ethno-religious identity and religious intolerance (Karpov 2010; 2013; Karpov & Lisovskaya 2007; 2008; Lisovskaya 2016; Lisovskaya & Karpov 2010). I analyze the conceptual framework of desecularization in chapter 2. I also hope that this dissertation further contributes to theorizing desecularization by demonstrating its social dynamics and explaining the formation of its regime in Russia.

Throughout this dissertation I cite and discuss multiple other sources pertaining to the study of religion in post-Soviet Russia. In particular, Chapter 6 reviews many studies on the conflict that followed the Pussy Riot performance. Thus, I am not including this more specialized literature in this introductory overview.

Next, let me briefly outline the structure and content of this dissertation. Following this short introduction, Chapter 2, Theory and Methods, lays out the theoretical and methodological foundation of this investigation. It details how my dissertation addresses the fundamental agency-structure question by advancing theoretical understanding of the dynamics of desecularization, of the making of the desecularizing regime in Russia. In this context, I
summarize and critically access the state of theory of desecularization and show how my research is intended to fill existing gaps. I then overview overlapping and adjacent theoretical fields that inform my work and to which, I believe, I am contributing by this study. These include theoretical ideas about culture wars, social identity, the dialectics of norm and deviance and disciplinary modalities of power. The rest of the chapter provides a critical and systematic analysis of Turner’s social drama approach and its development in recent literature. Finally, I discuss how my dissertation applies such methods of data collection and analysis as archival research, Geertzean “thick description,” discourse analysis, and statistical analysis of survey data.

Having thus defined theory and methods, I next turn to my comparative-historical case study. Chapter 3, Setting the Stage: The Unfinished Social Dramas of the 1990s, focuses on five cases in which the proponents of uninhibited artistic expression clashed with desecularizing activists and their influential supporters. The cases include: (1) Brener’s (1995) “Chechnya!” action at the Elokhovskiy Cathedral in Moscow; (2) the showing of the Last Temptation of Christ on NTV (1997) and the controversy that emerged around it; (3) Ter-Oganian’s (1998) action where he invited observers to chop paper reproductions of icons with an ax at the Manege Gallery; (4) action “Kh.V.1999” (1999) where artists covered the cupola of the Moscow planetarium as an Easter egg; and (5) Mavromatti’s (2000) action where he crucified himself in front of the Institute of Culturology across the street from Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow. I show that the events surrounding these five cases represent unrealized, partial, or aborted social dramas. Tensions between secularizing and counter-secularizing forces were highlighted, but activists on the ground still were not many, and their paradigms did not fully
crystallize and the tensions between competing paradigms were left unresolved and without a clear victor. The transitional and anomic nature of the cultural and political fields at the time was left preserved, but not unchanged as tensions intensified. Moreover, the forming paradigm of radical desecularization raised the possibility of retaliation for offending religious sentiments of the Russian Orthodox people, and by the end of the decade, just as the Putin regime was forming the specter of criminal prosecution for offenders of religious sensibilities entered the stage.

Chapter 4, “Beware, Religion!” A Threshold Social Drama of Russian Desecularization, begins the analysis of the “completed” social dramas that took place from 2003-2013 (i.e., just as the Putin regime was rising and consolidating) and began with the exhibit “Beware, Religion!” in the Sakharov Museum in Moscow. I call this a “threshold” social drama for a number of reasons. This was the first clash between desecularizing forces and their opponents that ended in the prosecution and trial of the nonconformist artists and museum workers who were found guilty of inciting religious enmity and punished by court-imposed fines (in contrast, a case against the Orthodox radicals who vandalized the exhibit was dropped). Moreover, root paradigms on both sides crystallized more clearly. Desecularizing activists purported to protect the Russian Orthodox people, its Church, and ultimately its state from the threat emanating from an anti-Orthodox and anti-Russian minority and sought legal protection against this presumably powerful minority who also stand accused of colluding with Western and other subversive and criminal forces. Importantly, at this stage the paradigm initially developed by Orthodox radical activists finds a growing support among the religious and political establishment and ultimately is echoed by the legal language of the court sentence. On the other hand, the opposing paradigm also crystallizes and includes symbols of liberal democracy, secular state, and constitutional
protection for the freedom of expression. Alongside these elements, there emerges a discourse condemning “clericalization,” or even “clerical bolshevism” that expresses itself in Orthodoxy’s undue influence.

Chapter 5, A Defeated Counter-Offensive: “Forbidden Art—2006,” concentrates on the events initiated by yet another Sakharov Museum exhibition, this time dedicated to censored art which yet again included artistic commentary of religious as well as political themes. The new exhibition served as a breach in the new act of the drama. The breach took place in 2006, soon after the ROC’s official spokesmen introduced in their discourse the ominous term “enemies of the church” which, in addition to its association with the Stalin-era sentence-like term “enemies of the people,” entered the scene in a context that stressed Orthodoxy’s law-enforcement and military connections. The talk of the already made lists of the “enemies of the church” started in the atmosphere of intensifying suppression of political freedom. In reaction to the exhibit, a broadest ever spectrum of radical Orthodox and nationalist radicals jointly rallied around the more and more forcefully expressed desecularization paradigm that was now sharpened against the enemies not only of the Russian Orthodox people and its Church, but also of its Army and State. The paradigm’s racist and anti-Semitic undercurrent fully surfaced. In a dramatic turning point, there emerged a split among the once relatively unified coalition of artists, human rights activists and opposition figures who once were squarely on the side of free expression. Now only a few consistently supported uninhibited artistic freedom, while many condemned the exhibition, showing signs of submission to the paradigm of radical desecularization and thus signaling its increasingly hegemonic status. Importantly, the staunchest support for the “anti-clericalization” paradigm was expressed by radical actionist groups, including Voina, of which Pussy Riot would
become an offshoot. A court trial followed, and its verdict used the same discourse as in the previous case, but this time fines were steeper, and some organizers lost their jobs. The anti-clerical counter-offensive failed, and desecularizing forces solidified their gains and public acceptance of their radical paradigm.

The last case study is presented in Chapter 6, titled “Mother of God, Chase Putin Away!” This is a line from the “punk-prayer service” that, following in the footsteps of Aleksandr Brener, the Pussy Riot band, an offshoot of Voina, video-recorded in the Theophany Cathedral and then attempted to perform in Christ the Savior Cathedral, the main temple of official Orthodoxy and a symbol of its collaboration with the state. This breaching action took place amidst the growing and progressively successful desecularizing push of the ROC leadership and mass protests against growing authoritarian trends and Putin’s return to presidency in 2012. I show that existing literature misses the rather obvious connection of the Pussy Riot act to the previous actions of the opponents of desecularization and largely fails to read their performance as a radical restatement of an expanded anti-clericalization paradigm. The chapter then describes principally new characteristics of the crisis phase that followed, including its unprecedented publicity, politicization, internationalization, and divisive effect on the Orthodox constituencies. Redressive mechanisms ranged from well-organized massive rallies and open-air prayer services in support of the ROC whose leaders purported that the Church was once again persecuted by godless enemies, and to a court trial that ended in the conviction and imprisonment of the band members. To an even greater extent the legal documents of the trial incorporated the discourse of radical desecularization. Most importantly, this episode resulted not only in use of short-term redressive mechanisms, but also in the creation of new ones. Specifically, I show how the
making of the new law that criminalizes offenses to religious feelings (the very law based on which the blogger Krasnov whom I mention in the beginning of this chapter is prosecuted) was a joint church-state venture that used the Pussy Riot case in conjunction with its predecessor cases as a justification for expanded repression against the “enemies of the church.” The enactment of the law completed the construction of the new punitive regime of desecularization.

Thus, a chain of specific actions by specific deusecularizing actors and their antagonists fighting each other under the banners of conflicting root paradigms resulted in the crystallization of a new set of legal norms, thus modifying existing structural arrangements. Through social actions and counter-actions subjective meanings were translated into objective facticities.

Chapter 7, Russia’s Silent Majority and “the Enemies of the Church,” addresses yet another dimension of the drama, its reflection in public opinion. This dimension is important because the degree to which a punitive regime is congruent with popular sentiment attests to the level of the regime’s legitimacy. Using published survey data from Russia, I show that Russia’s general public had remained largely uninformed about the ROC’s struggles against the “enemies of the church” virtually until the Pussy Riot case was broadly publicized by the state-controlled media. At that point public opinion showed strong punitive tendencies consistent with the nature of the forming regime. I then proceed to statistical analyses of existing data from national representative surveys in order to understand the nature of popular support for the restrictive and punitive treatment of the critics of religion and church. Through a cross-national comparison, I find that even before the Pussy Riot action, Russian attitudes towards anti-religious expression were somewhat more restrictive than in Poland or America, despite the fact that Russians are on average less religious than their counterparts in both countries. This leads me to theorize that the
roots of Russians’ intolerance are not so much in their individual-level piety as in collective representations linking their rediscovered Orthodox identity to maintaining rigid in-group–outgroup boundaries. I discuss this finding in the conclusion.

Finally, Chapter 8 is a conclusion that summarizes the dissertation’s main contributions to relevant fields. The contributions are clustered into three groups: theoretical, methodological, and empirical.

Let me make one more remark before I proceed with my study. Evidence that I present in this dissertation shows that the current leadership and officialdom of the ROC of the Moscow Patriarchate has affiliated itself with radical, even extremist groups and ideas and with the ever more authoritarian post-Soviet state in the suppression of dissent and opposition. This does not mean that I somehow espouse an essentialist view of Orthodoxy in general or Russian Orthodoxy in particular as inherently illiberal, reactionary or oppressive. Years of study of Orthodoxy prevent me from any such essentialist view. I am well aware of the historical record of resistance to despotism, courage and martyrdom in the face of ruthless persecution, defense of the oppressed, and support for liberty by Orthodox laity, clergy and hierarchs in Russia and elsewhere. I am impressed, furthermore, by the illuminating, richly documented study of John Strickland (2011), *The Making of Holy Russia: The Orthodox Church and Russian Nationalism before the Revolution*. The study makes a clear case that religious nationalism under the banners of a “Holy Russia” is a late modern creation that gained strength in the late 19th century. Thus, the very religious nationalism that is now, in an updated format, put to the service of the resurging Russian authoritarianism is no more ancient or traditional than the ideology of the nihilist and communist iconoclasts. The clashes that I describe in this dissertation cannot,
therefore, be construed as ones between a “Tradition” and modernity, or between an “ancient faith” and its modern enemies. Instead, it is a clash of a late-modern ideology of religious nationalism that, I know, many Orthodox believers find distorting to their faith, and a post-modern aesthetics of profanation and uninhibited self-expression.
CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND METHODS

Introduction

The central theoretical question of my dissertation research deals with an issue at the core of the discipline of sociology since the time of the founders—the interplay of social structure and agency. More specifically, my originating theoretical question follows the formulation of Berger and Luckmann (1989 [1966]: 18), who, drawing on Weber and Durkheim say: “The central question for sociological theory can then be put as follows: How is it possible that subjective meanings become objective facticities? … How is it possible that human activity (Handeln) should produce a world of things (chooses)?” [emphasis in original]. The historical and cultural turns in sociology led to the important recognition that any answer to this central question of the discipline necessarily points to the processual nature of the (re-)constitution of structures by meaningful social actors. Attempts to theorize this important and fundamental process have hitherto resulted in abstract conceptual approaches, most notably Giddens’ theory of “structuration,” that, while elucidating the clear “duality” of social structure that underlies its processual nature, are still insufficient for explaining the actual process that brings social structures into being through social action.

In my research, I thus directly examine this process whereby subjective meanings become objective facticities in an attempt to begin to bridge the gap in this important literature on social change. I do this through the examination of the following specifying questions: How
and why, in the anomic conditions of the post-Soviet period, with their competing secularizing and counter-secularizing currents and forces, did the current desecularizing regime in Russia form? And more specifically, what role did the cultural clashes between actors and activists over artistic and intellectual representations of religious themes play in its formation? Ultimately, in the place of offering a general theory of these processes based on my research I instead propose a method of studying this process that draws on Victor Turner’s social drama approach. Utilization of this method in my research will allow us to make a first approximation of the theoretical elements of this process while further implementation of this method in future research will allow us to in turn form a more specific theory of the process of structuration both as it relates to the dynamics of desecularization and other more general social contexts.

My dissertation research is thus necessarily a theory-building versus a theory-testing enterprise, and it is an enterprise in which theory and method are necessarily deeply intertwined. In this chapter I will thus lay-out my theoretical framework, which builds from theories of secularization and desecularization, especially Karpov’s approach to desecularization and Smith’s agency-centered approach to secularization, the Durkheimian dialectic of norm and deviance, the culture wars literature, and to a lesser extent, Foucault and Agamben’s disciplinary modalities of power, social identity theory, and “ethnodoxy.” My theoretical framework will thus help to explain the processes whereby the particular desecularizing regime develops through the cultural clashes between actors and activists, filling an existing gap in the literature.

I will then outline my methodology for my comparative-historical case study analysis of two waves of cultural clashes over representations of religious themes in artistic and intellectual representations. The first wave of cases (1995-2000) took place under the Yeltsin regime and led
to either relatively mild punishment of those who challenged the emerging religious hegemony or to unresolved social dramas while “setting the stage” for the second wave (2003-2012), which took place under the Putin regime and included the “Beware, Religion!” (2003) and the “Forbidden Art—2006” (2007) exhibitions at the Sakharov Museum, and, most famously, the Pussy Riot “punk prayer” at Christ the Savior Cathedral (2012). My comparative-historical case study analysis draws from Victor Turner’s social drama approach, though informed by the more recent applications and developments of his theory by Wagner-Pacifici and Jeffrey Alexander. This comparative study demonstrates how in the course of intensifying clashes between desecularizing activists and their opponents the paradigm of radical desecularization crystallized over time into an increasingly punitive normative regime. I then briefly describe the use of archival and documentary research and application of Geertzian “thick description” and discourse analysis. Finally, I briefly outline my application of survey data to assess the degree of popular support for the new regime of desecularization.

Theory

A key focal point of contention in sociological theory since the founders has been the structure-agency debate. Perhaps the most well-known theorization of the interplay of structure and agency has been Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration. In the face of what he perceived as overtly and overly structuralist conceptions of the social world and social action (e.g., in the work of Talcott Parsons), as well as the overly micro-action oriented theories of some Symbolic Interactionists, Giddens posited the “duality” of social structures—that “structures shape people’s practices, but it is also people’s practices that constitute (and reproduce) structures”
(Sewell 2005a: 127). For Giddens social structures were thus *constraining* but also *enabling*—structural transformation therefore happens when enabled agents, drawing on existing structures as “rules and resources,” practice in innovative ways. As Sewell (2005a: 128) argues, Giddens attempts through his theory of structuration to “reconcile phenomenology, interactionism, and ethnomethodology, with Marx, Durkheim, and Weber”—to create a theory encapsulating the dynamic interrelationships of structure and agency, to bridge the gap between micro-level actionist and macro-level structuralist theories. His endeavor stands in contrast to those of structuralists like Sahlins and even Bourdieu (with his “agent-proof” concept of habitus), who “cannot explain change as arising from within the operation of structures;” as well as figures like Berger and Luckmann mentioned above and their limited focus on the constitution of society through social psychological processes3 (Sewell 2005a: 138-139).

Yet, despite that Giddens’ structuration theory posits social change happens through structuration, or that Sewell builds from Giddens to argue about transformations of structures, neither theorize the actual process of structuration. The actual processes whereby Giddens’ “rules and resources” or Sewell’s “schemas and resources” come into being and are utilized in social action are in actuality left under-theorized. Ultimately, I agree with Alexander and Mast’s (2006: 3) argument that “there remains a gaping hole between [the] general concepts [of the metatheoretical debates of Sewell, Sahlins, Alexander in his previous work, and others] and empirical facts,” that the metatheoretical formulations of “structuration” remain so abstract as to leave the processes they seek to explain unclear. Consequently, although I agree with and rely on the formulation of the duality of social structure and the existence of the processes of

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3 I thank Vyacheslav Karpov for this point about Berger and Luckmann.
structuration, I will depart from such metatheoretical debates in my research to pursue a more specific and concrete development of social structure—that of a desecularizing regime—through social action. This focus thus brings together gaps in both the structure-agency theories and the literature on desecularization. This necessitates a brief overview of the bodies of theory I will draw from in my endeavor, including secularization and desecularization theory, the Durkheimian concept of anomie and his dialectic of norm and deviance, and to a lesser extent, the work of Agamben and Foucault on disciplinary modalities of power, and social identity theory.

Desecularization as Counter-Secularization

Whereas study and theorization of secularization have dominated the social scientific study of religion since the founders, the process of desecularization remains quite understudied despite its clear importance proven by world events of the last several decades. Until recently the dominant paradigm in the sociology of religion was that of secularization, which since the time of the founders of the discipline had inferred that there “is a necessary incompatibility between religion per se and modern, primarily urban life” (Davie 2008: 47). One of the most prominent formulations of the secularization thesis, for example, which despite much evidence against it still holds power in the discipline today (if introductory sociology textbooks are any measure), was Peter Berger’s (1990 [1967]) conceptualization in his Sacred Canopy. Put simply, according to this view with modernity comes pluralism, and with pluralism comes competition between idea-systems, and with such competition comes the decreased influence of religion in social life. Such simplistic and seriously problematic theories of secularization, with their clear reliance on
the limited framework of the European Enlightenment, were later met with more nuanced approaches\textsuperscript{4} that better considered the reality of the persistence and resurgence of religion around the world, including Berger’s retraction of his original theoretical formulation and his argument for further focus in research and theorization on the previously neglected co-occurring trends of secularization and desecularization in the world, and the more rigorous approach of Casanova (1994) that better considers the complexity of secularizing forces around the world, both of which are drawn from in Karpov’s conceptual framework of desecularization that I will rely on in this dissertation.

In his conceptual framework, Karpov (2010) first draws on Berger’s (1999) original conceptualization of desecularization as “counter-secularization,” which sets necessary limits to the concept’s field of reference. Desecularization does not simply refer to the growth or survival of religion in a given social context, but only to the “escalation of religions’ societal influences…[that] develops in reaction to preceding and/or ongoing secularizing trends” (Karpov 2010: 236). Karpov then builds from Casanova’s (1994) conceptualization of secularization “as inclusive of three \textit{unintegrated} processes: differentiation of societal institutions from religious norms, decline of religious beliefs and practices, and privatization of religion” to posit that desecularization can be imagined as the oppositional corollary to these processes (238). Ultimately, overcoming deficiencies in previous conceptualizations, Karpov’s (2010: 250) complete definition of desecularization reads:

\textit{Desecularization} is a process of counter-secularization, through which religion reasserts its societal influence in reaction to previous and/or co-occurring secularizing processes. The process manifests itself as a combination of some or all of the following tendencies:


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(a) a rapprochement between formerly secularized institutions and religious norms, both formal and informal; (b) a resurgence of religious beliefs and practices; (c) a return of religion to the public sphere (“de-privatization”); (d) a revival of religious content in a variety of culture’s subsystems, including the arts, philosophy, and literature, and in a decline of the standing of science relative to a resurgent role of religion in world-construction and world-maintenance; (e) religion-related changes in society’s substratum (including religiously inspired demographic changes, redefinition of territories and their populations along religious lines, reappearance of faith-related material structures, growing shares of religion-related goods in the overall economic market, and so on). The aforesaid tendencies can be, to a different degree, functionally interdependent and logico-meaningly integrated by a shared religious source (or lack meaningful integration if a simultaneous resurgence of multiple religions is taking place). Counter-secularizing trends can also co-occur with persistent or deepening secularization in some societal domains and, furthermore, be latently interdependent with them.

Let me emphasize some points in this definition that will prove important and instrumental for my study. First, the recognition that desecularization is unintegrated is crucial. It allows us to envision a society where desecularization in some domains is quickly developing while other domains may be resistant to it. The unintegratedness of this process thus creates preconditions for a duality and perhaps plurality of normative spheres of which some will be speedily opening up to religious influence while others will show resilient secular (and even secularist) orientations. This plurality may translate into a disposition of desecularizing and secularist forces and groups—i.e., those spreading religious influences and using the already desecularized domains as their bases, and those resisting desecularization, including by protecting the boundaries of more staunchly secular normative subsystems. Secondly, an important point is that secularizing and counter-secularizing processes may be co-occurring, inter-dependent and interacting with each other. A secularizing trend may be in reaction to a desecularizing of one or several domains, and vice versa.5 Once again, these interactions open up

5 This aspect of Karpov’s formulation among others was praised by Peter Berger (2015) in his article titled “Desecularization” (The American Interest). For the article, see: http://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/05/13/desecularization/.
possibilities for cooperations and conflicts among forces and groups promoting these trends. I return to this idea in the section on the transitional nature of desecularization below. Thirdly, and importantly for the theoretical framework of this dissertation, this approach emphasizes a specific conceptualization of culture that I explain below.

A note on culture: The study of the dynamics of desecularization in accordance with the above definition necessarily relies on a European, and I would even say specifically Durkheimian, understanding of culture. Karpov (2010) explicitly employs such an understanding as opposed to what sometimes is referred to as an “American” tradition which views cultures as aggregates of individual-level beliefs, values, attitudes, and normative orientations which can be explained by and attributed to individual locations in the social, economic, political, and other structures. In contrast, the “European” tradition focuses on supra-individual symbolic formations, systems, codes, and scripts that are irreducible to the sum total of individuals’ mindsets and orientations. Culture in this “European” understanding is comprised of collective rather than individual representations, and thus I referred above to it as a “Durkheimian” understanding (even though Weber’s treatment of Protestant ideas as formative to the “spirit” of capitalism is arguably of the same nature; these ideas are crystallized normative collective representations that inform social action). Furthermore, highly relevant for my study is Durkheim’s idea of crystallization of emergent currents into established collective representations, and of the latter – into informal and then formal institutions (including laws) (Thompson⁶ 1982: 43-51). We will see in this study how, through the actions of desecularizing

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⁶ Thompson’s summary is excellent, but Durkheim’s original discussion of social facts and collective representations can be found in his (1982) The Rules of the Sociological Method (of which the author did read to better gauge Thompson’s excellent summary and analysis).
activists and their struggles with the defenders of secular institutions, emergent currents of collective representations crystallize into solidified scripts that further inform political decisions and adoption of new punitive laws. This brings me to explaining the agency-focused view of desecularization.

Actors, Activists, and Their Visions/Paradigms

A crucially important proposition of the framework this study builds on is that desecularization is not self-propelled. It results from actions of specific desecularizing activists and actors. Karpov (2010: 252) defines desecularizing activists as “individuals and groups immediately and actively involved in efforts to reestablish religion’s role in societal institutions and culture,” and thus secularizing activists are defined in opposition to this definition. He (252) defines desecularizing actors more broadly to “denot[e] larger groups whose interests, grievances, and cultural and ideological orientations are congruent with activists,’ but who provide a more passive backing to counter-secularizing efforts, not participating in them actively, but rather serving as a social and political support base of counter-secularizing activities.” Karpov builds on Smith (2003) who similarly views secularization as brought about by social action and is thus best understood in the framework of the sociology of revolution. An important focus of Smith’s view of secularization is the culture and ideology that animate secularizing actors. Thus, Smith (2003: 31) asks:

“What ideologies of moral order shaped the actors’ cultural perspectives in ways that evoked and reinforced their commitment to activism? [emphasis is original – R.S.] ….

How did ideologies function to interpret the world for activists and adversaries in ways that fueled their activism and resistance [emphasis added – R.S.]?”

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Karpov (2013) further develops his view of the cultural and ideological basis of desecularizing social action when he writes about “visions of desecularization,” which include representations of an ideal desecularized society, its adversaries, and ways of achieving it. The focus on actors and activists of desecularization and its adversaries (Karpov [2010] discusses resistance to desecularization at length) is a methodologically consequential idea for this study. As explained below, and as was already done in my previous work (Schroeder & Karpov 2013), I use Victor Turner’s term “paradigms” to refer to constellations of collective representations that gradually crystallize and get clarified through a series of escalating clashes between desecularizing groups and their opponents, in which both sides are trying to make their case appealing to broader actors who can ultimately decide the outcome of the conflict.

Desecularizing from “Above” or “Below”

Karpov’s (2010) conceptualization includes two ideal-type modes of desecularization. One develops “from below.” It is driven by social movements and activist groups emerging from the grassroots level of society. Social pressure applied “from below” leads to institutional and political changes providing for a greater role of religion in society. Alternatively, desecularization can be carried out and imposed “from above,” without major involvement of grassroots-level groups, by, importantly for this study, alliances of religious and secular elites. The actual empirical cases, as specified by Karpov (2010), would be on a continuum between the two polar opposite ideal types. Which mode of desecularization will ultimately develop depends on a number of contextual conditions (masses and elites’ interests, visions, and material and cultural resources). In the Russian case, Karpov (2013) argues, there were no sufficiently
developed conditions for a desecularization from below (because the level of mass religious adherence at the end of the Soviet era was low, society was atomized and voluntary associations did not easily form, and masses lacked material resources and a vision for a broad based movement). Religious and secular elites, on the other hand, had specific interests, material and organizational resources and ultimately converging visions for a top-down desecularization.

My study builds on this conceptualization and generally confirms the characterization of the Russian case as that of a desecularization “from above.” Yet, I also make a specifying contribution to this argument by showing that Russia’s desecularization from above involved, especially at its early, formative stages, a considerable level of activism of small groups emerging “from below.” While it can be argued that such groups were not fully independent (we will see how their success was dependent on support from high levels of religious, political, and cultural establishments), Russia’s desecularization from above would probably not be as consequential as it has been without a small army of foot soldiers and street fighters promoting its cause in very real confrontations with those trying to protect or expand secular arrangements.

Desecularizing Regime

Karpov (2010: 255-256) defines a desecularizing regime as

“a particular normative and politico-ideological mode in which desecularization is carried out, expanded, and sustained. It includes: (a) the scope of intended desecularization, ranging from only some institutions and cultural domains to a total religious transformation of society; (b) institutional arrangements (both formal and informal) allocating given amounts of power and authority to religious and secular actors and defining the limits of religious and civil liberties for religious and secular groups in the population; (c) a specific mode of enforcement of these arrangements; and (d) ideologies legitimating the arrangements.”
Desecularizing regimes, furthermore, vary according to this formulation, between two ideal-type opposites. One is a monistic and restrictive regime that suppresses religious freedom and pluralism (e.g., in the case of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan). The other is a liberal and pluralistic regime that allows religious freedom and pluralism and makes the state into a neutral arbiter in potential disputes among religious and secular groups (Ukraine, according to Karpov, fits this regime model). Variations in the types of regime are further hypothetically attributed to a number of factors, ranging from the nature of resurgent religions to socioeconomic and political conditions in societies. Paraphrasing a Leninist metaphor, Karpov suggests that a desecularizing regime is established when desecularizing forces establish their control of “commanding heights” in society or a subset of societal institutions. In his theoretical and comparative analysis of the Russian case, Karpov (2013) provides a detailed description of elites’ strategies of desecularization from above that resulted in the establishment of a hegemonistic and restrictive desecularizing regime in the country.

My dissertation employs this conceptualization of desecularizing regimes and factors and strategies that lead to their emergence, and my conclusions generally agree with Karpov’s (2010 and 2013) explanation of the establishment of Russia’s restrictive and ultimately punitive regime. At the same time, however, this work closes a gap in existing theory and makes a substantive contribution by explaining the dynamics of the establishment of the punitive desecularizing regime. Existing theory rightly described it yet stopped short of explaining how exactly the establishment of such a regime was possible. My dissertation research is aimed at exactly this, and thus its title speaks of the dynamics of desecularization and the making of its punitive regime. Specifically, I show how a punitive regime emerges out of a series of escalating
confrontations among the forces that clash over the extent to which religious norms can regulate expression in the institutional fields that were previously thoroughly secular.

The Transitional Nature of Desecularization and the Russian Case

As I already explained above, desecularization, is an inevitably unintegrated process of social change which allows for a protracted coexistence of variably secularized and desecularized subsystems that serve as basis for the formation of deasecularizing activist groups and their adversaries. Even a desecularization that occurs in the context of a radical social transformation (such as in post-Soviet Russia) is a transitional and relatively lengthy process. As a transitional process, desecularization is, even in the otherwise rapidly changing society, essentially and inevitably unintegrated, contradictory, and inconsistent, and develops in some domains of society faster than in others, and often co-occurs with persistent secular and secularizing influences. This is especially likely in societies, which, like Russia, were subjected to lengthy forced secularization aimed at uprooting religion entirely. Furthermore, in the Russian case the unintegratedness and contradictory nature of desecularizing processes are further increased by the country’s integration (albeit partial and inconsistent) into the global economic and cultural system where secular influences are powerful. As a result, even with a punitive regime in place, a country like Russia will be long characterized by clashes between desecularizing and secularizing forces. Let me now reiterate in a more detailed manner what this means for the normative sphere of society.

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7 Much of the text in this section and the next are drawn directly from my previous publication—see Schroeder and Karpov (2013).
The unintegratedness of desecularization and its co-occurrence with persistent or even growing secular influences inevitably translates into the coexistence of competing cultural systems and values. On the one hand, there is a resurging and expanding religious system of beliefs and values that is promoted as a basis of societal re-integration. On the other hand, there is an agglomeration of secular orientations and values implanted by the old, atheist regime, and revitalized by secularist influences of globalization. On many issues, including those central to this dissertation (such as limits to freedom of expression and the relationship between the sacred and the profane), the expanding religious and the persistent secular cultural systems have conflicting views and on some their positions are irreconcilable—and thus lead to the cultural clashes central to this dissertation.

Durkheimian Anomie and the Dialectic of Norm and Deviance

From a Durkheimian perspective, an inevitable outcome of such a transitional situation is the state of anomie, perceived normlessness or lawlessness, that results from the absence of commonly agreed-upon cultural social goals and cultural values. Anomic states are conducive to high rates of deviance, and societies, if they are to stabilize themselves after a transitional phase, tend to reduce anomic states by clarifying and asserting a system of dominant norms. In a situation of acute anomie, such as that of a rapid dismantling of the official atheist ideological establishment of communism and resurgence of religions supported by the state, conflicts between bearers of secular and religious paradigms are likely. Both sides are likely to try to affirm their rights and expand influences, or at least contain their rival’s expansion. And

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8 In the words of Turner (1974a; 1980), which will be introduced in a later section, such a state could also be referred to as metaphorically “liminal.”
gradually, through a series of transgressions and redressive acts norms become increasingly clarified and crystallized. It is this series of transgressions and redressive acts that form the heart of the empirical study of this dissertation (and which are studied through the analytical “tool” of Turner’s *social drama* approach that is uniquely situated for the study of such clashes).

This theoretical framework builds in part on the classic Durkheimian (1982) theoretical argument of the functionality of crime. The crux of the argument is the idea of a dialectical relationship between societal norms and deviance. As Durkheim argues, the norms crystallize around the deeply held collective representations and collective sentiments of a society, and thus they often embody the moral values of the given culture. Crime, and deviance in general, is thus necessary for a functional society because it marks the boundaries of the norms, and through the transgression of the norms it reinforces the collective representations and sentiments of the population that underlie the norm, strengthening the normative system. Thus, according to Durkheim, the severity of the punishment meted out for a deviant act is an indication of the strength of the collectively held representations and sentiments underlying the violated norm. As Durkheim argues, “It is not of course punishment that causes the crime, but it is through punishment that crime, in its external aspects, is revealed to us. And it is therefore punishment that must be our starting point if we wish to understand crime” (Durkheim 1982: 80). Moreover, it is also through punishment that the norm is understood, made obvious to society members and reaffirmed. The true function of punishment, Durkheim writes, is to maintain the vitality of social cohesion in the collective conscience. “We can say without paradox that punishment is above all designed to act upon upright people” (Durkheim 1964: 108).
From this perspective, my analysis shows how resistance to the expansion of religious norms into previously secularized domains (such as artistic expression) is ultimately criminalized, and how through this process the new normative regime of desecularization is asserted. Thus, the meaning of this process is much broader than the victory of desecularizing forces over small groups of nonconformist artists and activists. This is a process through which a new system of collective representation acquires dominance by labeling resistance as deviance and ultimately a crime.

Culture Wars Analysis

Given my theoretical framework’s emphasis on clashing collective representations and normative orientations, the reader may legitimately wonder to what extent the concept of “culture wars” is relevant for this research. Let me address this question. The concept of culture wars is mostly known from its formulation and presentation by Hunter (1991). For Hunter (1991), culture wars involve “competing moral visions” (42) and are fought for the purpose of establishing “moral authority” (42). Furthermore, “cultural conflict is ultimately about the struggle for domination” (52), the “struggle to maintain or achieve power” (52). Hunter (1991) also refers to culture wars as “struggle[s] for cultural hegemony” (57), and at one point even uses the expression the “drama of social change” (61) to describe the struggle.

Moreover, an important aspect of Hunter’s argument is that cultural conflict is not reducible to or an epiphenomenon of politics. On the contrary, “politics is in large part an expression of culture” (57), and as “struggle between competing truth claims” politics is necessarily drawn from culture (58). This, anti-reductionist view goes against interpretations of
cultural conflicts, including those in post-Soviet Russia, as epiphenomenal to political struggles. For instance, Neil Robinson’s (2014) interesting and useful article “The Political Origins of Russia’s ‘Culture Wars’” approaches culture clashes in post-Soviet Russia as epiphenomena of a political management style described as “neo-patrimonialism.” While this is an important dimension of cultural struggles, the reductionist approach obscures the dynamics of conflict by unjustifiably narrowing the scope of actors and factors relevant to its analysis.

Hunter’s (1996) “Response to Davis and Robinson: Remembering Durkheim” notes that even if cultural conflict is not immediately reflected in attitudes and opinions of citizens, it is still sociologically significant from a Durkheimian perspective.

Furthermore, in his more recent work Hunter (2010) criticizes the influential “individualistic” view of culture as “constituted by and changed through the actions of aggregated individuals” (31) in favor of a view of culture as a historically determined system of truth claims and moral obligations that develops in networks and institutions and is a resource and form of power (32-47). Thus, in terms of the already discussed distinction between the individualistic (“American”) and supra-individual (“European”) perspectives on culture, Hunter clearly leans towards the latter.

Hunter’s emphasis on culture clashes as a social-change drama and his reliance on a Durkheimian-style interpretation of culture make his approach relevant for my research on the social drama of Russian desecularization. However, specific substantive aspects of Hunter’s approach make its application to the Russian case somewhat problematic. Let us not forget that Hunter’s idea of culture wars was not originally designed for broader, comparative studies, but rather was advanced to describe and explain the ongoing conflict between conservative
“orthodox” and liberal “progressive” coalitions in American society and politics. Describing American reality, the concept refers to an ongoing confrontation between broad coalitions of forces and the resulting cultural polarization on a large number of issues, from religion in education to abortion, homosexuality, and others. Furthermore, the two major camps are not fighting for an all-out victory and domination that would be impossible in the context of pluralistic democracy in America. Instead, their goal is a weak hegemony, which Hunter (2009: 1313-1314) defines as follows: “By weak hegemony I do not mean anything as robust as a dominant ideology in the Marxist formulation of the phrase. Rather, I refer to a minimal and flexible framework of epistemic propensities, normative assumptions, dispositions, myths, and symbols that loosely order public life; that allows room for a certain range of acceptable diversity.”

Neither characteristic of culture wars thus understood appears to fit the Russian context. In Russia one can hardly see nationwide coalitions of civil-society groups battling each other over divisive social issues. Ultra-conservative tendencies within Orthodoxy and other religious groups are present, but they are far from igniting a broad-based movement of cultural conservatives in the country whose population remains strikingly apathetic and unwilling to join voluntary associations and broad social movements. Moreover, at stake in the Russian culture clashes that I will describe in the following chapters is not a weak hegemony but rather a strong one, which amounts to cultural domination and suppression of dissent. Mandatory psychiatric evaluations for bloggers who criticize the overreach of the Orthodox Church or the possibility of imprisonment for publicly denying God’s existence are hardly signs of a “weak” hegemony.
Obvious differences of this nature prompted John Anderson (2012: 4) to conclude: “I see little evidence that a conservative Christian social movement might emerge in Russia or that these issues enjoy the same political salience in Russia as they do in the U.S.” Anderson’s (2012) article and (2014) book overview an array of culture clashes in Russia (creationism vs. evolution, homosexuality, and artistic expression, including some of the episodes I analyze in detail in this dissertation) to conclude that they do not amount to culture wars as they exist in America. Yet, does this mean that the idea of culture wars is irrelevant to the Russian context? I do not think so, and here is why.

In order to understand if and to what extent the concept of culture wars applies to post-Soviet Russia, we need to follow the simple rules of comparative method and try to understand not just what components of culture wars Russia does not have (which is the focus of Anderson’s comparison), but on what characteristics it does have that may fit a more general understanding of culture wars. By changing the focus in this manner, we will be able to understand that Russia presents us with a case of a different type of cultural warfare. The first step is to recognize that elements of Hunter’s definition (his understanding of the general nature of cultural struggles, focus on supra-individual symbolic systems, and rejection of reductionism) are applicable to comparative cross-national research. The rest of the description (the war between two broad coalitions over a weak hegemony) are particular to the American context. Thus, one can focus on the former and lay the latter aside in thinking about the applicability of the concept to other contexts.

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9 I am grateful to Vyacheslav Karpov for this formulation in a personal communication.
In essence, if to subtract the specifically American component from Hunter’s understanding, then the idea of culture wars is somewhat similar to Philip Rieff’s (2006) view of a worldwide *kulturkampf* between the forces loyal to theistic cultures and their late-modern or postmodern adversaries. The conflict takes a variety of forms in its manifestations worldwide. This allows us to focus on the specificity of culture clashes in particular national and religious settings. From this perspective, culture clashes that I explore in this paper are a specifically post-Soviet Russian form of cultural warfare, where, as I will show, a growing cultural hegemony of the Orthodox Church has been supported by state structures and challenged by “guerrilla” groups of cultural dissenters and defenders of secularity. Thus, when I later talk about culture wars and clashes in Russia, I use the terms in this, context-specific meaning.

Additional Theoretical Concepts

The theoretical framework of this dissertation builds on the ideas and concepts that I outlined in the preceding sections. To repeat, they pertain to theories of secularization and desecularization, the idea of anomie in a culturally divided society, the dialectical relationship between norm and deviance (as well as crime and punishment), and culture wars broadly understood. However, there are some additional theoretical concepts that, while not central, are at some point deployed in the dissertation, and I will briefly explain their meaning below.

First, in discussing the punishments of the “enemies of the church,” I use the Foucauldian concept of “disciplinary modalities of power.” I do so to emphasize that the punishments appear to have as their function not just the affirmation of a law, but the disciplining of the Russian people, and especially of the potential challengers of the desecularizing regime. The punishments
that, as the study shows, combine legal and extra-legal practices of state institutions and grassroots groups (e.g., Orthodox “stormtroopers” who vandalize artistic exhibits or make death threats against “the enemies of the church” with absolute impunity) and cannot be considered as solely affirming the sovereign power of the modern state. Rather, I argue, we are dealing here with “disciplinary modalities of power.” According to Foucault (1995 [1977]: 215), “‘Discipline’ may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a ‘physics’ or an ‘anatomy’ of power, a technology.” I furthermore build on Agamben’s (2009: 17) idea about the paradigmatic aspect of Foucault’s approach to disciplinary power and suggest that the treatment of Pussy Riot and other challengers of the Russian desecularizing regime can also be considered paradigmatic. For Agamben (2009: 31), “The paradigmatic case becomes such by suspending and, at the same time, exposing its belonging to the group, so that it is never possible to separate its exemplarity from its singularity.” Thus we will see how the treatment of the “enemies of the church” becomes paradigmatic as representing not just a unique case, but the applicability of punishment and disciplining to entire categories of individuals and their ideas.

Finally, I also use concepts pertaining to social identity theory and its applications in the sociology of religion. According to that theory, people identify themselves as belonging to broad categories of individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to the same category (see Stets and Burke 2000: 255). Such categories include, for instance, religious, ethnic, and national formations. Thus, one can identify as an ethnic Russian, an Orthodox, and so on. Such broad categories, as Karpov, Lisovskaya and Barry (2012) note are in fact “imagined communities,”
yet they are “real” for those who identify with these groups to pursue “personal and social goals” (Stets and Burke 2000: 230). Social identity-based categorization emphasizes intergroup boundaries between positively perceived in-groups and negatively viewed out-groups. Intergroup boundaries as well as normative in-group identification are creations of culture. These ideas are instrumental in my dissertation when I discuss the importance of the treatment of the “enemies of the church” for clarifying and tightening the definition of Russian Orthodox identity.

A related concept that is partly built on social identity theory is “ethnodoxy,” which Karpov, Lisovskaya and Barry (2012) define as a popular ideology that rigidly unites religious and ethnic identity of a group and translates into negative views of ethnic and religious outgroups and pursuit of a protected status for the group’s own faith. Such an ideology is thus associated with religious and ethnic intolerance to the group’s perceived enemies. While Karpov, Lisovskaya, and Barry (2012) use multivariate statistical analysis to detect the latent structure of ethnodoxy in mass consciousness, my contribution is that I demonstrate how these ideological structures are put together through the collective action of radical desecularizing activists.

Method

What I mean by “method” in the following sections is not a specific “technique” of data analysis (even though this is what often passes as “method” in contemporary sociological research). Rather, “method” here is taken in its original meaning that deals with the way (hodos) in which knowledge is obtained. The term thus refers to the general logic of intellectual inquiry. In this case, it refers to the general logic of my inquiry into the dynamics of desecularization. As such, method is theory in practice just as theory itself is built by method, and, ideally, both ought
to be united by the same logic. In the following sections I outline a method that is uniquely fit to explore the dynamics of agency-driven structural change in the process of desecularization.¹⁰

Turner’s Social Drama Approach—Where Theory and Method Meet

Victor Turner was a cultural and political anthropologist trained in the British structural-functionalism of the Manchester School (and Rhodes-Livingstone Institute), a version of structural-functionalism descended from Durkheim but influenced by Marxism (Deflem 1991: 2; St. John 2014; Ortner 1984: 130). For the Manchester School, “the analytic question was not, as for the straight line descendants of Durkheim, how solidarity is fine-tuned, reinforced, and intensified, but rather how it is constructed and maintained in the first place over and above the conflicts and contradictions that constitute the normal state of affairs” (Ortner 1984: 130). The “dialectical processualism” of Max Gluckman, Turner’s mentor, that saw societies as dominated by a dialectic of continuity and change, where continuity was punctuated by periods of “rebellion” and where rituals served as “mechanisms to ensure societal unity, although…this unity may be achieved in spite of social conflicts and competing social norms and values” heavily influenced Turner (St. John 2014; Deflem 1991: 4). Through his encounters with the works of Freud and later phenomenology and Symbolic Interactionism, Turner’s later work, while sustaining his abiding interest in the processual nature of the social world, incorporated a greater attention to the “multivocality” of symbols and meaning and its development in social action than that of his fellow structural-functionalists (Babcock and MacAlloon 1987: 8; St. John 2014). Ultimately, Turner saw the social world “as a world in becoming, not a world in being.”

¹⁰I thank Vyacheslav Karpov for his aid in formulating this introduction.
which drove him to investigate the “processual structure of [social] action itself,” and how, drawing on Dilthey, the social actors’ “structures of experience” affect social action and ultimately the constitution and transformations of social structures he perceived in the social world’s “becoming” (Turner 1974a: 24, 13; 1980: 143). The study of social dramas became for Turner a window into this “becoming,” an analytical framework through which to analyze the processes of structuration.

Turner’s (1974a: 33, 29-30) utilization of the frame of “drama” to describe the “isolable and minutely describable units of social process” he recognized as arising “[w]hen the interests and attitudes of groups and individuals stood in obvious opposition” was, as also in the dramaturgy of Geertz and Goffman, necessarily metaphorical, but it is a particularly enlightening metaphor for understanding and identifying relationships between structure and agency in times of social transformation. Turner (1974a: 14) argued, “If there is order, it is seldom preordained (though transiently bayonets may underpin some political schema); it is achieved—the result of conflicting or concurring wills and intelligences, each relying on some convincing paradigm.” And for Turner, social dramas were discrete public events that are marked by phased processes of the contestation over “root paradigms” within specific cultural and political fields in a given society or social group (17, 42).

The contested root paradigms include the collective representations, symbolic meanings, “social narratives, and cultural scripts that order social action and give meaning to that action” (Zubrzycki 2006: 4; Turner 1974a: 64, 96). Given this contestation over root paradigms, the conflict inherent in social dramas brings “fundamental aspects of society, normally overlaid by

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11 This description of the social drama approach is drawn in-part from my previous work, which will also be utilized in other aspects of my discussion of the approach (Schroeder and Karpov 2013: 285-286).
the customs and habits of daily intercourse, into frightening prominence. People have to take sides in terms of deeply entrenched moral imperatives,” and they must then weigh their “loyalty and obligation” to specific social affiliations (Turner 1974a: 35). The events then become a “trial of strength between influential paradigm-bearers” (17).

According to Turner, social dramas include four specific phases, each of which will be described in greater detail later in the discussion: 1) the recognition of a “breach” of an existing normative system; 2) a point of “crisis” where the cleavages between social groups and paradigm-bearers become apparent and social tensions rise; 3) a time where certain “adjustive and redressive ‘mechanisms,’ … informal or formal, institutionalized or ad hoc, are swiftly brought into operation by leading or structurally representative members of the disturbed social system”; and 4) the “reintegration” into society of the individual or social group that enacted the breach, or the recognition of an “irreparable schism between the contesting parties” (38-42). Turner (1974a: 79) further specified that “there are a number of variations possible with regard to the sequence of the phases and to the weight accorded to them,” that social drama phases can overlap, that they can happen out of order, that multiple social dramas can co-occur, or that the social drama can breakdown, be cut-short, or aborted.

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12 Both Turner (1980) and Wagner-Pacifici (1986) draw on Hayden White’s concept of “emplotment” to describe the process of the social drama—that social meanings and actions are “emplotted” in a “narrative,” but that the emplotment takes place through social action in the “dynamic process of lived history,” not in the actions of the historian as writer (Wagner-Pacifici 1986: 3). The study of the social drama in this sense is thus the study of the processes of emplotment. Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 6) also compares Goffman’s theory of the “encounter” as a metaphor (she sees “logical symmetry”) for the processes of the social drama: “…each encounter is viewed as having the status of an emplotted ‘event,’ with a beginning, middle, and an end. Here, framing devices, formulaic words, or gestures often put the seal on the ‘event’ and, simultaneously, define what kind of an event it was.”
Turner (1980: 151-152; 1974a: 32) thus understood the social drama approach as an “agonistic model”\textsuperscript{13} of fundamentally “political processes”\textsuperscript{14} involving “volitional human agents”\textsuperscript{15} and their relations to and utilization of the collective representations of symbolic culture in the processes of social action leading to the transformations of social structures. Important, within the framework of Turner’s social drama approach, “symbols are of interest not as vehicles of, and analytic windows onto ‘culture’—the integrated ethos and worldview of a society [as in Geertzian symbolic anthropology]—but as what might be called operators in the social process, things that, when put together in certain arrangements in certain contexts (especially rituals), produce essentially social transformations” (Ortner 1984: 131). Turner argued that the relations between social actors, their social action, and culture, symbols, and meaning, is “reflexive,” that social dramas thus become for social groups a “way of manifesting ourselves to ourselves and of declaring where power and meaning lie and how they are distributed” (Turner 1980: 158). The social drama approach clearly demonstrates the “inseparability of symbolic anthropology and political anthropology”\textsuperscript{16} that was central to Turner’s work (Babcock and MacAloon 1987: 11). Turner’s dramaturgical turn, with its focus on process and social change, thus stands in stark contrast to the “structural rigidity” of Geertz’s

\textsuperscript{13} Turner (1980:151) recognized that “processual units” other than the agonistic model of social drama exist, but his focus remained on this particular form.

\textsuperscript{14} Turner (1980: 152) argued more specifically: “Social dramas are in large measure political processes, that is, they involve competition for scarce ends—power, dignity, prestige, honor, purity—by particular means and by the utilization of resources that are also scarce—goods, territory, money, men and women. Ends, means, and resources are caught up in an interdependent feedback process.”

\textsuperscript{15} Turner (1974a: 17) drew on Florian Znaniecki’s “humanistic coefficient,” “whereby sociocultural systems depend not only on their meaning but also for their existence upon the participation of conscious human agents and upon men’s relations with one another.”

\textsuperscript{16} Babcock and MacAloon (1987: 11) point out: “The analysis of symbolic forms must always begin, [Turner] would insist, with a close understanding of the network of power relations in the social field, and it must end with as much of an account as possible—as he like to put it in his crusty and multivocal private speech—of ‘who is screwing whom.’”
dramaturgy17 where “background collective representations and myths steal each scene,” and the “detached, purely analytical [micro-level] approach” of Goffman’s dramaturgy18 (Alexander and Mast 2006: 12-13). Turner’s social drama approach also satisfies Sewell’s (2005b) call for an “eventful analysis” in the study of structural transformation in comparative-historical sociology, but while proving more useful than Sewell’s own metatheoretical discussion and complex conceptualization of the category of “event,” that while recognizing the agency of social actors fails to fully account for the role of actors in social transformation (it is not fully an actor- or agency-centered approach as discussed earlier in the theory section of the chapter).19

17 Alexander and Mast (2006: 12) rightly argue: “Yet it is striking how Geertz confined himself to studying performances inside firmly established and articulated ritual containers, from the Balinese cockfight, where ‘nothing happened’ but an aesthetic affirmation of status structures, to the ‘theater state’ of nineteenth century Bali, where highly rigid authority structures were continuously reaffirmed in a priori, choreographed ways.”

18 Alexander and Mast (2006: 13) criticize Goffman’s dramaturgy in the following way: Goffman’s “cool conceptual creativity contributed signally to understanding social performance, but the instrumental tone of Goffman’s thinking severed, not only analytically but in principle, that is ontologically, the possibility of strong ties between psychological motivation, social performance, and cultural text.”

19 In Sewell’s (2005a) most well-known formulation of the theoretical category of the “event,” his (article and later) book chapter, “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille,” Sewell includes no less than ten theoretical propositions about “events,” most of which are at a level of complexity and abstractness as to lose explanatory power across examination of multiple cases, in contrast to Turner’s approach (which he references along with Sahlins and others). These propositions include: 1) historical events rearticulate structures (244-245), 2) historical events are cultural transformations (245-246), 3) historical events are shaped by particular conditions (246-248), 4) historical events are characterized by heightened emotion (248-250), 5) historical events are acts of collective creativity (250-251), 6) historical events are punctuated by ritual (251-254), 7) historical events produce more events (255-257), 8) to become definitive rearticulations of structures must gain authoritative sanction (257-259), 9) historical events are spatial as well as temporal processes (259), and 10) defining the boundaries of a historical event requires an act of judgment (260). Given the overlap of Sewell’s conceptual framework and that of Turner, my discussion of the social drama approach and application of the approach to my case studies will necessarily overlap with Sewell’s “propositions” about events. However, Turner’s symbolic and actor-centered approach, I argue, is analytically better disposed for specifying how exactly structures are “articulated.” Furthermore, Sonya Rose’s work should be mentioned as well, since her book chapter, “Cultural Analysis and Moral Discourses: Episodes, Continuities, and Transformations,” (1999) investigates the ways in which moral discourses tend to intensify through “episodes” in which identity becomes particularly important for a community. Particular “episodes” or crises force communities to re-examine specific moral discourses, which in turn lead to a re-examination of the role of the moral discourse not only in maintaining social order but also in establishing identity for the community, a process which is necessarily ongoing, contested, and ambivalent. I would argue with Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 4), although she is referencing Rose’s earlier work, that although the concept of “episode” is theoretically important, similar to Sewell’s work, identifying an “episode” does not necessarily help one to understand how a moral discourse forms and gains power, and her discussions of such processes also fall into the category of “metatheoretical” formulations discussed above. I argue that the social drama approach helps to fill this gap.
This overview shows how relevant Turner’s approach is to addressing the fundamental theoretical questions raised in my research. Yet, what can perhaps also be felt from this brief outline of Turner’s social drama approach is something that plagued his work and has continually perplexed social scientists interested in utilizing his approach—its unsystematic nature. As Graham St. John (2008; 2014), the author of the most in-depth study of Turner’s work, argues, Turner’s “endeavor was uniquely interdisciplinary, anti-systematic, and perplexing—even mystical.” Moreover, Babcock and MacAloon (1987: 19) argue that Turner’s failure to “create a Turnerian system or semiotics of culture…was a matter of intellectual and, indeed, moral principle, for his was a laughing struggling spirit that protested the indignity of any closed system…[H]e liked to joke, paraphrasing Oscar Wilde, that ‘clarity is the last refuge of the Philistines.’”

The opaqueness of his approach is expressed most clearly in his concepts of “structure,” “anti-structure,” and “communitas.” Although Turner’s work seemed to implicitly rely upon the Durkheimian definition of culture and structure that was presented briefly in the theoretical section of this chapter (varyingly crystallized collective representations from “social currents” to norms, to institutions, to morphological elements of social groups), Turner himself argues that he relies upon Merton’s formulation of structure as role and status sets that overlap with systems of norms and values (1974a; 1980). Although the Mertonian reduction of social structure to its most fixed and immutable form befits his overarching theoretical model where anti-structure, that which exists between and outside of social structure and is not reducible to it and thus provides the impetus for social change (the two forms Turner recognized in his model were “communitas” and “liminality”), stands in opposition to that which is fixed, immutable, and constraining—
social structure, this understanding of structure is ultimately unhelpful and perhaps even antithetical to the study of social drama. To investigate the processual nature of a social drama requires a robust understanding of the symbolic elements of culture and structure with the necessary focus on “structures of action” and symbols as “operators.” Through further investigation of Turner’s (1974a) social drama case study analysis, it is clear that he himself did not rely on the Mertonian definition of structure but on a more Durkheimian conceptualization (see, for example, 1974a: 65).

The problematic nature of his claims about structure also calls into question his rigid delineation between structure and anti-structure, and thus also his concepts of “communitas” and “liminality.” For Turner (1969; 1974a; 1974b; 1980) “communitas” was a “modality of social relationships,” an equalizing and universalizing state of community, of essential “We”-ness, that exists between, outside of, and in opposition to immutable social structures. He saw communitas as a condition of creative potentiality and thus the essential force driving social change, and therefore the force behind the transformations of social structure. In Turner’s work “communitas” took on an almost mystical character as a positive creative energy and social force. This aspect of Turner’s work has continually been the focus of severe criticism20 (see Alexander and Mast 2006; Deflem 1991: 18; Babcock and MacAlloon 1987; St. John 2008, 2014; etc.). Part of this criticism, I argue, is a fundamental misunderstanding of Turner’s motives for

20 In an interesting twist, much of the criticism blames Turner’s conversion to Catholicism for any perceived issues with his theoretical model, and especially his formulation of communitas. I question the validity of this line of argument, however, because as I argue above, Turner did not see communitas as the only consequence of structural indeterminancy, but as a potential corollary to anomie. The traditional Durkheimian conceptualization of anomie is generally one of “negative” consequences, but as Turner points out, the consequences can be “positive.” It is an interesting issue within the social sciences that we tend to focus our examination only on that which we perceive to be “social problems,” and not on that which makes “good,” “beneficial” social life possible. To criticize Turner for changing the focus perhaps betrays the prejudices internal to our disciplines.
focusing on the positive potential of structural indeterminancy. Turner, against his critics’ interpretations, never argued that structural indeterminancy must lead to communitas as a positive force, but instead he was arguing against the Durkheimian tendency to view structural indeterminancy only through the destructive potentiality of anomie. Turner (1974a: 250) argued that for those working in the Durkheimian tradition that,

…the breakdown of a social system can only result in *anomie, angst*, and the fragmentation of society into a mass of anxious and disoriented individuals, prone, as Durkheim would have said, to pathologically high rates of suicide. For if a society is unstructured it is nothing. It is less often seen that the dissolution of structural relationships may sometimes give communitas a positive opportunity.

Turner was not arguing that anomie does not exist as a social state resulting from structural indeterminancy, but that social scientists need to recognize that positive social forces can result from the same conditions: “Structure’s breakdown may be communitas’ gain” (251). In spite of this clarification, however, communitas remains a problematic theoretical concept in that despite Turner’s (1974a: 253-254) attempts to ground communitas by arguing that “it would be unwise, and in fact, incorrect, to segregate structure too radically from communitas…[that] for each level and domain of structure there is a mode of communitas, and there are cultural links established between them in most stable, ongoing, sociocultural systems,” the concept remains too abstract to provide much explanatory power in case study analysis (beyond, perhaps, pointing to the “collective effervescence” and dynamics of “we-ness” underlying collective behavior). I ultimately agree with Turner (1974a: 52) that:

In the area of social creativity—where new social and cultural forms are engendered—both structure and communitas are necessary, or both the ‘bound’ and the ‘unbound.’ To view ‘societies’ as human processes, rather than as an atemporal, timeless, or external system modeled either on an organism or a machine, is to enable us to concentrate on the relationships, existing at every point and on every level in complex and subtle ways, between communitas and structure.
However, as this dissertation will demonstrate, it is perhaps more fruitful to rely on more specific sociological concepts (social identity theory, in-group and out-group dynamics, etc.) than abstract communitas in analyzing and explaining the interplay between the “bound” and “unbound.” Ultimately the application of the social-drama approach is not contingent upon recognition and acceptance of Turner’s view of communitas as anti-structure. I would even argue that the concept of communitas is superfluous in the social-drama approach as a method of study of the dialectics of agency and structure. I will thus lay aside communitas and concentrate below on methodologically more instrumental elements of Turner’s approach.

In his later work, Turner (1980) recognized that transposing his concept of liminality from the limited context of rituals (especially *rites de passage*) in “traditional” societies to the complex context of industrial societies was inherently problematic, but he attempted to salvage the usefulness of the concept through its application as metaphor. Turner’s (1969: 95-96) first formulations of the state of “liminality” were tied directly to *rites of passage* in traditional societies, that individuals passing through coming of age rituals became “threshold people,” that in their ritual transition there came a moment “in and out of time,” “in and out of …social structure,” a “condition [where] those persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (a condition dominated by “communitas”). These were essentially periods of structural indeterminancy.

In his acknowledgement of the greater complexity of industrial societies, of their lack of a “ritual center” and “competition among several centers of symbolic discourse” (Wagner-Pacifi 1986: 275), Turner (1974b) recognized that in the complex industrial world that with pluralism came options, and that this optionality shaped social behavior in ways that the
obligatory nature of rituals in traditional societies did not, including by introducing the notion of leisure. Turner thus introduced the concept of the “liminoid” to refer to the products of this “liminal-like” state such as theater, literature, political writings, etc. Deflem (1991: 16) argues, “Liminoid phenomena…take place in the complex industrial world: they are products of individual or particular group efforts and are generated continuously. The liminoid originates outside the boundaries of the economic, political, and structural process, and its manifestations often challenge the wider social structure by offering social critique on, or even suggestions for, a revolutionary re-ordering of the official social order.”

In recognizing the limited reach and explanatory power of the liminoid, Turner (1980: 75-76, 161) and others (Wagner-Pacifici 1986: 165, 275) realized that extending the concept of liminality as a metaphor to understand processes of social change was analytically valuable. Turner argued (1980: 75-76):

Nevertheless, the exigencies of structuration itself, the process of containing new growth in orderly patterns or schemata, has an Achilles heel. This is the fact that when persons, groups, sets of ideas, etc., move from one level or style of organization or regulation of the interdependence of their parts or elements to another level, there has to be an interfacial region or, to change the metaphor, an interval, however brief, of ‘margin,’ or ‘limen,’ when the past is momentarily negated, suspended, or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun. There is an instant of pure potentiality when everything trembles in the balance, like the moment when the trembling quarterback with all the ‘options’ sees the very solid future moving menacingly towards him!...[M]ost frequently [innovation] occurs in interfaces and limina, then becomes legitimated in central sectors.

Yet in his writing Turner obscures two forms or modalities of metaphorical liminality: 1) the first describes a general state of structural indeterminancy of a social group or society during a period of social change, and 2) the second refers to a period of structural indeterminancy within the process of a social drama that is induced by the breach and crisis phases and is worked towards (successful or unsuccessful) resolution through the redressive mechanisms and
reintegration/schism phases. The *first* modality best approximates a state of Durkheimian anomie (but tempered by the recognition of the creative potential of such states) (Turner 1980: 78). In the context of the social drama approach, the first modality of metaphorical liminality, the “complex and dramatic liminal period” makes “explicit many of the contradictions hidden in those [slow—i.e., longer-term] processes and generate[s] new myths, symbols, paradigms, and political structures” (Turner 1974a: 99). For example, the first modality of “dramatic” liminality would correspond to the anomic conditions (within the cultural and political fields, concepts that will be discussed later)—with all of the existing cultural and political contradictions—of post-Soviet Russian society that form the “backdrop” of my social drama case study analysis. The *second* and more specific state of liminality is interdependent with the first but points to a specific configuration of an underlying contradiction that is brought to the forefront of social life through the *breach* and *crisis* phases of a social drama. Turner (1980: 157) argued of this modality of liminality: “Indeterminancy is, so to speak, in the subjunctive mood, since it is that which is not yet settled, concluded, and known. It is all that may be, might be, could be, perhaps even should be. It is that which terrifies in the breach and crisis phases of a social drama.” Examining the underlying contradictions forming the heart of the social dramas and the attempts at resolving them in my case study will become important aspects of my analysis.

Before I move to the important task of delineating and describing the phases of the social drama approach, I will touch on two important authors that draw heavily on Turner’s approach,

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21 Comments such as this about what “should be” (an implicit reference to the creative potential of “communitas”) are part of why Turner faced serious criticism. Critics argue that he failed to see the destructive potential of liminality and communitas. Alexander and Mast (2006: 11), for example, decry this as a “nostalgic” turn in Turner’s work. For example, the rise of Nazism could be viewed as a creative response of “communitas” to a liminal situation.
and from whose work I will draw elements to solidify the original framework: 1) Wagner-Pacifi’s (1986) *The Moro Morality Play: Terrorism as Social Drama*, and 2) Jeffrey Alexander’s (2006a; 2006b; 2011) “performance theory.” Wagner-Pacifi employs Turner’s social drama approach in the examination of the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro in Italy in 1978. She further focuses the social drama approach beyond Turner’s phases to issues of narrative emplotment (drawing on White and Riceour) and genre, and thus she specifically focuses on the Moro social drama as “series of competing interpretations” within a melodramatic frame (4-5). Her work is a useful, although heavily empirical, case study of the contours of one social drama (including its contextual fields). The role of the media in the social drama process was something that Turner implicitly touched on but did not develop, and thus Wagner-Pacifi’s greater attention to the role of the media in the Moro case is an important development in the approach that I will consider and apply in my own work. Beyond this, an especially valuable addition she makes to Turner’s approach is her focus on “the [symbolic and discursive] mechanics of the process of vanquishing [competing] interpretations” utilized by social actors in the process of the social drama (1-2). She argues: “The successful crediting or discrediting of interpretations moves an event in certain directions. In the case of a discredited interpretation, it may no longer have the epistemological, political, moral and/or aesthetic…strength to proceed in the direction the protagonists of the failed interpretation want it to go” (1). I will thus pay attention to such “mechanics” in my study. I would argue, however, that ultimately her more specified approach is not conducive to the study of multiple or successive social dramas Wagner-Pacifi’s emphasis on the development of the melodramatic genre and its impact on the narrative about the singular event and subsequent political change is enlightening. Yet, it appears
unusable in the study of a protracted social drama that develops in a sequence of relatively lengthy stages

Jeffrey Alexander (2006a; 2006b; 2011; Alexander and Mast 2006) has perhaps done the most to promote and further the dramaturgical turn in sociology with his recent “performance theory.” Starting from his theoretical focus on “cultural pragmatics,” an attempt to ground the structure-agency debate in symbolic social action, he (Alexander and Mast 2006; Alexander 2006a; 2006b; 2011) developed his complex “performance theory” that works to explain “how social actors, embedded in collective representations and working through symbolic and material means, implicitly orient towards others as if they were actors on a stage seeking identification with their experiences and understanding from their audiences,” and how through “successful” such “performances” social transformation may result (Alexander and Mast 2006: 2). As can be seen from this description, Alexander’s performance theory shares much in common with Turner’s social drama approach. However, Alexander’s theory, unlike Turner’s “agonistic model,” has as its explanatory focus performances of one social group (and ultimately whether the performance is “successful” to some degree). Consequently, Alexander’s performance theory would be inadequate for explaining how a desecularizing regime forms through cultural clashes among multiple social groups (in a sense competing performances through the four phases of the social drama approach), which is the goal of this study.

22 Alexander (2006a; 2006b; 2011) and his colleagues (Alexander, Giesen, and Mast 2006) attempt to bridge the gap between the empirical case studies of social action (such as Wagner-Pacifici’s work) and the “metatheoretical debate over structure and agency” characteristic of Sewell, Sahlins, and Alexander’s previous work. They wish to fill the “gaping hole between general concepts and empirical facts” (Alexander and Mast 2006: 3). What results is an incredibly complex and admirable theory of social performance, but it is a theory that is restricted to explaining only specific cases as I describe above and is thus inadequate for my study.
My purpose here is thus not to describe the complex elements of Alexander’s performance theory, but to learn from his theoretical elements to improve Turner’s model. From Alexander’s (2006a) theory I will thus incorporate the following emphases into Turner’s model, emphases that Turner himself touched on only implicitly or left altogether silent: 1) How do actors draw on certain collective representations and “fuse” them into “scripts,” and then how are these “scripts” “actualized” through social action? 2) How does differential social power affect actors’ access to the means of symbolic production and distribution (e.g., access to the media and internet, issues of censorship, etc.), and thus their ability to propagate their competing “root paradigms”? 3) What role do various “directors” (media, journalists, critics, etc.) play in setting-up the “mise-en-scene” of the social drama? “Mise-en-scene” is a theater term referring to the “setting of the stage” by directors, and Alexander uses it more metaphorically to raise questions about the role of the media in interpreting (or misinterpreting) a social performance for an audience. Turner paid little attention to questions of how the media may influence the trajectory of a social drama, but this is something that will be kept in mind in this study. 4) Turner himself paid little attention to the question of the “audience” in his social drama approach, but for Alexander the role of the audience is of fundamental importance in his theory (to predicting the “success” of a “performance”). Against Turner, Alexander (2006a: 73) argues for the “contingent relationship between performative projection and audience reception.” Thus, the question becomes what role does the general public play as an “audience” to a social drama? And what roles do various constituencies of the “paradigm-bearers” play as “audiences”? Wagner-Pacifici in her work on the Moro affair demonstrated the very limited and passive role the general public played in that particular drama, and thus her study will not help address the question.
Let me note, however, that the question of “audience” needs to be specified. In a broadest sense the question is a variation on the fundamental sociological issue of the role that small activist vanguards play relative to “masses” in historical change, and how the masses are engaged or unengaged in transformative social action. This is a question that is too broad to be addressed within the limits of this dissertation. However, the question of “audience” can also be asked more specifically if one refuses to equate “audience,” as if by definition, with the general public or masses. I would suggest specifying the term “audience” in the context of social drama analysis so that it refers primarily to relevant audiences of the performers. Perhaps the distinction between activists and actors that was made in the theory section is useful here. Activists are immediately engaged in a drama and their immediate relevant audiences include not only the antagonist groups on stage, but also broader actors whose support for the performance is vital. In this sense, the presentation of root paradigms by paradigm-bearers is intrinsically dialogical. Their slogans, mottos, manifestos and symbols are not only directed against their adversaries and the adversary paradigms, but they also implicitly appeal to potentially allied larger groups. In this sense a success with the audience does not need to be measured by the awareness and support of the general public. For instance, at one point in the dissertation I show how radical desecularizing activists received endorsement from leading nationalist writers, artists, directors, and other authoritative leaders of Russian cultural establishment. Perhaps at a certain moment in the radicals’ performance that was the intended and therefore most relevant audience.
The Four Phases of the Social Drama

Now that I presented Turner’s original ideas and elaborated on them in the light of further theoretical developments, let us turn to a more detailed overview of the processual character of social drama. I will begin by summarizing Turner’s ideas about the phases through which social dramas unfold.

_Breach phase:_ For Turner (1980: 150), a social drama “first manifests itself as the breach of a norm, the infraction of a rule of morality, law, custom, or etiquette, in some public arena.” For the infraction to initiate a social drama, the breached norm must “gover[n] [a] key relationship” within the “same system of social relations” (1974a: 78, 38). Social dramas “occur within groups of persons who shar[e] values and interests and who have a real or imagined common history” (Turner 1980: 149). As Wagner-Pacifici argues, the breach (and thus the resulting crisis) is thus endogenous to an existing social group. More specifically, “[t]his breach is seen as the expression of a deeper division of interests and loyalties than appears on the surface,” the breach points to important underlying contradictions in the cultural and/or political fields, or, I argue, to metaphorical “fault lines” within the fields (Turner 1974a: 99; 1980: 150). The breach becomes, Turner (1974a: 38) argued in the words of Frederick Bailey, a “symbolic trigger of confrontation or encounter.” This “symbolic trigger” can be “deliberately, even calculatedly, contrived by a person or party disposed to demonstrate or challenge entrenched authority…or emerge from a scene of heated feelings” (Turner 1980: 150). The “symbolic trigger” of the breach, in order to initiate a social drama, must be strong enough to generate a powerful emotional response, emotions that will drive the ensuing crisis and carry-through the social drama (Turner 1974a, 1974b, 1980; Wagner-Pacifici 1986; Alexander 2006a; 2006b;
2011). In describing the breach, Turner (1980: 150) remarks, “Once visible, it can hardly be revoked.” The contradictions made visible must be confronted and addressed. To summarize, a breach consists of a publicly transgressed norm vital to a social group that evokes strong emotions and points to underlying contradictions in the cultural and/or political fields that must be addressed.

Important to the recognition and understanding of the breach phase of a social drama are Turner’s concepts of “field” and “arena.” Turner (1974a: 128) argued that his concept of field followed from the field-theory of Kurt Lewin that was popular in the 1950s. However, as with Turner’s claim of utilizing a Mertonian definition of social structure, Lewin’s field theory, with its focus on the individual’s “life-space” containing the individual’s “goals, needs, and their perceived environment,” which can be “mapped using vectors,” seems at once too micro-level and overly reductive to provide much explanatory power for the processes of social drama (“field theory,” 1998: 231). In actuality, it seems from Turner’s various social drama case studies that, in order to stay true to the more Durkheimian conceptualization of culture and structure, that he employed what would now be known as a roughly Bourdieusian concept of field.23 For example, at one point (in the same work where he claimed to rely on Lewin) Turner (1974a: 17) argued: “In the present context, ‘fields’ are the abstract cultural domains where paradigms are formulated, established, and come into conflict. Such paradigms consist of sets of ‘rules’ from

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23 At different points in his work he refers to: 1) the cultural field (discussed in Deflem 1991: 9) in which rituals take place (and where “ritual symbols are regarded as clusters of abstract meanings,” and where the field encapsulates both the ritual and the “cultural realm…of religious beliefs” of the social group that inform the ritual), 2) the social-action field (discussed in Deflem 1991: 9) that “refers to the groups, relationships, and social structural organization principles in which rituals are performed,” and 3) the political field (Turner 1974a: 127-128) defined as: “the totality of relationships between actors oriented to the same prizes or values, including in relationships the value meanings, and resources listed by Marc Swartz in his Introduction to Local-Level Politics (1968), and including in orientation (1) competition for prizes and/or scarce resources; (2) a shared interest in safeguarding a particular distribution of resources; and (3) a willingness to uphold or undermine a particular normative order.”
which many kinds of sequences of social action may be generated but which further specify what sequences must be excluded.” Yet this definition is essentially similar to how Bourdieu saw “field’ in his theorizing. According to Hilgers and Mangez (2014: 5): “…for Bourdieu a field is a relatively autonomous domain of activity that responds to rules of functioning and institutions that are specific to it and which define the relations among the agents. Each field has its specific rules…” Since this definition appears to fit Turner’s framework, I apply it in my study.

Thus, the underlying contradictions or “fault lines” made symbolically visible through the breach phase of a social drama are contradictions present in and running-through and between the religious, cultural and/or political fields of a society. We will see, in particular, how desecularizing activists violate the presumed boundaries of the artistic field by attempting to impose religious “rules” of censorship, and how, in turn, nonconformist artists transgress the boundaries of the religious field by asserting their perceived right to act in accordance with a secular understanding of artistic freedom. Again, the symbolic trigger embodied in the breach ignites conflict over these transgressions and contradictions, and the conflict inherent in social dramas brings “fundamental aspects of society, normally overlaid by the customs and habits of daily intercourse, into frightening prominence” (Turner 1974a: 35). Thus part of the importance of the social drama approach to our case study lies in its focus on the comparative analysis of the religious, cultural and political fields, and the content of the root paradigms within these fields, before and after events as well as across events through time.

Again, the breach brings about the condition of liminality. To remind, Turner’s analysis allows one to treat liminality in two ways: as a fundamental liminality that is akin to Durkheim’s anomie and as a, so to speak, “dramatic” liminality as a temporary state caused by a violation of
the status quo resulting from the breach phase. Thus, the anomic early post-Soviet condition where norms derived from atheism were officially discarded yet no alternative normative system solidified yet exemplifies liminality in the more fundamental sense. Yet, the state of indeterminacy (even if short-lived) in the aftermath of a breach carried out by, say, the Pussy Riot band, is an example of a liminal state within the social drama.

For Turner, the concept of “arena” referred generally to the “settings” that frame the social action at the heart of social dramas. He (1974a: 133) defined “arena” as a “framework—whether institutionalized or not—which manifestly functions as a setting for antagonistic interaction…” Arenas are thus interdependent with existing (intersecting) fields (from which they draw their symbolic content, rules, and distribution of social power amongst actors) but are more concrete (132, 140). Turner (1974a: 17) thus argued: “‘Arenas’ are the concrete settings in which paradigms become transformed into metaphors and symbols with reference to which political power is mobilized and in which there is a trial of strength between influential paradigm-bearers.” In a given social drama, multiple arenas of action may arise. To further specify Turner’s concept, drawing directly from his work, I argue that attention needs to be paid to the separate but overlapping types of arenas that arise over the course of the four phases. As can be seen in the definition of the breach above, Turner (1980: 150; also 1974a: 134) saw the first specific arena as providing the setting for the initial transgression of a pivotal norm. This initial arena needs to be identified, whether the setting is geographically concrete (a building, such as the Sakharov Museum or Christ the Savior Cathedral) or more abstract (a media report), since it provides, in the words of Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 69) the “symbolic arsenal” the actors will draw on in the ensuing social drama, the overlapping fields that intersect in the “arena”
provide the collective representations from which actors form their paradigms. Consequently, our definition of a *breach* thus needs to include the further specification that it will take place within a specific *arena* that will frame the ensuing drama. Turner (1974a; 1980) then recognized, as the *breach* widens to *crisis* that 2) the antagonistic action expands outwards to other arenas or “settings,” which also may be geographically concrete (e.g., specific churches, meetings, marches, etc.) or more abstract—the media and internet. It is in these “arenas” that further development of paradigms, their “fusing” and “actualization” take place, where the “trial of strength” begins and is acted-out. 3) In the *redressive mechanisms* and *reintegration/schism* phases, “arenas” can become “scene[s] for the making of a [publicly recognized] decision,” the “setting” or “settings” where a final narrative of the events is reached (1974a: 133-136; Wagner-Pacifici 1986). Such arenas may include such things as formal court proceedings or “trials” in the media.

*Crisis phase*: Following the *breach*, Turner (1980: 150; see also 1974: 38-39) contended, …a mounting *crisis* follows, a momentous juncture or turning point in the relations between components of a social field—at which seeming peace becomes overt conflict and covert antagonisms become visible. Sides are taken, factions are formed, and unless the conflict can be sealed off quickly within a limited area of social interaction, there is a tendency for the breach to widen and spread until it coincides with some dominant cleavage in the widest set of relevant social relations to which the parties in conflict belong.

The nature and extent of the crisis depends on the power of the norm transgressed in the *breach*, the closer the norm is to issues of ultimate group identity the more expansive the crisis. Again, the conflict inherent to the *crisis* phase of the social drama brings “fundamental aspects of society, normally overlaid by the customs and habits of daily intercourse, into frightening prominence. People have to take sides in terms of deeply entrenched moral imperatives,” and
they must then weigh their “loyalty and obligation” to specific social affiliations (Turner 1974a: 35). The crisis phase then becomes a contestation over “root paradigms,” a “trial of strength” between “paradigm-bearers.” As previously discussed, the crisis phase is suffused with a metaphorical liminality, it represents more broadly a “turning point or moment of danger and suspense” for a social group, it is a phase suffused with indeterminancy and potentiality, thus the crisis can take a “menacing stance” in the public life of the group that “dares the representatives of order to grapple with it. It cannot be ignored or wished away” (38-39). It is a phase saturated with heightened emotions.

However, the forces involved in the crisis do not drive themselves. Turner’s social drama approach is fundamentally an actor- or agency-centered approach. As Alexander (2006a: 64), drawing from both social problems and social movements literatures, argue, “The underlying strains or interest conflicts in a social situation simply do not ‘express’ themselves. Social problems not only must be symbolically plotted, or framed, but also must be performed on the scene.” Turner (1974a; 1980) specified that social actors (or an individual actor acting as a representative of a group) initiate the breach and drive the crisis through their actions. Although Turner (1980) would later refer to the main actors involved in a social drama as “star groupers,” denoting that they were the actors for whom the social group in question was one they identified with in fundamental ways, I argue his (1974a) original formulation of the main actors as “paradigm-bearers” is more appropriate and holds greater explanatory power in the context of social dramas. The main actors that emerge in the crisis are those for whom the social relations threatened by the breach are of fundamental importance, but to call them “star groupers” is to ignore or obscure their role in the social drama. The main actors draw on collective
representations to form “root paradigms” and they bear them, they enact them, they “fuse” them into scripts and “actualize” them in social action, in public contestations of various forms.

Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 66) refers to the main actors as “protagonists” and likens them to the “moral entrepreneurs” of the social problems literature, while Alexander (2006a) designates them as “chief actors” or “actor agents.” Similar to the designation of “star groupers,” I think these also obscure the type of action the main actors are engaged in within the phases of the social drama. Paradigm-bearers are in a sense what Apter (2006: 227) refers to as “cosmocratic agents”24—through their bearing and enacting of “root paradigms” in the conflict inherent to social dramas they constitute and transform social structures, and thus their social world.

Turner (1974a: 64) argued that root paradigms were roughly “cultural models in the heads of the main actors” in a social drama. Root paradigms thus:

…have reference not only to the current state of social relationships existing or developing between actors, but also to the cultural goals, means, ideas, outlooks, currents of thought, patterns of belief, and so on, which enter into those relationships, interpret them, and incline them to alliance or divisiveness. These root paradigms are not systems of univocal concepts, logically arrayed; they are not, so to speak, precision tools of thought. Nor are they stereotyped guidelines for ethical, esthetic, or conventional action. Indeed, they go beyond the cognitive and even the moral to the existential domain, and in so doing become clothed with allusiveness, implicitness, and metaphor—for in the stress of vital action, firm definitional outlines become blurred by the encounter of emotionally charged wills. Paradigms of this fundamental sort reach down to irreducible life stances of individuals, passing beneath conscious prehension to a fiduciary hold on what they sense to be axiomatic values, matters literally of life or death. Root paradigms emerge in life crises, whether of groups or individuals, whether institutionalized or compelled by unforeseen events. One cannot then escape their presence of their consequences.

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24 I am here re-framing Apter’s (2006: 227-228) use of the concept, as for him it is a wholly negative designation assigned to ideologues and their creation of “texts blown up to virtually biblical proportions” that breed extremism, whereas for me it refers more generally to the constitution of social reality through the symbolic action of the main actors in a social drama.
Throughout this dissertation, we will see how this powerful definition of root paradigms is instrumental in understanding the actors’ ideologies, their dialogically framed expressions that engage real and perceived adversaries and allies, and invoke fundamentally important collective representations. *Root paradigms* are drawn from collective representations, but their symbolic content are “not static cognitive signs,” but are “dynamic entities…patterned by events and informed by the passions of human intercourse…. paradigms [are] bodied forth as clusters and sequences of symbols, [and] mediate for men between ideals and action in social fields…” (Turner 1974a: 96). They are “multivocal” and “evocative devices” that are the “instigators and products of temporal sociocultural processes” (Babcock and MacAlloon 1987: 5; Deflem 1991: 11; Turner 1974a: 153). For example, in Turner’s (1974a) Hidalgo case study, Our Lady of Guadalupe is not a static symbol with a univocal meaning, but instead, as Turner argued, she “lives in scenes of social action…” (153). Thus, the contested *root paradigms* in a social drama include the collective representations, symbolic meanings, “social narratives, and cultural scripts that order social action and give meaning to that action” (Zubrzycki 2006: 4; Turner 1974a: 64, 96).

Both Wagner-Pacifici (1986) and Alexander (2006a) build from Turner’s concept of *root paradigms*. Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 71) argues, similarly to Turner, that *root paradigms* are not ready-made “narratives,” but are developed through the “definition work” of the *paradigm-bearers*. The main actors must work to define the situation, and in doing so they draw from but also transform collective representations. In drawing from existing collective representations, “[a]ll root paradigms custom contour tradition,” and form “condensed myths” (170, 167).

Attention must be made in the case study analysis to the ways the various *paradigm-bearers*
form the condensed myths, what is included and excluded, and especially to the content of their claimed “tradition” (or, as we will see in the later case study analysis, “Tradition”). Such claims become “symbolic weapons” in the agonistic contestation of root paradigms through the crisis and proceeding phases. Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 103) thus argues that alongside “definition work” actors also engage in “defense work,” meaning that paradigm-bearers must work to define, accredit, and re-accredit (in the face of their opponent’s attempts to discredit) their own paradigm while discrediting their opponent’s paradigm. In her analysis, she thus focuses on the “mechanics” utilized in the “vanquishing” of such competing interpretations, something I will pay attention to in my study. In a similar vein, Alexander’s (2006a) approach thus moves beyond the abstract character of Turner’s root paradigms to require focus in analysis of the ways actors “fuse” collective representations into (more condensed and focused) “scripts” through social action—how root paradigms are enacted and actualized in social action, which includes attention to the ways competing scripts are played off one another by social actors. The agonistic model of the social drama is thus inherently a dialectical process. Turner (1974a; 1980: 155) himself indirectly, and both Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 140-141) and Alexander (2006b: 99) more directly, point to the technique of “othering,” of drawing symbolic and discursive lines between “insiders and outsiders,” as a major mechanism (of “definition” and “defense” work) of root paradigm contestation in the crisis and proceeding phases of a social drama. Turner (1980: 155) argued that the root paradigm contestation of social dramas even “generate their ‘symbolic types’: traitors, renegades, villains, martyrs, heroes, faithfuls, infidels, deceivers, scapegoats.” In social drama analysis it is thus important to be attentive to mechanisms of discursive othering, and to the resultant production of symbolic types (such as “enemies” and “true holders of
Tradition”). Building from the recognition of actors’ definition and defense work, Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 7) and Alexander\textsuperscript{25} (2006a; 2011) both contend in different ways that paradigm-bearers have and act upon a certain “theatrical self-consciousness,” albeit at varying levels.

Paradigm-bearers are publicly and instrumentally enacting their paradigms. This means in part that they will engage in rituals\textsuperscript{26}, ceremonies, or ritual-like behaviors to imbue their paradigms with symbolic power, including such actions as (ritualized) protests, official complaints, official pronouncements, and with the redressive mechanisms phase, legal proceedings. These ritualized moments need to be analyzed in the context of the social drama in that they are important moments where scripts are “fused” in social action. Ultimately, as Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 202) points out, the crisis and proceeding phases are not just “trials of strength” between contesting paradigm-bearers, but are also “trials of legitimacy” of the social power of their paradigms to constitute social reality.

Thus, a thorough study of antagonistic paradigm-bearers and their root paradigms, and of clashes of these antagonists across a variety of arenas with an active involvement of the media that mediate performances’ effects on relevant audiences, along with an empirical analysis of how the ranks of paradigm-bearers change and root-paradigms are transformed and specified through the struggles, is at the heart of social drama approach as a method of study of social

\textsuperscript{25} Alexander and Mast (2006: 7) and Alexander (2006a: 55-59) point more specifically to what they frame as the issue of the “authenticity” of the social performance. They argue that it is “an interpretive category rather than an ontological state,” but ultimately what constitutes “authenticity” is unclear (7, 55). At one point, Alexander (55) connects it to issues of the sincerity of the performance, about whether or not the actor is a “puppet” or acting “authentically,” but this meaning is perhaps mixed with more general questions about the “authenticity” of the script being enacted, how the script relates to collective representations (and thus “the past” or “tradition”), etc.

\textsuperscript{26} Turner himself refused to separate ritual from religion in his work, which many find problematic. Deflem (1991: 16) points out, “However, Turner (197[6]:504-55) also argued that rituals in modern industrial society are ‘about matters of ultimate concern and about those entities believed to have enunciated, clarified, and mediated a culture’s bonding axioms to its present members.’” I think one can follow this train of thought whether religion is part of the rituals and ritual-like behavior one sees in a social drama.
change. The reader will see that this focus is indeed central to my study of Russian
desecularization.

*Redressive and Adjustive Mechanisms Phase:* Turner (1980: 151; see also 1974a: 39) argued that as the *crisis* expands:

In order to limit the contagious spread of breach, certain adjustive and redressive mechanisms, informal and formal, are brought into operation by leading members of the disturbed group. These mechanisms vary in character with such factors as the depth and significance of the breach, the social inclusiveness of the crisis, the nature of the social group within which the breach took place, and the group’s degree of autonomy in regard to wider systems of social relations. The mechanisms may range from personal advice and informal arbitration to formal juridical and legal machinery and, to resolve certain kinds of crises, to the performance of public ritual.

The third phase of the social drama is thus fundamentally about the social processes employed by relevant social actors to (re-)define norm and deviance in light of the *breach* and ensuing *crisis* phases. The redressive and adjustive mechanisms, through their enactment, constitute and potentially transform the normative system in the overlapping cultural and political fields. As Turner (1980: 156-157; 1974: 41) argued, the *redressive mechanisms* phase contains a time of “liminal reflexivity” for the affected social group, where “both pragmatic techniques and symbolic action reach their fullest expression... [f]or the...social unit [i]s here at its most ‘self-conscious,’” and thus the invoked “juridical and ritual processes of redress” form “the ways in which a group tries to scrutinize, portray, understand, and then act on itself.” The boundaries of norm and deviance, of the allowed and prohibited, of the sacred and profane (Turner 1974a; 1980), of purity and pollution (Wagner-Pacifi 1986: 221, drawing on Mary Douglas), are constituted and transformed as the “[r]eflexivity articulates experience,” as the redressive mechanisms “generate narratives from the brute facts” of the events of the *breach* and *crisis* and “rende[r] [them] meaningful,” “when an interpretation (*Bedeutung*) is constructed to give the
appearance of sense and order to the events leading up to and constituting the crisis” (1980: 156-157). It is necessary to note, however, that public rituals and ritual-like behaviors of the crisis phase may very well continue and overlap with the redressive mechanisms phase, and thus there is not always a clear dividing line between the phases—the rituals may both represent the development and contestation of paradigms and (attempt to) fulfill the function of redressive mechanisms. The formation and application of redressive mechanisms that, as I explained, may be preceded by ritualized responses to the crisis phase, is a threshold where we can begin to observe crystallization of new, modified social structure. It begins with a (re)construction of a narrative anchored in a modified root-paradigm. Collective representations are actualized and confirmed through collective actions and institutional responses to crises. As collective representations crystallize in the process, they are increasingly accepted as a reliable base for normative decisions, including the application of existing punitive norms and creation of new ones. Emergent currents of collective representations are thus translated into a solid ideational base of formal institutions (e.g., laws), and thus a cycle of structuration is completed, often only to give rise to a new cycle.

In true Durkheimian fashion, Turner (1974a: 40-41) argued that “[w]hen one is studying social change, at whatever social level, [he] would give one piece of advice: study carefully what happens in phase three…,” that of redressive mechanisms. He is, in a sense, advising researchers to pay particular attention to the “redressive machinery,” the mechanisms brought into play to deal with perceived deviance. Thus, changes to the redressive mechanisms across cases in a series of social dramas, which may be indicative of the relative political or cultural strength of the contesting parties and their root paradigms, will be an important focus of this study. We shall
see, furthermore, how the importance and strength of the new normative framework is expressed in the increasingly punitive nature of the law and its applications.

Whereas Turner clearly distinguished between juridical and legal proceedings and “public rituals” as *redressive mechanisms* in the definition above, Wagner-Pacifici (1986) rightly, I argue, considers them overlapping phenomena, in the sense that legal proceedings are a form of public ritual and that many public rituals serve the symbolic function of a “trial.” She further argues (246 and 249) that whether the public ritual of the trial takes place in a courtroom or in an arena such as the media, the following four elements, along with the presentation of the competing *paradigms*, need to be considered in a case study: 1) the locale, 2) the adjudged authority, 3) the various procedures invoked, and 4) the nature of the “evidence.” In addition, she (1986: 206) argues that the public rituals involved in the *redressive mechanisms* phase operate in similar ways as Kai Erikson’s (1966) “transition ceremonies” marking the transition of a deviant. Such public rituals are important in the third phase of the social drama because they move the drama towards its conclusion. In Turner’s (1980: 163) words, such public rituals become “paradigmatic” in the Geertzian sense, as both a “model for,” marking potential change and transformation, and a “model of,” inscribing order, society, a resolution that is more or less successfully fulfilled in the last phase of the social drama. These, as shown in the empirical-research chapters, are among the foci of my investigation.

*Reintegration or Schism Phase:* Following from the *redressive mechanisms* phase, “[t]he final phase consists either in the reintegration of the disturbed social group—though the scope and range of its relational field will have altered, … and [its] influence will have changed—or the recognition of irreparable breach between the contesting parties, sometimes leading to their
spatial separation” (Turner 1980: 151). The resolution to the social drama found in the fourth phase often includes public ritual, whether the end of a ritual employed in the third phase or a completely separate one appropriate for the occasion, where a symbolic end is brought to the action and a “final say” is given (Wagner-Pacifici 1986). Adding an etymological and philosophical twist to his consideration of the social drama approach, Turner (1980: 167-168) argued that the root of the word “narrative” ultimately derives from the root of the word “gnosis,” and thus:

Narrative is, it would seem, rather an appropriate term for a reflexive activity which seeks to ‘know’ (even in its ritual aspect, to have gnosis about) antecedent events and the meaning of those events. Drama itself is, of course, derived from the Greek dran (‘to do or act’); hence narrative is knowledge (and/or gnosis) emerging from action, that is, experiential knowledge. The redressive phase of social drama frames an endeavor to rearticulate a social group broken by sectional or self-serving interests; in like manner, the narrative component in ritual and legal action attempts to rearticulate opposing values and goals in a meaningful structure, the plot of which makes cultural sense…. [N]arrative and cultural drama may have the task of poesis, that is, of remaking cultural sense….

The fourth phase is thus a phase of (at least attempted) poesis in this framework. This poesis, however, may mark a return to the status quo, or it may be one of transformation. Reintegration of the offending group may be sincere and complete, or it may be only superficial, marking a “temporary climax” poised for another round of social drama (1974a: 42). Or, the social drama may end in irreparable schism that continues to breed conflict unless the offending group can be separated from others.

Of cardinal importance in the study of a social drama is a comparison of fields from the beginning (context of the breach) to the end of the fourth stage (Turner 1974a: 42). As Turner argued, the fourth phase may see significant normative change, the introduction of new norms, a change in the ordering and crystallization of collective representations, and political alliances or
political authority may change as well (42). Furthermore, in the political field “[t]he distribution of the factors of legitimacy will have changed, as also the techniques used by leaders to gain compliance” (42). Such comparison of factors will be of fundamental significance for understanding the emergence of the Russian desecularizing regime out of the anomic conditions, with the existing secularizing and desecularizing forces, analyzed in this study.

Limitations of the Social-Drama Approach

Turner realized that the social drama approach is not self-sufficient and needs to be applied in conjunction with other modes of investigation. Notably, Turner (1974a; 1980) argued that no social drama analysis could be fully complete without consideration and analysis of more “static” data, including statistical analysis of various aspects of the general context of the dramas. The data he mentioned more often referred to the study of the Durkheimian “morphological” aspects of society (mentioned in the theory section), a more typical focus of the structural-functional studies of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (see 1974a: 44). Yet, it was clear, despite Turner’s glossing over issues of audience, that he would see attitudinal surveys and public opinion poll data as important corollaries to the social drama process, as important measures of the resonance, reach, and impact of such dramas. My inclusion of attitudinal survey and public opinion poll data in this study therefore, I argue, is an important extension of the social drama approach true to Turner’s original endeavor. So is my consistent attention to the macro-political context of the specific social drama I am exploring in the dissertation. The reader will see that I look at each of the acts of the drama in the context of changing socio-political circumstances.
Furthermore, the main criticisms of Turner’s oeuvre, as were discussed briefly in an earlier section, focused on his larger model of structure and anti-structure, and his concept of communitas. Again, Turner had a tendency to see anti-structure and communitas in an idealized, universalistic, nostalgic, and even mystical frame (e.g., see Babcock and MacAlloon 1987: 12-13; Alexander and Mast 2006). I have, I argue, bypassed this issue through focusing specifically on Turner’s social drama approach, which in its greater specificity does not suffer from the same tendencies.

Yet another criticism offered against Turner’s social drama approach is that it represents an imposition of a form on events that may otherwise not “fit,” that in its metaphorical nature the social drama approach may highlight the elements in events that fit the approach but obscure that which does not fit (e.g., see Stets 1996: 1-7). This is an accusation that potentially can be raised against pretty much any analytical schema that involves a sequencing of stages of events. I think that this accusation has substance if and only if the analytical guidelines proposed by Turner are used as a Procrustean bed in order to get rid of any unfitting material. My approach is opposite to this. The reader will see that in my analysis a preconceived theoretical-methodological schema does not suppress and subdue its object. My goal throughout this study is to show the actual events in their complexity and contradictoriness. If anything is sacrificed in my analysis, it is the abstract schematics of meta-theoretical constructs, which are moved to a backseat in order to let historical objects that I study reveal their concreteness and complexity.

Furthermore, some argued that Turner’s social drama approach was the attempt to impose a form native to complex industrial societies on events in different social contexts, especially traditional tribal societies. Such a criticism would hardly be applicable to this study because
post-Soviet Russia is a modern and complex society to which Turner’s ideas are fully applicable. Speaking more broadly, I wonder to what extent this criticism is philosophically justified.

Finally, some, like Weber (1995) completely dismiss the bulk of Turner’s work as too apolitical, that his approach provides no room for marginalized groups to speak. To be honest, I cannot comprehend how this can be argued in all seriousness. It seems to me that, on the contrary, Turner’s approach is utterly political, in its consistent focus on the issues of conflict, power and domination, and that it can be very fruitfully applied to the struggles of marginalized groups for their rights. Moreover, my own analysis involves very directly the issues of political power, and of suppression and marginalization.

The Logic of Case Selection

This short section brings us closer to empirical application of Turner’s approach. As I already mentioned, I explore the social drama of Russian desecularization by conducting a comparative case study of a series of culture clashes that surrounded attempts at artistic expression that were perceived as “anti-Orthodox,” insulting to religious feelings of the Russian people, and ultimately subversive of existing political order. A reasonable question is why and how I selected the cases that I did to be studied in this context. I explain my logic of selection below.

I would not like to mystify my readers by pretending that my initial attention to the cases involving offensive art was somehow driven by profound theoretical concerns. As it often happens, I started paying attention to these cases simply because they were interesting and fascinating. It was interesting indeed to read about eccentric nonconformist artists staging
provocative performances and of no less eccentric Orthodox activists mobilizing against the artists. Yet, soon enough it became clear that, eccentricities aside, the events were taking a serious turn and telling something utterly important about social change in Russia. Clashes in and around Moscow exhibit halls stirred really serious passions and got increasingly publicized not only by parochial outlets, but also by influential national media. Let us recall now that public passions and high publicity are necessary elements of a social drama. And it was at the beginning of the Pussy Riot scandal when I realized that that and other cases were stages of one and the same escalating and intensifying social drama.

But why would one study the social drama surrounding art that is perceived as offending religious sensibilities while there are many other dramas taking place in the context of Russian desecularization? For instance, one could also legitimately focus on the social drama surrounding the introduction of religion into the schools, or the transfer of museum’s property to the Russian Orthodox Church. My answer to this question is presented in Chapter 6. Simply put, it was the drama that I study in this dissertation that resulted in the making of a new law that criminalizes offenses to religious feeling. However, even though the new law was created to directly confront the offenses exemplified by the scandalous exhibits and performances, its punitive reach is much broader than that, and its potential (and by now, actual) applications can extend to any opposition to the growing presence of religion in any segment of the public sphere. Thus, the social drama I focus on may seem extravagant, yet I argue that it has become vital to the construction of Russia’s desecularizing regime.

And one more question that logically arises needs to be addressed here. Why, after all, I put such diverse cases as Alexander Brener’s 1995 performance named “Chechnya!” in the
Theophany Cathedral in Elokhov, the 2003 “Beware, Religion!” exhibit in the Sakharov Museum, and the Pussy Riot punk prayer in Christ the Savior Cathedral, among others, in the same category of cases? My answer to this question is simple. It relies on a straightforward social-constructionist premise. I group these cases into the same category and consider them acts of the same social drama because their participants themselves consider them that way. Indeed, we will see throughout Chapters 3 to 6 a remarkable continuity in the composition of actors, their ideas, and even choices of sites for performances. We will see, for instance, in Chapter 6, that Brener’s 1995 action was a model for Pussy Riot, and that the Moscow Patriarchate’s official commentary on the adoption of the new punitive law explicitly lists some of these cases as relevant examples.

To sum up, the logic of case selection in my study is driven by these simple principles. First, I focus on the cases that were highly publicized and obviously stirred public passions, which is indispensable in a social drama. Secondly, I look at cases pertaining to a social drama that is pivotal for the making of a punitive desecularizing regime. And thirdly, my study includes cases that are considered by their participants as belonging to one and the same class of events.

Methods and Data—Archival Research, Thick Description, Discourse Analysis, and Statistical Analysis of Survey Data

Alongside the general method (logic of inquiry) that I described in the preceding sections, I rely upon a number of established methods of data collection and analysis. They are briefly described below.

First, the bulk of the evidence presented in this dissertation comes from archival research. One of the wonders of the digital age is the ease of access to remote archives and the
possibility to download archival materials to your work computer in unlimited quantities, which was precisely what I did with several repositories of archival materials. Those include primarily the Sakharov Museum, the Art-Protest, and Portal-Credo.ru archives. I cannot boast any sophisticated technique of selection of materials except to say that I patiently sifted through thousands of relevant materials pertaining to the empirical cases in the study. The reader will see that I end up quoting or analyzing to various degrees of depth hundreds of them in this dissertation. In addition to these rich repositories of chronologically and thematically classified materials, I also analyze a large number of official documents (ranging from decisions of Hierarchical Councils of the Russian Orthodox Church to the legal documents of court trials alongside multiple media publications). Perhaps 99% of these are Russian-language sources.27

In analyzing these materials, I have tried to consistently adhere to the methodological principles of Geertzian “thick description.” In explaining his idea of “thick description,” Geertz (1973: 10) wrote:

… [E]thnography is thick description. What the ethnographer is in fact faced with except when (as, of course, he must do) he is pursuing the more automatized routines of data collection—his a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render. … Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of “construct a reading of”) a manuscript-foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior.

Furthermore, Geertz (1973: 27) argued that this immersion into multi-layered, contradictory, and ambiguous textual reality does not preclude the use of theoretical concepts:

27 I would like to remark that, unless otherwise noted, all of the translations offered in the dissertation are my own, and when I have included transliterated Russian words or phrases that I utilized the American Library Association-Library of Congress (ALA-LC) Romanization of Cyrillic transliteration system, but without diacritical marks.
Although one starts any effort at thick description, beyond the obvious and superficial, from a state of general bewilderment as to what the devil is going on - trying to find one's feet - one does not start (or ought not) intellectually empty-handed. Theoretical ideas are not created wholly anew in each study; as I have said, they are adopted from other, related studies, and, refined in the process, applied to new interpretive problems. If they cease being useful with respect to such problems, they tend to stop being used and are more or less abandoned. If they continue being useful, throwing up new understandings, they are further elaborated and go on being used.

Such was my intent in analyzing the utterly complex and opaque world of the cultural scripts of the drama of Russian desecularization. To a great extent, the idea of thick description overlaps and works in tandem with the principles of discourse analysis. While discourse analysis is understood in a variety of ways and the term itself is overused, I understand the term to mean a study of discourse in accordance with the premises, that, according to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 5-6) are embraced by leading approaches in this field. The premises include historical and cultural specificity of contextual interpretations and focus on the connectedness of knowledge implicit in discourse with social processes and social action. Thus understood, principles of discourse analysis perfectly agree with the idea of thick description and with the comparative-historical direction of my empirical study.

Finally, a relatively small part of this study builds on analyses of national representative sample surveys. Some of the analyses are secondary and based on publications of surveys conducted by Russian research centers (predominantly, the Levada-Center, but also VTsIOM and FOM). However, I also use statistical analysis of existing datasets, including the 2005 data of the representative national survey conducted by Karpov and Lisovskaya as part of their study of religious tolerance in Russia. Furthermore, for the purpose of cross-national comparisons I also use the data from 2004 NORC GSS, Polish GSS, and 2008 ISSP Religion III. More detailed information about these surveys can be found in Chapter 7. As to the statistical techniques used
to analyze these datasets, they include frequency distributions, cross-tabulations, factor analysis and multiple regression analysis.
CHAPTER 3

SETTING THE STAGE: THE UNFINISHED SOCIAL DRAMAS OF THE 1990S

Introduction

An important methodological and conceptual question faced by historical-comparative sociologists relates to the choice of cases—which to include and which to exclude? The social drama surrounding the 2003 “Beware, Religion!” exhibition described and analyzed in the next chapter was not the first documented case in post-Soviet Russia when the proponents of artistic freedom clashed with those who were eager to protect religious sensibilities. It was, however, the first fully developed, large-scale social drama of this kind. Yet, it was preceded by a series of notable cases in the 1990s, when some of the actors and ideological scripts of the upcoming drama made their appearance. Tensions were gradually building and conditions emerging for the full-blown conflicts of the following decade. And it appears necessary, therefore, to focus on this formative pre-history of the social drama in question.

Thus I will briefly describe and analyze five important preceding cases of artistic expression involving critical approaches to religion and religious themes that initiated cultural clashes in post-Soviet Russia. We will see how these cases “set the stage” for “Act 1” of our core social drama. The cases include: (1) Brener’s (1995) “Chechnya!” action at the Elokhovskiy Cathedral in Moscow; (2) the showing of the Last Temptation of Christ on NTV (1997) and the controversy that emerged around it; (3) Ter-Oganian’s (1998) action where he invited observers to chop paper reproductions of icons with an ax at the Manege Gallery; (4)
action “Kh.V.1999” (1999) where artists covered the cupola of the Moscow planetarium as an Easter egg; and (5) Mavromatti’s (2000) action where he crucified himself in front of the Institute of Culturology across the street from Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow.

There is an important difference, however, between these five cases and the events surrounding the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition. This difference lies in the fact that unlike the complete social drama surrounding the exhibition, the events surrounding these five cases represent unrealized, partial, or aborted social dramas. Thus, with these cases the existing tensions in the cultural and political fields between secularizing and counter-secularizing forces in Russia were highlighted, but since the social dramas were left unrealized or cut short, as shown below, the tensions rose and paradigms and paradigm-bearers began to emerge. Yet, the paradigms did not fully crystallize and the tensions between competing paradigms were left unresolved and without a clear victor. As a result, the transitional nature of the cultural and political fields at the time was left preserved, but not necessarily completely unchanged as tensions intensified. These cases thus deserve discussion in that they point to the unresolved tensions that form the background of the events of the following decade, which drastically changed the religio-political landscape of Russia as it was entering the 21st century. To sum up, while I begin my comparative case study analysis proper with the events surrounding the 2003 “Beware, Religion!” exhibition as the first full social drama involving secularizing and counter-secularizing forces in the post-Soviet Russian context, which thus reveals the dynamics my research seeks to explore and explain, the unfinished dramas of the 1990s are analyzed as stage-setting, formative developments that prefigure later cases.
Discussion of Cases

1. “Chechnya!” in the Epiphany Cathedral

There was a long tradition of avant-garde art among the artistic intelligentsia in Soviet Russia. The chaos and freedom of the early post-Soviet period of the 1990s in Russia gave birth to a new generation of avant-garde performance artists including Aleksandr Brener. Throughout the 1990s Brener, alone and with other artists, performed many artistic actions (“aktsiia” in Russian) in Russia and abroad. Of special interest to this study is his action in protest of the First Chechen War where he entered the Elokhovskiy Cathedral (Epiphany Cathedral—Bogoiaevleskiy kafedral’nyi Sobor v Elokhove) in Moscow during services on February 11, 1995. Brener ran towards the ambo (an elevated platform right in front the Royal Doors of the altar) yelling “Chechnya! Chechnya!” He took off his clothing and threw leaflets calling for an end to the war (the first Chechen war). Fellow artist and poet Anna Al’chuk was present to take photographs of the action. Al’chuk describes how the “offended babushki” and

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28 See Brazhkina’s section on “Brener” on the “Forbidden Art” section of the Art Protest website (in Russian) for an overview of the actions Brener took part in: http://artprotest.org/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=4218. I rely heavily on Brazhkina’s overview of Brener’s actions found in the “Brener” and “1995. Chechnya. Brener” (see: http://artprotest.org/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=3324) sections of the “Forbidden Art” section of the Art Protest website (see References) in my discussion and analysis. When no citation is given, the information comes from Brazhkin’s entries on Brener, and I will note other sources with in-text citations.

29 “Aktsiia,” in the context of Russian art, can be broadly defined as an avant-garde or post-modern performance art piece carried out specifically to include interaction with and the eliciting of an emotional response from the audience. Such an action often utilizes shock (epatage—see definition later in the text) as an artistic tool to engage and elicit a response from the audience. Some aktsiia focused on eliciting shock through the human body, such as Brener’s un-clothing and Mavromatti’s self-crucifixion described later in the chapter. Such actions need not necessarily make a (critical) political statement, but this element can be present, such as it is in Brener’s action. “Aktsiia” can be considered as similar phenomenon to “Happenings” in American and British avant-garde art (see definition of “Happening” at: http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/happenings.htm) and Viennese “Actionism” (see definition of “Actionism” [2016] at: http://www.theartstory.org/movement-viennese-actionism.htm). Thank you Vyacheslavs Karpov for pointing out this link. Overtime, “aktsiia” came to refer to any organized public political and/or artistic action, and even to commercial behavior of companies (e.g., advertising).

30 Anna Al’chuk will be a major player in the “cast of characters” affiliated with the controversy surrounding the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition discussed later.
“dedushki” pulled Brener away from the ambo and took her camera. Brener was ultimately kicked-out of the church and the police were called. He was taken to the local precinct and held for a few hours before being released on bail to well-known art gallery owner Marat Gel’man (Brazhkina “Brener”; Brazhkina “1995. Chechnya! Brener”). There are not many details available on the results of this action, but it seems, according to Gel’man, that Brener was tried the following day and ultimately fined 500 rubles for his actions—but, “No one knew about it” [emphasis added—R.S.] (Kommersant 2012). Brener soon fled abroad to Europe after the action in 1995 to escape legal actions against him for other performances (Brazhkina “Brener”; Brazhkina “1995. Chechnya! Brener”).

As Gel’man’s comment suggests, it seems that Brener’s “Chechnya!” action created very little – if any - public outcry or response, whether from the Russian public, the ROC MP, the legal apparatus, or the state. This is surprising given the nature of the event—a clearly political artistic action undertaken in the sacred space of a church (an intended breach meant to bring about a crisis)—and the contrast the lack of response makes with the Pussy Riot case that came later. Ultimately, Brener’s attempt at a breach of the existing normative system led only to a very limited crisis phase where there was a correspondingly weak, low-level attempt to bring redressive mechanisms into play, an attempt that led to a nominal fine of 500 rubles (which, at the time, was an equivalent of 12 cents in US currency).

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31 The further proof of this claim lies in the relative absence of media reports and other “data” available on the case compared to others. Brener and other artists did speak with the media and give interviews, and the pro-ROC journalist, Sokolov-Mitrich did comment critically about the action, but overall there was no large public outcry (Brazhkina “1995. Chechnya! Brener”) demonstrated in the media or through public protests.

32 Brazhkina (“1995. Chechnya! Brener.”) argues that Brener was an “icon” for the Pussy Riot members, and that their action on Red Square and the filming of their famous “punk prayer” music video in Elokhovskiy Catheiral for their action in Christ the Savior Cathedral were purposely done in Brener’s “footsteps.”
Brener’s choice of performance, a political action within a church, demonstrates the existence of tensions between secularizing and counter-secularizing forces in the early post-Soviet period, but the lack of large-scale crisis surrounding the action and the unrealized nature of the social drama surrounding the event points to the transitional and open nature of the cultural-normative and political fields at the time. Marat Gel’m (quoted in Brazhkina, “1995. Chechnya! Brener.”), commenting back on the response to Brener’s action from the perspective of the Pussy Riot case, argues, “He could have been a hero, but he wasn’t because of the liberalism of the Yeltsin government that released him on bail to me after only a few hours.” One could also add that the subject matter of Brenner’s protest, the war in Chechnya, was highly unpopular in Russia at the time, and a severe action against the protester would not gain popular support either. Furthermore, let us not forget that in 1995 the ROC MP still did not enjoy the legal privileges and the preferential political treatment that became obvious with the enactment of the 1997 Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations.

2. “The Last Temptation of Christ” on Independent Television

In 1997, the battle-lines between secularizing and counter-secularizing forces and their competing paradigms and paradigm-bearers became clearer with the conflict surrounding the showing of Scorsese’s controversial film The Last Temptation of Christ (1988) on the privately-owned commercial television channel NTV (Nezavisimoe Televidenie - Independent Television).33 The controversy surrounding the airing of Temptation demonstrates a clear

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33 The channel was owned by the then highly influential “oligarch” Vladimir Gusinsky. In 1996, NTV played an important role in Yeltsin’s reelection for the second term. At the same time, NTV consistently provided a forum for critics of the policies of the Yeltsin, and later, of the Putin government. Not surprisingly, NTV was among the first
escalation in the intensity of tensions between the two sides as, unlike with the Brener case, a crisis phase more clearly developed and the response to the controversy, although still minimal, was more widespread.

Initial plans to show the film during Easter week met protests from the ROC MP and believers against the timing. They argued that showing a film portraying Christ as a human being with sexual urges during the most holy week of the Orthodox liturgical year (the Holy Week) would be inappropriate. The network then moved the showing to May 30th, but delayed the showing again following further protests that included a couple-hundred ultra-conservative and nationalist Orthodox believers holding an unsanctioned rally outside the network headquarters (Zolotov 1997). The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Alexy II, head of the ROC MP, led the protests against the airing of the film and argued, “This blasphemous film is being forced on us at a time when people are just beginning to acquire some moral and spiritual foundations of life”34 (Moscow Times, November 11, 1997), and furthermore, “a TV company, even a private one, cannot insult millions of believers, openly confront the nation and provoke a public conflict….This will inevitably make the TV company spiritually alien in the eyes of believers.…” (Hoffman 1997). The Patriarch was joined in the protests by various conservative and nationalist Duma Deputies (ironically, some of the Deputies were members of the Communist faction), clergy, and lay people (Zolotov 1997). It is important to point out, however, that these demonstrators were mainly from among the more radical Orthodox believers and

34 The Patriarch is most likely referring here to the push from the ROC MP to bring Russians back to their “traditional faith” of Orthodoxy—and thus the recent passing of the 1997 Law on the Freedom of Conscience that privileges the ROC against the influx of “non-traditional” Christian churches following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Hoffman (1997) refers to the law as well in this context in his piece for The Washington Post.
nationalists who were at the time marginal to and largely separate from mainstream Russian society. Overall, there was less of an outcry from amongst the mainstream Russian public. These protestors, including the Patriarch, argued not necessarily for the complete banning of the film, but for the more limited goal of the restriction against it being shown publicly on television.

In many ways, the controversy over the film in Russia paralleled similar controversies over the film in other countries in the West. Available documents do not provide evidence linking the protests to the 1988 protest in the US, in which Orthodox Christians, reportedly, took a noticeable part (Harmetz 1988). However, amidst cultural globalization, it is entirely possible the Moscow protests were inspired and informed by the American model.

Leonid Parfenov, general producer at NTV, responded to the protests in an interview by Echo Moskvyi (quoted in Moscow Times, November 11, 1997) saying, “NTV will show Scorsese's film regardless and a compromise hardly seems likely here….We insist on our values; let's call them liberal ones. The church insists on its values; which we can call Orthodox.” This was perhaps the first instance when a demarcation between the two orientations, dubbed (albeit

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35 Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov, rector of the church of St. Nicholas in Pyzhi and leader of the public committee, “For the Moral Regeneration of the Fatherland,” is one of the “cast of characters” and paradigm-bearers (loosely) in the Temptation controversy that returns for future social dramas, including the social drama surrounding Ter-Ogan’ian’s action and the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition. I will discuss him in more depth in regards to the next case and later sections. He is, however, an ultra-conservative and nationalist priest. The Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods, also a conservative and nationalist Orthodox group, which we will see play a role in the Mavromatti crucifixion case and others later, was also very loosely connected to the Temptation controversy. Both groups, that of Fr. Aleksandr and the SPB, were active in the Temptation controversy mainly through writing and publishing open letters protesting the airing of the film, and some of the group members were present at the protests. Mostly, these groups were only loosely active in the controversy, and they were mainly active “behind the scenes.” The membership of such groups at the time was relatively small. See the Ter-Ogan’ian and Mavromatti case discussions for more information on these groups and for relevant citations of sources.

36 The NTV leadership was also very critical of the role of the ROC MP in the Soviet period, especially with the issue of collaboration of the Church with the Soviet regime, and thus they tried to delegitimate the protests by highlighting this uncomfortable fact. For example, Hoffman (1997, Washington Post) quotes an NTV announcer as arguing, “The problem is not in ‘The Temptation of Christ,’ but in the temptation of top clergymen of the Russian Orthodox Church. They never had the courage to denounce the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin—or the regime itself.”

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fuzzily) “liberal” and “Orthodox,” was publicly made with regard to the issues pertaining to religion and free speech.

Ultimately, NTV aired Temptation on the evening of Sunday, November 9th, but the network not only covered the protests beforehand as part of its regular newscast, but also created a public affairs show where the potential showing of the film was openly debated. On the day of the showing, protests\(^\text{37}\) were held outside the NTV headquarters and protestors held icons and posters with sayings such as, “Satan Rules NTV,” “NTV, You’ll Drown in Your Own Filth and Abomination,” and “Zionism Will Destroy Russia”\(^\text{38}\) (Hoffman 1997).

Following the showing in December, the lower house of the Duma did adopt a declaration calling for “responsible state agencies [to] ‘begin using the entire existing legal mechanism, including suspension of television licenses, to prevent the propaganda of vice, sadism, blasphemy [emphasis added – R.S.], licentiousness, and criminality on the channels of the NTV television company and others broadcasting in Russia.’” The declaration also stated that, “On this matter the State Duma is in complete solidarity with the position of Patriarch Alexy II” (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, December 27, 1997). However, the declaration was merely a political pronouncement without any legal “teeth” and did not have legal repercussions at the time. Despite the protests and declaration of the Duma, no criminal case was started against the

\(^{37}\) It is unclear exactly how many protestors were present, with some pro-ROC sources quoting “thousands,” which is most likely an inflated number as often happens with partisan sources. It is much more likely that the protestors numbered at most in the hundreds as it did for the earlier protest on May 30th.

\(^{38}\) See previously cited sources for an overview of the airing of the film and protests. The openly anti-Semitic “Zionism” accusations made against the television station clearly refer to the fact that the channel was owned by the oligarch, Vladimir Gusinsky, who also served as the President of the Russian Jewish Council at the time. One poster, as reported in The Moscow Times (November 11, 1997), “…even depicted a Nazi swastika and a Jewish Star of David side by side, saying they were one and the same thing.”
owner or producers of NTV and no legal or state intervention into the affairs of the network followed the airing of the film.\textsuperscript{39}

The \textit{breach} of the planned showing of the film created a \textit{crisis} stage where paradigms were debated in the public sphere. While mainly marginal counter-secularizing forces manned street protests, religious leaders (e.g., Alexy II) and politicians joined their voices to the chorus. Ultimately, following the informal \textit{redressive mechanisms} employed by the television station to dampen criticism of the showing (giving voice to the protestors by covering the protests and allowing open debate on the issue on one of its shows), the film was still publicly aired.

In the end, the legal right of NTV as a privately owned and operated television network to air the film was upheld. As Hoffman (1997) writes, “The...controversy here over NTV’s plans to air the movie touched not so much on the film’s content as on the network's right to show it”—and this right was sustained. Yet, it was clear that the tensions between secularizing and counter-secularizing forces were left unresolved after the controversial showing of the movie, and given the level of public response to the \textit{crisis} the controversy produced and coverage of the \textit{crisis} in the media it was predictable that other such controversy would be inevitable. Supporters of free speech and artistic expression now already defined themselves as “liberal” values-bearers, in opposition to what they perceive as “Orthodox” values. On the other hand, the ROC MP was likely emboldened by its ability to put pressure on an influential part of the media mainstream, by using the combined power of the authority of its patriarch, allied parliamentarians, and the street protests.

\textsuperscript{39} Although there were no legal cases or state intervention directed towards the network at the time of the showing of \textit{Temptation}, perhaps in part because of the power and standing of Gusinsky, the station was later taken-over by the Kremlin in 2000 following criticism of the Putin regime in its programs (see previous discussion in note 5).
In a way, the *Temptation* controversy also prefigures that of the “Beware, Religion!” and “Forbidden Art—2006” exhibitions at the Sakharov Museum (which I consider in the following chapters) in that as cases they raise the question of the limits of the rights of private organizations to show artistic works critical of religion in Russia—but with very different results. As I will show in my later analysis, a major normative shift takes place in the cultural and political fields between these cases, a shift that privileges the “feelings” of believers over the legal rights of the freedom of speech to private entities, and that co-occurs with the consolidation of the Putin regime.

3. Axing Icons in a Manege Exhibit

A well-known peer of Brener’s in the post-Soviet avant-garde artistic community was Avdey Ter-Ogan’ian, who in 1998 initiated a social drama surrounding his performance piece, “Young Atheist” („Iunyi bezbozhnik”), at the famous Manege Art Hall. Ter-Ogan’ian was invited to participate in the international artistic exhibition “Art-Manege—1998” held in the Central Exhibition Hall of the Manege Museum and Exhibition Association in Moscow December 4-10. In preparation for his performance piece that he entitled, “Young Atheist,” Ter-Ogan’ian purchased 26 paper reproductions of famous Orthodox icons at the “Sofrino” icon shop, including: Christ Pantokrator (“Spas Vsederzhitel’—Pantokrator”), Icon of the Savior Not-

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40 Ter-Ogan’ian had undertaken similar actions previously, and these actions did create controversies, but not to the level of the controversy surrounding his action at the well-known Manege Museum (Brazhkina “1998. Young Atheist. Ter-Ogan’ian” see: http://artprotest.org/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=295).

Made-By-Hands ("Spas Nerukotvorhnyi"), and the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God ("Vladimirskiaia Bozh’ia Mater"). Accidentally or not, the artist chose some of the most highly revered Orthodox icons (not only in Russia, but elsewhere in the Orthodox world). His stand at the exhibition included a sign reading:

Dear contemporary art lovers, here you may acquire wonderful raw material for blasphemy.

Icon of the Savior Not-Made-By-Hands – 200 rubles

Vladimir Icon of the Mother of Christ – 150 rubles

Christ Pantokrator – 120 rubles

The Gallery offers you the following services:

Desecration of the icon you purchased by the Young Atheist – 50 rubles

You can desecrate an icon yourself under the guidance of the Young Atheist – 20 rubles

You can receive consultation for the desecration of icons at home – 10 rubles

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PURCHASE!

It is clear from the artist’s choice of language to describe his action, from the chosen title, “Young Atheist,” to the use of the words “blasphemy” and “desecration,” that he intended to shock his audience by striking at the boundaries of the sacred and profane.

Upon the opening of the exhibition, Ter-Ogan’ian proceeded to chop six-to-eight icons with an ax upon his own initiative and “orders” from his acquaintances. Some visitors to the exhibitions and fellow artists were disturbed by Ter-Ogan’ian’s destruction of icons and complained to the curator of the exhibition, security, and ultimately the director of the museum.
By closing time, security had taken the copies of icons from where they were displayed on Ter-Ogan’ian’s stand, and Ter-Ogan’ian’s performance was canceled for the rest of the exhibition.

On December 7th, however, an official complaint was filed with the Moscow Prosecutor’s Office, and between the 8th and 14th objections to the action were published in multiple pro-Orthodox media sources. Importantly, the text of the first published complaints came from an open letter from Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov’s “Public Committee ‘For the Moral Revival’ of the Fatherland.” Fr. Aleksandr and his public committee became important paradigm-bearers in the pro-Orthodox media campaign against Ter-Ogan’ian and actions against the artist and his work, and, as we will see, they play an important role in future cases as well. Fr. Aleksandr, a poet, translator (from English and French), and writer, was active in the philosophical-literature circles of the Moscow intelligentsia in the 1960s-1970s as a college student. The connections he made at this time led him to be baptized into Orthodoxy and ultimately to the priesthood. From his college days, Fr. Aleksandr was attracted to the more conservative, ethno-nationalist, and

42 These sources included Zavtra, Slavianskiy Mir, and Russkiy Vestnik. and later-on letters from artists were published and pro-Orthodox reporters wrote in more mainstream sources such as Nezavisimaia Gazeta—Religion. 
43 The group’s title in Russian is “Obshchestniy Komitet ‘Za naravstvennoe vozrozhdenie Orechestva.’” “Vozrozhdenie” is translated variously in different sources as “regeneration” and “revival.” 
44 My sources for the discussion of Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov and his public committee include: Knorre and Filatov (2006), “Moscow Diocese”; Muravev and Sitnikov, “Portrait—Archpriest Aleksandr Shargunov”; and Brazhkina, “Shargunov Aleksandr, Archpriest” (see Bibliography for full citations). Please see the pro-Orthodox site, Russkaia Narodia Linia (http://rukline.ru/) for Fr. Aleksandr’s recent articles, and the website for Fr. Aleksandr’s church and public committee for their most recent activities (http://moral.ru/church/).
45 As discussed in note 7 in this chapter, Shargunov’s committee was also involved, somewhat more loosely, in the campaign against the airing of The Temptation of Christ on NTV. The group will also participate as paradigm-bearers, sometimes more prominently, sometimes less prominently, in every case from Mavromatti’s self-crucifixion action on that I cover in this dissertation.
46 These connections included Fr. Stanislav Krasovitskiy, a Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) priest. ROCOR at the time was known to harbor a strong Russian-nationalist, monarchist, and conservative ideology. Fr. Aleksandr also had connections to other members of the conservative Orthodox intelligentsia in Moscow, such as Vladislav Sveshnikov, Anatoliy Nayman, and others. In later periods, Fr. Aleksandr’s group held connections to the conservative Union of Orthodox Citizens (Souiz Pravoslavnikh Grazhdan—SPG), one of many Orthodox “brotherhoods” to spring-up in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period (see Knorre and Filatov, Muravev and Sitnikov, and Brazhkina as cited earlier for discussion of these connections).
monarchist Orthodox ideology prominent among certain circles of the Orthodox intelligentsia in Moscow;\textsuperscript{47} overtime he also became more vocal about his support for the canonization of Tsar Nicholas II and his family.\textsuperscript{48} As Knorre and Filatov (2006: 550) explain, “The fundamental characteristic of the conservative-traditionalist [ideological] trend [in Russian Orthodoxy] lies in the striving to preserve one or the other of chosen ‘ancient traditions’ that according to representatives may be connected to specific periods of the history of the Russian Church.” It is difficult to say which period in Orthodoxy’s past served as a model to the radical neo-traditionalists. Most likely, a rather vague and strongly mythologized image of a pre-1917 “Holy Russia” with its supposedly perfect fusion of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality was inspirational to them.

In 1986 Fr. Aleksandr was elevated to the position of archpriest, and in 1991 he was appointed rector of the Church of St. Nikolai at Pyzhi in Moscow, and his church attracted a circle of more radical conservative and ethno-nationalist Orthodox parishioners and priests.\textsuperscript{49} Interestingly, Fr. Aleksandr pursued connections with patriotic-nationalist leaning communists in the KPRF (Communist Party of the Russian Federation), including Gennadiy Ziuganov.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{47} At this time, a “liberal” ideological trend within Orthodoxy was also present, with followers of Fr. Aleksandr Men’ (who was murdered in 1990) and such dissidents as Fr. Gleb Yakunin. See Papkova (2011: 53-60) on the liberal current within ROC.

\textsuperscript{48} This was an issue that was not supported within the leadership of the ROC MP at the time. This was, however, an issue supported within the ROCOR leadership.

\textsuperscript{49} The ideology of the group included strong patriotic, ethno-national, monarchist, and anti-Semitic strains.

\textsuperscript{50} In 1996, Fr. Aleksandr, Ziuganov, and others published the controversial article, “Put an End to the Moral Genocide of Our Nation!” (Polozhit’ konets nравственному genocidy nashego narodu), that argued for the election of Ziuganov in the presidential election (essentially so he could save and preserve the Russian nation) (see Brazhkina “Shargunov”). As is argued by Murav’ev and Sitnikov (“Portrait—Archpriest Aleksandr Shargunov,” Portal-Credo.ru), Chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of the ROC MP (at the time), Metropolitan Kirill, “promised that Fr. Aleksandr’s actions would not go without consequences. But the behavior of the priest went unpunished. The leadership of the Diocese did not react to the archpriest’s political position.”
some of their first forays of the “shagunovtsy” into protests included the airing of Temptation on NTV and attacks on billboards the group considered immoral. The Ter-Ogan’ian case represents the group’s first attempts to propagate their ideology more widely through a more organized media campaign, and through direct provocations and even attacks, as I will describe later in this section. The main goal of the media campaign was to define Ter-Ogan’ian and his supporters as “Satanists” and “Satanist sektanty”\textsuperscript{51} anathema to and destructive of the perceived Orthodox core of the Russian nation. It is important to note, however, that at this point in the late 1990s, Fr. Aleksandr, his public committee, and their ideology remained marginal within the ROC MP and mainstream Russian life and culture. As Knox (2005: 162-167) argued, while the Moscow Patriarchate under Patriarch Alexy accommodated chauvinists and radical fundamentalists within its ranks, it generally sought a compromise with all factions, including liberal ones, and avoided confrontations with the Yeltsin regime, which at the time was still officially committed to the principles of democracy.

In response to the pro-Orthodox publications in the media, Ter-Ogan’ian himself, as a paradigm-bearer, gave an interview to the Orthodox television show, “Russkiy Dom” (Russian House) on the 9th. The artist explained the purpose of his action as:

I continue an ironic tradition in art. My action parodies modernism. By using banal gestures against the public, culture, etc., I am returning to the source of epatazh

\textsuperscript{51} The term sekta (sect) and sektanty (sectarians) in post-Soviet Russia came to mean something different from the habitual meaning of these terms in the United States and other religiously pluralistic democracies. Quite typically, any Protestant group, for example, could be dubbed “sekta” (for instance, United Methodists or Baptists are often refered as sektanty). Moreover, within the “sekty” (sects), which thus include anything other than officially recognized and accepted religions, there emerged a designation of “totalitarian sects”. The latter, according to a 1998 textbook titled “Vvedenie v sektovedenie” (Introduction to sectology) by the famous anti-sectarian crusader Aleksandr Dvorkin (published in Nizhniy Novgorod by the Publishing house of the Brotherhood in the name of St. Great Prince Alexander Nevsky and with the blessing of Nikolai, Metropolitan of Nizhniy Novgorod and Arzamas) include such groups as the Church of latter days Saints, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Church of Christ, and the New Age Movement.
epatage—artistic provocation through shock – RS]. This is the main idea of my work, which, as it turns out, absolutely does not resonate in our Orthodox space.

If to analyze the idea from a social and political viewpoint, one can talk about a protest against the return of ideology (nowadays –Orthodox ideology), and one can also talk about injustice – at the time when people are not paid their salaries, crazy amounts of money are spent on the rebirth of the aesthetically deficient Temple of Christ the Savior.

Orthodox icon –is not an accidental choice; it is an attempt to find a spot that causes pain to the society. Now, when the Russian intelligentsia is moving monstrously to the right, without taking pains to even think about it, my action is fully appropriate. The intelligentsia bought into clichés. It is interesting to try to make them pause and think it through. (quoted in Brazhkina, “1998. Young Atheist. Ter-Ogan’ian”)

The result of this interview, according to Brazhkina, was an effort by pro-Orthodox reporters and the “shargunovtsy” to brand Ter-Ogan’ian’s action as “Satanism” and “satanskoe sektantsvo.”

In the proceeding days, the artistic community was split with some, like Marat Gel’man, siding with Ter-Ogan’ian and others voicing their disgust at his action in open letters published in the media (and which were later included as evidence in the indictment against the artist). For example, on December 21st the Institute of Contemporary Art in Moscow, under the direction of the head at the time, Iosif Bakshteyn, held a “round table” to discuss the scandal in which around 30 artists participated. Brazhkina (“1998. Young Atheist. Ter-Ogan’ian”) reports that the opinions of the artists were very much divided, with artists and critics like Andrey Erofeev and Anatoliy Osmolovskiy speaking in support of Ter-Ogan’ian, while those like Boris Orlov and Konstantin Zvezdochetov were “strongly critical” of his action.

Patriarch Aleksy II, in an official letter to Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov (reported by ITAR-TASS, quoted in Brazhkina, “1998. Young Atheist. Ter-Ogan’ian.”), further set the tone of the ROC official paradigm when he described the action as “an unheard of outrage and blasphemy,” and “demanded that the mayor do everything in his power so that the participants in
the sacrilegious action at the Manege ‘would be punished in accordance with the law, and that the believers of Moscow would be guaranteed protection from such offenses against their religious feelings,’” and furthermore, he argued: “What happened caused pain and indignation in the hearts of the Orthodox people [narod, meaning Orthodox nation – RS]. One wonders, is it permissible to use the guise of democracy and freedom to trample religious feelings of the believers? Will the all-out permissiveness and impunity be brought to an end?”

Human rights activists Aleksandr Podrabinek, Vitaliy Bogdanov, Lev Levinson, Valentin Gefter, and Marat Gel’man, and dissident priest, Fr. Gleb Yakunin, spoke out in support of Ter-Ogan’ian in the media, but there is precious little evidence of a broader support, which suggests that the larger human rights community was silent for most of the controversy. Levinson and Gefter, as paradigm-bearers on the side of the artist, argued that Ter-Ogan’ian’s action was protected under article 44 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation that guarantees the freedom of creative production, and article 28 that guarantees the right to freely disseminate religious—and anti-religious—beliefs. Overall, however, there was also no large public outcry about the events. It is possible that Ter-Ogan’ian’s action was a bit too much even for secularists. After all, it resonated too obviously with the violent iconoclasm of the 1917 revolution and the official Soviet atheism that was put to rest just seven years before the exhibition.

52 This is evidenced by even the reaction of fellow avant-garde artists to the action. For example, a group of artists, including some related to the “Kh.V.1999” action and “Beware, Religion!” exhibition (A. Filippov, D. Fillipov, V. Florenskiy, and O. Sarkisian), signed an open letter published in Nezavisimaia Gazeta (December, 1998) where they condemned Ter-Ogan’ian’s action as “an irresponsible action” and “vandalism” (punishable under Article 214 of the Criminal Code) (quoted in Brazhkina, “1998. Young Atheist. Ter-Ogan’ian.”).
Ultimately, official *redressive mechanisms* were brought into play and a criminal case was opened against Ter-Ogan’ian, and on March 25, 1999, he was officially indicted under criminal code Article 282 part 1 of the Russian Federation for the “incitement of national, ethnic, or religious enmity.”53 The official indictment concludes: “…Ter-Ogan’ian acted with direct intent, aimed at inciting religious enmity. That this is confirmed, first of all, by his extremely negative attitude towards the Orthodox religion [emphasis added-R.S.].…[And although] Ter-Ogan’ian stated that his intention was not aimed at inciting religious hatred, that according to the investigation, this is a frivolous claim meant to evade responsibility for committing the crime.”

As evidence for his “negative attitude,” the indictment quotes small parts of interviews the artist gave to the media, including where he argued, “While Orthodoxy occupied a marginal place in Soviet times I had no issues with it. I now claim that Orthodoxy has pretensions to the role of ideology, which in my view is monstrous.” Interestingly, the indictment takes for granted and does not explain how exactly a “negative attitude” towards Orthodoxy directly translates into inciting religious hatred, especially since the Constitution of the Russian Federation protects the dissemination of irreligious beliefs as mentioned earlier. In addition, the indictment relies on witness accounts of how the action offended believers’ religious sentiments as evidence of Ter-Ogan’ian’s crime, but the artist was not being tried under the existing civil code (article 5.26, part 2) against “insulting religious sentiments,” but under the more punitive criminal code for the incitement of religious enmity, and it is not made fully clear how offending believers’ sentiments translates to inciting religious hatred. Let us note that the indictment was presented to a secular court in an officially secular state, and it was unclear who and how it was decided if and to what

53 See the “Official Indictment” cited in note 14 for the original text.
extent religious feelings were indeed offended. With this and other similar cases Russian law enforcement gradually entered an uncharted territory where loud enough claims of offense to religious sensibilities could translate into accusations of inciting enmity, and thus lead to harsh punishments.

As the official redressive mechanisms were brought into play there was a corresponding ratcheting-up of tensions within the crisis phase where paradigm-bearers clashed openly. Yet, these clashes were limited and involved only a small number of core actors who were for the most part marginal to mainstream Russian society at the time. Intriguingly, Patriarch Aleksy II in an interview (ITAR-TASS, March 3, 1999 quoted in Brazhkina, “1998. Young Atheist. Ter-Ogan’ian.”) argued that Ter-Ogan’ian’s action should be thought of as not just offending Orthodox believers, but “all Russians,” and here he uses not the Russian word for ethnic Russians (“russkie”) but the word for all Russian citizens (“vsekh rossiian”). He continues, “For us believers, icons are holy objects. But I think the question in this case is not only about the rights of believers, but about the protection of our culture. Thus the ancient namolennye icons sold at the Manage for the purpose of desecration represent an outrageous insult against our history, our spiritual heritage, and this must be resolutely stopped” [emphasis added—R.S.]. Here we see a major actor making the huge claim, albeit implicitly, that the history of Orthodoxy is the history of the entire—multi-confessional—country, of all Russian citizens. Yet such an interpretive twist was to be expected. Let us recall that already in 1997 the Law on the Freedom of Consciousness and Religious Associations ascribed to Orthodoxy a special role in the history

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54 An icon is considered namolennaya, once it is invested with prayer over a long period of time and/or by multitudes of people, which is perceived to make the icon especially holy and perhaps even acquiring special wonderworking (e.g., healing) powers. In Russia, not only icons but also places are often considered to be namolennye (invested with prayers and thus acquiring special spiritual powers).
of Russia and its statehood. This legal recognition marked an important paradigm shift from the idea of state’s religious neutrality (that had dominated since early 1990s) to granting a privileged status to the ROC. As Knox (2005: 167-169) notes, the enactment of the 1997 was preceded by an intense political campaign, which involved influential media. Thus, the paradigm shift was not merely in the legal sphere, but reflected changes in collective representations concerning Orthodoxy and its role in the state and nation.

The following day human rights workers from the “Committee for the Protection of the Freedom of Conscience” sent an open letter to the prosecutor’s office demanding the case against the artist be thrown out given the protection of artistic work in the Russian Constitution, in which they further decried the case as setting a “dangerous precedent” (quoted in Brazhkina, “1998. Young Atheist. Ter-Ogan’ian.”) — ultimately a dire prediction of things to come.

Also, on the eve of the opening of the trial against Ter-Ogan’ian, the Gel’man Gallery hosted an exhibition of Ter-Ogan’ian’s work in support of the artist. In response to this, a small group of radical Orthodox believers—the “shargunovtsy”—attacked the gallery and spray-painted one of the canvases, a form of informal redressive mechanism in response to the growing crisis phase of the social drama. As the vandals departed, elderly believers with icons and Cossacks entered the gallery. The vandals were led by Sergey Shargunov, the son of Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov, at the time a member of his father’s radical Orthodox group, “For the Moral Revival of the Fatherland.”55 Gel’man (quoted in Brazhkina, “1998. Young Atheist. Ter-Ogan’ian) recounted, “They even showed me the ax with which they promised to kill Advey Ter-

55 Interestingly, later on Fr. Aleksandr’s son started a scandal as he started to oppose his father, became an atheist, and joined counter-culture groups and wrote about drug use (see Murav’ev and Sitnikov, “Portrait: Archpriest Aleksandr Shargunov,” for discussion of Shargunov’s son).
Ogan’ian and anyone who supports him.” Marat Gel’man made the decision to not call the police, but Advey Ter-Ogan’ian, as the victim, attempted to initiate criminal proceedings against the vandals but the prosecutor’s office refused to investigate—an eerie foreshadowing of elements of the “Beware, Religion!” social drama to come.

The “shargunovtsy” reappeared when on the first day of the trial they staged a demonstration (“piket”), another form of informal redressive mechanism, at the courthouse. Participants\textsuperscript{56} filled the hall and carried posters and shouted slogans, many calling for the death of the artist and his supporters. The crowd violently ejected a television crew filming the demonstration for NTV from the hall, but allowed a crew from the pro-Orthodox show, “Russkiy Dom,” to stay. Despite the death threats against the artist and his supporters that were very publicly issued, there were no legal ramifications of these actions for the “shargunovtsy” (Brazhkina, “1998. Young Atheist. Ter-Ogan’ian.”). The increasing intensity of the actions of the pro-Orthodox supporters against the artist and his supporters and the liberal media show the emboldening of these actors, and the lack of legal ramifications for their actions demonstrate the tacit acceptance of such behavior by those in the legal system.

The social drama surrounding the artist and his action was abruptly aborted, however, when, one year into the trial process, Ter-Ogan’ian fled to the Czech Republic (where he pursued and was later granted “political refugee” status) in the fall of 1999 to avoid trial after a consultation with his lawyer where he was advised that he may very well receive a guilty verdict and sentence of imprisonment. The controversy was not without its victims though as the

\textsuperscript{56} The demonstration was led by Mikhail Kuznetsov, a member of Shargunov’s group. Kuznetsov will reappear as an important actor in the “Beware, Religion!” social drama. He served as the lawyer for the “shargunovtsy” that vandalized the exhibition (Brazhkina, “1998. Young Atheist. Ter-Ogan’ian.”).
Manege curators at the time, William Meiland and Kseniia Bogemskaia, were fired as a result of the fall-out from the action and trial. With this case, we do see an escalation in response to the breach and crisis phases by the state through the utilization of the legal apparatus against Ter-Ogan’ian given that crimes against criminal code 282 part 1 carry a sentence of up to two years imprisonment, and through the firing of the museum curators. Yet, it is unclear how the social drama would have ended given that Ter-Ogan’ian’s flight abroad led to the case being dropped in 2010 as the statute of limitations came into effect.57

To sum up, in the Ter-Ogan’ian case, we see a progression in the articulation of conflicting paradigms. The artist’s statement reveals his intention to confront what he perceives as a thoughtless, cliché-driven right-wing Orthodox orientation in society and its intelligentsia. The artist’s critics purport to protect the religious feelings of the Orthodox people (nation) and speak of abuses of democracy and freedom.

Moreover, we see a clear escalation of repression. The artist flees to avoid criminal prosecution. His curators are fired. Clearly, the position of the ROC MP and its allies now has a much stronger support in the state and legal structures. This makes sense. After all, the events take place nearly two years after the enactment of the 1997 Law. The ROC MP now has a clearly privileged position with regard to the state and law. Furthermore, reactionary tendencies in society and politics gained momentum since the spectacular financial crisis of August 1998 which greatly discredited liberal economists and politicians and reinforced the nostalgia for the “good old Soviet times.” Let us not forget also that the Ter-Ogan’ian’s action took place as

57 It is not clear from the available documents why the case was dropped, but it seems safe to assume it is because the statute of limitations came into effect as the artist stayed abroad after he fled. Interestingly, the judge who made the decision to drop the case, Marina Syrovaia, went on to become the judge for the Pussy Riot case. Overall, Syrovaia carries a 92% conviction rate according to an Openspace article (“92% sud’i Mariny Syrovoi”).
Vladimir Putin was quickly ascending to power, which had fateful consequences for Russia’s freedom. In 1998 Yeltsin made Putin head of Federal Security Service (FSB), and in August 1999 Putin became Russia’s Prime Minister. The increasingly repressive responses to the Ter-Ogan’ian action and to the subsequent provocative artistic protests were congruent with the aforesaid political trends.

4. Action “Kh.V. 1999”—of Easter Eggs and Cosmonauts

In April 1999, Orthodox Easter (“Paskha”) and the Soviet-era holiday of Cosmonauts Day fell on the same day and a group of artists decided to mark the overlap with artistic action “Kh.V. 1999.” There is not much information available on the action, but we know that on the eve of Paskha on the night of the 11th a group of artists including Oksana Sarkisian, members of the group “Blue Soup” (Siniy Sup), and others scaled the fire escape of the building housing the Moscow planetarium and covered the cupola with a large red silk covering with the large Cyrillic letters “ХВ” (“KhV”) on it in gold. In Orthodoxy, the letters “Kh.V.” represent the phrase “Khristos Voskrese!,” or “Christ is Risen!,” which is repeated often throughout the Paskha Liturgy, and the planetarium cupola was meant to resemble half an Easter egg. On Easter Sunday the sponsor of the action, the firm “Monolith” (Monolit), about which not much is known, had a man dressed as an Orthodox priest give a speech and at the end of the speech he released doves.58 Locals and those driving by were able to see the covered cupola and some listened to the speech while going about the Easter day activities.

58 Sources for this section include, Kulik’s (1999) article in Moscow Art Magazine, Sarkisian’s testimony at the trial for the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition, and Brazhkina’s post, “Sarkisian Oksana. Curator. Critic.” on the Art Protest website. Please see the Bibliography for complete citations of these sources. The content of the Monolit
Irina Kulik (1999), writing in the *Moscow Art Magazine*, explained the purpose of the action in the following way: “The young authors of the project ‘Kh.V.1999’ meant to reconcile two worldviews, the mystical-religious and rational-scientific, in dedicating their work to the two holidays that came on the same day this year, Orthodox Easter and Cosmonauts Day, a day embodying the triumph of technological progress.” The covered planetarium was thus meant to represent an Easter egg, a symbol with sacred meaning concerning re-birth and the Resurrection, with, symbolically, the universe held inside. In this description, the artists purposely brought together the two semantic fields of Orthodoxy and of the Soviet-era triumphs of science and technology in space exploration in their action as an essentially desecularizing project. However, artist Oksana Sarkisian’s (2004) description of the action during her testimony for the “Beware, Religion!” trial that came later was less clear on whether the artists intended the action to be a desecularizing project. Sarkisian declined to give a description of the action when asked and argued that she and the other artists were concerned more with the form of the artistic project than with providing a specific interpretation of the content to the audience: “I set a mechanism that allows for interpretation. I am occupied with form. I, as an artist, am more interested in form.” She then stated that in the descriptions of the action she provided others that, “[She] felt that action ‘Kh.V.1999’ spoke of the cosmic character of religion, in this instance Orthodoxy. And also the idea…, [she] felt, that there exists some similarities between the symbols of the Soviet period and the religious. In this case, [she] thought that the holiday of Cosmonauts Day and Paskha were phenomenon of the same order.” Sarkisian’s description, with its comparison of Cosmonauts Day and Paskha as being similar phenomenon, and with the argued correspondence representative’s speech is unknown. To see pictures of the action, please see Kulik’s article, the *Art Protest* post, and this website: [http://cultobzor.ru/2014/02/dvoesovie-dialog/13-367/](http://cultobzor.ru/2014/02/dvoesovie-dialog/13-367/).
between Soviet and religious symbols, thus opens the possibility of a more critical, secularizing interpretation of the action.

The most interesting aspect of this case, however, was the complete lack of response to the action from the ROC MP, believers, or the media at the time, especially when the response to previous cases, like that of the recent Ter-Ogan’ian action, is taken into consideration. This action initiated no breach or crisis, and no social drama at all, despite the potential for a critical-secular reading of the action. Why is this? It seems far-fetched that the counter-secularizing actors would have read Kulik’s short article, and even more so that they would simply accept the description of the action offered there. But Sarkisian’s testimony at the trial gives insight into an aspect of the case not found in any of the others—Sarkisian applied for and received written permission for the action from Fr. Vsevolod Chaplin, head of the Department of External Relations of the ROC MP at the time. When asked why she pursued written permission for the action, Sarkisian explained, “I felt like at that level [pursuing a public action without permission] was not a real possibility. Without documented approval our sponsor would simply not have given us money. For that we needed permission, and I got it.” And furthermore, when asked whether, “except for the practical side of the issue, was there the necessity for coordination of your action with the patriarchate?,” Sarkisian replied:

In fact, when I worked on this project I was baptized, because of the need to be fit. It was my personal choice. It was my ethical decision. Maybe there was something heretical in the fact that we turned to Chaplin, this aspect could have been present. I don’t think I would turn to Chaplin for my own personal reasons. I went because it was a project. Altogether it was a public activity, a public project, because of this I needed to turn to the person representing a certain power.

Sarkisian’s testimony demonstrates that an understanding, whether issuing from the sponsor or the artists themselves is unclear, had emerged in 1999 that such a public artistic-action utilizing
religious (Orthodox) symbols necessitated the approval “of a person representing a certain power,” namely a prominent official representative of the ROC MP. As Brazhkina (“Sarkisian Oksana. Curator. Critic.”) argues, “This was the first instance in the history of Russian contemporary art of religious [“tserkovnoi,” i.e. “church,” or literally, “ecclesial”] self-censorship.” Consequently, this case makes evident the first significant shift in the cultural and political fields. There was a clear normative change. Artists, for the first time were compelled to ask permission for their work – not from state bureaucrats, but from the Orthodox Church. Yet at the same time, the ease with which permission was granted shows that the ROC officials felt secure enough and nor seriously threatened by this artistic initiative. Ultimately, although the written permission the artists received from Chaplin seemed to protect them from clashing with counter-secularizing forces at the time, as we will see in a later chapter, this protection did not extend to the later exhibition of photographs of the action at the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition in 2003 where the action was attacked by pro-Orthodox actors as “blasphemous” (*Pravoslavie.ru*, January 21, 2003).

5. Mavromatti’s Self-Crucifixion—Suffering in Life as in Art

On April 1, 2000, Oleg Mavromatti, an artist, actor, and director of avant-garde film in Russia, carried-out an action of self-crucifixion in the courtyard of the Institute of Culturology in Moscow as part of a short segment, “Don’t believe your eyes” (Ne ver’ glazam), of his new film “Blind Spot” (Slepoe Piatno). The artist was playing a character in the film receiving

59 My sources for the Mavromatti action include: Brazhkina, “2000. Crucifixion of Mavromatti” and “‘Russia has returned to the Middle Ages.’ Artist Oleg Mavromatti, accused of insulting believers, on his relations with the
punishment for a crime, and the artist was filmed as 10-centimeter-long nails were hammered into his hands (avoiding bones and tearing of skin and tendons) into a wooden bridge. On Mavromatti’s back was cut with a razor the words, “I am not the son of God,” and Christ the Savior Cathedral was visible in the background of the filmed crucifixion. The filming of the segment took fifteen minutes, after which the artist went to the emergency room to receive care for his wounds. There were fifteen actors (fellow artists and actors acquainted with the artist) in attendance of the crucifixion playing the role of the audience. An acquaintance of Mavromatti had invited a crew from NTV to film the crucifixion to create “PR” for the film. The artist had received permission to film in the courtyard from the director of the Institute of Culturology, and the crucifixion could not be seen by any passerby given that the courtyard was closed-off from the public by fences and walls.

In previous statements and publications, Mavromatti argued that art had lost its authenticity. Mavromatti saw pain as an aesthetic category in art that could reclaim this lost authenticity. Many of Mavromatti’s projects thus explore pain and suffering as artistic categories, including the crucifixion scene “Don’t believe your eyes” in the film “Blind Spot.”

The next day NTV aired a short news clip covering the crucifixion. The clip described the crucifixion as an artistic “action” (aktsiia) by Mavromatti and failed to explain that it was a segment of a larger avant-garde film. In general, the liberal press was mostly silent about the crucifixion with just one further piece published in Today (Segodnia) five days after the filming.
of the segment. The Segodnia piece included extracts from Mavromatti’s other projects and placed the crucifixion project in the context of the artist’s approach to pain and suffering as aesthetic categories in art (Brazhkina, “2000. Crucifixion of Mavromatti”).

On April 6th, an article deeply critical of Mavromatti’s “action”—and containing false information—by Iuriy Ageshchev and Aleksandr Korolev, 60 “Man Crucified at the Walls of a Church,” appeared in the newspaper Work (Trud). The authors described how members of the Church of St. Nikola the Wonder-Worker on Bersenevka—which is separated from the courtyard of the Institute of Culturology by a tall and very solid wall—witnessed Mavromatti’s crucifixion as they attended services, 61 and furthermore that children standing outside while their parents were attending services were asked by the participants in the film to “….share in the ‘impression and feel’ of the crucified man.” Ageshchev and Korolev go on to describe how “blasphemous drawings, parodying the crucifixion of Christ” and “leaflets…. [on one of which was written] ‘Oleg Mavromatti begins a serious of radical and bloody actions. Action No. 1—Crucifixion,’” were posted on the Church’s announcement board (in a separate courtyard on the other side of the solid wall not visible from where the filming was taking place). The authors argued that the artist’s choice to film the segment “next to a church…on the eve of the Krestopokloonnaia week (the third, “Cross” week of the Orthodox Great Lent, during which church services focus on the Cross on which Christ was crucified and include hymns to and venerations of the Cross)” 62 and with Christ the Savior Cathedral in the background and “I am not the Son of God” on the artist’s

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60 Brazhkina notes that as the article was re-printed that the name Aleksandr Korolev disappears leaving only Ageshchev as the author.
61 Mavromatti (in Portal-Credo.ru 2010) argues later that the members of the parish of St. Nikola came across the short clip of the project aired on NTV. This seems a much more likely scenario.
62 Brazhkina aptly points-out that the fact that April 1st is better known around the world as “April Fools Day” escapes the authors of the article.
back, “…leave no doubt that the offensive to believers’ sentiments action was deliberately undertaken by the organizers.” Although Mavromatti (discussed in Brazhkina, “2000. Crucifixion of Mavromatti”) asserts that he knew of Ter-Ogan’ian and his work but had never worked with him, the authors go on to argue that Mavromatti’s self-crucifixion represents “…a new sacrilege, arranged already by an entire gang of the ideological followers of Advey.” The article was soon reproduced in a number of pro-Orthodox media sources, and thus the false information was taken as fact—and was later used as evidence in the court case against the artist.

I argue that it took a two-tiered or double breach phase (that is, by a sequence of two breaches) to initiate the social drama surrounding Mavromatti’s self-crucifixion. Mavromatti’s project and the airing of the short clip on NTV, as a breach, were not enough by themselves to create a crisis phase.63 It was the publication and re-publication of the Ageshchev and Korolev article in pro-Orthodox sources in response to the original breach of Mavromatti’s project, thus the second breach, which initiated the crisis phase of the social drama. The publication and re-publication can be considered a breach because they placed the Mavromatti performance in a context that it most likely was not intended to have. The artist clearly intended to have Christ the Savior Cathedral as a background. Yet it is unlikely that he deliberately tried to offend the parishioners of a church that was separated by a tall enough wall from the performance site. It is also highly dubious that Mavromatti was aware of the advent of the Cross week of the Lent. Such knowledge is quite “esoteric” in Russia, where no more than two percent of the population are regular church-goers, and perhaps even fewer have a solid knowledge of the meaning of each

63 Here I am operating under the assumption that the audience of NTV, for the most part, would include viewers who would not be offended by the short news clip shown of the artist’s project. Also, there was not much media coverage of the project—prior to the publication of the article in Trud.
of the weeks of the Lent. Thus, the self-avowed defenders of Orthodoxy acted in a highly and
deliberately provocative way when they placed the performance in a symbolic context it was not
meant to belong in. In other words, their interpretation practically presented the performance as
an invasion of the symbolic (yet also physical) space that is sacred to the Church and its
members. We will see below that this interpretive breach was consequential. To paraphrase a
well-known sociological theorem, what the Orthodox provocateurs presented as real was real in
its consequences.

It is likely that it took the progression of two breaches to reach the crisis stage of the
social drama given the still transitional nature of the cultural and political fields in Russia at that
time, as discussed in previous sections. The political, cultural, and media mainstream was not yet
preoccupied strongly by the escalating clashes among relatively small groups of secularist and
religionist activists. The leaning of the mainstream media at the time remained rather liberal, and
yet another avant-garde action, even with Christ the Savior in the background, would not have
received much attention. However, radical Orthodox groups were obviously growing in strength,
acquired greater experience of culture clashes, and were willing to use this new opportunity to
promote their causes. In this regard, Mavromatti was perhaps correct that his accusers could not
not be offended because they were waiting for a reason to be offended (see quote below).

The publication of this article was important not only because it initiated a media
campaign against Mavromatti in pro-Orthodox sources, but also because of the significance of
the authors and the Church of St. Nikola (a common Russian way to pronounce and spell St.
Nicholas’s name) on Bersenevka in the conservative Orthodox circles in Moscow at the time.
The rector of the church, igumen (abbot) Kirill Sakharov, and St. Nikola church served as the
hub in the center of a circle of conservative, ethno-nationalist, and monarchist Orthodox priests and laity that played an important role in this case and others discussed later.64

A few words need to be said about Fr. Kirill Sakharov who epitomizes the aforesaid segment of Russian Orthodoxy.65 After graduating from the history faculty at university, Fr. Kirill was assigned to teach at a village school but was fired for attending church services. Fr. Kirill then joined a monastery and then attended seminary and the Moscow Theological Academy. In 1985 as a brother of the recently opened St. Danilov monastery in Moscow, he took vows as a monk. By 1987 he was elevated to the position of hieromonsk and in 1993 to the rank of igumen. In 1992, Sakharov was appointed rector of St. Nikola, where he led his flock with a very specific ideology, that of the “edinovertsy.” The edinovertsy (which can be roughly translated as “united by one faith”) is a term with a long history. In the past, edinovertsy referred to those who aspired for the unity of the mainstream Church with the Old Believers (the segment of Orthodoxy that was alienated from the mainstream by the Schism caused by the Patriarch Nikon’s reforms). Yet the post-Soviet version of “edinovertsy” meant more than that. The Sakharov-style edinovertsy are radically conservative, ethno-nationalist (with strong strains of anti-Semitism and anti-ecumenism), and monarchist. Their ideology was, in a way, a post-Soviet remake of the 19th century triad of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality spiked with a quite up-to-date anti-globalism and anti-modernism (which, ironically, are quite modern and global currents). Fr. Kirill’s parish is in some ways similar to that of Shargunov and the

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64 The Church of St. Nikola on Bersenevka website includes information, under the heading “Patriotic Activities” (Patrioticheskaia deiatel’nost’), about its current political activities and it also includes copies of the various publication of igumen Kirill that demonstrate his ideological leanings: [http://bersenevka.info/](http://bersenevka.info/).

65 My main sources of information on Fr. Kirill (Sakharov) include a short biography, “Authors on RNL: Igumen Kirill (Sakharov),” on the (conservative Orthodox) Russkaia Narodnaia Liniia website, Knorre and Filatov (2006), and (sociologist) Vladimir Pribylovskiy’s discussion, “KIRILL (in the world Sakharov Aleksandr Sergeevich),” on his website, Anticompromat.org. See the Bibliography for full citations.
shargunovtsy, and the groups do share some aspects of ideology and cross paths in their activities, but there are some differences in their ideology (e.g., as to whether or not monarchy, which both groups revered, should be restored in contemporary Russia) and thus their membership most likely does not overlap.

In 1990, Fr. Kirill played a central role in the founding of the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods (Soiuz Pravoslavnykh Bratstv—from now on SPB). The SPB was formed as an umbrella organization meant to unite the many small, independent Orthodox “brotherhoods” and “sisterhoods” formed during the late Soviet period (the period of “informality”—independent, “informal” social groups that were allowed to form by the Soviet government in late 1980s), and it was established with the blessing of Patriarch Aleksy II and Metropolitan (presently, Patriarch) Kirill, and the membership voted igumen Ioann (Ekonomtsev) (who was close to the leadership of ROC MP since mid-1980s and occupied official positions in its apparatus) as their spiritual advisor. Yet, the group existed outside the formal control of the ROC MP structures (until 1994, as we will see below). In 1991 Fr. Kirill was elected chairman, a position he would hold until 1997 when he stepped down but continued to serve as a member and spiritual advisor.

As Vladimir Pribylovskiy (“Union of Orthodox Brotherhods”) argues, in 1991-1992 the SPB faced a period of politicization originating from the conservative, ethno-nationalist, and monarchist sectors of the group, which makes sense with Fr. Kirill and others like him at the helm. Pribylovskiy points out that the 1991 SPB Congress voted as its priorities the “fight against the corrupting influence of the West, Zionism, ecumenism, freemasonry, and the Jewish

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66 My discussion of the SPB relies heavily on (sociologist) Vladimir Pribylovskiy’s discussion, “Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods” (Soiuz Pravoslavnykh Bratstv) and his discussion of Fr. Kirill, “KIRILL (in the world Sakharov Aleksandr Sergeevich),” on his website, Anticompromat.org, as well as on Knorre and Filatov (2006).
influence in the ROC [MP]” and to fight for the canonization of the Tsar and his family. The SPB also “advocate[ed] for the restoration of the monarchy through the convening of the All-Russian Zemskiy Sobor.” By 1992 the liberal oriented member groups had left or were “pushed out through scandal” (Pribylovskiy).

The main activities of the SPB were the organization of the smaller groups (which held their own activities, mainly in the regions in the early period) and the publication of various statements, agreements, and open letters. As Pribylovskiy discusses, in 1993, the ROC MP referent and deacon, Andrey Kuraev, “accused the Council of the SPB of assuming the functions of a holy inquisition, the first task of which was the hunt for objectionable priests and theologians, and that the activities of the SPB impose a grim imprint on Orthodox life in Moscow.” The SPB’s influence was so great that the ROC MP leadership felt it needed to step-in and assert control of the group, and in 1994, under the “insistence of the [ROC MP] hierarchy,” a de facto purge (“chistka”) of the most radical member-groups of the SBP was carried-out (Pribylovskiy). There was a corresponding decrease in the activity levels and publication of political statements of the SPB from 1994 to 1997. With the power of the SPB stymied by the ROC MP leadership’s interference, Fr. Kirill and others pursued alternative venues to pursue their goals.

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68 According to Pribylovskiy, some members commonly used the phrase: “He who is not monarchist is not Orthodox” (Kto ne monarkhist—tot ne pravoslavny).
69 Pribylovskiy notes that by 1992 the SPB included 90 groups, up from 23 at the moment of the group’s founding.
70 The purge was carried-out indirectly through the ROC MP Bishops Council passage of a rule requiring independent Orthodox groups to receive the blessing of their bishop in order to continue functioning in an official manner.
71 In this period, some SPB members accused others of being “Jews” and “ecumenists” (Pribylovskiy). I will discuss the later history of the SPB in later chapters. In 1997, however, Fr. Kirill signed and published a statement on behalf of the SPB calling for the “absolute boycott” of NTV for their airing of Temptation (Pribylovskiy). This was the only clearly organized activity of the SPB in response to the crisis created by the showing of the film, but SPB members may have participated in an unorganized form in the demonstrations.
One of those alternative venues was a member group of the SPB, the Union of Orthodox
Banner-carriers72 (Soiuz Pravoslavnykh Khorugvenostsev—from now on SPKh).73 The SPKh
was founded in 1992 by Leonid Simonovich-Nikshich, who was also a member of the Council of
the SPB, with Fr. Kirill as one of the group’s spiritual advisors (Simonovich-Nikshich was
ultimately elected chairman of the SPB in 1999 with igumen Kirill by his side).74 The SPKh was
one of the more radical group members of the SPB.75 The main activities of the SPKh in the
early period consisted of “molitvennye stoianie,” (literally, prayer standings, or publicly held
prayer services), although at the time (and until the 2000’s) the group had no formal structure
and its membership was small with a group of 20-30 activists showing-up at events. Verkhovskiy
and Kozhevnikova (2009) argue that in the second half of the 1990’s, the period leading-up to
Mavromatti’s case, the role of the SPB and SPKh “grew so much that the SPB in fact stopped
functioning as a union of different brotherhoods…and became a sort of alternative brand for the
SPKh” (159).

Importantly, both Iuriy Agevchchev and Aleksandr Korolev76 were members of the SPKh
at the time their article was published in Trud, and we can now see the overlapping connections
between the article’s authors, igumen Kirill, the Church of St. Nikola, the SPB, and the SPKh. It
is unclear what role Korolev played in the SPKh at the time the article was written, but the SPKh

72 “Banner-carriers” is alternately translated as “standard bearers.”
73 My main source for the discussion of the SPKh is: Verkhovskiy and Kozhevnikova (2009), “Union of Orthodox
Banner-Carriers (SPKh).” The SPKh also has their own website that includes archives of their group’s activities and
publications: http://pysskie.org/.
74 He served as chairman until the split of the SPB in 2006-2007, which I will discuss briefly in a later chapter.
75 As Knorre and Filatov state, Leonid Simonovich-Nikshich argues that the “insufficiencies and illnesses of the
ROC MP can be explained by the fact that ‘in our contemporary Church there exists two parallel churches—church
ellinov (i.e., Greeks, by which he means [ethnic] Russians), and the Jewish Church, that is of the Jews....’” (558).
76 My main sources for the discussion of Ageschev are: Verkhovskiy and Kozhevnikova (2009), “Union of
Orthodox Banner-Carriers (SPKh),” & Brazkhina, “2000. Crucifixion of Mavromatti.” My source for information on
Korolev is the SPKh website: http://pysskie.org/.
website at various times identifies him as an artist (he writes icons), a member of the Council of the SPKh, and as the editor of the SPKh’s journal, “The Sacred Banner” (Sviashchennaiia Khorugv’). Ageshchev, a self-styled “Orthodox publicist,” was a hippie (tusovka) in 1970’s Moscow who over time began to work for the ROC MP and made connections to ROCOR. In 1990 he joined SPKh, and in 1992 became the group’s coordinator (until the group’s split in 2006-2007). He also had overlapping membership with the SPB, and strong connections to igumen Kirill and the Church of St. Nikola on Bersenevka. Understanding these connections helps to clarify the role of the authors (and those behind them) as paradigm-bearers in the pro-Orthodox media and the paradigm they support in the social drama surrounding Mavromatti’s crucifixion.

On April 7th, the parishioners of St. Nikola delivered a complaint to the director of the Institute of Culturology, Kirill Razlogov, who is well known in Russia as an art historian, film critic, and author of several books, including one (published under communism) on Western counter-culture and “new” conservatism. The complaint identified Mavromatti’s self-crucifixion as a “Satanist action” (satanistskaia aktsiia), a discursive element of the pro-Orthodox media campaign initiated against the artist. The director Razlogov reportedly responded by arguing that Mavromatti used no elements of religious or Satanist rituals or ritual elements, so the parishioners had nothing to worry about (Brazhkina, “2000. Crucifixion of Mavromatti”).

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77 See Brazhkina, Pribylovskiy, and Verkhovskiy and Kozhevnikova for discussion of Ageshchev.
78 Shargunov’s group also took part in the social drama surrounding Mavromatti’s project, but played only a marginal role in this case. This case was driven mainly by Fr. Kirill, the parishioners of St. Nikola, and the SPKh (and SPB).
By the 11\textsuperscript{th} of April, igumen Kirill filed an official complaint to the Moscow Prosecutors Office. The complaint was signed by 45 parishioners\textsuperscript{80} of St. Nikola—mainly members of SPKh. The complaint urged the Prosecutors Office to initiate criminal proceedings against Mavromatti and the others in attendance of his project under Criminal Code 282 part 2 of the Russian Federation for the incitement of religious enmity. In the official complaint and in a second article by Ageshchev and Korolev published in \textit{Trud} on April 13\textsuperscript{th} entitled, “Man on a Cross,” it was argued, along with the accusations previously discussed (sacrilege, blasphemy, presence of witnesses including children, the intentionality of the act, etc.), that the cross is a religious ritual symbol—\textit{belonging} to Christianity. As the authors of the article argue: “[Christian] believers are convinced: the manufactured crucifixion of a person is nothing but blasphemy against the suffering of Christ on the Cross. Following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, crosses in any form have carried sacred meaning for Christians for 2,000 years.” Brazhkina (“2000. Crucifixion of Mavromatti.”) aptly points out that the media and legal campaigns started by the parishioners of St. Nikola, and those like Ageshchev and Korolev, would not have happened without the blessing of their “batiushka”\textsuperscript{81}, igumen Kirill (she then goes on to reiterate the overlapping membership and alliances between St. Nikola, the SPB and SPKh, and other conservative Orthodox groups).

Interestingly, following another artistic action by Mavromatti considered “Satanist” by the pro-Orthodox media, on the 8\textsuperscript{th} of June the Moscow Prosecutor Mikhail Avdiukov was

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{80} Technically, parish membership is still a non-existing category in ROC MP (except for its parishes in the US and elsewhere outside of Russia). Therefore, the “parishioners” who signed could be people connected to that particular temple otherwise, including through the aforesaid overlapping radical networks.

\textsuperscript{81} Literally, “little father,” a Russian diminutive commonly used to affectionately address or refer to a priest, especially a spiritual father.
\end{footnotesize}
approached with an official complaint by Kseniia Chernega, an official representative of the Moscow Patriarchate and lawyer (iurist) for the Department of Religious Education and Catechization of the ROC. Chernega argued for the prosecution of Mavromatti and the other participants in the project for “the incitement of religious hatred and the offending of believers’ sentiments” (Brazhkina). Thus, the accusations led by igumen Kirill and his parishioners (including the SPB and SPKh) were validated, reinforced and legitimized by official ROC MP structures. This shows that groups that at the time were still largely marginal to the Orthodox establishment were gaining ground as legitimate paradigm-bearers of the Church. The groups’ self-identification as “Orthodox banner-carriers” was quite meaningful from this perspective.

Mavromatti responded to the original official complaint in an open letter. The artist argued (as discussed and quoted in Brazhkina, “2000. Crucifixion of Mavromatti.”) that “not one object [that was used in the film] could be considered to have cult attributes except through a wildly intense effort of an inflamed imagination (bez dikogo napriazheniia vospalnnoy fantazii).” Used in the action was not a traditional cross but “a wooden platform with a board nailed to its top (not across it!).” And then Mavromatti continued:

It is not true that the action was carried out “in the immediate proximity of a temple.” In our view, it was a medium distance. For those especially smart let us specify: the action’s background was the kitschy Cathedral of Christ the Savior with its dubious spiritual aura, and not at all the temple of St. Nikola on Bersenevka, which is totally uninteresting to us from any point of view. …IT JUST DOESN’T MATTER TO US. Generally speaking, “crucifixion of a man” for us, avid soccer fans, has a huge symbolic meaning.

We, who are not churched even though brought up in an Orthodox cultural-historical tradition, have reasons to note that the present state of the Church (and not just

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82 The actual word is “popsovyi, “an adjective derived from the word “popsa, “a slang term for low-quality pop music. However, the word “popsovyi” has been used in a broader meaning to denote tasteless, low-quality artistic and intellectual production (e.g., in music, journalism, media, or, as the Mavromatti’s statement shows, architecture).
of the Christian one), does not, in our view, warrant her ambition to be the spiritual pastor who would consolidate all Russians.

Who placed flyers on the billboard – Lord only knows. However, on the other hand, if a temple’s billboard serves for communicating with the flock, and as a window into the world, why then cannot it be used to send a message to the parish, and to the servants of the Church? The flyers raise issues yet do not contain insults; why then do you hide from inconvenient questions?

_Those who crave insult to their feelings will be readily and willingly insulted_ [emphasis added—R.S.].

The statement above exhibits important characteristics of the paradigm that Mavromatti and other advocates of unrestrained artistic expression formulated with a growing clarity in the context of their clashes with Orthodox neo-traditionalists. First, there is an attempt to avoid a head-on clash with Orthodoxy or Christianity per se. Mavromatti stresses his and his fellow artists’ upbringing in the Orthodox cultural tradition. Moreover, he does not speak against Orthodoxy or Christianity. Instead, he comments negatively on the (generalized) Church’s present state and its inability to spiritually guide and consolidate the nation. Furthermore, Mavromatti takes on himself the role of a critic of specific aspects of church life (the need to communicate with the flock and raise difficult questions). In other words, despite the identification with soccer fans rather than believers, the artist speaks to the Church as if from within, as someone who desires to have a more spiritually authentic and authoritative Church. This motif, as we will see, later culminates in the Pussy Riot performance (their appeals to the Mother of God and harsh critique of the Patriarchate’s political servility). All this is legitimized by an attitude of an aesthetic superiority (see the characterization of Christ the Savior, a symbol of Orthodoxy’s post-Soviet resurgence, as a kitschy temple. Finally, there is a rather poignant
dismissal of the perceived insult as “willingness” to be insulted, i.e., as a manipulative use of religious feelings as an argument against artistic expression.)

On the 24th of April, Viacheslav Kuritsyn, “a well-known cultural commentator,” defended Mavromatti in his column on Vestia.ru. According to Brazhkina, Kuritsyn “was the only journalist to defend Mavromatti from the criminal investigation.” It also seems, given the lack of available material, that both the larger artistic community and human rights community were not directly active in support of the artist at the time (more information is available on the support of Mavromatti in 2010, which will be discussed briefly later in this section).

In early July, a Prosecutor of Zamoskvoretsskaia Inter-district Prosecutor’s Office Tat’iana Arutiunova declared that Mavromatti’s actions on April 1st at the Institute of Culturology did not constitute a crime. But, on July 7th Mavromatti faced an official search of his apartment by police. Prosecutor Tat’iana Artiunova knew nothing of the search and could not explain it. It quickly became clear that Duma Deputy Anatoliy Greshnevikov a writer, member of the Union of Writers, and an “active parishioner of the church on Bersenevka,” sent the complaint directly to the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation who authorized the search. Mavromatti’s case was then brought under the jurisdiction of Iuriy Krylov, who after his prosecution of Ter-Ogan’ian was promoted to a “newly established Department for the supervision of the implementation of laws on inter-ethnic (“mezhnatsional’nykh,” literally internationalities) relations of the General Prosecutor of the Russian Federation.” Mavromatti (quoted in Brazhkina), after being called to Krylov’s office for an interview, described the following: “His entire office was lined with icons and even his clock was an icon.” The question remains

83 Initially elected from a single-mandate district (which involved no party affiliation) and later aligned with the Spravedliivaya Rossiya (Just Russia), one of the main pro-Putin parties.
why exactly the Mavromatti case fell to a prosecutor specializing in the implementation of laws on *inter-ethnic* relations, or why Mavromatti’s project, like those of artists before him, would qualify as “inciting religious hatred”? However, by the end of July the parishioners of St. Nikola had received a letter from the office of the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation stating that following the investigation criminal proceedings (under Criminal Code 282 part 2) were initiated against Mavromatti under the leadership of Krylov. Ultimately, as this letter demonstrates the formal *redressive mechanisms* employed against Mavromatti came from, as Brazhkina describes, “the very highest level’ of the General Prosecutor of the Russian Federation.” Experts were soon brought into the investigation, including a worker in the Center on Criminological Information of the Head Information Center of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation (MVD RF), Andrey Khvylia-Olinter, an *expert in Satanism*.84 This particular expert had the Candidate of Juridical Sciences degree and later became known for the book, *Spiritual Security of Russia*, which he co-authored with the sociologist Andrey Voz’mitel’85 and (then) Archbishop (now Metropolitan) Ioann (Pavlov).86 The rise of the concept of “spiritual security” can be traced back as far as mid-1990s, when it still had a quasi-legal status.87 Yet, by

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84 Khvylia-Olinter worked for the Ministry of the Interior since 1970, and at the time was colonel of Interior Service. In 2004 he was ordained a priest. By 1999 he published three books on “destructive religious sects” “cults of evil” and related topics (I use his biographic statement from the book, *Spiritual Security of Russia* (see full bibliographic reference in a footnote below), p. 85. Actors like Khvylia-Olinter reflect the nature of Russia’s spectacular transition from Soviet secularity to the desecularizing regime of the Putin era through the formative period of the 1990s. Indeed, a Soviet colonel of the Interior Ministry who specializes in Satanism and later becomes a priest and a leading expert on spiritual security is quite an emblematic figure of this transition.

85 In Soviet times, Voz’mitel’’s work focused on the “socialist way of life.” He also published in “Kommunist,” an official publication of the central Committee of the Communist Party.


87 As mentioned in the aforesaid book (p. 4), in 1996 a group of Duma deputies in their appeal to the President of Russia used the concept of “religious security.” This was done in the context of the struggle for a more restrictive
2002 it entered the lexicon of the Law of Russian Federation “On security,” which considers the spiritual state of Russian citizens as one of the important facets of national security. Let us note a jurist “expert on Satanism” as a co-author of the book of guidelines on spiritual security. Let us note also that the aforesaid expert appeared to have perfected his expertise in the case against the nonconformist artist. We thus see that the cases against Ter-Ogan’ian, Mavromatti, and others were formative for the ideological and legal apparatus of “spiritual security” that was fully implemented under Putin, with serious political and legal consequences for those deemed as threats to the religious well-being of the Russian people.

It is not clear in available sources when or on what network, but Mavromatti took part in a television show that parodied a trial against the artist. Mavromatti (quoted in Brazhkina) explained, “The editor of the religion section of Novaya Gazeta, Banner-carriers [members of SPKh], and [Fr.] Vsevolod Chaplin [vice-president of the Department of External Church Relations (DECR)of the ROC MP] served as prosecutors. The audience was split into two sections: those defending [Mavromatti] and those supporting the prosecution. There was also a jury consisting of pop stars….” Ultimately, the tele-court found the artist guilty of hooliganism but not of incitement of religious enmity.

Over the following few months Mavromatti took part in various artistic actions and film festivals abroad. One of his artistic actions was “Crucifixion-2” where he filmed himself being crucified again (to make-up for the footage he lost in various police searches) at the Gel’man Gallery in September 2000. Brazhkina reports that the artist was crucified in the form of an “X” and Kuritsyn (quoted in Brazhkina) comments: "look how they managed to scare the artist; so

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that he would give not even a hint at religiosity.” It does seem indeed that the Mavromatti’s case marks an important change in the field. With this case a very real fear of prosecution and persecution appears to enter the equation. Zealous protectors of religious feelings and spiritual security were able to demonstrate that they were dead serious about punishing the offenders, even to the extent of criminal prosecution.

In September Mavromatti was also invited to participate in a film festival in Bulgaria, and he was given permission to attend by the Prosecutor Krylov. Mavromatti claimed that when he visited Krylov to receive official permission to leave the country to attend the festival Krylov “waved his hand” and replied, “Leave, and if possible, don’t return.” While Mavromatti (quoted in Brazhkina) was in Bulgaria, Krylov took part in the television show, “Man and the Law” (Chelovek i zakon), where viewers were told “to quickly call the police if they were to meet [Mavromatti]” because [he] was an ‘especially dangerous mentally ill person (“symasshedshim”—more literally, “crazy person”).’”

Mavromatti ultimately took the hint and the social drama was cut short when he did not return from Bulgaria. There was a later attempt to re-initiate the redressive mechanisms of the social drama in 2010 when Bulgaria refused to allow Mavromatti political refugee status and it became necessary for him to renew his Russian passport in order to continue living in the country. Mavromatti received support during this period from artists within Russia, Bulgaria, and the United States. The attempt was ultimately stymied by Mavromatti’s flight to the United States where he was granted political refugee status. In this case, we see again an aborted social drama cycle.
Overall, even though unfinished, the Mavromatti drama represents a clear escalation of tensions and is marked by developing synergies between radical groups on the fringes of official Orthodoxy, official Orthodox leaders, politicians and law enforcement. The artist was allowed to flee, yet he faced a real prospect of a criminal trial with potentially dire consequences. The case further highlights the actors and paradigms involved in the ongoing confrontation between desecularizing forces and their opponents. The cast of actors and their ideas in an increasingly clear fashion foretell the future direction of the development of Russia’s desecularizing regime designed to protect “spiritual security” at the expense of free artistic expression.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let us sum up what we found in the analyses of the unfinished dramas of the 1990s. First, throughout these cases we see a rather small and not very well organized group of non-conformist artists and their supporters among the human rights activists, journalists, and dissident (“liberal”) clergy. These actors are not well organized (after all, they are nonconformist artists, which almost by definition is supposed to mean mavericks rather than collectivists). Yet, at this stage they still seem to take for granted and to count on the spirit of unprecedented freedom that characterized the 1990s, and especially the first years of the decade. Indeed, until 1997 there still were weak barriers to religious freedom. Till the end of the decade there still were independent media (and we see how NTV journalists and even management took a stance similar to that of the maverick artists in the case of The Last Temptation of Christ). However, this reliance on the newly found post-Soviet freedom by the end of the decade becomes outdated and a “cultural lag” of sorts. Increasingly, the challengers of the ongoing desecularization face
growing, organized, and influential opponents. The paradigm-bearers of the desecularizing forces at this stage largely include radical ideologues and organizations outside or on the fringes of the Orthodox mainstream. Yet they are organized into interlocking groups, such as SPB and SPKh. They have spiritual guidance from official clergy and increasingly easily find support from highly ranked Orthodox officials, from DECR bureaucrats to metropolitans and the patriarch himself. The early entry of (then) Metropolitan Kirill (later patriarch of the ROC) and Archpriest Vsevolod (Chaplin) is important, since they became crucial speakers for the ROC MP cause in the following decade. And what at this stage could appear as extravagant and provocative ideological orientation of such priests as Shargunov, Sakharov and their lay associates Ageschev and Simonovich-Nikshich (all active players in the subsequent acts of the social drama) later will become mainstream discourse in the official Orthodox forces. The paradigm of radical Orthodox neo-traditionalism that fuses the faith with rigid ethno-nationalism and political authoritarianism was on its way to becoming dominant in the Russian desecularizing regime. Moreover, in these initial and unfinished dramas we see how the punitive features and mechanisms of that regime are taking shape, even though still tentatively. Free expression that is perceived as threatening to the forming Orthodox dominance is labeled as insulting religious sensibilities. Perceived insult is publicized in the allied media. Support from allied politicians is sought, and ultimately the repressive power of the state enters the equation. Prosecutors seek experts and find them in the developing segment of specialists in “spiritual security” and “cults of evil.” The legal basis of limiting artistic freedom is yet inadequate for full-blown repression. There is no criminal code article that would presume punishment for offending religious feeling. Therefore, the prosecution relies on articles dealing with incitement
of ethnic and religious enmity. Even on these shaky legal grounds prosecution becomes increasingly serious and potentially consequential. The specter of real prison terms for offending religious feelings is about to materialize by the end of the decade, which seems congruent with the growing authoritarian tendencies of the rise of the Putin regime. In the following chapter we will see how these tendencies further escalate and manifest themselves in a series of full-blown social dramas.
CHAPTER 4

“BEWARE, RELIGION!”—A THRESHOLD SOCIAL DRAMA OF RUSSIAN DESECULARIZATION

Introduction

The previous chapter, Chapter 3, documented the first wave of cultural clashes between secularizing and desecularizing actors and activists over the limits of artistic representation touching on religious and secular themes in the early post-Soviet period (roughly 1995-early 2000). Those clashes, we have seen, were marked by incomplete or aborted social drama cycles. This chapter includes an in-depth analysis of the first major case—and first full social drama—marking the beginning of the second wave of clashes (roughly 2003-2013), namely the controversy surrounding the 2003 “Beware, Religion!” exhibition at the Sakharov Museum. This chapter thus begins a comparative analysis of the cases (utilizing Turner’s social drama approach) across the two waves of clashes. The first wave takes place in the second half of the Yeltsin era, while the second one unfolds in the Putin years. Specific attention is paid to: the participating actors and activists (as paradigm-bearers), specifically their mobilization and behavior in the cultural clashes and their development and propagation of competing paradigms; the processual components of the controversies (with particular attention to power dynamics) and the resultant changes to the normative system; and changes to the cultural and political fields over time. Given that the cases of the first wave represented incomplete social dramas, it was impossible to know how the legal cases, the formal redressive mechanisms, against the artists
would have ended in that period. The cases of the second wave, however, all lead to completed court cases in which the prosecution triumphs. Thus, in the second wave cases we will see increasingly harsh reactions, both unofficial and official to artistic contestations of religion’s resurgent public role. We will also see how the desecularizing paradigm that was initially upheld by groups peripheral (if not marginal) to the ecclesial and politico-ideological mainstream crystallize as essentially mainstream, official positions of church and state. The initially raw cultural scripts that were evoked by small and exotic radical groups begin to shape official discourses, legal indictments, and verdicts. At the same time, there is a symmetric articulation of the paradigm of resistance to desecularization, but clearly as a dissident, minority paradigm.

As a way to introduce the qualitatively different cases of the second wave, let me briefly remind about the general tendencies that transpired in the analysis of the first wave. In discussion of the first wave, I demonstrated how one set of important actors, the radical Orthodox activists, such as the shargunovtsy and SPB/SPKh, moved from relative obscurity to a position of increasing power in post-Soviet Russian society, culture, and politics. I discussed their role as desecularizing activists in the clashes, specifically their ability to mobilize resources and other pro-Orthodox actors to their side in the clashes and their important role as desecularizing paradigm-bearers in the social dramas discussed. Furthermore, I outlined the Orthodox activists’ tested and increasingly successful tactics in their propagation of their paradigms and fight against secularizing forces, such as their: initiation of media campaigns, use of official complaints and court proceedings, mobilization of sympathetic politicians, public demonstrations, and use of (unprosecuted) physical attacks of galleries and threats and attacks against the artists and their supporters.
I then explained how the radical Orthodox activists’ paradigms and tactics were further legitimized by actors and official structures connected to the ROC MP, Russian state, and legal system. Specifically, important official representatives of the ROC MP, including Patriarch Aleksy II, Fr. Vsevolod Chaplin, and (former) Metropolitan (now Patriarch) Kirill, among others, at different points vocalized their support of the radical Orthodox activists’ paradigms and tactics. Yet, the support was ad hoc rather than consistent across cases, and the Orthodox radicals’ actions still appeared controversial and not fully in line with the ecclesial mainstream. In addition, the Orthodox activists were able to draw on sympathetic politicians to push complaints towards prosecution, and such politicians utilized official state structures, such as Duma votes, to endorse and propagate their views. This time period also saw the state-sponsored early development of a discourse of “spiritual security” that played a role in the later clashes and merged into the paradigm of desecularization. In addition, at the end of the first wave of clashes artists were officially prosecuted in criminal court cases that drew on religious enmity laws and experts in very specific ways, and which drew on a new class of official experts in “Satanism.”

In the same period, the artists and their supporters moved from a time of relative freedom of expression (Brener) to increasing censorship (Ter-Ogan’ian and Mavromatti). The artists and human rights activists that supported them, as actors and activists fighting the increasing influence of the desecularizing forces, were stymied at every turn in their efforts to preserve their freedom of expression from this growing new form of religious censorship. Their pleas to the legal guarantees to freedom of expression and artistic production and freedom of irreligion and its propagation ensconced in the Constitution of the Russian Federation fell on deaf ears as existing laws on inciting religious enmity were employed against them. There was thus the
growing recognition of the limits of representation of religion and irreligion in art in the face of this new censorship, and the first tastes of fear that led to artists fleeing the country.

My discussion in the previous chapter focused on the cases that were the most publicized, well known and had the greatest impact. The discussion is hardly exhaustive of all cases of this nature. Importantly, cases similar to those discussed, which all took place in the capital of Moscow (which is perhaps in-part why their effect was so great), happened elsewhere in Russia as well, and especially within the timeframe of the second wave. Analyzing these less publicized cases would require another study and another dissertation. While such cases were scarcely if at all publicized, they show that the changes in the social, cultural, and political fields that developed from the Brener to Mavromatti cases of the first wave I outlined above extended beyond the bounds of the capital. This social change was thus not limited to the Moscow art scene and capital politics, but reached throughout the country—something I will confirm again and discuss in greater depth later in this dissertation. For example, an exhibition of Oleg Yanushevsky’s work, “contemporary icons,” that “uses the traditional art form of the icon to frame images of consumer goods, film stars, and politicians in order to represent absence of spiritual, non-material or meaningful values in contemporary society,” was vandalized at the Central Exhibition Hall in St. Petersburg, presumably by nationalist-Orthodox radicals—who were never prosecuted (Article 19 2005: 7-8). Yanushevsky’s work faced further censorship, attacks, and vandalism during the second wave as well, which I will discuss later in this chapter. While my analysis of the first wave cases may not be empirically exhaustive, its focus on the cultural life of the capital of Russia and on the most publicized cases is justified. It was a series

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88 The title of his work is sometime translated as “cosmopolitan icons” as well (see Article 19 2005).
of clashes in Moscow in which a nationwide ideology and practice of restrictive and punitive desecularization crystallized. Nearly a hundred years after the collapse of the Russian Empire, it is still the life of the capital that sends the tone for provincial practices.

These circumstances thus set the stage for the first social drama of the second wave. The second wave begins with the controversy surrounding the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition at the Sakharov Museum. This, we shall see, was the first case leading to a completed course of a trial and conviction of desecularization’s opponents, and the case that heralded a new era in the interplay between secularizing and counter-secularizing forces and actors on the Russian scene.

One more remark is needed before I begin the analysis of the second wave. The remark deals with its historical context. We need to take into account the fact that the cases of the second wave took place in a changed societal environment. Vladimir Putin was elected president in March of 2000. By 2003, the year my analysis begins, a crackdown on media freedom was underway, and NTV, the leading independent TV channel that played an important role in the events of the first wave, was its first significant victim. With opposition coverage silenced, there was a tangible popular support to the second Chechen war that, to a great extent, propelled Putin and his security apparatus to power and control of the country. With their rise to power elements of re-Sovietization (such as a return to the old Soviet anthem, albeit with changed lyrics) became increasingly visible. The popularity of the reemerging authoritarian habitus of the Russian state was enhanced by rising oil and natural gas prices, leading to an economic recovery from the crisis of 1998 and further growth in consumption and living standards. It was amidst these trends that further struggles between secularizing and counter-secularizing forces took place.
“Beware, Religion!” Exhibition at the Sakharov Museum—The First Full Social Drama

The potential for the first breach phase of the social drama was initiated by the opening of the art exhibit, “Beware, Religion!” at the exhibition hall of the Sakharov Museum and Public Center for “Peace, Progress, and Human Rights,” on January 14, 2003. Before discussing the nature of the exhibit, it is necessary to say a few words about the nature of the place where it was held, the Sakharov Museum. The roots of the Sakharov Museum and Public Center grew from the foundation in 1990 of “The Commission to Protect the Legacy of Andrei Sakharov,” an “informal” dissident group of the late Soviet period formed through the work of Sakharov’s wife and dissident human rights activist Elena Bonner and the couple’s colleagues that focused on the memorialization of the victims of the Soviet regime, the preservation of the rich legacy of Sakharov as a Soviet dissident, and the promotion of freedom in the Soviet Union. The commission grew into the Sakharov Foundation in 1991, the Sakharov Archives (of the victims of repression) opened in 1994, and in 1996 the Sakharov Museum and Public Center was established. The website for the Sakharov Center describes its mission as:

…to keep alive and develop the legacy of Academician Andrei Sakharov. We seek to develop a historical consciousness of Soviet totalitarianism and the resistance to oppression; promote values of freedom, democracy, and human rights; support a robust, comprehensive, and free discussion about relevant historical issues, human rights, and humanitarian problems; and aid the creation of civil society in Russia. (SMPC “About Us”)

89 The exhibition title reads in the original Russian, «Осторожно, Религия!».
91 I rely here on the English version of the Sakharov Center website, but in the Russian text, “О Нас,” the descriptor used is “aktual’nye,” the definition of which indicates more than just relevance. Please see note 9 in this chapter for a discussion of the definition of this Russian concept. For the Russian version of the Mission Statement, please see: http://www.sakharov-center.ru/about.html.
The Sakharov Museum’s mission clearly draws on both the dissident tradition of the late Soviet period (Sakharov’s legacy, historical consciousness of Soviet totalitarianism and memorialization of its victims, resistance to oppression, development of civil society) and the familiar global discourse on human rights (promotion of freedom, democracy, and human rights). The combination of the two traditions is not accidental, and can be traced to the ideological positions of Andrei Sakharov and Elena Bonner themselves. The dissident movement of the Soviet era was ideologically diverse. Its political-ideological spectrum ranged from advocacy of a “socialism with a human face” (e.g., by the historian Roy Medvedev) to an organicist, anti-Western nationalism (e.g., in the work of the mathematician Igor Shafarevich). While Sakharov was a strong advocate of the freedom of speech and often came to the defense of those persecuted regardless of their political orientation, he himself (as well as Bonner) could be seen as rather consistently liberal with a pro-Western orientation, who envisioned Russia’s integration into the modern civilization that embodies the Western liberal values of human rights, pluralistic democracy, and a market economy. While Sakharov occupied a respected and prominent position of authority in the dissident movement, his disagreements with its more nationalist and Slavophile wings (including such a prominent figure as Alexander Solzhenitsyn) were also known.

Included in the designated educational activities of the Sakharov Museum (from now on abbreviated as SM) are temporary exhibitions, mainly of historical or political topics, but also occasionally of art, such as the “Beware, Religion!” exhibit. Furthermore, the Center is described as a “multifunctional educational space which houses discussions pertaining to relevant cultural, social, and societal issues which are ignored by mainstream Russian media.” The central theme
of the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition, as is discussed below, seems to exemplify this goal of the SM in that it was meant in part to provoke discussion of the role of religion in society, a challenging and problematic topic in Russian society as we saw demonstrated in the last chapter.

Overall, the Sakharov Museum represents a very specific symbolic space in post-Soviet Russia. The dissident tradition and global human rights discourse forming the cultural base of the institution of the SM are symbolic systems that even now have not yet made significant headway into the mainstream Russian culture, a culture still dominated by its Soviet (and in part pre-Soviet) past, and thus the SM often functions on the margins of Russian society and culture generally without widespread effect, but occasionally drawing opposition as we will see. In addition, the mission of the SM also often places the institution and its member-actors at odds with the consolidating Putin regime and its authoritarian tendencies. Thus, the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition needs to be understood within this larger context of the symbolic space the SM occupies in post-Soviet Russia.

The Director of the Sakharov Museum at the time, Yuri Samodurov, initiated the conceptualization process of the “Beware, Religion!” art exhibition during the summer of 2002 and appointed Artiun Zulumian as curator and Narine Zolian and Anna Al’chuk as exhibition coordinators. The exhibit included artistic works from over 40 artists from Russia and around the world. Although most of the participating artists were not well-known to the general public,

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92 Her full name is Anna Aleksandrovna Mikhal’chuk, but she uses the name “Anna Al’chuk” as a pseudonym in her role as an artist. I will thus refer to her as Anna Al’chuk when discussing her role in the exhibit, and as Anna Mikhal’chuk when discussing certain media reports and her trial. Al’chuk was mentioned previously in the discussion of the Brener action at Elokhovskiy Cathedral.

they were known within the avant-garde artistic community in Russia, and they did include artists mentioned or discussed in the previous chapter, such as Anna Al’chuk, Avdey Ter-Ogan’ian, Oksana Sarkisian, Irina Kulik, Oleg Mavromatti, and the art collective Blue Soup (Siniy Sup), as well as the well-known artist and impressionist, Vladislav Mamshev-Monro, most known for his impressions of Marilyn Monroe.

In the words of the SM press release announcing the exhibition, it was meant to present the “reflections and impressions of artists of the younger and middle generations about religion, religious people, and religious institutions in the contemporary world” (SMPC94 2003a). The press release also explained that the title of the exhibit, “Beware, Religion!” was meant to evoke two trains of thought or approaches to the topic of religion, each linked to the meaning of the first word in the Russian title, “ostorozhno,” which carries the double-meaning of, and can be translated as both, “caution” and “beware.” The exhibit title was meant to evoke on one hand the idea of using caution, or a “careful, delicate, respectful approach to religion, faith, [and] believers…,” while on the other hand it evoked the meaning of beware, or the “…sign—‘attention, danger!’—when it comes to religious fundamentalism…, fusion of religion and the state, or obscurantism” (SMPC 2003a). The exhibit title was thus purposefully provocative, as Samodurov explained, it was meant to “provoke discussion of religion in modern society” (Borisov 2004), but it also pointed to an intention for the exhibit to respect religious themes.

94 From now on referred to as SMPC.
The official poster\textsuperscript{95} (SMPC 2003b) announcing the exhibit, along with including text announcing its title, place, and dates (January 14 to February 9), and the names of the participating artists, included a photo of artist Natal’ia Magidova’s\textsuperscript{96} work presented at the exhibit, a printed photo of an icon of Christ where the shape of Christ’s face is outlined in silver and gold yet the face itself is replaced by a light gray background with a “caution” road sign (a red triangle with a white background and a black exclamation point in the middle) in the center. The work was entitled, “A holy place is never empty,” and was meant to suggest visually the double-meaning of the exhibit title (although Magidova’s description seems to place more emphasis on the “beware” theme) (SMPC 2003b).

In the Museum and artists’ descriptions (SMPC 2003a, 2003b, 2003c) of the exhibit at the time it opened, two other themes also emerged and built from the “caution/beware” themes: the complexity and necessity of the freedom of conscience, and religion or irreligion as an individual choice. The artists saw both themes as further problematized by the existence of myriad alternative truth-claims in the contemporary world. For example, the SM (2003a) press release states:

Freedom of conscience can lead to spiritual depth and asceticism, or to fanaticism and hatred towards other faiths and those who think differently, or to cynicism and emptiness. Freedom of conscience and the diversity of beliefs and religious authorities places before the individual a choice: in what to believe, what church or religious community to belong to, or to not believe at all and become atheist.

\textsuperscript{95} The SMPC link to the poster: \url{http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_reliz.htm}.

\textsuperscript{96} Magidova’s piece included in the exhibit that is described here and used for the poster actually builds from the work of Tat’iana Antoshina, which includes the icon of Christ used in the poster but where the face of Christ would be there is a mirror. Magidova’s piece replaces the mirror with the caution sign discussed here.
These themes are repeated in various forms in Magidova’s and other artists’ (SMPC 2003b; 2003c) remarks. The discourse employed in the description of these themes, as can be seen in the quote above, clearly resonates with modern Western secular discourse. It centers on and emphasizes individualism and individual choice. Individual freedom is presented as fundamental in relation to both religion and irreligion. The discourse is not intrinsically hostile to religion, nor does it overtly endorse irreligion. Yet, its individualistic-libertarian emphasis puts it at odds with the view of the meaning of human freedom and its relationship with the sacred within many religious traditions. The alignment of the artists’ views with individualistic values of advanced secular modernity is an important aspect of the disposition of forces at the outset of the conflict surrounding the exhibition.

The artists variously described the exhibits as “aktual’noe iskusstvo,” visual art, pop-art, and post-modern (critical) art (SMPC 2003b; 2003c), and the exhibited works were avant-garde in form and their content was diverse. Although there were many more works exhibited, I will describe only a few that were perceived as most problematic in the crisis and redressive mechanisms phases discussed below.

Magidova and Antoshina’s works used for the poster and described earlier were included in the exhibit. Alina Zrazhevskaia’s work, “Do Not Create for Yourself an Idol” (Ne sotvori sebekumira), included a life-size copy of the icon, Christ Pantokrator on the Throne (Spas na prestole; or, Christ on the Judgment Throne), where in place of Christ’s face, hand blessing, and

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97 This phrase is difficult to translate, but points to the topical nature, the pressing nature, the actuality of the art and how the nature of the art pertains to the present day. I thank Vyacheslav Karpov for help in this translation. Natal’ia Magidova argues that “aktual’noe iskusstvo” cannot be judged by the criteria of traditional forms of art (SMPC 2003c).

98 Again, given the complexity of copyright law, I cannot include photographs of the exhibited works here, but please refer to the SM website (SMPC 2003d) for pictures: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_otkritieUrazgrom.htm.
hand holding the Gospel were holes into which visitors to the exhibit could place their own face and hands. In front of the icon stood a camera with a sign saying “Cheap Photo!” (Foto nedoroga!). Aleksandr Kosolapov contributed a picture resembling an advertisement that included a rendering of Christ on a red background with the trademark name “Coca-Cola” to the right of Christ’s face, and underneath “Coca-Cola” was the phrase (in English) “This is my blood.” Vasiliy Florenskiy exhibited a decorated arrangement of the letters “RPTs” (ROC) made out of styrofoam, and Irina Val’dron’s work, “Hello, Dolli!,” consisted of a picture of the cloned sheep of that name. Aleksandr Dorohov’s exhibit, “In the beginning was the word” (V nachale bylo slovo), consisted of a triptych beginning with a picture of a man crucified on a cross, followed by a man crucified on a communist five-point star, and finishing with a Nazi swastika. Below each picture was a quote, the first taken from the Bible, the second from the “Communist Manifesto,” and the third from Hitler’s Mein Kampf. One of Oksana Sarkisian’s exhibited works included a picture of “Action ‘KhV 1999’” as described in the previous chapter. Advey Ter-Ogan’ian’s exhibit included reproductions of icons with words such as “vodka,” “Lenin,” and “Kalashnikov” painted on them. As can be seen from these described works, Orthodoxy formed the central theme of a majority of the exhibits, and many, like Kosolapov’s, bring attention to the commercialization of religion, while others bring a critical perspective to the public role of religion, especially the ROC, in Russian society (Borisov 2004).

The exhibition officially opened to visitors on January 14th, and was scheduled to run until February 9th (but was closed on January 19th because of the events described in the next section). Around 70 visitors attended the exhibition between the 14th and 18th, an expectedly small number considering the marginal nature of the exhibit, participating avant-garde artists,
and place of the SM in Russian society and culture at the time, as described above (Kline 2005). (If the exhibition had run for the full five weeks as planned, it is possible to extrapolate from the known rate of visitation to an estimation of just over 350 total visitors—a very modest number considering that the population of Moscow was over 10 million at the time.)

The Social Drama Begins—A Two-Tiered Breach Phase

First Breach Phase of the Social Drama

Given the precedents set by the cases of the first wave, the opening of the exhibition held the potential for initiating the first breach of a new social drama. Moreover, we have seen that the desecularizing normative system was gradually crystallizing, and the exhibition content was directly or indirectly critiquing and challenging it. Yet, it took the publication of critical reviews of the exhibition in mainstream media sources to fully realize the first breach phase of the social drama, for reasons discussed below.

The first critical review of the exhibition, “Give Us Mohammed with Boobs” (Daesh’ Magometa s sis’kami), by Kirill Mefod’ev was published on Gazeta.ru on the 15th. The article title referred to a “Beware, Religion!” exhibit that portrayed a naked woman crucified on a cross, and the author argued that the artists were not taking critical approaches towards other faiths (“Nobody has depicted Mohammed with bare boobs…. [or] Buddha with a machine gun or Yahweh with a pig’s snout…” in their works in the same way they were approaching

99 The Russian word, “daesh’,” carries the further meaning of “let’s go for!,” perhaps with a “hurrah!” added-on. This brings further focus to the author’s critical emphasis. Thank you Vyacheslav Karpov for this translation.

100 The exhibit title and the name of the artist that created it are not mentioned in the sources, but the work itself was described by witnesses in the court documents that I will describe later.
Orthodoxy. Mefod’ev pointed out Ter-Ogan’ian’s participation in the exhibition as problematic, and drawing on his history (see Chapter 3) argued, “The authors of these artistic works clearly do not fear spending the rest of their lives drinking cheap Czech beer in Prague: the Sakharov Center, unlike the Manege, where Ter-Ogan’ian’s iconoclastic action caused such an uproar, nobody visits.”

A second critical review, written by Alla Arkhangel’skaia and titled, “Caution with Icons: The Sakharov Center and Religious Extremism,” was published on the 17th in Nezavisimiia Gazeta and included photographs of the exhibitions. Like Mefod’ev, the author demonstrated surprise that Ter-Ogan’ian was included in the exhibition, and she argued furthermore that, “Naturally, there is an idea that the curators have chosen a too one-sided approach to the problem of principle. Numerous ‘against’ and too few ‘for.’ The postmodern consciousness is not able to seriously reflect on the topic of religion. In the best case, what results is ‘reflections on the self.’”

The use of the phrase religious extremism in the article title was not accidental, and clearly demonstrates the author’s opinion of the exhibition. To better understand the context in which the term appears, let us note that Duma passed a new law on extremism in June 2002 (with 270 votes for and 145 against it), despite fierce opposition from Russian and international human rights groups and serious critique by Western democratic leaders. The law enabled rather arbitrary interpretations of the phenomenon of extremism and has since been broadly used to curb and suppress political opposition. Given the prominence of the debates that had surrounded the enactment of the law, it is hard not to see the usage of the term extremism as intentional and,

101 Sources also refer to publications in this period in Izvestiia and Afisha, but I was unable to locate the original articles. Archived copies of the articles I describe here by Mefod’ev and Arkhangel’skaia are available on the SMPC website: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion4.htm.
in a way, as inviting a repressive reaction. The author ended the article with: “But it seems, the
criterion of heresy is exhausted before the end, and to rebel ‘on the theme’ (na temu) is no longer
relevant (aktual’no).” It was not, thus, the opening of the exhibit itself that initiated the first
breach phase in the social drama, but the publication of these critical, pro-Orthodox, reviews in
the mainstream Russian media that brought about the realization of the first breach. The exhibit
itself was a too localized event to result in a serious breach. The publications, on the other hand,
elevated the event to a radically new level, linking it to previous artistic challenges to
desecularization and to the resulting struggles. Moreover, the publications passed judgment on
the exhibit as essentially provocative, even extremist. Thus, the exhibit was de-localized and
made into an event of a much broader significance in the context of the desecularization and
unfolding tendencies in the treatment of religious and political dissent.

As previously argued, the institution of the SM and the actions of its members remained
mostly marginal to Russian society and culture, as were the groups of avant-garde artists
represented in the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition. Ordinary Russians were not likely to know of
or attend the exhibition in person (as were those sympathetic to the SM’s cause and the type of
art displayed), but they were considerably more likely to encounter a review of the exhibition in
the popular media like those I describe that have wide circulation. The reviewers therefore
brought the exhibition out of the private and mostly marginal space of the Sakharov Museum
gallery to the public space of the news media thus allowing for the exhibition to be encountered
by an unintended audience in a medium already critically framed. There is, however, a notable
shift in this case from the Mavromatti case in that the reviews were published in mainstream
news sources with wide circulation, and thus the pro-Orthodox commentary went mainstream. It
is logical to surmise that if no reviews had been published in the media that a breach and crisis phase may never have developed around the exhibition given the events that followed the reviews.

Second Breach Phase of the Social Drama

The second breach phase of the social drama was initiated when, after reading critical reviews of the exhibition and seeing the photographs they included (most cited was Arkhangel’skaia’s review), six members (Kul’berg, Liukshin, Ziakin, Smakhtin, Sergeev, and Garbuzov) of Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov’s Public Committee “For the Moral Revival of the Fatherland” visited the exhibition on January 18th and vandalized the art works. After checking that they were alone in the gallery, the six “shargunovtsy” destroyed exhibits, knocking them over, tearing them down, and spray painting “Blasphemy,” “Sacrilege,” “Scum,” “Vermin,” “You are demons,” “You are damned,” and “You hate Orthodoxy” on the walls and some exhibits (thus clearly demonstrating the paradigm they supported). The woman supervising the hall, Liubov’ Kholina, locked the vandals in and called the police, who arrested the vandals and ultimately charged them under criminal code article 213, part 1, on “hooliganism.”

References by the vandals to the article on the exhibition in Nezavisimaia Gazeta as the catalyst for their visit to the exhibition can be found in various news sources as well as Liukshina, Ziakin, Smakhtina, and Garbuza’s testimony given during the investigation and at the later trial (e.g., see the official indictment and verdict of the trial against Samodurov, Vasilova, and Michal’chuk referenced later in the text).

For photographs of most of the destroyed exhibits, see the Sakharov Museum (SMPC 2003e) website archive of the events: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion01.htm. For multiple media reports of the vandalism, see the Sakharov Museum archive of the events: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion4.htm for specific articles on the 19th, and http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_grani01.htm for articles published over the days following the vandalism. For a concise description of the events, Anna Kulik’s (January 19, 2003) article, “Pious (Blagochestivyi) pogrom,” in Kommersant is a good resource (a copy can be found on the Sakharov Museum archive link for the 19th given above).
Ageev, in an official Department for External Church Relations (from now on DECR) of the ROC MP article, argued, “The arrested explained their actions by the fact that they as Christians ‘could not put up with the exhibit’s openly cynical and blasphemous character.’”\(^{105}\) When interviewed for the Orthodox radio station “Radonezh” on the 22\(^{nd}\) (quoted in Brazhkina, “2003. Events Surrounding the Pogrom at the Sakharov Center”\(^{106}\)), the vandals stated “that they had acted deliberately with a view to prevent the ‘gross mockery of the multimillion [person] nation,’” and Smakhtin argued, “We defended our society, we defended our faith and our actions do not constitute a crime.”

As discussed in the previous chapter, the “shargunovtsy” were a specific group of desecularizing activists who followed a radical neo-traditionalist and ethno-nationalist Orthodox ideology (and had connections to patriotic and nationalist leaning communists such as Ziuganov). The group was led by Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov, and was centered at his parish, the Church of St. Nikolai at Pyzhi in Moscow. The group had been a major force in the Ter-Ogan’ian case where they first tested the tactic of vandalizing an art exhibit when they spray painted a canvas by the artist at the Gel’man Gallery while issuing threats of physical violence against the artist and his supporters. Notably, as was stated before, this original act of vandalism went unprosecuted,\(^{107}\) therefore opening-up the possibility of further such acts as potentially safe and legitimate forms of protest for pro-Orthodox activists in such clashes. Drawing on this precedence and perhaps also given that they were the only visitors present, the shargunovtsy

\(^{105}\) Ageev, Dmitry. “‘Beware, Religion!’: a Rebirth of Militant Atheism in Moscow.” The exact date of publication is unknown, but it is clear by the content that it was published no later than February 2003. (Please see bibliography for full citation.)

\(^{106}\) The quotes from the interview can be found on the Art Protest website at: http://artprotest.org/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=721.

\(^{107}\) The vandalism of Yanushevkyi’s exhibit in St. Petersburg by another group also went unprosecuted, as mentioned earlier.
starkly increased the destructiveness of their assault on the “Beware, Religion!” exhibits by destroying almost all of them.\textsuperscript{108} This marks a shift in tactics by pro-Orthodox activists in that their initial act was not to start a media campaign or series of complaints, but the more punitive act of physically attacking the exhibition directly.

Importantly, in the framework of Turner’s social drama approach, such an act by such activists represents a clear attempt to manufacture a \textit{crisis} by employing tactics (vandalism and the resulting media attention) meant to bring-on a \textit{second breach} as a counterpoint to the first, which was not by itself for the reasons discussed above enough to create a \textit{crisis}. In this, the shargunovtsy were clearly successful, but with their arrest it remained to be seen whether their tactics would be legitimated and supported by official structures and state representatives in the justice system.

The Crisis Stage

The effects of the vandalism and the arrest of the vandals were felt almost immediately as \textit{paradigm-bearers} from both sides utilized the media to promulgate and defend their \textit{paradigms} while refuting those of the other side. Along with Fr. Aleksandr and the shargunovtsy, other pro-Orthodox actors and activists emerged to defend the vandals and condemn the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition, including official representatives of the ROC MP, journalists, state-run news agencies, cultural elites, sympathetic politicians, and members of other radical nationalist groups. Along with the artists, exhibit organizers, and Sakharov Museum administration, those

\textsuperscript{108} For a list of the exhibits and the damage they sustained (in Russian), please see the list given by the Sakharov Museum (SMPC 2003f) in the online archive of the events at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/ hall_exhibitions_religion_exponat.htm.
defending the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition and the prosecution of the vandals included prominent human rights activists, fellow artists and members of the cultural community, some clergy, very few liberal politicians, and liberal news media sources. It quickly became clear, however, that the precursor cases of the first wave had seriously changed the cultural and political landscape in Russia on issues of critical artistic representations of religion, changes that favored the pro-Orthodox desecularizing activists at the expense of free expression. As I will demonstrate, the new religious censorship discussed in the previous chapter was clearly gaining ground.

Desecularizing-Orthodox Paradigm-Bearers and Their Paradigms in the Initial Crisis Phase

*The Official Paradigm of the ROC MP.* By the 19th the first news reports of the vandals’ actions and their arrest were published, and on the 20th of January the ROC MP made its first official statements, setting the tone for the controversy to follow by outlining the first iteration of the ROC MP’s *paradigm*, a discourse clearly informed by the previous conflicts. Metropolitan (later Patriarch) Kirill, chairman of the DECR at the time, gave a press conference that was broadcasted on the state-run television station “Kul’tura” and reported in various other media sources where he strongly condemned the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition and described it as a “direct provocation that creates tension in our society.” He went on to argue, “We should be sensitive to the convictions of others. It is inadmissible to offend patriotic sentiments and create religious strife….Any form of provocation that offends the feelings of believers and stirs up religious hatred, according to Russian law, must be considered a crime” [emphasis added—R.S.] (Ageev, “Beware of Religion!”; Guelman.ru 2003; Kocharova 2003). Although Metropolitan
Kirill’s statement does not explicitly support the vandals’ actions, it does point to a certain sympathy for their motivations in referring to the exhibition as a “provocation,” which carries the connotation of a deliberate action meant to offend and elicit an oppositional response. The Metropolitan’s comments also implicitly link Orthodoxy, the state, and the nation when describing the exhibition as offending “patriotic sentiments” and the “feelings of believers” while creating “religious strife” and “religious hatred.” The language used appears deliberate in its framing of the exhibition as a violation of the laws against offending believers’ feelings and inciting religious enmity. This is a discursive frame quite familiar from the cases discussed in the last chapter.

Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, (then) vice chairman of the DECR, at the same press conference, while not directly supporting the vandals’ actions, still supported the condemnation of the exhibition as illegal: “Of course, it is inadmissible to use unlawful means to fight against unlawful acts. Unsanctioned violence is not a solution. Nevertheless, this exhibition was undoubtedly a violation of the law” (quoted in Ageev, “Beware of Religion!”). A secretary of the DECR, a Fr. Mikhail, did not attend the exhibition in person, but still argued—as an official spokesman of the ROC—demonstrating a certain veiled sympathy with the vandals, “It was an obvious provocation, to which, I would say perhaps with regret (skazhu mozhet byt’ s sozhaleniem) some succumbed” (quoted in Kocharova2003). Thus, within the first three days following the vandalism of the exhibition the official ROC discourse has already framed the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition as an intentional crime that offended patriotic-national sentiments and the feelings of believers while inciting religious strife and enmity. At the same
time, the discourse was implicitly sympathetic if not of the vandals’ acts, then to their sentiment and cause.

By the end of January, the harshness and punitive nature of the ROC MP’s official discourse in regards to the exhibition had increased significantly. For example, the official appeal of the participants of the XI Annual International Christmas lectures to President Putin, an official document created at the end of January and published by the ROC MP and available on the main ROC MP website Mospat.ru (2003; with a translation into English reported in Ageev, “Beware of Religion”), included this paragraph:

Extremism, threatening to become one of the most terrible catastrophes of the 21st century, is the direct result of a disdainful attitude toward the human personality and its spiritual essence, an attitude that has been ideologically consolidated and put into practice by the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. Therefore, the rebirth of militant atheism, as we have seen in the openly blasphemous exhibition at the museum of the well-known defender of human rights Andrei Sakharov, is a cause for serious worry. We must not forget that during and following such acts of blasphemy were murdered hundreds of thousands of priests and believers and were ruined the lives of millions of people who suffered in prisons and the Gulag. Atheist extremism is not a whit better than fascism. In our country, which has only heard of fascism’s manifestations, it should be exterminated once and for all. The exhibition’s organizers who shamed the name of A. Sakharov, himself the grandson of a priest, should be severely punished” [emphasis added—R.S.].

The paradigm presented in this quote of an official ROC MP document frames the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition as a form of “atheist extremism,” and as described previously above, the

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109 Interestingly, although this sentence appears in the quoted section included in Ageev’s article published in its English translation (by William Bush), the sentence is absent from the official archived document on the ROC MP website cited in the text, and it does not appear in other published copies of the appeal online. It seems far-fetched that either the author of the article or the translator would add such an incendiary sentence to the quote in their report (and the English translation of the article was published—and can still be found on—the official ROC MP DECR website, and thus it is also an official document of the ROC MP). This thus begs the question of whether the appeal was later cleansed and adjusted by the ROC, with the English translation falling through the cracks with the original text? It is also unclear if the original Russian text of the sentence, if it was not fabricated in the Ageev article, actually included the Russian equivalent of “exterminate,” or whether it used a more popular Russian vocabulary meaning to “finish” or “punish,” which could clearly have less serious implications than the notion of extermination (with its recent history).
use of the word extremism is not by chance, but points to the perceived criminal nature of the exhibition, as does the cry for severe punishment. The appeal also links the exhibition and the participating artists and organizers with the “militant atheism” of the communist period, which led to the severe repression of Orthodox clergy and laity. This is a strong claim, one that necessitates a response (perhaps from the state and the people) given that the authors seem to be arguing that such “militant atheism” displayed by the artists and exhibit organizers can lead to renewed violence as was experienced in the past. Interestingly, the authors of the appeal at once equate the exhibition with “militant atheism” and the “totalitarian” communist state—and “fascism.” This at once increases the perceived danger of such an exhibition and those that created it since in the Russian context “fascism” carries with it memories of war and massive destruction (the Soviet Union suffered the most loses in WWII, etc.). However, this is an odd discursive twist to compare the Soviet Union to the fascism of the Nazis. Even in 2003 there was a growing nostalgia for the Soviet past within Russia. Yet, this comparison makes sense in the context of the appeal given that it allows the ROC MP to privilege a narrative of victimhood—then and now—that silences any questions concerning the collaboration of the ROC MP with the Soviet, or now Russian, state. Finally, if the reference to the “extermination” of “fascism,” i.e., in this context the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition (an by implication its artists and organizers and any other such events and actors), is authentic (see note 22), then this paradigm contains a horrifying final logic given the recent history of that particular concept (and it seems very odd that the artists and exhibit organizers are compared to totalitarian militant atheists and fascists, when their opponents are calling for extermination). It is true that this document may not have had as great of an effect on mainstream Russian culture given that it was not a direct
pronouncement of the Church to the media, but again I would argue it represents a significant and influential undercurrent within the ROC MP that would quickly become mainstream, as we will see, and that this document may actually be more representative of the existing paradigm at the time than declarations to the media because there is less need to be solicitous to other interested parties (such as those in politics) in such a document than in official pronouncements.

It is worth noting, and is perhaps unsurprising given this context, that the other official (state-sponsored) representatives of two of the three other “traditional faiths” (as outlined in the 1997 Law), Islam and Judaism, also spoke-out in support of the ROC MP position. Borisov (2004) reported: “The deputy supreme mufti of Russia’s Muslims, Mukhameddgali Khuzin, told the news agency Interfax that Sakharov, a Nobel Prize winner and champion of human rights, never dreamed about ‘such democracy.’ Russia’s chief rabbi, Berl Lazar, was quoted as saying: ‘I respect the freedom of creative work, but it should not turn into freedom to spit into peoples’ faces.’” These statements by Muslim and Jewish leaders may be seen as good-faith expressions of solidarity with a religion perceived as being under attack. Yet, it is also hard to ignore the fact that since the enactment of the 1997 Law, official Islam and Judaism became ROC’s junior partners in the coalition of “traditional” faiths. Therefore, their leaders’ rush to defend Orthodoxy from godless artists can also be considered in the context of these relations of power and domination in the religious field.

The Paradigm of Pro-Orthodox Cultural Elites

Following the press conference at the SMPC discussed in the next section and media reports of the events, a group of famous and well-respected artists—known pro-Orthodox and
nationalist members of the Russian cultural elite, including: famous film actor and director (and Putin’s friend) Nikita Mikhailov, well-known writers Valentin Rasputin and Vasily Belov, artist Il’ia Glazunov, and former dissident mathematician Igor’ Shafarevich—published an open letter on January 22 condemning the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition and the participating artists. The publication of this letter was a remarkable case of the mainstreaming of the radical desecularizing discourse. The letter actually contained a verbatim repetition of entire paragraphs from an earlier text written by Archpriest Shargunov published on December 7, 1998 on the frontpage of the reactionary newspaper “Zavtra” (issue 50 [262]). This, earlier text was in reaction to the Ter-Ogan’ian exhibit, which was considered in the previous chapter. Yet, published as a collective letter from highly reputed cultural authorities, the text contained no mention of its prototype. While we do not know anything of the mechanics of this “borrowing,”

Belov and Rasputin were among the group of influential pisately-derevenschiki (village life writers) in the 1970s -1980s. The group also included such famous writers as Boris Mozhaev, Victor Astafev, and some others. Their novels presented a realistic (within the limits of Soviet censorship) description of the hardship and devastation of village life after collectivization. However, the work of Rasputin and Belov also included subtly expressed nationalistic undercurrents. During the years of glasnost’ (openness) in the end of the Soviet era, the subtleties were abandoned, and both writers expressed openly nationalistic, anti-Western, and often anti-Semitic views (e.g., blaming the Jews for the destruction of rural life during collectivization), siding with some of the most reactionary groups opposed to the reforms of the 1990s. The artist Glazunov was also somewhat scandalously known for his artistic representation of Soviet Russia (with Lenin and Stalin) as an indispensable part of the Russian national glory that in his paintings goes back to the Romanovs and ultimately to the princes and saints of Kyivan Rus’. The mathematician Shafarevich during the Soviet era collaborated with well-known dissidents and clandestinely published work critical of socialism. However, his critique included an organicist nationalist manifesto titled Rusofobiya (Russophobia) in which he used Augustine Cochin’s term “the little people” (or “the little nation”) to refer to the anti-Russian, pro-Western elite (in which he mostly included intellectuals of Jewish descent) ultimately responsible, in his view, for the unfolding destruction of the Russian civilization and potential extinction of the Russian nation. See Vyacheslav Karpov’s Starye dogmy na novyi lad (Oktyabr’, 1990, 3) and Robert Horvath’s (2012) The Legacy of Soviet Dissent: Dissidents, Democratisation and Radical Nationalism in Russia for an in-depth analysis of Shafarevich’s work and related nationalist literature.

The authors also included movie and theater actor Nikolay Burliaev, writer Viacheslav Klykov, writer and critic Mikhail Nazarov, and Lina Mkrtchan. It is well-known that as cultural elites, these individuals support a particular form of Orthodoxy and Russian nationalism, one that is xenophobic and pointedly anti-Semitic (see the previous note for details). The xenophobia can perhaps be felt in the excerpts of the letter I discuss below, although blatant anti-Semitism is not represented.

See Rasputin, Mikhailov, Shafarevich, Belov, Burliaev, Glazunov, Klykov, Nazarov, and Mkrtchan (2003) for the full citation and link to the text of the letter.
it possibly was a result of a “collaboration” of Shargunov who could have provided his ready-to-use formulations to the prestigious group. Otherwise, the only possible explanation is blatant plagiarism, which, of course, is utterly common in Russia and often perceived as quite normal.

The letter opened by referring to the “artists” and their “work” in quotes,113 thus calling into question their designation as artists and the nature and status of their work as art, and then the text refers to their exhibits as a “sacrilegious mockery of Orthodox Christian shrines (sviatyni—holy or sacred objects and places).” The signers of the letter then detailed the controversial “blasphemous” and “sacrilegious” pasts of participating artists such as Ter-Ogan’ian. Interestingly, Sarkisian and Blue Soup’s “Kh.V. 1999” (discussed in the previous chapter), a photograph of which was part of the exhibition, was now characterized by these leading cultural figures as sacrilegious despite the permission given for the action by Fr. Vsevolod Chaplin at the time.

The second half of the letter delineates a complex and important pro-Orthodox paradigm. It is thus worth quoting this section of the letter at length:

…..Today, society, under the guise of tolerance (terpimost’) for dissent, imposed a kind of “tolerance” (tolerantnost’).114 In fact, it turns out that the marginal sacrilege-ers (koshchuniki) and Satanists, in the center of Moscow, publicly mock (glumiatsia) Orthodox shrines (sviatyni—holy places and objects), feeling their complete impunity, and our nation (narod—or people in the sense of the nation) is in fact deprived of the opportunity to protect against this defilement (poruganie) of their faith, of their holy

113 Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 148) refers to this phenomenon in root paradigm development as “quotation mark syndrome.” For her, such a syndrome marks one type of mechanism of “definition work” used by paradigm-bearers to discredit the oppositional paradigm while reaccrediting one’s own (71).

114 As with the earlier case of using “artists” and “works” in quotes, the authors here mean the exact opposite of the word they use—intolerance, not tolerance. It is interesting that here they also employ the Russianized version of the English-language word tolerance, and that they juxtapose it with the Russian word for tolerance, “terpimost’.” This is most likely done purposely as a subtle hint against Western influence in Russian culture (and especially the Western human rights discourse that is represented in the SMPC as previously discussed).
shrines (sviatyni). Nothing like this could be imagined in relation to Islam, Buddhism, in reference to any of the traditional\textsuperscript{115} faiths, not to say anything of Judaism.\textsuperscript{116}

We see in the context of moral terror and propaganda a corruption that begins religious terror, the craziest and most dangerous form of extremism. The sacrilege [referring to the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition] that took place during the days of the Holy Theophany\textsuperscript{117} cannot even be compared to its communist analogues: the atheists (bezbozhniki) were fooled and thought God does not exist. Here is conscious Satanism—a new stage.\textsuperscript{118} Here is the insulting of the national shrines (sviatyni), Orthodoxy, the faith of our fathers, Russia itself. Our enemies want to demonstrate again that Russians (russkie—meaning ethnic Russians), driven onto the reservation—are nothing. Exactly now, when Russia’s enemies have everything—weapons, money, and control of the media, they ventured into a new mockery (izdeval’tsvo—also has connotation of “to flout”) of the Russian nation (narod), of its holy shrines (sviatyni) and its historical values.

This event marks the ringing of the alarm bells. It represents the last drop that overflowed the cup of the people’s (narod) patience. It is absolutely necessary to mobilize all the forces that can assess the scale of the national disaster taking place right before our eyes. Or else—it is the end. Or else—it is a betrayal of Russia, of Orthodoxy, of Christ,\textsuperscript{119} for which we cannot be forgiven.

\textsuperscript{115}The word traditional here is in reference to the 1997 Law that privileges Orthodoxy legally while providing certain rights and protections, but less privilege than Orthodoxy, to the other faiths deemed “traditional” to Russia—Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism. The law, as discussed previously, while allowing certain forms of these faiths to exist, does not guarantee protection to other faiths, including Protestants, etc. Please refer to the note in the previous chapter for the discussion of the meaning of “sektas” in this context.

\textsuperscript{116}The mention of Judaism in this context is ironic given the anti-Semitic tendencies of some of the authors of the letters.

\textsuperscript{117}The feast day of Theophany (Epiphany in the Western tradition) in the Eastern Orthodox (“Old Calendar”) tradition, falls on January 19\textsuperscript{th}. In Orthodoxy there are days leading up to most feast days, the “forefeast,” and a number of days after the feast day, the “afterfeast,” leading-up to the “leave-taking” of the feast. For Theophany, there are four days of forefeast, then the day of the feast, followed by 9 days of afterfeast, for a total of a two-week cycle. This is, however, very esoteric knowledge, especially in the context of post-Soviet Russia, and it is incredibly unlikely that the exhibit organizers would have known anything about this feast (not to mention a majority of Russians). The authors, similarly to the attempts of the SPKh members and their articles about the Mavromatti case in the previous chapter, are attempting to demonstrate a further link with the artists and the flouting of Orthodox norms that does not actually exist.

\textsuperscript{118}The suggestion that the exhibit somehow goes farther than the Bolshevik iconoclasm is remarkable. After all, communists were responsible for the destruction of countless churches and murder of millions of believers. To argue that a relatively obscure exhibit is somehow worse than that is an interesting twist of thought for the group that positions itself as representing the Orthodox Russian people.

\textsuperscript{119}Needless to say, the “betrayal of Christ” metaphor evokes less than innocent associations not only with Judas, but also with traditional accusations against the Jews for the betrayal and murder of Christ. Later in this dissertation we will see how these not-so-subtle and innocent metaphors migrate from influential but not official discourse of pro-Orthodox lay cultural leaders to official pronouncements of Patriarch Kirill.
This section of the letter outlines a *paradigm* that creates a confluence of the (ethnic) Russian nation, Orthodoxy, and the country of Russia (implicitly bringing-in the state)—thus again implying Uvarov’s triad (Orthodoxy, nationality, autocracy). It further clearly positions this ethnic-Russian-Orthodox nation (that supports the state) as victims and the Sakharov Museum and the artists as aggressors while projecting a tacit support by this “nation” for the vandals (and potentially worse actions in response to the exhibition). This is clear by the language used to describe the artists and exhibit organizers, such as referring to them as “marginal sacrilege-ers” and “Satanists,” and by using vocabulary such as mockery (glumiatsia), defilement or cursing (poruganiia), insult (oskorblenie), and flouting and mocking (izdeval’stvo) to describe the artists’ actions, thus implying that the artists do not represent, and are actually acting in direct opposition to, the mainstream “ethnic-Russian-Orthodox nation.” There is also an incredibly marked elevation in the severity of the discourse utilized by the authors of the letter in their characterization of the actions of the artists and exhibit organizers not only as “conscious Satanism” that is worse than the actions of the atheist communist regime (that destroyed churches and imprisoned and killed thousands of Orthodox clergy and millions of laity), but as moral and religious terrorism, as propaganda and corruption, and consequently as extremism, thus pointing clearly to the perceived extreme illegality of the exhibition. The authors then take this discourse even further by characterizing the exhibition as a manufactured “national disaster,” which implies state intervention as well as the rising-up of the “people” against such actions, and by framing this ethnic-Russian-Orthodox nation as having been “driven onto a reservation” and being surrounded by “our enemies.” In this, there are discursive hints to a narrative of a “Holy Russia” or the “Third Rome” besieged by enemies bent on destroying this holy nation, both from
outside (mainly the perceived as secular West) and from within (secular liberal with perceived ties to the West). The language of “our enemies” (the enemies of the ethnic-Russian-Orthodox nation) also harkens back to the Soviet term “enemies of the people,” thus laying the groundwork for the concept of the “enemies of the church” that will arrive into the discourse of future cases.

It is important to remember this letter was signed by a group of famous, much respected, and powerful cultural elite members with ties to Putin. This marks a significant change from previous cases in that this *paradigm* was being propagated not just by more marginal radical pro-Orthodox desecularizing activists such as the shargunovtsy or SPKh, but by highly influential *paradigm-bearers* acting within mainstream Russian culture. Their entrance onto the scene with this case marks an extension of desecularizing activism to mainstream cultural icons. Again, although I will show that their *paradigm* was not fully embraced in the context of this case, they were preparing the groundwork for the *paradigm* that would in later cases become dominant and mainstream.

The *Paradigm* of Fr. Aleksandr and the Shargunovtsy and Related Actors

Fr. Aleksandr and his followers, the “shargunovtsy,” and related anonymous actors also helped initiate the media campaign against the Sakharov Museum and the artists and exhibit organizers, while also utilizing informal and formal means of lodging complaints against the

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120 Or, given the ideology of the authors of the letter and their anti-Semitic tendencies, perhaps these enemies are secularists and/or Jews. This point was echoed on the radical nationalist website for the group Pamiat (Memory), which, as Akinsha (2004) explained, “The intellectuals didn't identify [these “enemies” directly], but the fascist political party Pamiat had no hesitation. The appeal posted on the party website called on Orthodox Christians to protect ‘our Lord Jesus Christ’ from ‘Yid-degenerates,’ using the most derogatory term for Jews.”

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exhibition and SMPC. It is not necessary to comment extensively on the media campaign initiated by these desecularizing activists since the discourse it outlines echoes the elements of the paradigms promulgated by other desecularizing actors and activists discussed in earlier sections. Furthermore, my discussion of complaints will provide extensive insight into the activists’ paradigms. Thus instead, it is more beneficial to analyze first the anonymous informal complaint of an anonymous desecularizing actor submitted to the Sakharov Museum since actors are more likely to say what they “really think” and “really feel” when allowed such anonymity; and second, the formal complaints of these activists submitted to various officials (President Putin, representatives of the Duma, the Prosecutor’s Office) since, in their written form, these complaints mark the attempt of the activists to further clarify their paradigm for specific audiences that hold the power to act on and reinforce the paradigm.

Following the vandalism of the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition, the SMPC received a number of anonymous “listovki” (roughly, “notes” or “leaflets”) (SMPC 2003g), one of which was archived on the SMPC’s online archive of the events and deserves a very brief commentary. The handwritten note reads: “Sirs of the Administration! (or comrades-neobolsheviks [ili tovarishchi-neobo’sheviki]) Do not insult the feelings of believers with such Satanist exhibitions! Otherwise, the consequences will be even more serious (bolee ser’eznymi). In the end, do you have a conscience or not?!”) Similar to the paradigms offered by the other actors and activists previously discussed, this anonymous complainant, through the use of such descriptors as “comrades” (tovarishchi) and “neo-bolsheviks” (neo-bol’sheviki), linked the SM with the “militant atheism” of the Soviet period, while also emphasizing the “Satanic” and

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121 Copies of the original listovka can be viewed on the SMPC online archive at: [http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_listovki.htm](http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_listovki.htm).
“insulting” nature of the exhibition. This complainant, however, took things further by offering direct threats.

Such anonymous notes were paired with a number of official complaints from desecularizing activists such as Fr. Aleksandr, the shargunovtsy, as well as some other submitted anonymously. One of the most important ones was Olga Lochagina’s official complaint to the Moscow (Tagansky) Prosecutor’s Office on January 20th that ultimately instituted the investigation and prosecution of the exhibition organizers that will be discussed later. Lochagina was an active member of Fr. Aleksandr’s parish, and thus can be considered a desecularizing activist rooted in the shargunovtsy. Part of Lochagina’s complaint read (quoted in Ageev, “Beware of Religion”):

Orthodoxy is an inseparable part of Russian national consciousness and culture. I ask that you immediately close the exhibition ‘Beware, Religion!’ and bring to justice not only its organizers and participants, but also those who offered their premises for this purpose, in accordance with article 282 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (‘inciting of national, racial and religious hatred’). Any inactivity on the part of those charged with maintaining law and order will inevitably give rise to spontaneous actions by citizens intended to put an end to the illegal demonstration of blasphemous works of art offensive to national dignity.

In addition to the now well-discussed paradigm of a victimized ethnic-Russian-Orthodox nation, Lochagina legitimized the actions of the vandals, her fellow shargunovtsy, by arguing that the law enforcement agencies failed to do their jobs, that they should have stopped the “illegal” exhibition, and thus the citizens themselves had the rights to rise up in their place. This added a dimension to the desecularizing activists’ paradigm that, as will be discussed in the redressive mechanisms section, will become important in the court case against the vandals.

122 I was unable to locate an official copy of her complaint, and thus I must rely on excerpts of the complaint published in secondary sources.
Along with Lochagina’s official complaint, two anonymous complaints (one in a form letter available for others to fill-in and send) were sent to the Prosecutor’s Office as well. The first called for the prosecution of the artists and exhibition organizers (“Ter-Ogan’ian, Zulumian, Samodurov—behind bars!”) while referring to them as “neo-fascists” that “defiled the shrines of our multi-national nation.” It also stated, “No to spiritual (dukhovnomu) terror, no to genocide of Christians on our land!” The use of genocide in the context harkens back to Fr. Aleksandr’s article, “Put an End to the Moral Genocide of Our Nation!” mentioned in the previous chapter. The second was a form letter of unclear origins but dated February 3rd that labeled the artists and exhibition organizers “extremists” (as a reminder, a new law on extremism had been already enacted by then) and argued that the “sole goal” of the exhibition was to “incite inter-confessional (mezhkonfessionalnoy) and national enmity,” and called for immediate prosecution.

Fr. Aleksandr, while participating actively in the media campaign against the SMPC, authored a series of complaints (that anyone could download off the website of the Public Committee “For the Moral Revival of the Fatherland,” sign, and also potentially send to various officials at the time) (Archpriest Aleksandr 2003a; 2003b; 2003c). Two of the letters were addressed to President Putin (the date of publication is unknown for one and the other is dated March 4, 2003 on the SMPC archive website) and one to representatives of the Duma Committee on Security (bezopasnosti) (dated February 2, 2003 on the SMPC site). The content of the letters

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123 I was unable to find the original source of these particular complaints, but a copy of both is included on the SMPC (2003g) online archive of the events at: [http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_listovki.htm](http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_listovki.htm).

became incredibly important in the court case against the exhibit organizers, as will be demonstrated later. The first (undated—2003a) letter to President Putin argued that the artists, exhibit organizers, and the SMPC instituted the most recent “blasphemous,” “sacrilegious,” “extremist,” and “maniacal” attack on “the Orthodox Christian faith” with their exhibition (with the previous “attacks” described in the previous chapter), and that this attack with those in the past come from “forces fearing the strengthening of Orthodoxy as a moral authority, which has for many centuries stood as the foundation of Russian statehood” [emphasis added—R.S.].

The second letter to the president (2003b) made similar arguments with the other letters, but pointedly calls for the closing of the SMPC, as it is an extremist organization that offers “nothing valuable for society.” The letter (2003c) to the representatives of the Duma Committee on Security, as expected, argued that the SMPC, the artists, and the exhibit organizers are a threat to the safety and security of Russia (with hints to the spiritual security argument briefly discussed in the previous chapter) and should be prosecuted for their actions of “propagandizing anti-social ideas, the defense of bandits125 (bandity), criminals, and most of all, Chechens,” for “existing on the money of [the prosecuted oligarch] Boris Berezovsky,”126 and for representing “the growth of fascism127 in Russia.” The letter also contained familiar sentences that directly

125 The word bandity, in addition to its habitual meaning of bandits, criminals, or street gangsters, in the post-Soviet context acquired another, somewhat more “sociological” and political meaning. The word was commonly used to refer to the power of organized criminal syndicates and their members who, in the atmosphere of the near-collapse of the state in the early 1990s, gained far-reaching control of wealth and power (a popular Russian TV series, Banditskiy Peterburg, reflects this meaning very well). Putin’s rise to power has been portrayed by his propaganda as putting an end to the “evil 1990s (likhie devianostye)” and the unlimited power of bandits. This is ironic, given Putin’s connections to the “bandits of St. Petersburg” of the early 1990s (see Putin’s Plutocracy by Karen Dawisha). Thus, by linking the Museum to “bandits,” the complainants stressed its threat to the new political regime.

126 By then, Berezovsky, who in the end of 1990s did a lot to propel Putin to power, came to be associated with the aforesaid “evil 1990s” and the power of “bandits.”

127 Fascism, of course, is a term that links the issue to one of the most sacred myths of the Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, the nation’s victory over fascism (i.e., over Nazi Germany in World War II). To say that the exhibition propagated fascism implied that it went against one of the nations most sacred legacies, its victory in the “Great Patriotic War.”
reflect language utilized in the past cases discussed in the last chapter, and language that would be used in the indictment, trial, and verdict against the exhibit organizers that will be discussed later. These sentences argued: “It should be noted that the Christian symbols, Orthodox iconography and original icons, that were subjected to public desecration and defilement during the exhibition, ‘Beware, Religion!,’ are of great historical and cultural value on the special basis of their special importance for the social memory and social morality of the Russian population, which mainly identifies itself with Orthodoxy”; and, “This political provocation under the guise of an exhibition was aimed to incite enmity, the hatred of Christianity, Russian culture, traditions, and religious rites, and to insult the national dignity of the vast majority of the population of our country” [emphasis added—R.S.].

In examining the discourse utilized in the letters in combination, the explicit equating of (ethnic) Russian-ness and the nation with Orthodoxy, with the further connection of Orthodoxy as the foundation of the Russian state—the explicit expression of Uvarov’s triad—is incredibly clear. Again, this paradigm is extremely important because it is utilized in the prosecution of the exhibit organizers and in the defense of the vandals (the letter to the Duma representatives called for giving the vandals an award)—and carries over into future clashes.

The Sakharov Museum, Artists, and Human Rights Workers and the Initial Crisis

As the desecularizing actors and activists made their declarations, the Sakharov Museum administration, the artists, and members of the human rights community released their own statements and held their own press conferences, thus developing their own initial paradigm regarding the events. The emerging paradigm was initially fragmented. Actors involved on the
side of the Museum expressed different views. A more integrative paradigm did not crystallize until later in the conflict. Yet, already at this early stage the paradigm elements emerged and started to converge into a relatively stable constellation.

On January 21st, following the official statements made by representatives of the ROC MP and various media reports on the exhibition and the vandalism, the Sakharov Museum administration, represented by Yuri Samodurov, along with some of the “Beware, Religion!” artists and members of the human rights community held their own press conference128 (SMPC 2003h) through which elements of a paradigm began to emerge. Along with arguing that the vandals just misunderstood the purpose of the art exhibition, those participating in the press conference made frequent reference—as reminders against any intention to offend—to the original description of the exhibition (SMPC 2003a), specifically to the first of the double-meanings of “ostorozhno,” that the exhibition was meant to evoke the idea of using caution, or a “careful, delicate, respectful approach to religion, faith, [and] believers…” Exhibit coordinator Narine Zolian also very pointedly stated, “I wanted to start [my statement] with this—from the beginning there was no such goal, in any form, to offend the feelings of believers.” This purported lack of the intention to offend, while acting as a general defense against the vandalism and negative media reports about the exhibition, was also particularly important given the court case that would come later in that the law they were charged with breaking requires proof of intent, as will be discussed later.

Two other elements of the group’s paradigm that emerged from the press conference and later statements and publications were: 1) the reliance on the secular Russian state to protect

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freedom of expression perceived as critical of religion and uphold the Constitution, and 2) the related reliance on the rights and freedoms outlined in multiple articles of the Constitution of the Russian Federation to protect the actions of the artists, exhibit organizers, and the Sakharov Museum.

Yuri Samodurov opened the press conference by arguing, “When I came to work this morning, I thought, in what kind of state do we find ourselves, where I find myself? I always thought that I live and find myself in a secular state, and I want to live in a secular state. To me, this means that I want to defend this secular state.” He then decried the statements made by Metropolitan Kirill and Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin about the exhibition and the vandalism, implicitly implying that these were forces he was defending against. Samodurov then went on to remind the audience of the history of the SMPC, that it only arose “…thanks to the fact that our country after 1991 began to live under the conditions of political and economic freedom,” freedoms that were established under a democratic and secular state, and that “[the SMPC’s] mission has always been to protect these conditions, and this remains our mission.” He thus discursively framed the vandalism as “…the destruction of the ‘symbols’ of free attitudes and those works which express the right to the free expression of that which is important for society.” In conclusion to his opening statements, Samodurov argued, “Consequently, the discussion is practically about the defense of civil freedom and the right of people to freely discuss all difficult problems.”

While Samodurov’s remarks may not strike one as well organized and thoroughly thought through, in their “raw” form they clearly capture a frame of reference that will become the emerging paradigm. In a nutshell, it is a constellation of the ideas of the secular state,
political and economic freedom, and civil liberties (freedom of speech, freedom of expression). Important also is a reference to the legacies of 1991 (the fall of communism and USSR). In this sense, while desecularizing activists’ statements implicitly devalued the legacies of the Yeltsin era (the power of bandits, oligarchs, and so on), their opponents were clearly emphasizing the positive heritage of the decade of reforms.

It is also remarkable that the positive value of the idea of a secular state is contextually defined by its conjunction with political and economic freedom and civil liberties. Strictly speaking, in the Soviet experience the idea of a secular state (albeit in a particular, Marxist-Leninist version) was associated with a total lack of economic and political freedom, and with harsh suppression of civil liberties. Therefore, the frame of reference appears to be clearly Western. In the context of Western modernity, the constellation of political and economic freedom and a secular state makes sense. In the Russian context, however, the constellation has been historically short-lived at best. The early 1990s saw an impressive implementation of the principle of a secular state along with considerable political and economic freedom. Yet, later post-Soviet developments could be characterized as leading to erosion (albeit differently paced) of all three elements.

Yet another horizon of meanings of Samodurov’s and similar other statements can be traced back to an even earlier history. While desecularizing activists were eager to go back to the pre-1917 paradigm of the unity of nation, state and faith, Samodurov’s emphasis on secularity can be seen as harking back to the Westernizing, modernist opposition to religious nationalism and autocracy. In this sense, the debate becomes somewhat of a reenactment of the great ideological clashes of the end of 19th – early 20th century Russia. Yet, while the Orthodox banner
carriers seem to be intent to go back to the ancient paradigm quite intentionally, modern secularists are in a sense involuntary reenactors (at least in the context of the case we study here), by virtue of the objective logic of the ideas and the debate.

Samodurov’s call to the protection offered by the secular state was echoed at the press conference by the famous Soviet dissident and human rights activist, Sergey Kovalev, and by many others in statements and publications during the crisis and redressive mechanisms phases of the social drama.

The second element of the group’s paradigm mentioned above was related to the aforesaid arguments and was already present in previous cases. Namely, it was the reliance of the artists, exhibit organizers, SM administration, and human rights community on the protection that the Constitution provided to the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition and their actions. This paradigm was first mentioned during the press conference but was delineated more clearly as the crisis gained momentum with the redressive mechanisms phase. I will, however, briefly discuss these elements of the paradigm here, and then revisit them to analyze their efficacy in the redressive mechanisms section. Kovalev was the first to mention the Constitution during the press conference, and he connected both the secular state and the Constitution generally in the defense of the artists and the SMPC. The artist Aleksandr Kosolapov, however, made more pointed remarks about the rights guaranteed in the Constitution: “What strikes me (Chto mne brosaetsia v glaza?)? It is most of all the violation of the constitutional human rights to the word and the utterance…. Again, in reference to the Constitution—religion and the state must be separated, no one here can ever affect the right of believers to believe, nor in the same way…society cannot allow intrusion in the territory of art or in the territory that I call the
constitutional rights of the person, human expression, human rights.” As the crisis increased with intensity, calls to heed the rights and freedoms outlined in the Constitution (see: “The Moscow Trial of Yuri Samodurov, Ludmila Vasilovskaya and Anna Mikhalchuk,” 2005; Borisov 2004; Article 19 2005; among others) became more specific in that they referred to specific Articles: 1) Article 13: No ideology can be established as an official state ideology. 2) Article 14: The Russian Federation is a secular state and no religion can be regarded as official or obligatory and all religious organizations are equal before the law. Article 28: The freedom of conscience is guaranteed and everyone can practice or promote any religion or irreligion. Article 29: The freedom of speech and thought and the right to produce and impart information is guaranteed. And, Article 44: The freedom of artistic creation and the right to participate in cultural life is protected. In this reference to Constitutional Articles, the artists and human rights activists presented very logical arguments concerning the rule of law. However, as will be discussed later, this was a less powerful paradigm than that of the opposition.

In their defense against claims that the exhibition was purposely “anti-Christian” or “anti-Orthodox,” the artists and representatives of the human rights community at the press conference attempted to re-frame the paradigm on Christianity and Orthodoxy (promoted by the ROC MP and others above) to argue that one can at the same time be Orthodox and be critical towards the ROC MP and its role in Russian society. The paradigm was outlining in a sense a different path to being Orthodox. This attempted re-claiming of Orthodoxy, in the form of the argument that the ROC MP does not necessarily represent “all” of the Russian people, was present in past cases described in the previous chapter as well, thus this is not a new phenomenon. At the press conference, for example, the artist Kuzentsova defended against the accusations that her work
was anti-Orthodox by claiming her own identity as an Orthodox believer: “I am a churched Orthodox person….” (Ia tserkovnyi provoslavnyi chelovek…). This was echoed by another artist (un-named in the text) who argued: “As relates to the exhibition, it was not about any concrete religion, not about Orthodoxy or any other [specific] religion, it is simply that ‘the shirt is closest to the skin’…The large majority of participants in the exhibition were Christians. They are talking about themselves. Understand? It was about religion, but not about a concrete Church, not about Orthodoxy. I myself am Christian…” The artist Vinogradov took a very interesting approach when responding to a sly question with negative implications from a member of the Union of Writers, Irina Medbedeva, about “who sponsored” or “gave grants” for the exhibition (generally such questions are asked when the involvement of Western organization is suspected, but in this case there were no sponsors nor any grants): “…[O]n the question of who stands behind us (kto stoit za nami). I will say who stands behind me. Behind me stands my great-grandfather (praded) Pavel Ivanovich Vinogradov, the beloved student of [St.] John of Kronstadt,…who was executed…. Nothing ever stops, it is still going. There is my answer to who stands behind us.” While the precise meaning and logic of parts of this emotionally charged, improvised remarks are not fully clear, the general direction of the statement is that the nonconformist artists are true heirs to the persecuted martyrs of Orthodoxy, while their opponents resemble those who persecuted the believers (and in this sense, “nothing stops”). Such contestation of the meaning of being Orthodox (or, more generally, Christian) and of religious persecution thus becomes an important motif in the clashes of desecularizing actors and their opponents, and, as we will see later, resurfaces prominently in the Pussy Riot case.
The human rights activist Kovalev, at the press conference, also tried to re-claim Christianity from the pro-Orthodox activists paradigm by re-framing the vandals and their actions and the statements made by the ROC MP representatives as “anti-Christian,” and by drawing-on the Christian history of the human rights concept. Kovalev opened his statements by arguing: “Vandalism—is something alien to the spirit, to, if you wish, the major world religions, and to Christianity, perhaps, most of all.” This discursive twist thus places the vandals not as defenders of Christianity (or the ethnic-Russian-Orthodox nation), but as anti-Christian aggressors, thus turning the pro-Orthodox paradigm on its head. While Kovalev argued he “does not pretend to be a serious authority in the area of Christianity,” he went as far as to say that “in his view” the statements made by Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin represented an “anti-Christian position.” He went on to explain that a Christian position in these circumstances would be to follow the biblical prescription to “Love your enemies.” In addition, Kovalev reminded the audience that, “The very idea of ‘Human Rights’ arose as the result of the development of European, Christian, I emphasize—Christian—culture. This is an undoubted fact.” Kovalev thus discursively placed the moral authority of Christianity not on the side of the ROC MP or shargunovtsy, but on the side of the human rights activists and the dissident tradition of the SMPC represented in the freedom of expression displayed in the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition. As will be shown, however, this alteration of the paradigm of Christianity was not powerful enough to fight the paradigm of the desecularizing actors and activists. Moreover, this defense strategy, even if contrary to the artists and their supporters’ intentions, signified, at least to an extent, their surrender to the logic of the attackers. Indeed, it is difficult to claim at once that one is right because he/she upholds the principles of a secular state, and also because he/she is a
better Christian. The injection of religious arguments in the secularist and legalistic discourse could easily be taken to mean that the secularists were accepting the religionists’ criteria as valid if not superior to their own.

A clear transformation of the *paradigm* borne by the artists and their supporters occurred between the cases of the first wave and the initial case of the second wave. At the end of the first wave it was clear that the artists and their supporters were starting to feel fear and pressure from the desecularizing activists and authorities (to the point that some artists fled abroad). However, there was not yet a solidified concern among the artistic community and their supporters about what was happening or a clear attempt to discursively describe and explain the nature of what was occurring. This changed with the initial case of the second wave, the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition, as the participating artists and their supporters, especially members of the human rights community, attempted to discursively frame the major social change that had occurred over the course of the first wave and in which they found themselves with the latest exhibition, most likely unexpectedly. (It is quite possible that the artists and exhibit organizers felt they would be protected in their actions by the private nature of the exhibition and the prominence of the Sakharov Museum and Public Center in international circles.) But, with the vandalism and the resulting media campaign against the exhibition, which as was demonstrated included official ROC MP representatives and members of the Russian cultural elite, a dawning realization of the new circumstances in the cultural field arose. This realization quickly led to the first formulations of the new *paradigm* for the artists and their supporters—that a new period of censorship had arrived.
The early formations of this new element of the paradigm borne by the artistic and human rights communities drew in-part from the language of the pre-Soviet and Soviet past and in-part from a newly constructed vocabulary to make sense of the new form of censorship that had arisen. For example, Lev Ponomarev (2003), a well-known Soviet dissident and human rights activist, as director of “For Human Rights” (Za prava cheloveka), published a statement on January 21st titled, “On Clerical Bolshevism” in which he argued:

The all-Russian movement ‘For Human Rights’ expresses great concern over the manifestations of clerical bolshevism in our country. Nothing else can practically explain the justification issued from the leaders of the DECR of the ROC for the actions of the pogromshchiki [those that carry-out a pogrom] who attacked the [SMPC] on January 18. Instead of the condemnation of the “Orthodox” hooligans by the largest religious organization, we see attempts to equate the vandalism and the anti-clerical exhibition.

In recent times in Russian society opponents of clericalism are increasingly faced with outright persecution. The latest example of this is the grossly defamatory and offensive statements by a number of religious organizations in reference to the human rights defenders who opposed clericalism and the xenophobic school textbooks [for the newly instituted religious curriculum]. Demonstrations against clericalism and medieval obscurantism are equated to persecution of the church….

We call on the Russian public to defend the principle of the secular state and secular education to stop the spread of religious nationalism.

The triumph of clerical bolshevism could be for our country the same sort of tragedy as the coming to power of the communists. [emphasis added—R.S.]

Ponomarev, unlike other actors, correctly argued that the events surrounding the exhibition were indicative of larger desecularizing social trends taking place in the cultural and political spheres in Russia. In the first wave of cases the implementation of the 1997 Law represented a major turning-point in Russia’s desecularization in that the ROC MP’s privilege was ensconced in federal law and supported by state structures. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, this

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had a clear indirect effect on the desecularizing activists’ ability to enforce their *paradigm*.

Ponomarev was thus pointing to new policies implemented at the beginning of the second wave that led, in addition to the power already afforded to the ROC by the 1997 Law, to the encroachment of the ROC MP into several (public and legally secular) social institutions, including the military, prisons, and most recently, education with the impending implementation of a new religious curriculum in schools (thus the reference to the xenophobic and nationalist textbooks).\(^{130}\)

In the early 2000s the opposition began to refer to such encroachment by the terms “clericalization” and “clericalism,” and thus positions in critique of this encroachment of desecularizing forces were framed as “anti-clericalism,” “anti-clericalization,” and “declericalization.” All of these terms were extremely fuzzy and used without any attempts to analytically define them. Perhaps the choice of ‘clericalism’ and ‘clericalization’ as targets was a way of being critical without being anti-religious. After all, the self-avowed anti-clericalists did not speak against religion per se. It was not religion they were criticizing, but rather the Church’s undue control of public and constitutionally secular institutions and activities. Ponomarev’s short statement thus identifies this clericalization of Russian society as a major danger, one consequence of which is the censorship of oppositional, anti-clerical, views. His term, clerical bolshevism, suggested an emerging tyrannical dimension of clericalization. The human rights activist’s use of the word bolshevism calls to mind the varied methods of censorship and repression utilized by the communist regime during the Soviet period—with the warning that

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\(^{130}\) For a more detailed discussion of the ROC activities that were taking place at the time in the aforesaid public (and presumably secular) institutions see Nikolai Mitrokhin’s (2004) informative work, *Russian Orthodox Church: Present state and current problems* (Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov’: sovremennoe sostoyanie I aktual’nye problem). Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, pp. 235-399. See also Knox (2005, 105-131).
such censorship can lead to more violent forms of repression experienced in that period—but
with the Church taking the role of ideological arbiter and enforcer (with the support of state
structures and power) in the new period. Others (see Averiushkin 2003 and Akinsha 2004 for
examples) argued that the new censorship was an example of an “Orthodox bulldozer.” By this
they apparently referred to the infamous bulldozing (according to the orders of Soviet
authorities) of an open-air avant-garde art exhibition in the Moscow district of Belyayevo in
September, 1974. In this metaphor, however, who would play the role of the bolsheviks that
raided churches and attacked believers, or the KGB thugs that used bulldozers to destroy the
open-air art exhibit? Ponomarev’s statement, in his utilization of the vocabulary of
“pogromshchiki” pointed to who might fill this position. The artists and their supporters often
referred to the vandals not as vandals (vandaly), but as “pogromshchiki,” and the vandalism not
as vandalism, but as a “pogrom,” which clearly have more severe connotations given the special
meaning and history of “pogroms” and those that carried them out. By using these words to refer
to the vandals and the vandalism, the artists and their supporters are pointing to the intentional
and ideological nature of the vandals’ actions. As the human rights activist and wife of Sakharov,
Elena Bonner (Akinsha 2004), pointed-out, the vandals had arrived at the museum “prepared to
be offended” with “cans of spray paint in their pockets.” Ponomarev, in his comments at the
press conference on the 21st (where he referred to his published statement), went further in
designating the vandals as “stormtroopers” enforcing the “new variant of [clerical] bolshevism”
(with the support of the ROC MP).
Samodurov\textsuperscript{131} (2003—“On the Exhibition ‘Beware, Religion!’ and the Events Surrounding It”), provided a detailed assessment of all of the claims leveled against the SMPC and the artists\textsuperscript{132} in the Orthodox and mainstream media in an attempt to delegitimize them. The claims were that the artists and the SMPC were anti-Orthodox and anti-Christian, that the vandalism was just a PR stunt, that the SMPC exists on the money of oligarch Boris Berezovsky and is “Western,” “Zionist,” “Islamist,” and supports the “Nord-Ost” terrorists, and so on.

Samodurov comes to the conclusion that the SMPC and the artists had:

…become an object for the testing of mechanisms in the creation of a form of the “modern enemy of the Russian people” (sovremennogo vraga rossiyskogo naroda), and in methods of mobilization in the fight of this enemy of not only nationalist and Orthodox-nationalist public organizations and their activists, but also some members of the church hierarchy, representatives of the Prosecutor’s Office, law enforcement agencies, and most recently, the general public.

This was a perceptive summary. Indeed, an obvious meaning of the accusation that the artists were inciting national and religious enmity was that the enmity was against the Russian people and the people’s faith. The specter of the Stalin era deadly label “enemies of the people” was re-entering the political, ideological, and juridical vocabulary. Only this time it has an ethno-national qualifier, “enemies of the Russian people.” Importantly, the qualifier appeared to have an exclusionary function. Enemies of the Russian people could not be part of the Russian people. Furthermore, the use of this terminology made it possible to blame the artists and their supporters as enemies of the Russian people and enemies of the Russian Church, since the discourse of

\textsuperscript{131} This statement by Samodurov (2003) is available on the SMPC site at: \url{http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_replies_samodurov.htm}.

\textsuperscript{132} A journalist from “Orthodox nabat” (Pravoslavnyi nabat—Orthodox alarm-bell), at the press conference on the 21\textsuperscript{st} of January at the SMPC (2003h), went as far as to ask, “If not in the legal sphere, as you say, but in the artistic sphere, let’s say, someone from the public beats the artists? Would this be vandalism or would it be my artistic expression of my artistic vision of the world.”
radical desecularization saw the two as inseparably linked. Thus, Samodurov’s note prefigured the emerging representation of opposition to desecularizing actors as “enemies of the church.” This label, we will see, became increasingly important in the crises of the second wave.

Interestingly, the SMPC officially closed the exhibition before the end of its appointed run, which was announced at the press conference, and then they placed a notice outside the exhibit hall apologizing for any offense the exhibition may have caused. The official closure of the exhibition was announced by Samodurov (SMPC 2003h) at the press conference on the 21st, where he argued against opposition to the closure from multiple artists (Al’chuk, Sarkisian, Galstian, Kosolapov, etc.) who argued that “under no circumstances should it close.” Samodurov stated that it is better to close the exhibition, “Simply because the exploitation of the fact of the [exhibition’s] destruction would continue further.” (The issue of the exhibition’s closure continued to be discussed by Samodurov and the artists present at the press conference, but transcripts of the meeting were not kept, and thus any further explanations for the closure remain unknown.)

Following the press conference and discussion, a notice was posted outside the SM exhibition hall, which read (quoted in Ageev; see also Portal-Credo.ru 2003): “The Andrei Sakharov Museum and [Public] Center offers its apologies to those visitors whose sincere convictions and feelings were offended by the theme and works of the exhibition. We consider this theme to be important and did not want to offend [anyone].” Although it was perhaps not meant to, the closing of the exhibition and the apology offered in the notice (along with the perhaps intentional language about the absence of intent to offend) represented an act of self-censorship by the SMPC in response to the events surrounding the “Beware, Religion!”
exhibition, an act that, as an *informal redressive mechanism*, marked the beginning of the next stage of the *social drama*. It is possible that the exhibit was closed and the apology offered in an attempt by the SMPC to guard against any further *redressive mechanisms* from the desecularizing activists and their supporters, including any attempts to initiate a criminal trial against the exhibitions participants or organizers. If this was the case, the SMPC was unsuccessful.

The Redressive Mechanisms Phase—The Crisis Continues

The self-imposed closing of the exhibition did not resolve the crisis, and far-more serious redressive mechanisms were set in motion. Let us now turn to these mechanisms. Their analysis will show how the paradigm of the radical proponents of desecularization gained enough power to cause noticeable shifts in the normative structure and law enforcement practices of post-Soviet Russia. It will also show how the opponents of desecularization and “clericaization” were losing ground and increasingly treated as a deviant group whose actions were punishable by law. In a nutshell, the story below is simple. The prosecution of vandals was relatively quickly aborted and case against them dropped. Moreover, their cause gained even more support with Duma votes on the side of desecularizing forces. It was the Museum and the artists who now stood accused of wrongdoing, prosecuted and sentenced to fines amidst a continuing barrage of protests and clashes in the media. A detailed investigation of the redressive phase is provided below.
Redressive Mechanisms and the Vandals

Following their arrest on January 18th, the six vandals faced clear formal redressive mechanisms when a criminal investigation against them was launched by the Tagansky Prosecutor’s Office in Moscow. This investigation led to charges being filed against two of the vandals as the leaders of the group, Mikhail Liukshin and Anatoly Ziakin, under criminal code Article 213, part 1 on “hooliganism” (interestingly, these charges were released in the same month that the “Beware, Religion!” artists and exhibit organizers were charged with inciting religious enmity, as will be discussed in the next section). The charges against them listed the property damage caused by the vandalism at a sum of 538,000 rubles ($1,668 at the time), whereas the SMPC administration was only asking for a sum of 2,500 rubles ($78) for the defacing of the premises and 3,000 rubles ($93) for disrupting the scheduled run of the exhibition (Arsenina 2003). The investigation continued after the charges were filed, and the vandals were released on their own recognizance while awaiting trial.

As the vandals awaited trial, the crisis phase of the social drama continued unabated, and thus along with the ongoing media campaign against the SMPC and artists, the vandals found themselves at the center of different forms of informal adjustive mechanisms. For example, on March 15th the vandals were honored in “an action in support of the defenders of the Orthodox faith” at the Church of St. Nicholai at Pyzhi (Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov’s parish). The action

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133 This sum was reported, for example, in the “Official Ruling to Terminate Criminal Proceedings (Against the Vandals)” (2003) by the Tagansky Prosecutor’s Office available on the SMPC archive at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_hooligan.htm.

134 This action was reported in Brazhkina, “2003. The Events Surrounding the Pogrom at the Sakharov Center.” A picture of the vandals with Fr. Shargunov can be viewed in the Brazhkina piece on the Art Protest website at: http://artprotest.org/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=721.
was sponsored by the Italian-Russian Charitable Fund of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker; and the fund’s director, Andrei Bykov, a well known conservative commentator, awarded the vandals Psalters published on Mt. Athos and icons of St. Nikola. In attendance was Duma Deputy and Chairman of the Committee for Public Associations and Religious Organizations Aleksandr Chuev. With an elected state representative present adding legitimacy to the proceedings, Bykov stated (quoted in Brazhkina), “From this moment Russia knows that Satanism will not stand without punishment.”

In the week leading up to the initial hearing of the case against Liukshin and Ziakin on August 11th, with the help of their lawyer, the two filed a complaint arguing that the investigators’ actions against them were unlawful. The two with their lawyer also attached a request to the Prosecutor’s Office to the case file in which the two “contested the impartiality of the investigators.” The vandal’s lawyer, Mikhail Kuznetsov, argued in court on the 11th that the “investigators had made a mistake by qualifying [the vandals] actions as hooliganism” since “in truth the accused had sought to prevent the kindling of inter-religious enmity”—and thus the case against his clients was “unlawful.”

A brief note is needed on the term “inter-religious enmity” that was often in accusations against the artists, the SMPC, and their supporters. Strictly speaking, the term presumes enmity between at least two religions. If one of them (presumably under attack) is Russian Orthodoxy, then there must be another religion, that of the attackers. The range of possibilities here is limited. Clearly the vandals’ defenders did not imply Islam or Buddhism. Judaism in this episode is not openly mentioned, but, as was already mentioned, the presumed Jewish connection was often either insinuated or bluntly stated in other instances. Anti-Semitic and anti-Judaist currents
(even if masked as anti-Zionism) have been clearly present in the rhetoric of desecularizing radicals.

As the case was heard inside the court, “500 Orthodox believers” protested it outside in defense of the defendants, filling the square. Ultimately, the judge ruled in favor of the defendants, that there was no evidence that they committed any crime, and the criminal case against them was dropped. The judge also spoke-out in support of the charges against the artists and exhibit organizers, thus justifying the vandals’ actions through the criminalization of the exhibition. In the terms of the social drama, therefore, the vandals’ actions were re-defined not as a breach, but as normatively appropriate given the circumstances. The vandals were consequently reintegrated into society as symbols of the further consolidation of the desecularizing normative system in Russia.

Following the court’s decision, the paradigm-bearers worked to frame the decision in terms of their paradigms. Samodurov called the ruling “amazing,” and Yevgeny Ikhlov, a spokesman for the group, “For Human Rights” (Za prava cheloveka), argued the ruling was an “ignomious decision” that gives “blessing for defacing everything that fails to conform to the ideas of Orthodoxy and nationalism.” ROC MP spokesman Fr. Mikhail Dudkov, however, argued that the court was right in its judgment because the actions of the vandals represented “a move to cut short a breach of public order, which is the duty of every citizen” (reported in Arsenina 2003). Thus, despite previous statements by the ROC MP arguing that vandalism or violence are not the correct response to such “provocations” as the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition, a prominent ROC representative spoke in clear support of the vandals’ actions and in

135 Although I was unable to confirm this number of protestors, “500” was reported in multiple sources (see the Arsenina 2003 and Brazhkina pieced previously cited in the text for examples).
agreement with the termination of criminal proceedings against them (perhaps this legal “win” for the desecularizing activists opened discursive space for such an open confirmation of support).

The termination of the case against the vandals marked *an important turning point between the first and second wave of cases*. The vandals that illegally and with full intent destroyed private property went free while the artists and exhibit organizers were charged with much more serious crimes than hooliganism. One group’s actions were clearly criminalized while the other’s was not. Official state structures in the form of the Moscow Prosecutor’s Office thus validated the desecularizing activists and their paradigm while condemning the artists and their supporters and their corresponding paradigm.

This would have far-reaching implications beyond the “Beware, Religion!” case. For example, an exhibition of Oleg Yanushevsky’s work, “contemporary icons,” one exhibit of which was vandalized without prosecution in 2001 as mentioned earlier, at the St. Petersburg Museum of Religion in 2003 was cancelled at the last minute because of fears of an attack (it was clear after the vandalism of the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition that such an attack could be much worse than the 2001 attack). There are reports (see *Article 19* 2005) that the Ministry of Culture placed pressure on the museum to cancel the exhibition. If this is true, then it would be the first instance of direct censorship exercised by the post-Soviet Russian state on the artistic sphere within the cultural field in Russia (as we will see in the next chapter, many works of art would be censored by museums, some public and some private, and not allowed to be publicly displayed over the next few years). By 2004, an exhibition of Yanushevsky’s work at the SPAS gallery in St. Petersburg was vandalized by a group of masked men in fatigues, suspected
members of a radical Orthodox-nationalist group—thus fulfilling Ikhlov’s fear that the court’s decision to drop the case against the “Beware, Religion!” vandals would be taken as a sign by other radical desecularizing activists that such tactics are endorsed by the state (and ROC MP) (Akinsha 2004; Brown 2004; Article 19 2005).

Yanushevsky was supposed to be present at the time the vandals destroyed the exhibition but was not, and he feared that if he had been present that he would have faced a serious physical attack (given their military fatigues and masks hiding their identities). The vandals wrote (quoted in Brown 2004; and Article 19 2005: 8) in the gallery’s guest book: “This challenges the entire Orthodox Church and its centuries of culture.” Police refused to investigate the attack and the threats the artist received following the vandalism. The artist became the object of a media campaign (including by the state-run “Kultura” television station, and radical Orthodox-nationalist publications by “Pamyat” and “Russian National Unity”). Yanushevsky’s son was beaten (the assailants made sure he was the artist’s son first) and his wife received harassment at her workplace. Ultimately, the artist and his family fled abroad when the police continued to refuse to investigate and his work could no longer be exhibited in Russia (Article 19 2005). As the criminal case proceeded against the “Beware, Religion!” exhibit organizers, as will be discussed later in this chapter, such attacks became unnecessary as the growing censorship of the state and various museums and the self-censorship of artists grew.

State-Sponsored Redressive Mechanisms—The Case of the Duma

Although President Putin and those close to him made no official statements about the events surrounding the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition, this did not mean that the state and its
representatives were not actively involved in the events. Such involvement was left to the elected members of the Duma, who undertook votes and released official statements related to the events. On February 2, 2003, a Duma vote (State Duma of the Russian Federation 2003a) was held on the question of whether or not the Duma should encourage the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation’s office to initiate criminal proceedings against the participating artists and organizers of the exhibition (the initiative took place following Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov’s complaints described above). Interestingly, when the first vote was held at 4:51 PM, the results demonstrated 57.8% of the representatives were against such an official declaration. But, when the vote was held again at 5:06 PM (State Duma of the Russian Federation 2003b), it passed with 58.9% in agreement that such a declaration should be sent to initiate prosecution. The official letter of the Duma (State Duma of the Russian Federation 2003c) to Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Ustinov, was authored by Duma Deputy Chuev and sent on the 3rd of February, one day after the votes. (Deputy Chuev was active in the media campaign against the exhibition organizers, and at one point he attempted to create a new law “that would make it a crime to defame or dishonor Russia’s ‘traditional religions’” that ultimately failed [Brown 2004]). The letter decreed that the exhibition was “sacrilegious” and that it was “aimed at inciting religious enmity and humiliated the feelings of believers and insulted the Russian Orthodox Church.” The author thus, with the power of the Duma behind him, ordered Prosecutor General Ustinov to direct the proper authorities to investigate the exhibition and prosecute the

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exhibit organizers and participants. Konstantin Akinsha (2004) reports Sergei Yushenkov, the leader of the Liberal Russia party, after the motion was passed stated: “We are witnessing the origin of a totalitarian state led by the Orthodox Church.” (Although there is no evidence that it was related to his statements on that day, Yushenkov was murdered in Moscow a few weeks later.)

In March 2003, oppositional members of the Duma, including Sergey Kovalev (who served as a deputy from 1993-2003), Sergey Yushenkov, Andrey Vul’f, Aleksandr Barannikov, and Vladimir Semenov sent their own letter to Prosecutor General Ustinov (Brazhkina, “2003”). Their letter indicates that, at least at the level of the legislative branch of government, the merging desecularizing regime was not consolidated yet, and there remained room for contestation. The letter, which paralleled an open letter sent by various human rights activists the week before,138 condemned the Duma decree calling for the prosecution of the exhibit organizers and participants and requested the continued prosecution of the vandals and that no case be opened against the exhibit organizers and participants. Ultimately, this letter had no affect, whereas the letter from Chuev following the Duma vote had its attended affect as charges were filed against the exhibit organizers and participants and an investigation was officially begun.

In April 2003, another Duma vote was held which led to increased prison terms of up to five years for those found guilty of inciting religious hatred (Akinsha 2004; Borisov 2004). As Akinsha (2004) argued at the time, “This was a direct reaction to the Sakharov Museum show.” Akinsha and others (see Article 19) pointed out that the law against inciting religious and

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national enmity had been frequently utilized against artists, but it had “never been used against anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi groups, which operate undisturbed.” Indeed, studies by the independent analytical Sova Center in Moscow documented a rise in xenophobic attacks and rhetoric in Russia around 2003-2004. Importantly, the studies showed enmity toward minority religious and ethnic groups was increasingly propagated in 2001-2004 not only by extremist groups, but also by mainstream media.\(^{139}\) There also was a marked growth in the Nazi attacks on minorities and dissidents. In a highly publicized case, ethnographer and human rights activist Nikolai Girenko, a defender of minority rights in Russia who actively testified as an expert on radical nationalists and neo-Nazi groups (putting many such offenders in prison), and who participated as an expert on the side of the SMPC in the later trial of the “Beware, Religion!” exhibit organizers, was brutally gunned down and murdered in 2004 (Borisov 2004; Article 19 2005: 11). Elena Bonner and Yuri Samodurov, along with praising his expertise in the case against the exhibition and all of his other important work, in an official statement (SMPC 2004)\(^{140}\) argued that his murder represented “the first political assassination in Russia for a professional expert’s activities and the civil position of the researcher.” Four men were arrested and tried for the murder, but the case did not involve Article 282.

In this general atmosphere, the acquittal of the vandals marked an important threshold. Intrinsically illegal acts were now officially (legally, politically, and ideologically) deemed justified, and their perpetrators praised because the acts meant to protect the Russian people and


\(^{140}\) A copy of the statement, which is undated but can be assumed to be from 2004 around the time of the murder, is available on the SMPC online archive at: [http://old.sakharov-center.ru/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_ybijstvo_21_06.htm](http://old.sakharov-center.ru/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion_ybijstvo_21_06.htm).
its Orthodox faith against alleged enemies. Those who broke what had seemed to be social norms now were presented as defenders of the (new) norms. To complete this process of normalization, there had to be a similarly official redefinition of deviant, norm-breaking behavior. Such a redefinition indeed followed when the artists and the Museum, instead of the vandals, were found guilty of inciting religious enmity. Here is how this happened.

Redressive Mechanisms and the “Beware, Religion!” Exhibition Organizers and Participants

At the same time the vandals were facing an investigation, the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition organizers and participating artists found themselves under investigation as well under the much more serious Article 282, part 1, for inciting religious enmity. In October 2003, the Moscow Prosecutor’s Office found no evidence that the artists committed the crime of intentionally inciting religious hatred,141 but by December official charges were filed against Yuri Samodurov as the Sakharov Museum Director and exhibit organizer,142 which were followed by charges against Ludmila Vasilovskaia as the Sakharov Museum curator, Artiun Zulumian as the exhibit curator, and Anna Mikhal’chuk143 and Narine Zolian as the exhibit

143 Again, artist Anna Al’chuk’s legal name is Anna Mikhal’chuk, and thus her name appears in its legal form in all court documents. This tension between her chosen name as an artist and her legal name causes consternation for those involved in the court case (especially the prosecuting attorneys), as can be seen in various court documents (see the testimony given by Al’chuk and others on the side of the defense). It seems that the attorneys wished to call into question not just her art, but her identity as an artist through emphasizing her legal name and making pointed remarks about her artistic moniker.
organizers. The five were officially charged under Article 282, part 1, for inciting religious enmity. The Article read (at the time):

Actions aimed at inciting national, racial or religious [enmity], humiliation of national dignity and propaganda of superiority or inferiority of citizens on the basis of their religious, national, or racial affiliation, when carried out in public or through the media:

Are punishable through a penalty amounting to 500 to 800 minimum wage units or the convicted offender’s salary or other income for a period of five to eight months, or restriction of freedom for a period of up to three years, or deprivation of liberty for a period of two to four years.

The same acts carried out:

a) through violent means or threat of its use;
b) through the use of one’s official position;
c) by an organized group;

Are punished by deprivation of liberty for a period of three to five years.\(^{144}\) (Article 19 2005: 5-6)

Samodurov and Vasilovskaia were charged specifically for (b) using their official position and the other three for (c) conspiring as an organized group to incite religious enmity, and thus they faced the possibility of up to five years imprisonment. Zulumian and Zolian were both Armenian, and fled Russia back to Armenia after it became clear that official charges would be filed.\(^ {145}\) This left the other three to face the investigation and resulting court case, which stretched on in fits and starts for the next two years.

The investigation and trial were not straightforward processes, and as a phase in the social drama, the hurdles that were encountered point to the still unconsolidated nature of the desecularizing regime within state structures, such as the criminal justice system, and the larger

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\(^{144}\) These penalties are the ones that were increased after the April 2003 Duma vote, as discussed earlier.

\(^{145}\) Thus fleeing also resulted in accusations that the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition was an “Armenian conspiracy” aimed at humiliating and degrading Russia. (Ter-Ogan’ian was also Armenian.)
cultural field in Russia at the beginning of the second wave. The cases of the first wave represented aborted social dramas where the possibility of official redressive mechanisms, of criminal court cases, were cut short by the fleeing of the artists abroad, and thus it was not clear how such cases would proceed. As the first of such cases to include an investigation and court trial, the “Beware, Religion!” case makes it clear that the new desecularizing normative system was not yet fully crystallized. Its elements and mechanisms of application were gradually crystallizing as the case progressed.

For example, as Akinsha (2004) reported, the investigator appointed by the prosecutor in the case originally approached art historians at the State Center for Contemporary Art in Moscow to provide expert testimony about the blasphemous nature of the exhibition and the intention of the exhibit organizers to incite religious hatred. These experts in art history, however, gave a major blow against the case when they found neither to be true. This demonstrated the divided nature of the cultural field at the time. Far from every potential expert was willing to support the prosecution, and there still was no established nomenclature of those who would willingly support the new desecularizing regime. Yet, the case was saved by Lochagina, the member of the shargunovtsy that filed the original official complaint against the exhibition, when she filed another complaint “against the art historians for providing what she called ‘false’ expertise.” The investigator was then able to pursue new experts who would give the appropriately affirmative testimony, which was accomplished. Apparently, there was no unanimity in the legal profession either, and the trial faced another hurdle in June 2004 when Judge Natalia Larina “criticized the indictment and returned the case to the [prosecutor’s] office” (Kline 2005). This obstacle was also temporary as the trial was re-opened in September under Judge Vladimir Poroshchenko and
“sporadic” court sessions began in November 2004 (Kline 2005). Even during this period, however, the SMPC online archive shows that while Samodurov and his lawyers filed at least ten petitions to the court, all but one were denied.\textsuperscript{146} In addition, the fact that the case was ultimately tried against the remaining three defendants indicates the power of desecularizing activists and their paradigm in the face of the yet unevenly consolidated desecularizing regime.

Crisis Continues with Redressive Mechanisms at Work

As the court case proceeded, the crisis phase continued unabated with paradigm-bearers on both sides entering the public sphere to promulgate and defend their paradigms, the elements of which had been delineated by the various actors in the initial crisis period but were now tinged with the tension of the trial. Human rights activists continued their support of the exhibit organizers and spoke out in the media against the trial. Ponomarev (quoted in Borisov 2004), for example, told reporters that the trial served “to confirm the exhibition’s warning about the dangers of fundamentalism and politicizing religion.” Ludmila Alexeyeva, then president of the Moscow Helsinki Group (the oldest human rights organization in Russia), and Kovalev (reported in Young 2005) noted, “that this is the first time since the 1966 trial of writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel that individuals in Russia faced criminal charges solely for the content of their artistic works,” which they saw “as a dangerous sign of Russia’s descent into authoritarianism.” Samodurov’s lawyer (and human rights activist), Yuri Schmidt (quoted in Borisov 2004), stated to journalists that he hoped the judge “will be guided by the Russian Constitution and uphold the

freedom of expression it guarantees, as well as the secular nature of the Russian state….I have no doubt that it will turn into a huge mark of shame for Russia if a guilty verdict is delivered.”

American journalist Cathy Young (2005) described the trial as an “absurd witch-hunt” that has “many farcical elements,” and Anna Al’chuk (quoted in Akinsha 2004) characterized it as a “real theater of the absurd.” The SMPC online archive of the events surrounding the exhibition and trial includes copies of over 120 open letters from around the world (mostly Russian, but other countries in the former Soviet bloc, as well as Great Britain, Germany, and the United States are also represented) authored by individuals, such as Vaclav Havel, and groups, such as Amnesty International, in support of the exhibit organizers and in condemnation of the trial against them. Supporters of the exhibit organizers included Fr. Iakov Krutov, Marat Gel’man, Lev Levison, Gleb Iakunin, and Boris Al’tshuler, among many others. Although there is no evidence of any major protests in support of the exhibit organizers during the trial, a small group of avant-garde artists and others did organize a small “theatrical piket” (teatralizovannyi piket) outside the courthouse on March 16, 2005 (Ekho Moskvy 2005a; 2005b). One banner at the picket said: “Prosecutors office is supporting pogrom organizers and obscurantists.” Another slogan said “Fascism begins with pogroms and book burnings.” Photographs also show participants with orange balloons, which apparently was a political statement symbolically linking the defense of SMPC with the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. A small group of supporters did also attend the trial. Overall, given the evidence, it seems the support for the exhibit organizers was restricted

149 For photographs from inside the courtroom, showing both the supporters of the exhibit organizers and those supporting their prosecution, see the SMPC (2003k) online archive at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/Taganskij_sud/foto.htm.
to a small segment of the Russian and international publics, mostly specific artists and members of the small human rights community.

On the side of the prosecution, ROC MP church leader Fr. Tikhon Shevkunov (who was rumored to be Putin’s spiritual adviser at the time) argued (as quoted in Brown 2004), “These artists are rotten, disease-carrying bacteria, and society is using antigens to fight them off.” In his statement “antigens” (i.e., redressive mechanisms) may refer both to the criminal court case and the act of vandalism that occurred earlier. The Prosecutor’s Office also reported “thousands of complaints” (mostly copies of the form letters discussed earlier) from Orthodox laity in support of the prosecution of the exhibit organizers (Borisov 2004; Akinsha 2004; and Ageev).150 From available evidence, it appears that there were no major protests held by radical pro-Orthodox activists during the trial, but small numbers did attend the trial.151

In an interesting turn, however, as the trial progressed the ROC MP began to step back from the case. Fr. Mikhail Dudko (quoted in Borisov 2004), as an official representative of the ROC MP made an important comment in a radio interview, that it was “not a trial of the Church versus the Sakharov Center” but “a trial of the state versus the Sakharov Center.” This appeared a clear and important discursive attempt to divest the trial from the Church’s realm of interest while placing it firmly at the center of state structures and power, thus giving the process more legitimacy by framing it in the more “neutral” terms of a “legal” versus a “religious” framework. In March of 2004, the DECR152 of the ROC MP (2003) released an unexpected official statement

150 Without access to the official documents of the Prosecutor’s Office, this number cannot be confirmed; however, as will be discussed, Ann Al’chuk reported that of the 14 volumes of evidence, 11 volumes consisted of “signed form letters” from “working people” (reported in Akinsha 2004).
151 Members of such groups can be seen in the photographs of the trial available on the SMPC (2003k) online archive at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/Taganskij_sud/foto.htm.
152 A copy of the official statement (Department of External Church Relations of the ROC MP 2003) is available on the SMPC online archive at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/
that seemed to argue that the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition should be tried under the Russian civil code (administrativnyi kodeks—or administrative code) making it illegal to “offend religious feelings” or religious objects (code 5.26), not criminal code 282, part 1. Given the nature of the trial, of the expert testimony given against the exhibit organizers, of the discourse of the court documents, as discussed below, this clearly marked only a surface-level divestment of interest and involvement on the part of the ROC MP in the trial.

The media became an important battleground over paradigms throughout the social drama. Kline (2005) reported “more than 300 articles” related to the case published in Russia and abroad. The SMPC online archive of the events also includes copies of over 300 media reports related to the events surrounding the exhibition, which consisted of mostly Russian publications (in mainstream, liberal, and Orthodox sources), but countries of the former Soviet bloc, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States were also represented. Considering that the events surrounding the exhibition spanned two years, 300 articles is perhaps not a large enough number to be indicative of widespread publicity of the events. Article titles ranged from, “Beware, Zionism!,” “Naked Broad on the Cross as a Symbol of the Human Rights Movement,” “Kill the Post-Modernist,” and “The Verdict Against the Organizers of the ‘Beware, Religion!’ Exhibition—The Best Vaccine against Similar Provocations, Argues Deacon Andrei Kuraev” (echoing Shevkunov’s sentiments quoted earlier), to “Orthodox Jihad,” “Monkey Trial in Moscow,” “The New Middle Ages,” “The Taganskaya Inquisition,” and “Fascism sneaked in unnoticed.” Interestingly, as reported by Brazhkina (“2003”) on August 26, 2003, a group of

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153 To access the articles (and see full citations), see the SMPC (2003) online archive at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_religion4.htm.
artists accused the media for its bias and violation of journalistic ethics in its campaign against the organizers of the exhibition (citing such authors as Dmitriy Sokolov-Mitrich). However, the Grand Jury of the Union of Russian Journalists decided against the artists, that no violation of journalistic ethics occurred, because the journalists’ publications were “well within the scope of the constitutional freedom of opinion and the unconditional right of a journalist to express [his/her] own position.” Notably, the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution were thus utilized in the defense of journalists supportive of the desecularization paradigm, although such rights and freedoms were not extended to the exhibit organizers. This decision thus marked the penetration of the new ideology and desecularizing regime into the field of journalism.

Importantly, the unfolding crisis demonstrated the fluidity and uncertainty of existing conceptions of freedom of expression, of private and public spheres, and the boundaries between the sacred and the profane. The uncertainty, we will see, was shown even by those who could be considered to true experts, including well known sociologists of religion.

Redressive Mechanisms and Criminal Case No. 4616—The Discipline of Sociology and Expert Testimony at the Trial

The trial against Samodurov, Vasilovskaia, and Mikhal’chuk began in November 2004, and the discipline of sociology figured prominently in the expert testimony given on behalf of both the prosecution and defense. On behalf of the prosecution, after the lead investigator failed to get appropriately condemning expert testimony from the group of art historians, sociologist Natalia Markova provided her expertise to the case. Reliance on social scientists like Markova, in addition to experts in art and history, gave an important “scientific reinforcement” to and
legitimation of the prosecutor’s case and the desecularizing activists’ paradigm (Akinsha 2004). Markova argued in her official brief and expert testimony at the trial:

Analysis of the ideological affiliation of the “Beware, Religion!” exhibits demonstrates, at various levels, the expression of an anti-Christian orientation, characteristic of Western counterculture. The sociological functions of these works are the desacralization of Orthodox Christian values, the de-Christianization of society, and the introduction of anti-Christian religious movements.

This was a rather compounded statement. While it rightly points at the desacralizing function of some of the exhibits, it also denies the artists the role of unmasking the desacralizing tendencies of the commercialization and politicization of religion that were so obviously targeted by their work. Moreover, the desacralization argument was accompanied by politically ominous references to Western counterculture (as if Russia did not have its own anti-clerical and anti-religious traditions) and to anti-Christian movements.

Markova furthermore argued that “the sticky spider web of post-modernism” is a distinctly dangerous Western invention, alien to Russian culture, that propagates drug addiction, counterculture membership, homosexuality, and the demographic containment of the West (thus implicitly blaming the West for Russia’s real issues with drug addiction and demographic decline, issues that, along with intolerance to homosexuality, have more to do with Russian culture than that of the West) (Akinsha 2004; Levada 2005). The “Beware, Religion!” exhibition held at the SM thus represented an importation of dangerous Western cultural influences to Russia by marginal artists and a marginal institution (prefiguring the “foreign agent” laws to come in the later period), cultural influences that necessitate resistance from ordinary Russians.

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154 This quote for her expert testimony was included in the official published verdict (“Official Verdict (Samodurov, Vasilovskaja, Mikhal’chuk)” 2003), a copy of which is available on the SMPC online archive at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_obvinenie.htm.
and the Russian state. She went on to utilize the concept of “culture shock” and the “frustration-aggression model” to explain the “justifiable” reaction of the vandals to this dangerous nature of the exhibition.

The defense also drew on sociologists for their case, calling on Dmitri Furman, a sociologist of religion, and the well-known researcher and head of the Levada Center, Yuri Levada (2005), to give expert testimony on the behalf of the defendants on February 2, 2005.\footnote{Transcripts of their testimony is available on the SMPC online archive at: (Furman 2005) http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/Taganskij_sud/020205-furman.htm and (Levada 2005) http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/Taganskij_sud/020205-levanda.htm.} Furman’s (2005) testimony was oddly contradictory, and at one point a defense lawyer had to ask the judge for permission to treat him as a hostile witness. He argued that the exhibit organizers had no intention of offending anyone, that the vandals came prepared to be insulted, but also that the exhibition was “objectively offensive” to believers because some were offended (but some were not). Furman’s testimony served to mystify the question of the intention of the exhibit organizers, a question to which the answer is of the upmost importance given that a successful prosecution of Article 282, part 1 must prove the intention to incite religious hatred (Article 19).

Levada, however, drew on the secular nature of the state, the Constitutional provisions (Articles 13, 14, 28, 29, and 44) protecting the artists and organizers, the “anti-clerical” nature of the exhibition (versus “anti-Christian” or “anti-Orthodox”), and the status of the Sakharov Museum as a \textit{private institution} to defend the exhibit organizers. In addition, he argued, after briefly discussing public opinion poll data his research organization collected on the percentages of self-identified religious and irreligious Russian citizens, that, “The question [relevant to the
trial] is not where lies the majority, but where lies the minority. A normal law-abiding government [i.e., a state guided by the “rule of law”] takes into account any minority interests, prescribing a framework within which it must act so as to not interfere, to not hinder others.”

Levada relied on the discourse of legal rights to defend the exhibit organizers. Ultimately, as will be discussed in the next section, one paradigm and set of paradigm-bearers and experts would be utilized in justification of the verdict, giving legitimacy and prominence to the paradigm in the cultural and political fields, while the other group’s would lose its legitimacy and power.

Criminal Case No. 4616 and the Verdict—Reintegration or Schism?

The trial continued from November 2004 to March 2005, with final arguments given on March 2nd and the final verdict issued on March 28th. Prosecutor Kira Gudim156 (2005), in her closing arguments, argued for the conviction of Samodurov, Vasilovskaia, and Mikhal’chuk for inciting religious enmity, through the use of their official positions (part “b” discussed above—Samodurov and Vasilovskaia) or through membership in an organized group (part “c” discussed above—Mikhal’chuk). From the available forms of punishment outlined in Article 282, Gudim called for the more severe punishment of three years imprisonment for Samodurov, and two years imprisonment for Vasilovskaia and Mikhal’chuk, sentences to be served in penal colonies. She also drew on the available punishments to argue that Samodurov and Vasilovskaia should be further banned from holding positions in their fields (“deprivation of the right to hold positions related to the implementation of administrative and management functions of distribution for

156 A transcription of her (Gudim 2005) final arguments is available on the SMPC online archive at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/Taganskij_sud/020305-gudim.htm. The punishments discussed are outlined in the last paragraph of her comments.
commercial and non-profit organizations”), and that the artworks, which were being held as material evidence in the case, should be destroyed. At this point, there was the very real fear among the three exhibit organizers and their supporters that the three would face time in prison.

On March 18\textsuperscript{th}, 2005, Judge Poroshchenko gave the verdict\textsuperscript{157} that Samodurov and Vasilovskaia were guilty of inciting religious enmity, whereas Mikhal’chuk was acquitted for the absence of evidence against her. Samodurov and Vasilovskaia were not given the more severe punishments called for by Gudim, but were each sentenced to pay a fine of 100,000 rubles (approximately $3,600 at the time). This was a considerable amount for a fine, but it palled in comparison to the possibility of prison sentences.

In the verdict, Poroshchenko argued:

> The conceptual focus of the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition was the public expression in visual-demonstrative form of a degrading and insulting attitude towards the Christian religion in general, and Orthodox Christianity and the Russian Orthodox Church in particular, as well as the religious symbols of Orthodox believers through the public display [in the Sakharov Museum hall] of the specially selected exhibits that incite enmity and humiliate people solely on the grounds of their belonging to the Christian religion in general, and Orthodox Christianity and the Russian Orthodox Church in particular.

Thus, the verdict uses the same language as the complaints sent by Shargunov and his supporters and multiple other complainants. The court decided that the exhibition did indeed offend and humiliate Russian Orthodox Christians, just as the shargunovtsy, nationalist intellectuals, and their allies in the Russian state apparatus had argued. Moreover, the verdict echoed some of the formulas already used in previous cases by desecularizing activists. The formulation referred to

\textsuperscript{157} A copy of the official verdict (“Official Verdict (Samodurov, Vasilovskaia, Mikhal’chuk)” 2005) can be found on the SMPC online archive at: \url{http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/religion_notabene/hall_exhibitions_obvinenie.htm} (it is the third document on the list).
the social memory and national dignity of the Russian people. The verdict said that the exhibition used:

Images, objects and texts that are meaningful for the historical and social memory of the peoples of Russia, and first and foremost, for the peoples who profess Orthodoxy, as well as for other Christians.

Ultimately, the verdict continued, the exhibit:

incited enmity and also humiliated the national dignity of a large number of believers on the grounds of their belonging to Christian religion, and particularly to Orthodox Christianity and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Remarkably, the verdict also appropriated the language and the argument used by human rights activists and other defenders of the artists and the Museum that referred to the constitutional order. However, the verdict’s reference to the Constitution put the argument on its head. Now the artists and the Museum stood accused and convicted of violating the Constitution.

Humiliating the Russian Orthodox people and their Church, according to the judge:

violated the principles of the constitutional order that are affirmed in the propositions of part 5 of article 13, article 14 and 28 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation and guarantee the principle of religious tolerance as a foundation of civil peace and stability of the democratic society.

The text of the verdict represents a significant development of the desecularizing paradigm. On the one hand, it employs crucially important representations and rhetorical devices previously employed in the texts of radical activists and the allies from among the nationalist cultural elite. These include the imagery of the Orthodox Russian people whose dignity is inseparably linked to its faith and Church, and of those who offend the people’s most sacred sensibilities and humiliate its national dignity. While the verdict does not openly call the artists enemies of the Russian people and of the Church, it symbolically excludes them from the Russian people as a national entity by convicting them of incitement of enmity towards it. Yet at
the same time the elements of the radical script are merged with the symbols of democracy, religious tolerance, and constitutional order. Not only did the convicts insult, humiliate, and incite enmity towards the Russian Orthodox people and its Church, but by doing so they also violated the principles of religious tolerance, civil peace, and democratic stability. Importantly, the verdict stressed the importance of religious tolerance towards the presumably offended and humiliated Russian Orthodox majority (even though a majority of Russians was likely unaware of the exhibit and the controversy, and their Orthodox identity, as surveys at the time showed, was utterly fuzzy and weakly related to churchliness). Yet at the same time the verdict’s paradigm completely bypasses the issue of tolerance towards minority beliefs and constitutional guarantees of the freedom of expression. Needless to say, the defense of majority sensibilities in the absence of protection for minority rights is a formula of anything but democracy. Thus, the text of the verdict is a crystallization of the fluid collective representations of the initially marginal groups of radical desecularizing activists into the official, codified language of law enforcement.

As was noted earlier, in order for a successful prosecution and guilty verdict in a case where defendants are tried under Article 282, part 1, intent to incite enmity must be proved through evidence. As demonstrated throughout the trial and in the official published verdict, most of what was considered evidence in the trial consisted of eyewitness testimony by the six vandals, the discussed expert testimony, and copies of complaints received by the Prosecutor's Office. Anna Al'chuk, as reported by Akinsha (2004), said:

…she had read all fourteen volumes of evidence collected by the prosecutor, and that eleven volumes consisted entirely of letters from ‘working people’ expressing their outrage at the show and demanding that the artists be punished. Almost none of the
writers had seen the exhibition—most had signed form letters—but they accused the artists of such sins as torturing Christ. [emphasis added—R.S.]

Thus the question of intent to incite religious enmity was reduced to a simplistic formula—if someone was offended, the intention must have been to offend, and if it was intended to offend (because someone was offended), then it must have been intended to incite religious enmity.

Al'chuk (quoted in Myers 2005), in considering the court's ruling of the other two defendants, commented, “I am afraid the formulation of the court’s ruling will be used as a precedent for the authorities.” This was prophetic; the decision was indeed utilized in the succeeding social dramas discussed in the dissertation.

The fines and acquittal seemed to mark a reintegration of the perceived offenders into Russian society in the terms of the social drama; however, it truly marked a point of tension, of schism in the normative system that would breed further social dramas in the future.

Conclusion

Set amidst the growing authoritarian tendencies of the last decade, The “Beware, Religion!” case was the first in the second wave of cases in my study, and it can be seen as a watershed case in the course of the general social drama of Russian desecularization. There are several reasons to see it that way.

First, this is the first “complete” social drama episode that followed a series of unfinished or aborted dramas of the 1990s that were explored in the previous chapter. This time, the social drama ran a full course, from a dual-breach phase to the workings of redressive mechanisms. As could be expected, this full cycle of social conflict gave the opportunity for the actors and
paradigm-bearers on both sides to mobilize and articulate their paradigms more clearly, which leads me to the second point.

The second reason to see this episode as a watershed case is that broader and more obvious alignments and alliances of actors emerged. Desecularizing activists who in the cases of the first wave looked like rather marginal and exotic radical groups now were able to find support and allies at some of the most authoritative levels of Church leadership, the state apparatus, and cultural elite. The elite realignment in support of these formerly marginal Orthodox radicals manifested itself not only in the defense of those who vandalized the exhibit, but, more importantly, in the adoption of the paradigm that was first introduced by the radicals. In the case of the nationalist cultural elite representatives, the adoption, as we have seen, amounted to a word-for-word repetition of a text initially written by Shargunov. In other cases, there were no verbatim repetitions of the desecularizing activists’ text, but rather adaptation of their ideas for use in more respectable, mainstream discourses. Across the statements of the DECR of the ROC MP, cultural elite members, and Duma votes, we find the themes and symbols first employed by Orthodox neo-traditionalists.

The themes converge in the course of this social drama into a rather coherent paradigm. With the paradigm, the exhibition “Beware, Religion!” is but an episode in the efforts of influential enemies of the Russian Orthodox people and the people’s Church to attack and desecrate national shrines, to incite religious and even inter-religious enmity, to humiliate national dignity and insult religious sensibilities of the Russians. While the terms “enemies of the Russian people” and “enemies of the Church” are not there yet explicitly, the imagery clearly enters the official discourse of the Russian elite within the ROC, cultural establishment, and
political institutions. Blended with political discourse of the 1990s (as embodied in the legal codes and political symbols introduced during those years), this paradigm comes to inform court decisions acquitting the vandals and convicting the exhibit organizers. The ideology of the protection of the Orthodox Russian people from the attacks of anti-Orthodox (and therefore anti-Russian) wrongdoers becomes an issue of the protection of the Constitution, of religious tolerance, and democratic stability. The emerging legal discourse does not, however, afford protections to free artistic expression, private institutions, and dissident belief. On the contrary, it justifies censorship, and we have seen that mainstream institutions, such as the Union of Journalists, consented to the justification. While not represented in the legal language of the court verdict, the paradigm also integrates anti-Western orientations (e.g., opposition to Western counter-culture), a not-so latent anti-Semitic undercurrent, and characterizations of the opponents as intrinsically evil, e.g., as “Satanists,” and as supporters of “bandits,” of Chechens, and of oligarchs.

A third and related meaning in which the “Beware, Religion!” episode is a watershed social drama is that we see in it a complete cycle of crystallization of the emergent, initially fluid collective representations of desecularizing activists into a well-defined paradigm of desecularization, and, subsequently, into new legal normative decisions and practices. The paradigm does not only unite the political, cultural, and religious elite, but it also manifests itself in the selective punishment of the alleged offenders of the Russian Orthodox people.

On the other hand, there is a consolidation of the paradigm of those who oppose the emerging desecularizing order. Their numbers are not large, and include many who were dissidents in the Soviet times and/or democratic activists in the 1990s. There is no evidence that,
as some suggest,\textsuperscript{158} the Russian intelligentsia was consolidated in support of the artists and the exhibit. Rather, we see segments of the intelligentsia and human rights movement converging around a forming paradigm.

Their paradigm is a constellation that incorporates a positive view of the secular state (that has deeper roots in Western rather than Russian historical experience) and a critique of clericalism, clericalization, and “clerical bolshevism.” Noticeably, this critique does not amount to anti-religious or anti-church views. Religious forces are blamed for attempts to dictate, for crossing legitimate boundaries and enforcing censorship, and thus for curtailing democratic freedoms. The opponents of clericalization at times portray themselves as religious, as Christian, and as Orthodox, thus contesting the meaning of these central values of desecularizing discourse. Side by side with this there is a defense of constitutionalism and legal protections for the freedom of speech.

Yet, the paradigm that emerges around the defense of the exhibit is indeed strikingly defensive. Gone are the days when Ter-Ogan’ian and others openly declared that they wanted to challenge the mainstream and its movement towards the right. The nonconformists were clearly not on the attack. Their arguments were lined up to defend themselves.

The above observation is consequential. Essentially, we are dealing with the first instance when those who attempt to challenge the forming desecularizing regime clearly realize that they are outnumbered and overpowered, and that the best they can do is to protect themselves as a

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{158} Anya Bernstein (2014), argued that Western journalists and intellectuals tend to see the Russian “intelligentsia” as one “liberal” block, whereas the composition of even the liberal intelligentsia is split from libertarian tendencies to those of the left (as was discussed earlier in the chapter and is discussed in her article), while a considerable conservative intelligentsia exists as well (as can be seen with such actors as Ageschev and Bykov—many of whom were fellow “tusovki” [members of the Russian hippie movement] of those considered “liberal”). At no point in the previous chapter or this one do I argue that these larger divisions among the intelligentsia do not exist. On the contrary, these divisions are incredibly important, as was demonstrated in my discussion of all of the cases so far.
\end{footnote}
minority against the majority forming under the banners of the protectors of the Orthodox Russian people and its Church.

Further weakening the position of the emerging deviant minority is the lack of a firm unifying vision. We saw in this chapter that even some experts (e.g., Furman) who were expected to testify on the artists’ side in fact endorsed the view of the “objectively” insulting nature of the dissident art.

As we will see in the following chapter, the dissidents were not about to give up. They undertook an attempted counter-offensive. Yet the attempt failed, opening the doors for yet another stage in the consolidation of the new regime of desecularization.
CHAPTER 5

A DEFEATED COUNTER-OFFENSIVE: “FORBIDDEN ART—2006”

Introduction

As was shown in the previous chapter, “Beware, Religion!” became a watershed act of the Russian desecularization drama. The normative uncertainty that had surrounded the conflicts of the 1990s was clearly nearing its end, and radically new norms were emerging. The outcomes of the first completed court trial along with the involvement of state, religious and cultural elites in the defense of the Russian Orthodox people and its Church were difficult to misinterpret. The normative climate of Russian public life had changed, and those who, along with the exhibit organizers wanted to challenge the new normal, found themselves in a position of a dissident group. Legal punishments used against them did not quite match the severity of public pronouncements against them. However, the fact that ideological condemnations that were previously mostly coming from radical fringe activist groups were now endorsed by mainstream leaders and reinforced by court sentences made the case a real turning point in the drama.

Yet, the new dissidents were not about to give up, and this chapter focuses on an attempted limited counter-offensive that they undertook. The counter-offensive, the chapter shows, ended in a consequential defeat and an even stronger reaffirmation of the neo-traditionalist desecularizing paradigm. The new act of the social drama resulted in even harsher punishments for the new dissidents. During this act, censorship and self-censorship more assertively re-enter the stage. We will also see a much broader coalition of radical desecularizing...
and nationalist activist groups demanding repression against those whom they see as the enemies of the Russian Orthodox people. Importantly, it was in the context of this act that the term “enemies of the church” entered the vocabulary of desecularization activists and was used by highly-ranked officials of the ROC. Importantly, during this act the consolidated paradigm of desecularization showed its hegemonic potential when its opponents appeared to accept its logic, even if partially. Furthermore, a remarkable feature of this new act was that for the first time, thanks to Russian public opinion pollsters we can have a glimpse into what the broader public knew and thought about the social drama (not much, as we will see). Let us now turn to a more detailed investigation of this new act of the social drama of Russian desecularization.

Introductory Context for the Case—The Emergence of Censorship and the “Enemies of the Church”

As was mentioned above, the trial and guilty verdict against the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition organizers made it clear to players involved in the cultural field in Russia that a clear normative shift had taken place. The shift privileged the desecularizing paradigm and regime against the freedom of artists to produce and curators and gallerists to show artworks perceived as critical or disrespectful to religion or religious themes. What resulted was a double-movement of official (religious) censorship by cultural boards and gallerists and the informal self-censorship of artists, curators, and gallerists. The censoring of Yanushevsky’s (2004-2005) exhibitions of his “contemporary icons,” through formal and informal means—to the point he felt they would no longer be shown anywhere in Russia, was given as an example in the previous chapter, but it was by far not the only case.
By the autumn of 2005, Andrei Erofeev, head of the section on latest trends in art at the Tretyakov Gallery [an internationally renowned state museum], found one exhibit of his “Sots-Art” (or Russian Pop-Art, including artists of the 1970s, 80s, and 90s) exhibition removed by the Tretyakov’s director — “at the request of representatives of the Orthodox Church,” mainly unidentified Orthodox activists (Jonson 2015: 53; Tolstova 2007). The censored exhibit was Aleksandr Kosolapov’s (1994) work, “Icon-Caviar,” which replaced the image of the Theotokos and Christ child in a famous Orthodox icon (but leaving the easily recognizable metallic border surrounding the image) with black caviar. It was argued that the work reflected the time it was made, the mid-1990s, and thus criticized the well-known black market trade in icons and caviar in that period. Kosolapov, however, updated the meaning to argue, “In the context of today’s Russia the project reveals the connection between the revival of Russian national symbols or signs and the strategy of consumption” (quoted in Jonson 2015: 114). The unidentified Orthodox activists, however, considered it blasphemous, and thus it was removed from the exhibition. In this case, we see the clear power of and a clear victory for the Orthodox activists in the act of censorship carried-out by the prestigious Tretyakov Gallery administration.

In January 2005, the famous gallerist and curator Marat Gel’man opened his “Rossiia-2” (Russia-2) exhibition at the Central House of Artists as part of the First Moscow Biennale for Contemporary Art. He named his exhibition “Rossiia-2” because he saw it as a critical counterpoint to (the actually existing) “Rossiia-1” of Putin’s Russia. Gel’man reported (FitzGerald 2005; Jonson 2015: 51), “Before the exhibition opened, [he] was warned by Russian officials that ‘three subjects are not to be touched—Chechnya, the Orthodox Church, and Putin.’” Gel’man did not specify which Russian officials warned him and his claim cannot be verified,
but it seems a likely scenario considering the time and circumstances. He decided to run the exhibition as planned despite the informal attempt to push him towards self-censorship, and thus the artworks exhibited critically touched on all three of the warned about themes. His exhibition was ultimately allowed to run without major interference, but he did face two court cases initiated by Orthodox activists once it closed, one criminal and one administrative, both of which were ultimately dropped. Gel’man was most likely protected in his endeavor by his fame and status in international artistic circles, protections Yanushevsky and the Sakharov Museum and the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition organizers lacked. Yet, like Erofeev, Gel’man’s experiences, and others I will discuss below, point to the regime of religious censorship beginning to emerge in the intervening years between the “Beware, Religion!” verdict and the forthcoming “Forbidden Art” social drama, a regime that quickly consolidated (and was even internalized by its opponents, as we shall see) and whose effects were widespread and long lasting.

In the same period of the second wave that some artists, curators, and gallerists were facing religious censorship, another contingent of artists and curators was pursuing a rapprochement between contemporary art and the ROC. This desire to seek the approval of the ROC MP, and the emerging need for the ROC MP to provide official approval or disapproval on the religious quality of art, I argue, was symptomatic of the cultural shift that had taken place following the “Beware, Religion!” trial and verdict. Some artists and curators were no longer content to just produce and show art, but found it necessary to be in direct dialogue with the ROC and its representatives in an effort to elicit official approval and thus the legitimation of their artworks (and the field of contemporary art in general, which had been under attack by Orthodox activists since the first wave). One of the first major cases that manifested this shift in
the cultural field was Konstantin Khodiakov’s (2004) exhibition, “Deisis/Predstoianie” (In the Presence of God). The artist “constructed portraits of Russian saints by using digital images of contemporary Russians, which he manipulated and blended using computer technology. The result was a series of portraits with traits of suffering and patience carved on their faces.”

Ultimately, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin “very much admired the exhibition” (Jonson 2015: 85).

Artist and curator Oleg Kulik brought together about sixty artists for the exhibition “I believe” (Veriu) at the Moscow Vinzavod in February 2007, an exhibition supported by the Moscow City Government and the Moscow Museum of Contemporary Art. Kulik had been the object of Orthodox activists’ protests in the past, and thus he prefaced the opening of the exhibition with discussions and lectures in the six months leading up to it, thus “[bringing] spiritual and religious issues to the art scene,” and ultimately his exhibition “managed to satisfy the demands of the local Moscow authorities and the Patriarchate” (Jonson 2015: 85). Artist Gor Chakal in the same period actively pursued dialogue with the ROC MP by meeting with Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin (“with Marat Gel’man acting as middleman”). In his efforts, Chakal wished to rectify what he perceived as “the schism between religion and contemporary art since the performances by Avdei Ter-Ogan’ian in 1998, Oleg Mavromatti in 2000, and especially the ‘Beware, Religion!’ exhibition in 2003...” (Jonson 2015: 86). His efforts took many years, and his exhibition, “Dvoeslovie/Dialog,” did not open until 2010 to mixed reactions from the ROC (including neutral and positive remarks by Chaplin and criticism from Archpriest Tikhon Shevkunov. This mixed reaction needs to be considered within the context of the “Forbidden Art” social drama ongoing at the time as described below.). Ultimately, such movements towards a rapprochement with the church, and the official pronouncements of the
ROC MP for and against such art, signal the recognition on the side of the artists and curators that the ROC MP’s opinion matters, and on the side of the ROC MP the further encroachment of the desecularizing regime into the cultural field as an arbiter of “appropriate” and “good” contemporary art.

In the intervening period between cases another important contextual shift occurred (along with the emerging mechanisms of censorship) that further solidified the desecularizing paradigm and further empowered the desecularizing regime and its actors and activists, namely the entrance of the phrase “enemies of the church” (vragi tserkvi) into the ROC MP official discourse.¹⁵⁹ A local round table on the topic of “The challenges of the time and the path to the development of Church life” was held in June of 2006, and was attended by Russian youth, official representatives of the ROC MP, and journalists. During the discussion, Archpriest Dmitriy Smirnov, head of the ROC MP Synodal Department for Relations with the Armed Forces, contended that the time had come for the ROC to create a list of the “enemies of the church” and propagate it publicly on a website with the same designation (“Vragi Tserkvi”). The list would include the “enemies’” names, addresses, and quotations or examples from their speech, writing, or other performances (a hint that such a list may include members of the intelligentsia and artistic community).

This radical suggestion was immediately legitimized, validated, and given great import when Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, Vice-Chairman of the DECR (and conduit to and measuring rod of Metropolitan—soon to be Patriarch—Kirill), responded, “The list is already prepared” (Spiski uzhe gotovy). In three short words Chaplin not only placed the momentous weight of the

¹⁵⁹ In this section I rely on Solodovnik (2006) and Izvestia.ru (2006) unless otherwise noted.
ROD MP behind the idea that “enemies of the church” exist, but also acknowledged that the Church had already recognized and catalogued such “enemies.” The meaning of the discursive frame of the “enemies of the church” was not clearly delineated by either party in the discussion and thus remained, perhaps purposely, somewhat fuzzy (and thus easily transportable to myriad contexts). Yet, a specific definition of the phrase was not needed to understand the general idea behind it, especially given the cases I have described above and in previous chapters.

This entrance into the desecularizing paradigm of the idea of the “enemies of the church” was fuzzy but still meaningful—and particularly powerful—for three reasons: 1) the ready popular associations of the phrase with the infamous Soviet-period designation of the “enemies of the people” (vragi naroda), 2) the official status and high profile of the two ROC MP representatives introducing the phrase, and 3) the nature of the audience to the declaration. During the Soviet period, the designation of “enemy of the people” was a repressive discursive mechanism that led to severe punishment for those labeled as such, including at one time a ten-year sentence in the Gulag (and likely death). It was used against not only the political opposition of the communist regime, but also more widely for a variety of infractions (or if your neighbor wanted your apartment, or for no reason at all other than to create and use terror as a mechanism of social control). Anyone connected to an “enemy” fell under suspicion as well, including spouses and children (who would receive terms in the Gulag as well), colleagues, and friends. The designation of “enemy of the people” was so powerful because the word for people, “narod,” also held the connotation of the “nation” and because to be an “enemy of the people” was also to be an enemy of the state, which in Soviet communism was considered a “state of the people” (although in reality in did not function in this way). The concept tied together these
powerful notions of the people/nation, and the state, and to be enemy of these was to be excluded from membership in the nation. Enemies of the people thus needed to be confronted, fought, and ultimately punished (severely). The phrase “enemy of the people” brings to mind the sprawling Gulag system, exile, shame and a ruined reputation, and even death.

The advent of the “enemies of the church” demonstrates the strength of the paradigm that combines “nation—state—Orthodoxy” that arose during the first wave and was legitimized by the start of the second wave of cases as we have seen. To be an enemy of the church therefore carries with it the weight of the past discussed above with the added moral-religious dimensions of Orthodoxy. From this perspective, to be an enemy of the church is to be not only an enemy of Orthodoxy (with all the moral weight of religion behind it), but also, by association, an enemy of the nation and the state. Neither Smirnov nor Chaplin verbalized this meaning. Yet, the context of events and normative shifts in which the term was introduced and publicized makes this meaning quite apparent. To label people as “enemies” in this sense discursively and morally implies a directive to confront and fight them (victoriously) in some way—enemies are evil and evil must be confronted and punished. Thus, for what purpose would such an organization as the ROC MP surveil and catalogue its (perceived) “enemies” (defined in this historical and cultural way) and support propagating such a list in a public forum? I fear it was not to love them as Christ directed. In terms of the tactics of the desecularizing activists and ROC MP in previous cultural clashes, such confrontation and punishment of the “enemies” had so far ranged from more spiritual forms of warfare (prayer services—molitvennye stoianie), to media campaigns, protests (pikety), vandalism, physical threats and attacks, official complaints, and criminal court trials and fines.
The status and personage of the individual introducing the phrase, and also that of the individual confirming and legitimizing it, need to be considered as well in attempting to delineate the phrase’s meaning and symbolic power. Archpriest Dimitriy Smirnov was a major figure in the expansion of the ROC MP-led desecularizing regime into the (legally secular) institutions of the military and law enforcement. From 2002 to 2003 Smirnov headed the Synodal Department for the Interaction with Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Institutions. With new legal rights, the ROC MP was able to take control of and expand the chaplaincy to the Russian military, police, penitentiary system, and other institutions of law enforcement (other “traditional” religions have not had the same access to the institutions) under Smirnov, an encroachment that many in the human rights community criticized (similarly to the encroachment of the ROC MP into education). Images of priests blessing soldiers and equipment before battle in Chechnya (and the human rights abuses committed there) were used by critics to question what exactly the ROC’s new role in the military and law enforcement was, and whether or not the Church played the role of politico-ideological control that communist commissars and zampolity (“political deputy commanders) once had.

Symbolically, the fact that the phrase “enemies of the church” first issued forth from the personage of Archpriest Dimitriy Smirnov perhaps pointed to the potentially not so innocuous meaning behind it. Smirnov, as the official head of the ROC Chaplaincy, in an interview in May 2005 (quoted in Knorre and Filatov 2006: 566), argued: “Rus’—this means a military druzhina.” Druzhina in medieval Russia referred to an armed retinue serving a knyaz’ (prince). Later, during the Soviet era, the term was used to denote the supposedly voluntary people’s guard formations patrolling city streets in collaboration with militsiya (police). The choice of the term is thus
remarkable on both counts. Continued Smirnov, “Love for the army is in our genes. For us war is a holy war (sviashchennaia voyna).”

Smirnov’s comments thus evoke the mythology of a “Holy Rus’,” a holy Russian nation, the “Third Rome,” with a spiritual love of battle in-born in its members who are eager for the fight in a holy war against its evil enemies. It is thus difficult not to view the phrase “enemies of the church” within this militaristic-patriotic frame (again, the “enemies” are excluded from the “true” Russian nation, from “Holy Rus’”). And Chaplin, in his incredibly influential role within the ROC MP, legitimized Smirnov’s declaration about the “enemies of the church” without comment, without clarifying the meaning of the concept, thus not-so tacitly endorsing its militaristic-patriotic and potentially repressive frame. Furthermore, although such an announcement at a local round table would normally seem insignificant, it is important to remember not only the presence of the high status ROC MP representatives, which most likely would not be by chance, but also that the audience consisted of impressionable Orthodox youth who tend to be at the forefront of Orthodox activism (including its more violent forms) and will direct the future of the church, and Orthodox journalists, including the well known and influential conservative writer for and activist of “Radonezh,” Evgeniy Nikiforov (who would play an important role in the social drama). At the same round table Nikiforov was quoted as arguing: “Russia is a[n] [ethnic-] Russian national Orthodox state. This must be insisted.”

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160 Several years later, during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this kind of rhetoric and imagery was used at the highest levels of Church and state leadership.
161 Knorre & Filatov’s (2006: 539-540) discussion of the ROC-sponsored “military-patriotic” Orthodox (“vospitaniye pravoslavnogo voistva”) camps where boys (13 yrs. and older) learned to shoot and fight adds reasons to consider Smirnov’s and similar statements seriously. The camps they described were run by the ROC in conjunction with FSB and official military structures. Thus, the Church was indeed in business of training fighters, not in figurative, but in very real terms. One wonders if at least some of the trained boys ended up as “holy warriors” in the battlefields of Georgia, Ukraine, or perhaps in the clashes with peaceful protesters on the streets of Russian cities.
Notwithstanding the limited nature of the round table, the emergence of the frame of the “enemies of the church” was poised to make a significant impact considering its participants. Ultimately, whether or not such a list of the “enemies of the church” really existed or was ever published online did not matter. The discursive frame of the “enemies of the church” was given reality and power, which gave reality, legitimacy, and power to the desecularizing activists on the front lines of the cultural clashes in the fight against the (perceived) “enemies”—a discursive frame we will see in the Orthodox activists’ slogans at the demonstrations against the “Forbidden Art” exhibition below. The power of such a frame was limited at the beginning of the second wave since the phrase had not yet entered the public lexicon, but it would grow in use and strength by the end of the second wave after the Pussy Riot case when its power would be fully realized. Its first utterance by influential ROC representatives, however, indicated a major shift in the cultural and political fields between the “Beware, Religion!” case and the “Forbidden Art” case to come even despite its limited use at the time, a shift that, I argue, further served as a call, along with the lack of redressive mechanisms (such as prosecution) offered against the desecularizing activists’ actions and the emerging censorship, for, if not a full “open season” against the church’s enemies, at least the clear escalation of conflict.

One more contextual detail needs to be added. Importantly, the term ‘enemies of the church” was introduced after the opponents of “clericalization” already had had their first experience of pogroms, vandalism, legal prosecution and serious threats to their safety. They knew already what alleged “enemies of the church” could face, and thus the use of the term was clearly intimidating. Speaking more broadly, this was a period when, following the victory of the Orange Revolution (the first Maidan in Kyiv) the Putin regime was mobilizing forces capable of
fighting (not just metaphorically) similar protests in Russia should any such protests arise. The forces mobilized were diverse. They ranged from the officially endorsed (by Putin himself) youth movement Nashi (Ours) to a plethora of semi-official and unofficial groups that were eager to use any means necessary to crackdown on dissent and protest. The regime’s opponents now had to face not only law enforcement, but also semi-legal (and often illegal) Stormtrooper-like groups. Added to this needs to be a series of high profile murders and suspicious deaths of the regime critics. For example, in 2003 the Duma deputy Yuschenkov was murdered, and the famous investigative journalist Schekochikhin’s sudden death was rumored to have been caused by poisoning. And in 2006 another high-profile political journalist and human rights activist Politkovskaya was shot and killed. One can imagine fear setting in in this atmosphere of intimidation, mobilization of street thugs, and murders of dissidents. This was not a good time to be labeled an “enemy of the church,” and by association, of the Russian people and state.

It is in this context that the second case of our second wave begins, the social drama surrounding the “Forbidden Art—2006” exhibition at the Sakharov Museum. As we will see, the “Forbidden Art” exhibition was an attempt by the exhibit organizers to push back against these changes to the cultural and political fields, an attempt that ultimately resulted in the opposite outcome of that desired as the perceived deviance was again punished, only this time more harshly.

Forbidden Art and the Breach Phase

The origins of the breach phase for this social drama go back to 2006 as curator Andrei Erofeev prepared for his second “Sots-Art” exhibition that would run at the Central House of
Artists as part of the Second Moscow Biennale in 2007. Erofeev decided to take in younger artists in this exhibition, which included works produced between the 1970s and 2000s. Ultimately, a number of the exhibits were removed from the exhibition against Erofeev’s wishes.

In an interview (Zaitseva 2009; and reported in Jonson 2015: 111), Erofeev argued that by 2006 there were three categories of censored artwork: “First, those that used the language of the street. Second, those with non-canonical usage of religious motifs. Third, those [that demonstrated] physicality (telesnost’—or corporeality), playing with all sorts of erotic images.” By 2007, he argued, a fourth group was added: “political censorship, museums began to reject ironic works with political overtones.” The artworks removed from his exhibition touched on all four categories.

In her discussion, Jonson (2015) seems to imply that each category is distinct, thus direct religious censorship is separate from the other categories, as if they were completely disparate and unrelated phenomena. I would argue that all four categories of censored artworks Erofeev recognized relate to the emerging mechanisms of religious censorship and the larger desecularizing paradigm and regime. By “street language,” Erofeev was referring to artworks that incorporated “Russikiy mat,” which is a common “swearing” language used amongst Russians—and which has been a common target since the 1990s of the ROC MP and desecularizing activists who take its prevalence in Russian culture as an indication of the degraded morality of Russian citizens (e.g., it is common for desecularizing activists to attack

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162 A copy (Zaitseva 2009) of the interview can be found online at: http://www.rusrep.ru/articles/2009/07/23/7quest_erofeev
163 Although she does go on to explain how the trial focused not only on works that utilized Christian motifs but also “mat.”
164 Russkiy mat, unlike “swearing” or “cursing” in American English, is a full and separate language from standard Russian. An individual can speak a complete sentence—with nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives—all in mat.
films, music, television shows, and other forms of public culture for utilizing “mat”). For the same reasons I would argue that erotic themes are also censored. As the iron curtain fell, erotic (and at times pornographic) images flooded Russian television and advertising, and this was a major tension point within Russian society for desecularizing activists (e.g., the first organized protest action of the shargunovtsy was to deface billboards they considered pornographic). Often, “the West” and “Western tendencies” were blamed as the origin of such culture, again denying its Russian roots. And by 2005, as fighting in Chechnya was subsiding and Russian forces were emerging victorious, it was clear how much support Orthodox officials and radicals gave to the resurging military and law enforcing power of the state. Finally, as the Putin regime consolidated power against its political opposition and as it embraced and propagated the emerging ideology of the desecularizing paradigm, of the essential unification of the nation, Orthodoxy, and the state, religious and political censorship began to overlap, as I will show in my discussion in this and future chapters. Thus, I argue that the four categories of censorship are interrelated and overlapping and point directly to the emerging crystallization of the desecularizing paradigm and mechanisms of the desecularizing regime. It would be mistaken, furthermore, to see religious censorship as a mere reflection of a general authoritarian trend. On the contrary, it was through the actions and propaganda of paradigms of desecularizing groups that much of the ideology of censorship was consolidated and expanded into the political realm.

Recognizing the systematic religious censorship taking place in the cultural field of contemporary art, Erofeev turned to Samodurov with an idea of exhibiting a group of censored artworks at the Sakharov Museum.165 After receiving approval from the Board of the Sakharov

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165 For this chapter, I will rely heavily on the reports of the events given by Brazhkina (“2007-2010. Forbidden Art”) on her Art Protest website (http://artprotest.org/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=631), Jonson (2015), and the SMPC archive of
Museum and Public Center for the concept of the exhibition, Samodurov and Erofeev began organizing the “Forbidden Art—2006” exhibition, the purpose of which, according to the organizers, was to “monitor and discuss the character and tendencies of institutional censorship in the cultural sphere,” and which would include about twenty artworks that had been censored by museums or galleries in Moscow in 2006 (SMPC 2007a). The exhibition was set to run from March 8th to the 31st of 2007 and would be open only to those over the age of 16 given the nature of the exhibits. In addition, in the original conceptualization of the exhibition, Samodurov and Erofeev had planned to run such an exhibition every year at the SM, something that the SMPC Board originally agreed upon (but later refused as the crisis and redressive mechanisms phases proceeded).

The exhibited works, like those at the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition, were avant-garde in form, and in this case were produced between 1972 and 2005, and thus represented both the Soviet underground and the post-Soviet contemporary art scene, and each fell into one of the four “categories” of censorship discussed above. The artists included two we already know from past cases, Kosolapov and Avdei Ter-Ogan’ian, among others. The exhibition included

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the events (http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/forbidden-art/). Much of the reporting of events in these sources is overlapping, and each secondary source connects to primary documents related to the case. Thus, for the general description of events, in order to make it easier to read, I will not constantly cite these sources in the text. I will, however, cite any primary sources I reference in the text or any specific arguments made by Brazhkina or Jonson.

166 Brazhkina (“2007-2010. Forbidden Art”) reports the approval of the SMPC Board of the exhibition concept—but not of the included artworks that were ultimately exhibited of which the board was not informed and did not vote on. I was unable to locate any original documents detailing the Board’s original vote, but Brazhkina cites the legal documents pertaining to the investigation and later trial of the exhibit organizers, which considering that the official investigators searched and seized SMPC documents relating to the exhibition’s conceptualization, I believe her report to be true despite that I do not have access to the original documents. This Board vote, and the lack of a vote on the exhibits, will become pertinent to arguments I make later in this chapter.

167 The other participants included: Vagrich Bakhchanian, Dmitriy Gutov, Il’ia Kabakov, Viacheslav Mizin, Valeriy Nilin, Mikhail Roginskiy, Mikhail Roshal’-Fedorov, Aleksandr Savko, Leonik Sokov, Viacheslav Sysoev, Group “Blue Noses” (Sinie nosy), Group “PG.” For a complete list and pictures of the exhibits, see Erofeev’s (2007) website of the events at: http://www.aerofeev.ru/index.php?option=209
Kosolapov’s (1994) “Icon-Caviar” as well as his (2000) work, “Advertisement for McDonald’s” that, like his Coca-Cola exhibit in the previous case, included a rendering of Christ superimposed over the McDonald’s emblem with the words (in English) “This is my body” across the bottom. Aleksandr Savko exhibited two works from his (1995) series, “Travels of Mickey Mouse through the History of Art,” which superimposed Mickey Mouse’s head on that of Christ in famous paintings. Vagrich Bakhchanian’s (1985) photo collage showed Christ crucified on the cross but with the Order of Lenin (Lenin’s face in profile) replacing the face of Christ. Ter-Ogan’ian’s contribution was his “Explosion No.5,” which was a colorful print resembling a comic-book style explosion with the letters “Kh,” “U,” “Ia,” “K” across the middle, spelling a “russkiy mat” word (one of innumerable derivatives from the root “khuy,” or “dick,” khuyak means a sudden, strong bang or hit). Leonid Sokov’s “Monument to the most important Russian word,” consisted of a bronze statue of the letters “Kh,” “U,” “Y,” spelling the “mat” word for “dick” or “prick.” Exhibited works by Group “PG” included photo-collages from their series, “Glory to Russia” (Slava Rossii), that criticized corruption in the military and society, one of which showed an older male military officer having sexual intercourse with a younger male soldier. Another showed a military officer with handfuls of rubles, and yet another portrayed a topless woman in a shower spraying herself with a black substance (presumably petroleum) with an image of an oil rig in the background—all of which had the words “Glory to Russia” across the bottom. The exhibit from the “Blue noses” group, “Chechen Marilyn” (2002), was the only one to include themes dealing with Islam. It consisted of a photograph of a woman wearing a black hijab with only her eyes visible and with something wrapped around her waist with wires protruding from it.

Com_content&view=article&id=303&Itemid=165; or Brazhkina (“All of the Forbidden Art Exhibits”—includes the expert testimony against the exhibits from the later trial) at: http://artprotest.org/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=1900.
(presumably explosives) instead of a belt. On either side of her a hand holds up her skirt (in a satirical play on Marilyn Monroe’s famous picture) to reveal black panties and high lace stockings with a skull and crossbones pattern repeated down them ending in black high heels. Interestingly, the works utilizing Christian motifs and russkiy mat came under scrutiny at the trial but others did not, including “Chechen Marilyn,” which also covered religious themes. Also, although the “Slava Rossii” exhibits were critical of the corruption of the military and society they were not considered at trial, yet they did indirectly become the objects of protests, as will be discussed later.

It was clear in this case that the exhibit organizers recognized that their exhibition represented a conscious breach of the crystallizing desecularizing normative system and its mechanisms of censorship, and they employed various tactics in an attempt to mitigate this apparent deviance. Visitors to the exhibition were met with false walls shielding the exhibits from view. To view the exhibits, the visitors had to make the conscious choice to view them through peepholes in the walls 145 cm from the ground (which meant shorter guests had to utilize stepladders). Visitors under the age of sixteen were blocked from entrance in a clear attempt to thwart any claims that the organizers were attempting to corrupt minors (which had arisen with previous cases). Furthermore, visitors were not allowed to take any photographs of the exhibits, again perhaps to protect the SM and the organizers from having photos published in the media and online. In the end, the exhibition ran as scheduled and was visited by 1,020 people, but it was clearly not without its controversy (SMPC 2007a; Jonson 2015; Brazhkina “2007-2010).
Ultimately, unlike previous cases that took a two-breach phase to initiate a crisis, the opening of the “Forbidden Art” exhibition was enough of a breach by itself to initiate the next phase of the social drama. This makes sense in light of the consolidation of the desecularizing paradigm and regime in the wake of the “Beware, Religion!” trial and verdict (and the dropped prosecution against the vandals) as I discussed here and in the previous chapter. The artists and curators were clearly in a defensive position and recognized it, whereas the desecularizing activists, with their previously tested tactics, were poised to quickly and aggressively respond as soon as the breach was realized.

The Crisis Phase

In describing the crisis phase of the social drama’s previous act, the “Beware, Religion!” episode, I focused greatly on the articulation of the paradigms of the sides involved in the conflict. This was a justified and need emphasis. Indeed, at that stage the articulation of paradigms and their endorsement by high-profile players (especially on the side of desecularizing activists) was crucially important for understanding the episode’s outcome, in which cultural scripts were translated into the normative language of court decisions. In accordance with Victor Turner’s approach, the outcomes of each act set the stage and shape the development of the next one. This applies to the “Forbidden Art” episode. Its course was shaped by the outcomes of the “Beware, Religion!” episode. In particular, the paradigms that had been previously articulated were reaffirmed in the new episode. Therefore, in this section there will be much less emphasis on paradigm formation (with the exception of the now even more obvious connection of the radical desecularization paradigm with racism and ethnodoxy) Instead, I emphasize here the
distinctly new characteristics of this act in the social drama of Russian desecularization. The new characteristics include a markedly increased and more radical reaction to the new exhibit by desecularizing forces, in contrast with an apparent lack of a noticeable support for the exhibit organizers from the Russian human rights community, or even from the SMPC itself.

Desecularizing Orthodox Activists and the Social Drama

The scale of the response by desecularizing Orthodox activists to the “Forbidden Art” exhibition was unprecedented in comparison with previous cases. The number of groups and individuals participating in the social drama rose dramatically, with Brazhkina arguing that as many as 4,000 Orthodox activists participated in the events, which lasted three years.\textsuperscript{168} Whereas previous cases were mainly driven by one group (the SPB/SPKh with the Mavromatti case and the shargunovtsy with the “Beware, Religion!” case, for example) with members of other groups participating more loosely while allowing the particular group to take the lead, the “Forbidden Art” social drama drew the direct and active participation of at least eight separate groups and their members (and quite likely many more). No one group took the lead, but each seemed to openly vie for the opportunity to publicly condemn and protest the exhibition. As Jonson (2015: 116) argues, “The exhibition immediately became like a red flag for conservatives of all kinds and colors.” This marked an important turning point in the second wave of cases. Now Orthodox-nationalist groups saw such exhibitions as an important rallying point for their cause, and they felt empowered enough to be completely open and public about their goals and

\textsuperscript{168} I was unable to find further sources to verify her numbers of participants, but given my own research on the events I feel her number is accurate, as is demonstrated just by the sheer number of Orthodox groups that participated in the events that I describe in this section.
ideology, as we shall see. Furthermore, such groups included not just the usual “cast of characters” of the shargunovtsy and SPKh, but also much more radical far-right groups with memberships that openly professed neo-Nazi and skinhead orientations. Thus, with the “Forbidden Art” exhibition *crisis* phase there is a clear increase in both the scale of participation and the public nature of the activities of the desecularizing activists, and also the radicalization of at least a significant contingent of the activists’ ideology.

All of the desecularizing groups and individual activists that participated in the events were of a nationalist-patriotic and traditionalist-Orthodox orientation. Although their ideologies differed on various issues, such as whether to profess a monarchist or loyalist-statist (pro-Putin) orientation, or to support the ROC MP or decry it as a “Jewish conspiracy,” or whether their main goal should be ridding the country of “immigrants” or engaging in politics with an nationalist-Orthodox orientation, all of the groups held at the center of their ideology an understanding that Orthodoxy was the spiritual and moral core of a mythic “Holy (ethnic-) Russian nation” or a “Holy (ethnic-) Russian civilization” that should form the basis of contemporary Russia and that was currently under siege by various enemies. The ideology of a majority of the groups thus included core elements of cultural racism where ethnic-Russian-ness (with an “Orthodox soul”) was privileged over other categories. (In this sense, even ethnic Russians if they were found to be lacking an “Orthodox soul” as defined by these groups would be excluded from membership in the “Holy Russian nation.”)

Support for this ideology could be found among representatives of the ROC MP, including such figures as Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, Deacon Andrei Kuraev, and Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov. For example, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, in a discussion in
2004 summarized by Knorre and Filatov (2006: 565), argued: “…the defense of the family, homeland (rodnoi zemli) and its holy shrines (sviatyn’—holy objects and places) are more important values and more lofty than human life itself…” And, for some of the more radical groups, their ideology also included elements of biological racism (such as the banning of inter-ethnic and inter-racial marriages and even physical attacks and murders of non-ethnic-Russians).

Among the groups’ various “enemies” endangering the mythic nation (which were prioritized differently based on the overall ideology of each group) were included: Jews, Chechens, other non-Russian ethnic groups, homosexuals, the West (and its perceived cultural tendencies, which are often linked discursively with anti-Semitic ideological elements), democracy, globalization/globalism, liberalism, ecumenism, “sects,” and the broad category of “Satanism.” Among the more radical elements of such groups it was common to hear the well-known phrase “Russia for (ethnic-) Russians” (Rossiia dlia russkikh). But for even the less radical groups their ideology was clearly built on a common discursive frame in Russia, that of the Manichean “Svoy – Chuzhoy” (“Ours” vs Aliens, Us vs Them) dichotomy.

Thus, the swelling of the ranks of desecularizing activists due to the involvement of radical nationalist, racist, and even Nazi groups has further highlighted a very important aspect of their shared paradigm. The highlighted aspect is a fusion of religious and ethnic identities that translates into exclusion and intolerance of anything that is ethnically/racially and/or religiously alien. Sociological studies show that already by 2005 elements of such a worldview were present in the Russian collective psyche. Karpov, Lisovskaya, and Barry (2012) use the term “ethnodoxy” to describe the popular ideology that fuses religious and ethnic identities, breeds hostile attitudes to ethno-religiously alien elements and seeks a protected status for “native”
religion. Yet, their description of ethnodoxy is as a latent social-psychological syndrome that underlies attitudes manifestly expressed in social research. In contrast, the social drama we are looking at in this study presents ethnodoxy in its actualized ideological form, not latent but quite manifest. Moreover, this is not a dormant ideology that needs to be discovered (through survey interviews) in the minds and hearts of the masses who are by and large socially and politically inactive. Instead, it is an ideology that is energetically acted upon, one that animates aggressive political action. It is ethnodoxy actualized. The syndrome of religious, nationalist, anti-western, and racist symbols that we see on the banners and in the statements of radicals also demonstrates the making and remaking of ethnodoxy through action. I mean it in a very real and mundane way. We see meanings animating the radical movement. And we see very real acts (carrying banners, making statements, shouting slogans, etc.) which re-create the old and create the new ideological symbols and syndromes. Yet another important dimension here is that through such acts not only ideologies but also social identities are constructed. Just as ethnodoxy is about identities (it fuses ethnic and religious ones), ethnodox acts define, reaffirm and publicize the fused identities. Finally, it is crucial that the newly (re)made identities are defined vis-à-vis a spectrum of “others” (Jews, Westerners, liberals, ecumenists, “sects,” and so on). This makes sense and is nothing new in the context of social identity theory; collective identities of imagined “in-groups” are defined vis-à-vis “out-groups.” Yet, a remarkable characteristic of this actionist identity construction by radical groups is how negative (i.e., in negation of how many outgroups and perceived ‘enemies’) the construction is. But let us return to the participating radical groups. The leadership and memberships of such groups are often overlapping, interconnected, and fluid, and thus are difficult to trace clearly. In an effort to clarify for the reader the ideologies and
The interconnections of the eight main formations that participated in the social drama surrounding the “Forbidden Art” exhibition, I have included a brief compendium of the groups below. Thus, along with Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov and the shargunovtsy and Fr. Kirill Sakharov, Simonovich-Nikshich, and Ageshchev, and the SPB/SPKh discussed in previous chapters, the following groups played prominent roles in the social drama surrounding the “Forbidden Art” exhibition:

1. Narodnyi Sobor (NS)

The NS was founded in 2005 and served as an umbrella organization for nationalist-patriotic and traditionalist Orthodox groups, a number of which are radical far-right in orientation. Knorre and Filatov (2006) argue that the NS took the place of the SPB in the mid-2000s as the main umbrella organization for Orthodox groups. The most important personage in regards to the NS with this case is its founder and co-chairman Oleg Kassin (who had played a role in the attempted prosecution of Gel’man and his “Rossiia-2” exhibition among others).

To understand the ideology of the NS and the nature of its leader, it is important to consider Kassin’s history. He started as a leader of the military-patriotic youth club, “Variagi,” and was a prominent member of the notorious Russkoe National’noe Edinstvo (Russian

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169 Simonovich-Nikshich’s activities were directly legitimized by the ROC MP when in 2006 Patriarch Aleksiy II awarded him the Order of St. Sergius of Radonezh of the third degree (SMPC 2007b at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/forbidden-art/whois/groups/).

170 My sources for this section include: Jonson (2015), Knorre and Filatov (2006), Verkhovskiy and Kozhevnikova (2009—“DPNI,” “NS,” “Russkii Marsh,” “RONS,” “RNE”), Pribylovsky’s website Antikompromat (for his entry on the SPG see: http://www.antikompromat.org/s_pg/spr_spg.html), Brazhkina’s (“Nalimov Mikhail”) entry on Nalimov and the OPM on her Art Protest website (http://artprotest.org/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=420) and the SMPC (2007b) website description (that takes from Verkhovskiy and others) of a few of the groups (http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/forbidden-art/whois/groups/).

171 People’s Sobor, or People’s Council. The word sobor in Russian history, and especially Church history, means more than just a council. Sobor and sobornost’ (counciliarity, or Catholicity) point to the principles of organization and governance of Orthodoxy and, at for the Slavophile philosophers and their followers, to a fundamental characteristic of Russian mind.
National Unity—RNE). The RNE was founded by Aleksandr Barashkov and it stood as one of the strongest ultra-right groups of the 1990s with a membership in the thousands (it split apart in 2000, and thus lost its power as a united organization). The group’s ideology was firmly set in a cultural and biological racism that privileged the ethnic Russian (Orthodox) nation (intermarriage with other ethnic groups was banned). In many sources the group was categorized as “fascist” or “neo-Nazi” in orientation. The group was militarized and members often received military-patriotic training, including Kassin, as his history with “Variagi” suggests. RNE took part in the armed conflict in Moscow in October, 1993. As an umbrella organization, the NS and Kassin were active in the creation of the Narodnaia Zashchita, another major player in the social drama. Jonson (2015: 116) argues that the Narodniy Sobor had direct connections to the Patriarchate, especially given that the representative of the ROC MP participated in the group’s initial activities. Brazhkina even reports that Kassin declared that he regularly gave updates about the events surrounding the “Forbidden Art” exhibition to the Patriarchate, but the ROC MP made no public pronouncements supporting this claim. [Duma Deputy Kur’ianovich was connected to the NS, and he will play a role in our current social drama.]

2. Narodnaia Zashchita (People’s Defense—NZ)

The NZ was one group that formed under the umbrella of the NS with direct connections to Kassin and whose main members were shargunovtsy, and thus were directly connected to Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov and his church, St. Nikolai in Pyzhi. Part of the NZ ideology was the reclaiming of the human rights concept for an “Orthodox human rights” framework (along with the ideology of the NS described above and the shargunovtsy previously discussed). This
reclaiming involved the reinterpretation of the concept of human rights from within the nationalist-patriotic and traditionalist-Orthodox ideology of the group, and thus this new concept of human rights privileged the “rights” of those fitting the “ethnic-Russian, Orthodox-soul” paradigm, rights that members of the NZ (and other such groups) saw as under attack by various “enemies” (including the SMPC as the “Forbidden Art” social drama suggests). Interestingly, the main figures of the NZ involved in this social drama were Vladimir Sergeev and his wife Anna, and Mikhail Liukshin—Sergeev and Liukshin were two of the “Beware, Religion!” vandals. [The NZ had connections to Duma Deputy Chuev, who also played a prominent role in the last chapter and will again in this new social drama. Chuev has affiliations across multiple groups.]

3. Soiuz Pravoslavnykh Grazhdan (Union of Orthodox Citizens—SPG)

Pribylovskiy (Antikompromat, “Soiuz Pravoslavnykh Grazhdan”) describes the SPG as a “socio-political” and “nationalist-Orthodox” association. The organization formed in the late 1990s out of the Orthodox-Political Meetings (Pravoslavno-Politicheskie Soveshchaniia—PPS) and attracted members of the nationalist-Orthodox elite with political aspirations and interests in nationalist Orthodoxy-oriented social, educational, and charitable activities. The membership of the SPG reads like a “who’s who” of the more mainstream nationalist-Orthodox elite. The group’s membership boasts connections to such politicians as Sergei Glaz’ev, Sergei Baburin, and Chuev, as well as such cultural elites (that were discussed in the previous chapter) as Burliaev, Klykov, Nazarov, and Astaf’ev. Igumen Kirill Sakharov (discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the SPB and SPKh) and Fr. Vladislav Sveshnikov are also connected to the group. Two prominent figures in the SPG leadership, Kirill Frolov and Evgeniy Nikiforov,
played especially important roles in the social drama surrounding the exhibition. [Baburin and Chuev will both play important roles in the new social drama discussed here.]

4. Obedinennaia Pravoslavnaia Molodezh (United Orthodox Youth—OPM)

The origins of the OPM are difficult to trace, but its leader, Mikhail Nalimov, seems to have come more prominently onto the scene as an Orthodox activist only around 2006, with the events surrounding the “Forbidden Art” exhibition in 2007 bringing him and his (short-lived) group the most attention. Nalimov was a businessman, blogger, and had political aspirations (as a member of the party “Spraviedlivaia Rossiiia” [“Just” or “Right” Russia]). Brazhkina (“Nalimov Mikhail”) reports that Nalimov was affiliated with the group “Molodaia Rus’” centered at the Novospasskiy monastery under Bishop Alexiy Frolov (some members of “Molodaia Rus’,” most likely under Nalimov’s direction, were purported to have taken part in the protests against the “Forbidden Art” exhibition). The OPM and Nalimov took part in other various protests against “sekty” and the “Academician Ginzburg”172 and his critical publication on the dangers of clericalization (in conjunction with other groups, such as the SPKh, NS, and NZ) around the same time as the “Forbidden Art” protests. The OPM was clearly a nationalist-patriotic and traditionalist-Orthodox group, but there are no clear public delineations of the group’s ideology (or any reports on its activities or membership).

5. Dvizhenie Protiv Nelegal’noi Immigratsii
(Movement Against Illegal Immigration—DPNI)

The DPNI was established under Aleksandr Belov in 2002 with the participation of Vladimir Tor and it was a radical far-right group with a large neo-Nazi and skinhead membership (the organization split in 2008 with multiple splinter groups resulting). Belov was an active member of the radical nationalist-traditionalist organization “Pamiat” (Memory), and was charged with and imprisoned for multiple weapons violations over the years. The DPNI, as its name suggests, was a group with a cultural and biological racist ideology focused on ridding the “ethnic-Russian nation” of “illegal immigrants,” mostly “kavkaztsy” (people from the Caucasus region). The group’s ideology was also strongly anti-Semitic and basically against any non-Russian ethnic group (although they semantically gave “rights” to other “traditional” ethnic groups located in the Russian region—as long as they stayed submissive to the “ethnic-Russian nation”). The DPNI ideology over time assimilated the notion that Orthodoxy forms the spiritual-moral core of the ethnic-Russian nation, which led to the participation of some DPNI members in the “Forbidden Art” social drama. Importantly, the DPNI saw themselves as “ethnic-Russian human rights activists” whose purpose was to protect ethnic-Russians from non-ethnic Russians and their degrading influence on Russian culture, which most infamously led to the physical attacks by DPNI members on “kavkaztsy” in the course of ethnic tensions in the city of Kondopoga in the Karelia region of Russia (2006). The “Kondopoga” imagery would play an important role in one of the protests of the social drama. [Politician Baburin had connections to the DPNI as well.]
Vladimir Tor, a founding member of the DPNI who would go on to create the “Russkiy marsh” (Russian Marches were the largest rallies of radical nationalist groups held in Moscow since 2005, and later in other large Russian cities) and was an active participant in the social drama.

6. Russkii Obshchenatsional’nyi Soiuz (Russian All-National Union—RONS)

RONS is one of the oldest national-patriotic organizations, having risen to prominence in the 1990s. Members of RONS in the early period had much success in politics. The organization was not originally neo-Nazi or skinhead in orientation, but such orientations gained prominence within the group by the mid-2000s. RONS had significant ties to the DPNI, and its members engaged in similar far-right activities such as ethnic attacks (including an attempt to reproduce “Kondopoga” in Stavropol that ultimately failed because of police surveillance and intervention) and attacks on (including burning-down) gay clubs. As with the other groups, Orthodoxy made its way into the group’s cultural and biological racist ideology as the spiritual-moral core. [RONS had loose connections with the SPG and DPNI, and connections to politician Baburin.]

Desecularizing Activists, the Crisis, and Initial Redressive Mechanisms

The response of the Orthodox activists, ROC MP representatives, and pro-Orthodox Duma Deputies and journalists to the opening of the “Forbidden Art” exhibition was swift and aggressive, and included tactics and redressive mechanisms tested in previous conflicts, such as media campaigns, filing official complaints, creating form letters and calling believers to action, demonstrations (“pikety”), and issuing threats. By March 13th the media campaign began, and
despite the prohibition against taking photographs at the exhibition, a critical review with photos was published in Novye Izvestiia, and by March 16th Interfaks-Religiia had published three critical pieces (reported in Brazhkina “2007-2010”) including an announcement by Kirill Frolov of the SPG calling for a “psychiatric expertise” of the participating artists (thus calling their sanity into question, a tactic that would become more common in future cases), a statement by Deacon Andrei Kuraev that called for the banning of the exhibit organizers from their profession, and statements made by Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin (including that the exhibit organizers “should be perceived as being absolutely outside of normal human communications [literally, as those with whom absolutely nobody can shake hands –“sleduet vosprinimat’ kak absoliutno nerukopozhatnykh liudey”].”

Within days the media campaign against the exhibition saw articles published across myriad mainstream and Orthodox media (Russkaia Linia, Pravaia.ru, KM.ru, Pravoslaviie i Mir, Versiia, Kredo.ru, Blagovest-info, Radonezh, etc.), with such well-known Orthodox or pro-Orthodox commentators as Sokolov-Mitrich, Maksim Sokolov, Aleksandr Krutov, and Mikhail Leont’ev weighing in against the exhibition and its organizers. On the 20th Duma Deputy Chuev publicly announced his intentions to join protests against the exhibition. And, in one version of events, Vladimir and Anna Sergeev (of NZ) visited the exhibition already on March 10th and Anna was reported to have taken photographs with her mobile phone (another version placed them at the exhibition much later, but the details were still very similar) while Vladimir waited outside afraid to enter given his participation in the vandalism of the previous exhibition. Ultimately, Vladimir and Anna circulated the photos not only to Mikhail Liukshin, another
vandal and NZ member, but through Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov to the parishioners of his church St. Nikolai in Pyzhi.

A flurry of official complaints from various activists and groups coincided with the media campaign. It seemed as if no group wished to be left out, that everyone wanted a piece of the action represented by calls to prosecute. By March 20th four separate complaints were sent: 1) Vladimir Tor (Russkiy marsh/DPNI) sent a complaint to the Taganskiy Prosecutor’s Office. At a round table the same day he was reported (in Brazhkina) as arguing, “the first impulse [in response to the exhibition] is to arrange a pogrom.” Considering Tor’s radical history, the “pogrom” he had in mind could potentially be much more violent than that of the “Beware, Religion!” pogromshchiki. 2) The past “pogromshchiki” (NZ/shargunovtsy) bypassed the tactic of acting first with vandalism, and instead, through Vladimir and Anna Sergeev, sent an official complaint also to the Taganskiy Prosecutor’s Office. 3) Oleg Kassin’s (NS/RNE/NZ) complaint bypassed the local (Taganskiy) prosecutor directly for the Moscow Prosecutor’s Office. 4) Finally, Fr. Aleksandr Shargunov, in his by now perfected tactic, authored and circulated form letters online that used the same language as those that had been so effective in the past (again, Brazhkina argues that an entire volume [“tom”] of evidence at the later trial was made-up of Shargunov’s form letters).

To make sure there was action taken, Kassin and the NS followed up on the 27th with an official complaint directed to Duma Deputy Kur’ianovich and Chaplin. An open letter was also sent on the 30th from Deputy Chairman of the Duma Sergei Baburin (connections to SPG, DPNI, and RONS) to the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation demanding a criminal case to be opened against the SM and exhibit organizers. A statement addressed by Baburin
(2007) was circulated on LiveJournal around the 30th as well, and it stated that the SMPC was holding:

…the exhibition ‘Forbidden Art,’ which exhibits ‘art creations’ that are blasphemous for Orthodox believers. Most of the exhibit items are of an anti-religious, anti-state, and extremist character, and denigrate Russia’s Armed Forces and the Russian Orthodox Church. These malicious insults provoke the rising in society of inter-ethnic and inter-religious enmity, and denigrate the religious sentiments of people” [emphasis added— R.S.].

Baburin’s statement is interesting in that it not only includes the desecualrizing paradigm of the unified “(ethnic-Russian) Nation—the State—and Orthodoxy.” It is also an example of the extended desecularizing paradigm that links the Church to the Armed Forces. The link implicitly militarizes Orthodoxy and sanctifies the military, so that now both are presented as sacred, and an insult against them “denigrates the religious sentiments” of the Russian people. Thus, Dimitriy Smirnov’s imagery of Holy Russia as a “druzhina” is put to work in the politician’s statement. The links between Church, State, and (ethnic) nation are thus further specified and expanded. Overall, these developments marked an unprecedented rise in the sheer number of actors and groups filing complaints in such a case, as well as a further consolidation of the paradigm of radical desecularization.

Redressive mechanisms employed by Orthodox activists during the showing of the exhibition also included organized demonstrations outside the SMPC. The first demonstration (“piket”) was held March 28th and was organized by Nalimov and the OPM174 and was

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173 As in the previous chapter, we again see in Baburin’s use of quotation marks to call into question the nature of the artists as artists what Wagner-Pacifici (1986: 148) refers to (as a phenomenon in root paradigm development) as “quotation mark syndrome.” For her, such a syndrome marks one type of mechanism of “definition work” used by paradigm-bearers to discredit the oppositional paradigm while reaccrediting one’s own (71).

174 On April 9th, following the pikets and the closing of the exhibition, Nalimov and the OPM would also go on to organize a round table at the Central House of Writers in Moscow titled, “The foreign (inorodnoyy) character of the Western understanding of art in terms of the historical traditions of Russia.”
sanctioned by the Moscow government. The OPM was not a registered group at the time, so the group pursued permission from the authorities through the political party, “Spravedlivaia Rossiia,” of which Nalimov was a member. Members of groups other than the OPM also participated, including the SPG, SPKh (pictures of the participants include some wearing the SPKh’s trademark black “Orthodoxy or Death” t-shirts and also a photo of Igumen Kirill Sakharov watching the events¹⁷⁵), DPNI, and RONS (SMPC 2007b). In all, there were around one hundred participants of the demonstration. Advertisements for the piket were circulated widely on nationalist-patriotic and traditionalist-Orthodox websites. The official announcement¹⁷⁶ demonstrated elements of the desecularizing paradigm in that it called for the closing of the “extremist organization” of the SMPC

…that for many years has been a sewer accumulating every anti-Orthodox, anti-state, and anti-Russian [antirusskie—ethnic Russian] element, the place where they group together, organize and conceive provocation after provocation, where they meet their sponsors (foreign sponsors as well), and receive ideological priming. In this sense, the Sakharov Center is no only a center for organizing provocations, but also an ideological center for so-called subversive activities, one of the several ‘crystallization points’ at which the strategy of creating and sustaining social tensions, of provoking conflicts and riots and the ideology of the fight against the Faith and the Nation are being developed. (SMPC 2007c) [emphasis added—R.S.]

In addition, the suggested slogans of the announcement and those that were utilized by the protestors reiterated past discursive frames from the desecularizing paradigm and also created new ones that reflected the shifts in the desecularizing paradigm that were described earlier and also the more radicalized nature of the groups participating, these included: “Anti-Christianity


and Liberalism are *enemies of the people!*,” “Enemies of Orthodoxy: there is no place in the world for you!,” “The laws in Russia are on the side of ORTHODOXY!.” “You want blood, it is coming!” “Get out of Russia!,” “Evil calls for Retribution!,” “Do Not Offend GOD—Moscow is scarier than KONDOPOGA!,” “Putin! Lead the Censorship of this ‘Culture’!,” One of the images preserved by the SMPC archive shows a rally poster stating that those who insult soldiers will pay for it (in the sense that there will be reckoning for what they do).¹⁷⁷ Such posters show that while the works of “Slava Rossii” that highlighted widespread abuse in the Russian military were not legally prosecuted in this case, they clearly irritated Orthodox radicals and were targeted in their redressive actions. Thus, the radicals’ indignation and action went not only against the “enemies of the church,” but also against the “enemies of the army.” A most important point here is that in the imagination of the radicals, as well as in the cultural scripts they were updating and “editing” through their action, the perceived enemies of the church and those of the army were one and the same category of people.

The use of these “pro-soldier” slogans was very ironic, because the rallies took place in from of the SMPC building, which displayed the following banner: “Since 1994 there has been a war going in Chechnya – ENOUGH!” Strictly speaking, the SMPC opposition to the war that took innumerable Chechen and Russian lives could be seen as far more “pro-soldier” than the angry posturing of Orthodox radicals.

Other posters gave further evidence of the militant anti-Semitism fused into the radical desecularizing paradigm. One, for instance, declared: “The law is one for all communities; For all

¹⁷⁷ The photo (SMPC 2007c) ([http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/forbidden-art/piket/imagepages/image7.html](http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/forbidden-art/piket/imagepages/image7.html)) does not allow one to see the first word on the poster, but from the context it is clear that the word is “obidel” or “oskorbil” (offended, insulted).
Judases a NOOSE and JUDGMENT\textsuperscript{178}!” (Zakon edin dla vsekh obshchin, dla vsekh IUD, PETLIA i SUD!”) Moreover, various announcements for the picket advocated violence (e.g., “Pogroms in Rus’ are Approaching!”), but such activity was bridled by the presence of a small contingent of police (requested by Samodurov\textsuperscript{179}).

A second, smaller and unsanctioned picket organized by RONS took place on the 30\textsuperscript{th} and was attended by 30-50 participants. The piket organizers communicated the following message\textsuperscript{180} to the “blasphemer-satanists”: “The Patriots have warned the exhibition organizers that it is the last attempt to reason with them peacefully and in the future Orthodox Muscovites will not put up with such blasphemy on the holy Russian land (na sviatoi russkoy zemle)” [emphasis added—R.S.]. This statement represents a condensed summary of the further elucidated desecularizing paradigm I discussed above with its unity of an ethnic-Russian nation with an Orthodox spiritual-moral core, and considering the make-up and ideological orientation of RONS at the time, such a threat was to be taken seriously, although no violence resulted from the piket or announcements. It seemed the various Orthodox activists and groups were awaiting the official redressive mechanisms of prosecution to punish their deviant “enemies.” In this lack

\textsuperscript{178} The anti-Semitism of this placard is clearly apparent, but is even stronger below the surface with its implicit references to Judas’ suicide and appending judgment for the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ.

\textsuperscript{179} At the time of the piket, the SMPC was holding an international conference, “Modern Art and the Taboo,” and thus Samodurov wanted participants and exhibition visitors to feel safe. Interestingly, Yuri Ageshchev and Fr. Yakov Krotov had an exchange at the conference where Ageshchev discounted Krotov’s arguments by pointing out that Krotov is ethnically Jewish (thus pointing again to the anti-Semitic strains of the SPKh and other Orthodox activist groups). As a Christian, Krotov could have argued that yes, he is ethnically Jewish by birth, but that Christianity is universal and negates ethnic categories. Instead, Krotov ended-up trying to discredit Ageshchev by arguing that he was using Nazi definitions of ethnicity. This seemed an odd moment where Krotov, most likely inadvertently, accepted the activist’s paradigm in his attempt to not define himself as Jewish. Thank you, Vyacheslav Karpov for elucidating this point. To see the full transcript of the discussion available on the SMPC (2007d) online archive, see: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/forbidden-art/tabu-art/texts/.

\textsuperscript{180} See the official report of the piket from RONS kept on the SMPC (2007e) online archive of the events at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/museum/exhibitionhall/forbidden-art/whois/groups/http_www.rons.ru_antisaharov_30_03.htm.JPG. The section of the report I utilize was also quoted by Brazhkina.
of violence, some (see Brazhkina) saw the hand of the authorities, either the intervention of the ROC MP or the state, in the desecularizing Orthodox activists’ behavior. Why else would groups prone to violence in the past withhold such actions despite the threats issued in their statements?

The Exhibit Organizers, Artists, SMPC Administrators, and Human Rights Community in the Initial Crisis Phase

As desecularizing Orthodox activists undertook their media campaign against the SMPC and the exhibition organizers, a major shift in the cultural field became evident in the responses of the SMPC administration and members of the human rights community to the initial crisis phase surrounding “Forbidden Art—2006.” In the social drama surrounding the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition, there was little dissension in paradigms among the core actors on the side of the SMPC and the exhibition organizers, even if the actors did not particularly like the art that was exhibited. In the initial crisis phase of this new social drama, however, a clear conflict of paradigms emerged between Samodurov as the exhibition organizer and the SMPC administration and some prominent human rights activists. I argue that this conflict arose because, as Samodurov continued to adhere to the same paradigm that was active in the “Beware, Religion!” social drama, albeit strengthened by the past redressive mechanisms and the need he felt to directly challenge the desecularizing regime, other actors that would be assumed to also support this paradigm (because they did in the past) had actually begun conforming (consciously or unconsciously) to the new desecularizing normative system represented by the desecularizing paradigm and promoted by the desecularizing regime. Even if their “hearts were not really in it,” even if they were unwillingly conforming and not truly internalizing the new norms, this marks a watershed moment in the second phase of cases that shows the extent and
power of the crystallization of the desecularizing normative system and regime—it had become hegemonic.

An examination of a series of messages\(^\text{181}\) between Samodurov and members of the SMPC and Sakharov Fund’s Board and various prominent human rights activists that was sparked by a letter by Elena Bonner early on in the crisis best delineates this conflict of paradigms. It is important to keep in mind when considering this exchange that according to court documents (based on official searches of the SMPC, as reported in Brazhkina), the SMPC Board voted in approval of the conceptualization of the exhibition (although no vote was taken to decide which exhibits would be displayed, Samodurov and Erofeev alone made those decisions). On March 16\(^\text{th}\), following initial critical reports of the exhibition in the media, Elena Bonner, Sakharov’s widow, member of the Sakharov Fund Board, and symbolic head of the SMPC and direct link to Andrei Sakharov’s legacy, sent a letter to the Board’s members and various human rights activists close to the SMPC. Although the content of the original letter was not made public, those that read it asserted that the letter proposed to the Board whether it would be most appropriate to “condemn and close” (osudit’ i zakryt’) the “Forbidden Art” exhibition (reported in Brazhkina and in references to the letter available in the exchange, SMPC [2007f])). This pronouncement by the most symbolic figure of the SMPC, an individual that never waivered in her support of the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition, set the tone for the exchange that followed.

Samodurov quickly followed-up Bonner’s letter with his own clearly passionate five-page response on the 19th. While respectfully giving credence to the argument that the exhibition could be offensive to certain audiences, Samodurov asked the recipients of the original letter to visit the exhibition for themselves, and he framed his paradigm, as in the past, within the specific mandate of the “unique institution” of the SMPC and its symbolic legacy of the “struggle for freedom.” Samodurov argued, “The exhibition ‘Forbidden Art—2006’ has, as it is stated in the press-release, A CLEAR GOAL COMPLETELY WITHIN THE HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA: MONITORING AND DISCUSSING CENSORSHIP AS APPLIED TO THE VISUAL ARTS IN RUSSIA” [emphasis in original text]. Furthermore, as was true in the earlier editions of the paradigm, the exhibition organizer reminded the reader of the Constitutional protections for such exhibitions and that the SMPC, like all private museums, was a specially “marked space” that legally should be free of censorship. He drew on the frame of “declericalization” when he encouraged his readers to fight for “spiritual and intellectual freedom,” for the “cultural pluralism, which…is shrinking under the pressure from the religious ideology that enjoys both formal and informal support of the state.” It is worth quoting an end section of the letter at length:

…[I]t appears that many members of the board of the Sakharov Fund and many human rights activists feel it is better “not to stir the religious hornet’s nest.”183 […]

I personally think, being true to themselves and to their public position, the human rights activists will not be able to refrain from “stirring the religious-church-state hornet’s nest [more precisely, religious-church-state likho (evil)]” for long. They and their relatives have children and grandchildren. And not every one of the human rights activists would want their children and grandchildren being blessed by an Orthodox priest

182 Please see the discussion of the SMPC “Mission Statement” offered in the previous chapter for elucidation of the “goals” or mandate Samodurov refers to.
183 The SMPC translation is imprecise; Actually, “ne trozh’ religioznoe likho, poka ono tikho” is more precisely translated as “do not touch religious likho (a meaningful Russian world for evil or evil fate) while it is quiet.”
when they are drafted to the army as well as reared by one while they serve there. To avoid this something will have to be done. In other words, Russian citizens will face a struggle with the attempts of the Russian Orthodox Church to put everything it can under its control: including making the Sakharov Center close the exhibition “Forbidden Art—2006”….

All these situations in which the state and the Russian Orthodox Church merge and complement each other are becoming too much to bear, and the time has come for putting up serious resistance to the Russian Orthodox Church’s claims to spiritual hegemony.

Samodurov’s defensiveness at Bonner’s suggestion for the SMPC to “condemn and close” the exhibition is palpable in his energetic and passionate attempt to remind the readers of the elements of the paradigm that were supported without question in the recent “Beware, Religion!” social drama, that clericalization is a negative and dangerous trend (e.g., Ponamarev’s statement of “clerical bolshevism”), that the rule of law and the legal right to show an exhibition of such art is worth fighting for (e.g., lawyer and human rights activist Yuri Schmidt’s statements), and the SMPC and human rights community are the last bastion of the fight for freedom in the face of increasing authoritarianism (e.g., any of the letters of support from the previous case).

Samodurov saves his biggest blow, however, for the last paragraph of the letter. After commenting that he was prepared to defend the exhibition at trial (and that he would welcome any funding from the Sakharov Fund for lawyers or fines in the case of such a trial, a declaration that was unfulfilled until after the conclusion of the trial), Samodurov argued that closing the exhibition would be in all practicality to “support the position of the Russian Orthodox Church (Kuraev and Chaplin)” against the Museum. In this, he placed before the SMPC administration and human rights activists a difficult dichotomous choice, one that they were not comfortable with, as can be seen in the responses below.
The situation quickly escalated with the response of human rights activist and Memorial Society member Oleg Orlov, who questioned the nature of the choice Samodurov set before him. Orlov argued that he disagreed with statements made by Kuraev and Chaplin, but that he stood on the “side of the museum”—but not on the side of the exhibition organizers. For Orlov, the exhibition was “disgusting,” “repugnant,” “bewildering,” and “amusing” (in a negative way). He argued that he did not understand its conceptualization and he found it questionable in aesthetic terms. In an interesting twist, Orlov went on to ask whether the exhibition organizers would include child pornography or caricatures of Auschwitz in their exhibitions if such works had been censored (in order to “inform the public” about the nature of censorship). Such an intellectual move is unexpected given Orlov’s whole-hearted support of the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition. Going further, Orlov acknowledged directly that believers may be offended by the exhibits and that yes, Samodurov had the legal right to display the exhibits, but that “other norms, for example, moral [norms]” should have been taken into account when deciding which artworks to display. Ultimately, he asked: “After all, what is the purpose of the exhibition? Neutral monitoring of forbidden works or the fight for the right to show sacrilegious work?” He responded to his own question with:

I think that, unfortunately, it is the second.

Unfortunately, I believe that deliberately preparing an exhibition of such content is questionable ethically. In this case, it looks like a provocation.

Of course, a real work of art, whether it is even three times as blasphemous in someone’s point of view, has every right to exist, and that it is unacceptable to restrict access to it. But somehow I think that this has nothing to do with this exhibition. [emphasis added—R.S.]
In this exchange, we see a major shift that negates the core of the paradigm of the “Beware, Religion” social drama that Orlov and other supporters of the exhibition organizers propagated. According to that paradigm, part of the crisis was the fight for the (legally existing) right to show artworks that could be considered offensive and sacrilegious. Yet now Orlov not only recognizes the existence of the new desecularizing normative system and the restrictions it places on the cultural field, but conforms to it—as we can see in his usage of such language as “sacrilegious,” “offending believers,” and “provocation,” which come straight from the legal discourse of the desecularizing paradigm, and also such phrases as “new moral norms,” and that the exhibition is “questionable ethically.” He ultimately agreed that the artworks that may be “offensive” to believers should not be exhibited publicly and that to show them publicly was a provocation. Although he does attempt to attenuate the force of his statements by arguing that the artworks shown in “Forbidden Art” were not “real” art, by doing so he opens yet another line of attack on the exhibit as artistically unworthy. Given the passion and directness of his writing, I would argue that Orlov has even internalized the hegemonic desecularizing normative system to a certain degree, whether consciously in an effort to avoid (and divest the SMPC from) conflict and punishment or even unconsciously and whole-heartedly. Orlov did follow-up this letter with another note to Samodurov where he argued he was actually “on his side,” but the content of the first letter still stood as a definitive statement from a prominent figure—and it perhaps encouraged others to follow a similar line of argument.

Human rights activist Evgeniy Ilkhov did attempt to counter Orlov’s letter in support of Samodurov on March 21st, but his letter was followed by more critical letters from other prominent figures. Ilkhov pointedly argued that parts of Orlov’s letter sounded exactly like
arguments from Prosecutor Gudim’s final statement at the “Beware, Religion!” trial, thus bringing direct attention to the paradigm shift. He further argued:

…[I]f we think of ourselves as free people, and we want to live in a free country, for us any censorship (except for direct restrictions on appeals to hatred and violations of laws on porn…) is unacceptable.… [The exhibition] is remarkable in that it attempts to stop the barrage of self-censorship flooding our culture. Yes, in culture there is swearing (mat), sex, and blasphemy, and they should be represented. Protecting cultural freedom is the mission of human rights defenders…. And it is inappropriate to compare the “Forbidden Art” exhibition with a competition for Holocaust cartoons.

Ilkhov clearly drew from the paradigm of the human rights community utilized in previous cases, especially that of the “Beware, Religion!” social drama (emphasis on the rule of law and protection of freedom), and furthermore argued that the exhibition organizers had no intention to offend anyone and that comparing the exhibition to caricatures of the Holocaust was dubious.

But again, the original paradigm of the artists, exhibition organizers, and human rights community faced challenge. Svetlana Gannushkina argued (March 23rd) that she would rather see the SM display exhibitions on themes, like political prisoners in Chechnya, that are significantly “more important” than the dubious art exhibition. This was followed by a damning statement by human rights activist Boris Al’tshuler on March 25th, when in one sentence he tore apart the exhibition artists and organizers: “I am in agreement with Elena Georgievna Bonner that it is absurd, inappropriate, and sorry, offensive to LINK (UVIAZKA—or to “tie together”) these shocking (epatazhnye) experiments with the name of Andrei Dmitirievich Sakharov” [emphasis in original]. Al’tshuler thus painted the exhibition organizers as traitors to Sakharov’s legacy. Feeling the lack of support represented in the exchange, Samodurov instead appealed to the public for support by circulating a slightly altered version of his original letter on March 30th.

Then, Kovalev (2007; discussed in Brazhkina “2007-2010”), as a major symbolic figure within
the SMPC, argued (April 9th) after the exhibition closed that it had been a mistake to show it at the SM, but despite this it was necessary to defend the exhibition organizers against the ongoing media and legal attacks.

Ultimately, the condensed paradigm that arose as the crisis continued and the formal redressive mechanisms of prosecution were brought into play against the exhibition organizers followed that of Kovalev: that the exhibition had been a serious mistake but that it was necessary to come to the defense of the exhibition organizers despite this fact. Thus, in the end the actors that had been critical in the early exchange began to once again propagate elements of the original paradigm publicly (through the media and via open letters and press conferences), but the shifted paradigm continued as a recognizable undercurrent among the actors, as I will discuss below. Once again, this marked a major paradigm shift on the side of these actors given that they had all been in unwavering support of the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition organizers from the beginning, a social drama that surrounded very similar styles of art, which they had not publicly criticized and had fully supported the right to show at the SM.

So, what explains the paradigm shift that was witnessed in the message exchange? I argue that the impetus behind this shift was the further crystallization of the desecularizing paradigm and regime, which produced a new desecularizing normative system to which a contingent of important actors felt it necessary to conform to in order to avoid further perceptions and labels of deviance and the potential mechanisms of punishment that follows such deviance. Once the actors recognized that as members of the institution of the SMPC and the human rights community in general they could not escape being labeled as deviant by default, no matter how much they attempted to divest themselves from responsibility for the exhibition, they
resumed their fight against the desecularizing paradigm and regime in support of the exhibition organizers, albeit in a tempered manner (as the later forced stepping-down of Samodurov as Director of the SMPC by its Board demonstrated).\textsuperscript{184}

Redressive Mechanisms

As with the “Beware, Religion!” court case, the process of initiating an investigation against the exhibition organizers, Samodurov and Erofeev, was not straightforward. Originally, the Taganskiy Prosecutor’s Office dropped the case, but on the same day (March 27\textsuperscript{th}) the Moscow Prosecutor’s Office acted on Kassin’s complaint and initiated an investigation. By April 13\textsuperscript{th} Duma Deputy Kur’ianovich publicly announced that an investigation against the exhibition organizers was underway, but the investigation would be a lengthy process. The artworks were not seized as evidence from the Tretyakov Gallery until November and the SMPC offices were not searched until January of 2008. It took until May 2008 for the official arraignment of Samodurov and Erofeev, and until June for the official indictment of both. Ultimately, the trial would run in fits and starts for two years. The language of the indictment\textsuperscript{185} replicated exactly the language of past cases, as did the other documents; the exhibition organizers were charged using their official positions (part b) to incite religious and national enmity and create interethnic strife through the humiliation of a group of people based on their identification with Orthodox

\textsuperscript{184} The patterns of conflict visible among the paradigms of the SMPC and Russian human rights community were even produced in similar ways abroad. Although the exhibition organizers received various statement and letters in their support from abroad, including from the United States, as we will see, the head of the American Sakharov Fund, Edward Klein, criticized the “Forbidden Art” exhibition and even reduced funding to the SMPC, leading to a financial crisis within the institution. Klein had been in complete and unwavering support of the exhibition organizers and the institution during the “Beware, Religion!” social drama.

\textsuperscript{185} To see the text of the indictment against Samodurov, see this reference: “Official Indictment (Samodurov)” 2007. The text is available in Russian and a shortened version in English translated by Ksenia Gurshtein.
Christianity (Article 282, part 1). A paragraph announcing the charges\textsuperscript{186} (a document that was prefaced by a warning the it included “non-normative language that could be offensive to some people” [emphasis added—R.S.]) against Samodurov and Erofeev is a good example of the repetition of language from past cases in that it repeats almost word-for-word the charges found in the “Beware, Religion!” verdict quoted in the previous chapter in that it stated that Samodurov and Erofeev conspired to create and display an exhibition:

…the conceptual focus of which consisted in the public expression in visual-demonstrative form of a degrading and insulting attitude towards the Christian religion in general, and Orthodox Christianity in particular, as well as the religious symbols honored by Orthodox believers through the public display [in the Sakharov Museum hall] of the specially selected exhibits that incite enmity and strife, and humiliate the dignity of a group of people solely on the grounds of their belonging to the Christian religion in general, and Orthodox Christianity in particular. (“Official Indictment (Samodurov)” 2007)

In the case of the “Forbidden Art” exhibition, however, the exhibits considered offensive to the feelings of believers were extended beyond just those utilizing Christian motifs to those utilizing russkiy mat. I argue that this demonstrated the expansion of the power and range of the desecularizing paradigm in the cultural field, in that the category of “offending believers’ feelings” had grown to include a new discursive sphere. This marked an increase in the crystallization and reach of the desecularizing normative system.

Further Context for the SMPC and the Continuing Crisis

As the formal redressive mechanisms of the investigation and court trial continued, two further contextual issues complicated and exacerbated the continuing crisis phase surrounding

\textsuperscript{186} To see a copy of the indictment in English (including the discussion of the “offensive” nature of the usage of russkiy mat in the artworks) available on the SMPC online archive of the events, see the previous reference, or: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/news/2007/forbidden-pollice/1505postextenglish.php.
the SMPC, namely Samodurov’s support for Bukovsky in the Presidential race and the SMPC’s financial troubles. Samodurov, in his role as Director of the SMPC, openly supported and arranged meetings at the SMPC for the former dissident and oppositional politician Vladimir Bukovsky. Bukovsky’s run for president was an open political challenge to the Putin regime. His candidacy was further supported by myriad members of the intelligentsia and human rights community (Ponomarev, Podrabin, etc.). Ultimately, Bukovsky’s campaign failed, but Samodurov’s support brought further scrutiny to the SMPC. Brazhkina goes so far as to speculate that the trial against Samodurov was mainly because of his support for Bukovsky. However, I argue that the facts, as I have discussed, do not support this interpretation of the events. Samodurov’s support for Bukovsky might have been an aggravating factor, but clearly not the root cause of the case against him.

Most likely (but it is not fully clear from existing documents) because of the negative publicity the exhibition and the trial, and perhaps also Samodurov’s use of the SMPC in support of Bukovsky, created for the SMPC, the American Sakharov Fund substantially cut its funding allocation to the SMPC for a period of time. Ultimately, the SMPC was in such financial troubles during the “Forbidden Art” social drama that requests for public donations were frequently circulated in the news media and online. Ultimately, the SMPC recouped funding

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187 It is unclear from existing documents what the root cause of the SMPC’s financial troubles was or why U.S. Sakharov funding was cut, but Brazhkina indicates that the implementation of the 2006 law on non-government organizations, which complicated the transfer of funds from international to local branches of NGOs and required yearly financial reports from NGOs to be sent to the federal government (to highlight and track the “influence” of foreign organizations), was a potential factor. I would argue that the complications introduced by the new legislation most likely converged with the U.S. Sakharov Fund Board’s discontent with Samodurov’s actions to produce the SMPC financial crisis. For a brief overview of the 2006 law, please see the Freedom House (2012) “Factsheet” at: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Fact%20Sheet_0.pdf.
(mainly through foreign grants and the return of some American Sakharov Fund monies) and was able to stay open and continue functioning, but its survival was in serious doubt at the time.

Redressive Mechanisms Outside the Courts

The redressive mechanisms applied against the “deviance” of Samodurov and Erofeev extended beyond the court trial itself in that both lost their jobs, which is another indication of the strengthening of the desecularizing regime and paradigm and its penetration into both state and private cultural institutions. On June 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2008, Erofeev was officially fired from his post at the state Tretyakov Gallery. In an interview Erofeev\textsuperscript{188} referred to his firing as the “final accord of censorship in contemporary art” (Lapygina 2008). Members of the arts and human rights communities rushed to provide him support in an effort to win him back his job. They were completely unsuccessful. And, by August Samodurov had stepped-down as Director of the SMPC. He (2010) argued in a later article\textsuperscript{189} that it became impossible for him to do any work as Director given that he was blocked in his endeavors by the Board (including by the Board’s vote to stop any further “Forbbiden Art” exhibitions, as Samodurov and Erofeev had planned to do such an exhibition once a year), and that he was even told directly that the Board was thinking of replacing him anyways. Feeling the complete lack of support from the Board, he stepped-down, but he would later refer to the events as essentially “being fired.” That both Erofeev and Samodurov lost their jobs demonstrated not only that the leadership of government and private cultural institutions felt the need to adhere to the desecularizing regime and its normative system,

\textsuperscript{188} A copy of the interview (Lapygina 2008) is available on the SMPC online archive at: http://old.sakharov-center.ru/news/2007/forbidden-pollice/novaya0628.php. This was also reported in Brazhkina.

\textsuperscript{189} To view the article on the Portal-Credo.ru website, please see: http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=monitor&id=14781.
but also that the desecularizing regime had become more punitive in its redressive mechanisms from the previous cases. I argue this is an indication of its further consolidation at the middle of the second wave of cases, the Pussy Riot case would push this punitiveness even further.

This expansion of redressive mechanisms in the cultural field also included a major new case of censorship, but this time it involved a Russian art exhibition being shown abroad, marking the extension of the censorship function of the desecularizing regime to the realm outside Russia’s borders. A 2007 exhibition of Erofeev’s “Sots-Art” in Paris had 86 exhibits removed by government censors. Brazhkina (“2007-2010”) reports, “At the board meeting of the Ministry of Culture, Minister Aleksandr Sokolov argued: ‘If this exhibition appears there it will be the very same disgrace (pozor) of Russia for which we have already answered in full…. Because, after the Holy Patriarch in France speaks of morality and the criterion of spirituality (dukhovnosti), and first of all, of what Russia does—[Russia] at the same time displays pornography. One with the other should never be adhered together (nikak ne kleitsia—should never be connected).’” Again, this marked a major shift in the power and reach of the desecularizing regime and paradigm. Artistic exhibits abroad now needed to match the Patriarch’s discourse on Russia’s presumed morality and spirituality.

Formal Redressive Mechanisms—the Trial

As much of the paradigms offered at the trial and in the media and various letters repeat those previously described, I will not discuss them in depth. I wish instead to focus again on what was different about the “Forbidden Art” trial from previous ones. Overall, there were three major differences: 1) the increased scale of participation of Orthodox activists in the trial process
and the decreased scale of participation by the exhibition organizers’ expected supporters, 2) the organized “theatrical” protests of the trial by art collectives, and 3) the more punitive punishment of the exhibit organizers in the form of higher fines.

When witnesses to the trial, including Samodurov, took account of who was present at each hearing, they noted the preponderance of Orthodox activists in the courtroom, and the corresponding lack of human rights activists, artists, and journalists. Brazhkina (“2007-2010”) and Jonson (2015) report packed courtrooms where fifty or more “believers” take-up most if not all of the available seats, and where some “believers” even have to stand throughout the proceedings for the lack of open seats. Many Orthodox activists and other believers could also be found demonstrating outside the courthouse. Brazhkina and Jonson also report that Orthodox activists like Nalimov, Sergeev, and Kassin were present for most of the sessions and gave directions to witnesses during the breaks (witnesses often gave the exact same testimony word-for-word, and as Jonson explains [113], “In court the witnesses had difficulties explaining how the exhibition evoked hatred against Orthodox belief or hatred between different religions.”). Of the 134 witnesses for the prosecution, only three or four had actually visited the exhibition. Vladimir Sergeev was one of the many witnesses that had not visited the exhibition, and he made the outrageous claim on the stand that his wife had died a year after visiting the exhibition from the shock of seeing the exhibits, although her official cause of death was cancer. Other witnesses had completed the form letters or answered a call by multiple Orthodox groups to “provide witness,” a call that explained that they need not have visited the exhibition to be “offended” by it. All of the Orthodox groups described earlier played a role in the trial, whether by acting as a witness, attending the hearings, or protesting outside.
The ROC MP itself, however, mostly allowed the proceedings to take place without official statements (once the trial began). Thus, following critical statements by Chaplin, Kuraev, and others during the initial crisis period, the ROC MP then utilized a tactic used in the “Beware, Religion!” trial, its official representatives stepped back from the proceedings, most likely to give credence to the idea that it was a trial of “the state versus the Sakharov Center,” as a representative had stated during the last case. An interesting event arose when a Hieromonk Nicodemus, a member of the ROC MP Cultural Board, which was headed by Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov (a prominent nationalist-patriotic and traditionalist-Orthodox priest, who, as I mentioned earlier, was rumored to be Putin’s spiritual adviser) gave witness testimony in court by reading a statement (reported in Brazhkina). He presented the document as an official ROC MP statement, but it was unsigned and undated. Upon questioning by the defense, Hieromonk Nicodemus explained that the document was a written version of an oral statement provided to Archimandrite Tikhon and himself by members of the Narodniy Sobor, but that it was an official ROC MP document. Samodurov proceeded through the press to question the ROC MP about the authenticity of the document and was met with silence but ultimately it was indicated that the document was “official.” Thus, ultimately the ROC MP endorsed and thus legitimized the paradigm of the Narodniy Sobor, albeit perhaps reluctantly under pressure (and as a guilty verdict became a clear possibility).

In contrast with the active participation of Orthodox activists, Samodurov (reported in Brazhkina) noted the absence of his expected supporters in the courtroom and outside throughout the trial, a visible sign of the paradigm shift between the “Beware, Religion!” and “Forbidden Art” cases. Samodurov also noted the absence of Russian reporters (an absence the Levada
Center data support, as I will discuss briefly later), and that most of the reporters present were from foreign news media outlets. In media statements, Samodurov expressed (as reported in Brazhkina) his disappointment with the lack of support and characterized what I would call the actors’ *paradigm* in these terms: “The exhibition should not be tried in court, but we do not need to show them anymore at the Sakharov Center.” Ultimately, by the time the court case had come to an end, Samodurov\(^{190}\) (2010) argued, somewhat indirectly (he framed it in terms of “we” and “our”), that the SMPC had “betrayed [its] values” (“Ia schitaiu, chto nashi tsennosti predali.”), which he had discursively framed as the values of freedom. This again points to the tension in *paradigms* that had arisen during the social drama of this case.

*Crisis Continues*

Although the expected supporters of Erofeev and Samodurov from the human rights community were in short supply at the trial (but not in the media and open letters), support did arise from a new contingent—the art collectives, artists, and a group of libertarians. During the court proceedings there were six separate organized protests by these groups:

1) **Libertarians**: On May 21, 2008, as the first trial hearing was supposed to take place, members of the libertarian groups, “The free radicals” (Svobodnye radikaly) and “Defense” (Oborona) had a small piket outside the courthouse.

2) **Voina**: On May 22, 2008, as court was in session, the art collective Voina (War) demonstrated against the trial via a “theatrical” art performance, “Tsensura saset (Censorship sucks),” outside the courthouse. Members of the group used two vehicles to imitate an

\(^{190}\) To see the full article on the *Portal-Credo.ru* website, please see: [http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=monitor&id=14781](http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=monitor&id=14781).
automobile accident, shutting down the street for twenty minutes, while a group of young people in matching tracksuits shouted slogans and signs hung from a truck. One of the signs said: “Eternal shame to the persecutors of Sots-Art!” Another proclaimed: “Censorship is stupid, the artist (literally, creator) does great!”

The performance participants chanted: “Censorship sucks!” “Long live Shishkin!” “Glory to Aivazovsky!” and “Repin lives!” (Repin, Shishkin, and Aivazovsky were classical Russian artists glorified by the official Soviet cannon, and presented as a golden standard, especially by official critics of artistic avant-garde). Other slogans included: “Shove culture up the ass- let us go to the prosecutor’s office!,” “State – go f yourself,” “No to priestly bespredel (slang denoting actions that trespass all written and unwritten norms),” “No to art critics in cassocks!,” and others. The short overview of Voina slogans suggests that this radical artistic protest group was much closer to the original anti-clericalization and anti-censorship paradigm (no matter how extravagantly expressed) than many in the human rights and Sakharov Museum communities.

3) Bombily: On May 29, 2008, the art collective Bombily, which had overlapping membership with Voina, staged a theatrical protest where one actor, the poet Mikhail Kedrenovskiy, pretended to flog another actor, artist Antona Nikolaeva, who was dressed as the ancient God of Justice.

4) Voina: In May 2009, Voina again staged a protest, but this time inside the courtroom. Their action was called “Dick up the ass,” and they brought musical instruments inside the courtroom and sang the song, “All cops are bastards.” Samodurov and Erofeev asked them to stop their “concert,” but they did not heed their calls for silence. A member reported that,

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191 The word bombily is a slang term for unofficial taxi drivers – actually, private citizens making money by using their private cars as unofficial taxi cabs (also known as “chastniki”).
surprisingly, none of the group members were detained by the police. The performers included Nadezhda Tolokonnikova of later Pussy Riot fame (before Voina suffered a split within its membership).

5) **Solidarnost’**: On July 9th, 2010, as the verdict in the trial approached, a group of artists and supporters referred to as “Solidarnost’” (Solidarity) formed what they called a “meeting-installation” that included speeches by Samodurov and others, as well as humorous skits, and art installations.\(^{192}\)

6) **Voina**: As everyone prepared for the reading of the verdict on July 12th, 2010, two Voina activists released thousands of cockroaches inside the courthouse. One of the participants in the action was detained by police and was seen in videos arguing that he released “1,500” cockroaches because “they all have cockroaches in their heads,” referring to a common Russian saying for someone that is “crazy.” A video collection on Brazhkina’s *Art Protest* website (“Vynesenie Prigovora Erofeevu i Samodurovu—videosiuszheti”) includes footage of the activist, and around him circle believers and members of the SPKh, including Simonovich-Nikshich.\(^{193}\)

**Punitive Redressive Mechanisms**—the Verdict

As the trial came to a close, the prosecutor requested a sentence of three years imprisonment in a penal colony for Samodurov and Erofeev. This request was met with a statement by Gel’man that if the two were imprisoned he would run the “Forbidden Art” exhibition at his gallery. Gel’man’s announcement was countered by threats to the “evrezhidy” (Jew-Yids) of “pogroms” on the website run by the “Moskva—III Rim” (“Moscow—Third

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\(^{192}\) Videos of some of the proceedings can be found online through Brazhkina’s *Art Protest* website.

\(^{193}\) To access the video collection, please see: [http://artprotest.org/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=2030](http://artprotest.org/cgi-bin/news.pl?id=2030).

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Rome”) group, which had ties to more than one of the other groups I included in the compendium. The group’s ideology is made clear not only by its name, but also by the nature of its threats. (Although a guilty verdict would be given, Gel’man did not go through with his plan to show the exhibition. Although he claimed it was because fines were not a terrible punishment, I would think the threats served their function as preventative measures against his potential deviance.194) Interestingly, in the intervening period between the prosecutor’s statements and the final verdict, both the ROC MP195 (Shmaraeva 2010) and the Ministry of Culture (Jonson 2015: 123) released statements requesting leniency in the sentencing, that imprisonment was not required and that fines would be sufficient. This marked an interesting congruence of paradigms of the ROC MP and state. While I cannot argue this definitively, it is logical to assume that the positions of the government and ROC were coordinated, and that their coordinated position determined the actual sentence.

Ultimately, Samodurov and Erofeev were found guilty of inciting religious enmity and inter-ethnic strife, and of humiliating the dignity of a group of people based upon their Orthodox faith. Although Samodurov reportedly “came to court with a black travel bag slung over his shoulder, just in case” he were imprisoned (Kishkovsky 2010a), the two exhibition organizers were only given fines. Erofeev was fined 150,000 rubles, and Samodurov196 200,000 (4,500 and

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194 Speaking more generally, throughout the trials and tribulations of Russian artistic and political opposition during the Putin era, Gel’man showed himself capable of compromising. Most recently, in an interview with Mikhail Sokolov aired by Radio Svoboda (Radio Liberty) on June 19, 2016 (“Iz-za Putina Rossii teriaet vremia”), Gel’man, while expressing cautious criticisms of Russia’s current regime, also stated that Crimea was undoubtedly Russia, that Russia needed to win culturally in East Ukraine, and so on (https://youtu.be/MyaG3U8N87g).

195 To view the statement (Shmaraeva 2010) in full on the Portal-Credo.ru website, please see: http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=monitor&id=15256. Interestingly, Chaplin made more critical remarks about the sentencing to the press in the same period, as reported in Brazhkina.

196 In an interesting twist, the Director of the American Sakharov Fund, Edward Klein, after the appellate decision, offered to provide funds to Samodurov and Erofeev to pay the fines and lawyers’ fees. Samodurov refused the funds. He pursued the funds through various fund-raising events organized by his supporters. When in the end he
6,000 US dollars respectively). These were considerably steeper (25% and 67% larger, respectively) than the ones in the “Beware, Religion!” case ($3,600). The increased fines attest to a harsher treatment of the defendants by the Russian court and, more generally, reflect clearly increasing punitive tendencies in the country’s desecularizing regime. The fines were later upheld in appellate court.

Once the verdict was given, Kirill (Gundyaev), now the new Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, strongly condemned the exhibition.197 Interestingly, he chose to make the statement on his trip to Ukraine. Speaking at a public meeting at the Opera and Ballet theater in Odessa in the end of July, he said that the artists and organizers of “Forbidden Art” committed a “demonic act” (besovskoe delo). He further said:

When the so-called “art” provokes national conflicts [natsional’nye i.e., between nationalities within one country] and insults people based on their faith, why should there not be protests against it? If they themselves lack conscience and tact, then society needs to have its say.

This was a brief but remarkable statement. Not only did it endorse punishment of the offenders of religious feelings, but also reaffirmed characterizations of the exhibit as demonic. Moreover, the language of “nationalities conflicts” indirectly supported the view that the exhibit was an offense to (ethnic) Russians by some other nationality. Given strong current of anti-Semitism in previous condemnations of the exhibit, it was easy to guess what nationality Gundyaev was talking about. Thus, the statement was a short yet meaningful endorsement not only of the

had an excess of funds required for the fines and fees, he passed on the extra funds to Mavromatti’s lawyers. At the time in 2010, Mavromatti was facing a crisis of his own when Bulgaria refused to grant him refugee status and Russia threatened to renew criminal prosecution against him for his “crucifixion” film described in the precursor cases chapter (reported in Brazhkina “2007-2010”).

punishment of the enemies of the Church and the Russian people, but also of the paradigm that so recently was openly verbalized and upheld by radical Orthodox activists. The radical desecularizing paradigm thus made further inroads into the mainstream of Russian culture.

A Silent Majority—No Knowledge about the Trial, Divided Opinion on Art Censorship

Yet another remarkable and new characteristic of the “Forbidden Art” case was that, for the first time in the history of the social drama that we focus on in this study, we have a glimpse into popular perceptions into the unfolding conflict. There were no public opinion polls focusing on the drama’s previous episodes, but in this case the Levada-Center, a reputable independent research firm, conducted a representative national sample survey on July 2-5, 2010, and published its results.198 The data show that a vast majority of Russians (76%) had heard nothing about the case before they were interviewed, roughly one in five (19%) had heard something about it, and just two out of a hundred had known well about what happened. Given that in answering survey questions people tend to exaggerate their awareness of social issues, the actual proportion of those in the know could be even less, and thus negligible.

But what about punishments for art that hurts religious feelings? On this issue, Russian public opinion at the time did not appear to have been formed. On the one hand, a majority (58%) agreed with the opinion that “people should have freedom of speech, and therefore – the right to publicly criticize religion.” Yet this was a poorly framed question that left it unclear whether people commented on the general freedom of speech principle or on the more specific issue of the permissibility to criticize religion. Furthermore, the artists and organizers of

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“Forbidden art” were prosecuted not for criticizing religion, but for an art exhibit that supposedly incited religious and ethnic enmity and insulted the country’s Russian Orthodox majority. One wonders what the answers would have been had the question been framed in these terms. Even with these, misleading formulations, there were 22% of Russians opined that authorities must impose fines or arrest people who publicly criticize religion, because this “may undermine the reputation of the church.” When asked whether or not it “should be permissible to publish works of art and organize artistic exhibitions that create controversy and protests from part of the public,” 36% of Russians said yes, but 40% answered “no,” while nearly a quarter had no opinion one way or the other. Finally, 28% opined that artists and exhibition organizers should be prosecuted in courts if there are people who are offended by their art (the question did not specify the nature of the offense or of the offended group), while 37% disagreed and more than a third (34%) did not have opinion one way or the other.

While the aforesaid questionnaire appears inadequate for measuring public opinion about the issues that were at the center of the “Forbidden Art” drama, the data are telling nevertheless. The survey shows, first of all, that Russia’s “silent majority” remained at this stage utterly uninvolved in the dramatic developments in Moscow. This is further evidence to support the thesis that Russia’s desecularization has been largely carried out “from above” (Karpov 2013), without major involvement of the largely uninformed (at least at this stage) masses. Yet, on the other side, even abstract questions about the right to publicly criticize religion or exhibit art offensive to some revealed a notable punitive current in public opinion. We will see further, in a chapter dedicated to popular sentiment surrounding these issues, that ordinary Russians became
more aware of the subsequent act of the social drama, and that the punitive tendencies became
even more apparent.

Conclusion

Jonson (2015) and Bernstein (2014) suggested that “Forbidden Art” was the “watershed”
moment in the controversy surrounding artistic challenges to religious sensibilities. (Actually,
Bernstein talks about a conflict between two “regimes of seeing,” or “scopic regimes,” which
practically takes agency out of her analysis). The analysis that I presented in this chapter does
show indeed that “Forbidden Art” was a very important and, as we will see further,
consequential act of the social drama. Yet, I argue that true watershed moment was the “Beware,
Religion!” episode. It was then when, for the first time the artists and exhibit were
unambiguously ascribed the status of a deviant minority whose actions offend religious
sensibilities of the Russian Orthodox people and incite religious and ethnic enmity towards it,
and are thus justly punished for violating the Constitutional order of the Russian state. It was
then when the increasingly consolidated paradigm of radical desecularizing activists migrated
into the discourse of mainstream political, cultural, and religious elites and its elements were
ultimately embodied in court documents. It was during that episode, furthermore, that the
discourse against “clericalization” formed on the side of the challengers of the new religious
dominance, and when it merged with standard arguments about Constitutional protections for
free expression.

From this perspective, the “Forbidden Art!” episode can be seen as an extension of the
previous act, and as, essentially, an attempted and defeated counter-offensive of the newly
labeled deviant minority against its increasingly powerful nemesis. Yet, the counter-offensive and its defeat bring new substantive elements into the drama. First, we see markedly growing signs of expanding religious censorship and self-censorship in the area of artistic expression. Next, the concept of the “enemies of the church” enters the discourse of desecularizing forces, and is immediately endorsed by authoritative spokespeople of the ROC. The concept, as we have seen, evokes the specter of its not so distant predecessor in the discourse of exclusion and repression, the idea of the “enemies of the people.” Moreover, the logic of the paradigm that inseparably links Orthodoxy, the people, and the state makes the enemies of the church into the enemies of the Russian people and its state. What is more is that the discourse about the enemies of the church emanates from the branch of the ROC in charge of the Armed Forces and law enforcement. The perceived inseparable Church – Army unity is further clarified when dissident artists dare to criticize the state of affairs in the military, and Orthodox activists respond with anger and threats.

Furthermore, in the “Forbidden Art” episode we see a drastic expansion of the united front of Orthodox radical groups and their ultra-nationalist, racist, and Nazi allied formations. The broad alliance of these forces also clarifies the paradigm of desecularizing radicals. It increasingly includes blatantly racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Western elements along with very clear threats of violence, such as references to the upcoming pogroms and reminders about the Kondopoga fighting. While religious officials do not openly use this discourse, Patriarch Kirill’s later comment that the exhibit was provoking a “nationalities conflict” leaves little doubt about the Patriarchate’s tacit endorsement of the radical ideology. In the next chapter we will see how elements of anti-Semitic cultural script surface in Kirill’s own speech.
Importantly, in this episode we also witness a partial falling apart of the unified front of avant-garde artists, SMPC workers, and human rights activists that had emerged in the previous act. Samodrov and Erofeev came under the “friendly fire” from somewhat unexpected sources, such as Bonner, Orlov, and even the SMPC U.S. sponsors. Remarkably and importantly for this study, some of their statements suggest a partial acceptance of the desecularizing paradigm according to which the works of art that presumably (according to the small groups of radicals and their official supporters) offend religious sensibilities of the Russian Orthodox majority should not have been exhibited. This partial acceptance of the desecularizing paradigm by its initial opponents shows that the paradigm was becoming hegemonic in the Russian society at the time.

Next, a significant trait of the episode deals with harsher punishments for the convicts. They are still fined and not imprisoned. Yet, the fines are steeper, even though the verdict reads in part as a carbon copy from the previous episode. Thus, we are seeing the state showing a resolve to increase punishments for offending the Russian people and its Church.

Finally, for the first time public opinion data relevant to the drama were made available in Russia. The data showed that throughout the act Russia’s presumed Orthodox majority stayed uninformed and uninvolved, which lends further credence to the “desecularization from above” thesis. Yet at the same time public opinion showed noticeable punitive tendencies with regard to potential critics of the church as well as to controversial art works. We will see how in the next act of the social drama these punitive tendencies become more pronounced as the Russian public gets more informed about the events in Moscow.
CHAPTER 6

MOTHER OF GOD, CHASE PUTIN AWAY!

Introduction—Where Existing Literature Misses the Mark

The next, climactic and most publicized act of the social drama on which this study focuses began on February 21, 2012, when five members of the Pussy Riot\textsuperscript{199} band attempted to perform a “punk moleben” (punk prayer service) on the ambo of Christ the Savior Cathedral, the emblematic temple of official Russian Orthodoxy, where leaders of the Russian state often attend festal services. The event was very broadly publicized, both in Russia and abroad. As it later turned out, the Pussy Riot performance and its consequences captivated the imagination not only of the general public, journalists, religious and political commentators, but also of many social scientists and humanities specialists. In a relatively short time interval, from 2012 to 2015 in only English-language social-science journals there appeared about a dozen peer-reviewed articles. A book containing a journalistic study of Pussy Riot was published (Gessen 2014), and another book (Jonson 2015) included the Pussy Riot episode in its history of art protest in Russia. Hardly any other event that took place in a Russian temple since the fall of communism received a similar level of scholarly attention, not even the ordination of Kirill Gundyayev as Russia’s new Patriarch in 2009, or the ceremony of reunification of the ROC with its former nemesis, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in 2007. Numerous and diverse aspects

\textsuperscript{199} Some text of this chapter is drawn from my previous co-authored publication (Schroeder and Karpov 2013).
of the events have been described in detail. Moreover, this literature raised important interpretive issues pertaining to the case, and I will address some of them below. Thus, a lot has been covered by colleagues in different fields, which makes my task easier, and to prevent any redundancy, I will skip many already well-established details and limit analysis in this chapter only to those aspects of the case that are directly relevant to the social drama at the center of this dissertation. Thus, this chapter largely concentrates on the aspects of the episode that are central to my study of the dynamics of Russian desecularization rather than on the already known other parameters. I would argue, furthermore, that much of the scholarly commentary has largely bypassed the fundamentally important dimensions that are primarily relevant to this study. Therefore, before I proceed, let me briefly state where, in my view, the literature stops short of giving the Pussy Riot case its due reading.

There appear to be two distinct currents represented by the publications on Pussy Riot. One current focuses in-depth on the religious dimension of the event. Such research (e.g., Denisenko, 2013; Prozorov 2014; Shevzov 2014; Tolstaya 2014; Willems 2014) offers important insight into the cultural meaning of the Pussy Riot act and allows to trace “from within” some of its socio-cultural and political ramifications. The other current treats religious aspects of the episode as epiphenomenal, secondary to such dimensions as gender, authoritarian politics, media and protest movements, or as merely contextual to these, presumably more important factors (Bernstein 2013; Vaissie 2014; Sharafutdinova 2014; Yablokov 2014; Johnson 2014; Smyth & Soboleva 2014; among others). While the intersection of gender and politics (and sometimes media) that this literature mostly focuses on is an important vantage point from which the Pussy Riot case can be studied, viewing religion as merely epiphenomenal or contextual may, in my
view, lead to one-sided, reductionist interpretations that do not capture the meaning and consequences of the event. There seems to be little cross-fertilization between the two currents within the literature, so that the hermeneutical readings of the tradition-imbued religious meanings of the act rarely if at all intersect with its critical, feminist, and politic-cultural interpretations. Even David Martin (2014: 259) in his otherwise thoughtful note on post-communist religion describes the two approaches as alternative rather than mutually complimentary:

Once one puts analytic pressure on the Pussy Riot case, it emerges as rich and ambiguous. It could be interpreted as a religious protest within an understood Orthodox ritual frame, appealing to the Blessed Virgin for aid in the struggle against tyranny and the collusion of Church and state, or alternatively as a typical Western-style art-protest happening. The reactions to the riot covered the whole range from those who placed the protest within the radical tradition of the Gospels concerning what pertains to Caesar and what to God, to those who invoked the Durkheimian sacred and agitated for condign punishment.

I argue that one does not have to see the two approaches as mutually exclusive. It is perfectly possible to read the event as a “purely Western,” feminist-activist, subversive act that, at the same time, resonates in some of its aspects with Orthodox (and more broadly, radical Christian) tradition, while turning its edge against the church-state tyranny.

Furthermore, there has been little work that links the case to the context of Russian desecularization. Except for my co-authored publication (Schroeder and Karpov 2013, which was among the first academic works on the issue), only Dmitry Uzlaner (2014) looks at the Pussy Riot affair in the context of Russian desecularization using conceptual tools developed by Karpov (2010). Additionally, while largely focusing on legal issues and not directly applying the aforesaid framework, Ponomariov (2013) demonstrates the merger of religious and secular norms in the Pussy Riot trial, which is in fact an important aspect of desecularization. In my
view, the paucity of interpretations linking the Pussy Riot case to the process of desecularization is attributable not only to the still influential view of religion as epiphenomenal, but also to the failure of most researchers to link the episode to the broader struggles between the desecularizing forces and their opponents. Surprisingly, researchers have rarely looked at the event in the context of the conflicts that I described in the preceding chapters (the only exceptions I know of are Schroeder & Karpov 2013, Anderson 2014; and Jonson 2015), or of other relevant struggles around the role of religion in Russian society and state (e.g., religious education in public schools). Such a de-contextualization and a-historicity are surprising indeed because, as I show below, the empirical texture of the event provides multiple and very clear clues of its “genetic” connection to the preceding clashes between nonconformist artists and desecularizing activists. Furthermore, we will also see that the content of the Pussy Riot performance leaves no doubt as to the band’s alignment with the paradigm of the critics of “clericalization.” And even the choice of the site of the performance provides evidence of these connections. Yet at the same time, as this chapter will show, the Pussy Riot act is markedly different from the preceding episodes of our social drama on a number of important dimensions. It is the drama’s most publicized, politicized, and divisive act, with fault lines emerging within Orthodoxy itself. This act also triggered repressive responses that, in a longer run, included not only application of existing laws, but also the making of a new law, utterly consequential for Russia’s further desecularization. However, before I present these distinctive characteristics in detail, let us look at some important new characteristics of the religious and political context in which the events described in this chapter took place.
Context—The ROC Pushes for Desecularization as Putin’s Regime Consolidates

Significant changes took place in the ROC, in the system of state power, and in church-state relations during the time interval between the “Forbidden Art” exhibit and the Pussy Riot episode. It would be impossible to understand the Pussy Riot act and even the text of their “punk prayer” without taking into consideration these important contextual changes. The changes are briefly summarized below.

ROC’s Desecularizing Push under Patriarch Kirill

The “Forbidden Art” trial was still underway when on January 27, 2009 the Local Council (Pomestny Sobor), the most authoritative organ of governance of the ROC, elected Kirill (Gundyayev), formerly the Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad and head of DECR, as the new Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus’. Gundyayev became the first Patriarch born in the USSR, and thus he is often sarcastically referred to by critics as “the first Soviet Patriarch,” not a very flattering characterization for a leader of the Church that was once nearly eliminated by the Soviet state. Jokes aside, Gundyayev’s position as the head of DECR was a clear indication of his inevitable connection to state structures. The Department of External Church Relations manages the Church’s foreign connections. Let us not forget that, according to the historian Steven Merritt Miner (2003), Stalin’s 1943 decision to revitalize the Church was motivated not as much by the desire to mobilize Russian nationalism for the war against Germany (which has long been an influential interpretation), as by the need to facilitate reoccupation of Western territories (Ukraine) and to advance foreign alliances and Soviet influences abroad. Historically this has been done in close collaboration with Soviet and then Russia’s Ministry of Foreign
Affairs and embassies all over the world (for example, a quick look at the website of Moscow Patriarchate in the U.S. will show that some of the Church’s functions, such as Easter banquets, are still held in the Russian consulate and sponsored by the government). Furthermore, it is common knowledge that foreign offices and embassies all over the world work in close collaboration with intelligence services. Thus, the assumption that the foreign activities of the DECR would need to be in collaboration with Soviet/Russian diplomats and spies is a reasonable one. Accordingly, it is also reasonable to assume that Gundyayev was, even if only by the nature of his previously held position, very closely linked to the vital structures of the Russian state, including the KGB/FSB. There have been, furthermore, persistent allegations that his involvement with Russia’s secret services was far from simply positional. Critics, including former intelligence chiefs of the Soviet bloc, argued that Kirill was formerly a KGB agent nicknamed “Mikhailov.” Whatever the specific connections were, it would be difficult to argue that the head of the ROC foreign office and its long-time ambassador to the World Council of Churches would not have a lasting record of interaction with the very agency to which Russia’s current president once belonged and perhaps still belongs. We will see that the KGB connection was very vocally brought up in the Pussy Riot “punk-prayer.”

Gundyayev’s enthronization as Patriarch in 2009 marks a period of the ROC’s increasingly active attempts to enhance its status and influence. By the time of the Pussy Riot performance, the ROC could boast serious achievements in this area. On November 20, 2010,

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then president Dmitry Medvedev signed a new law according to which state and municipal property of “religious designation” (e.g., church and monastery structures) had to be transferred to religious organizations. This “restitution” move faced serious opposition, primarily from the ranks of the intelligentsia employed in museums, libraries, and other establishments that were in control of some of the religious objects, ranging from buildings to icons and other artifacts. Another dissertation could be written on the social drama of resistance to the transfer of property. Some key arguments were that the transfer would complicate public access to some of the most cherished Russian cultural treasures while putting the treasures’ preservation at a greater risk. Furthermore, the transfer was hardly a “restitution” because prior to 1917 the administrative and property affairs of the Russian Church were controlled by the state, and thus the Church was not the juridical proprietor. The struggles surrounding the transfer of property still continue and they are beyond the scope of the study. Yet, given the salience of the debate in the run-up and aftermath of the enactment of the new law, it is important to take into account yet another emerged fault line in the conflict between desecularizing forces and their opponents. As Casanova (1994) pointed out, the original meaning of “secularization” is appropriation of church property by the state. In this context, the transfer of property to the church is a desecularizing process, and the struggles around it are among the central struggles of desecularization.

Yet another success of the ROC under Kirill was a breakthrough development in the sphere of religious education in public schools. In 2011, following a two-year “experimental” introduction of a new course in the Foundations of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics in

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202 For information on the “restitution” of church property, see: Kishkovsky (2010b); “Federal’ny zakon” (2010); and Delovoi Peterburg (2010).
Russia’s regions, president Medvedev signed a decree introducing the course as obligatory in all of the country’s schools since the new 2012-2013 school year. This move followed two decades of contested attempts to bring religion into the school, and yet another study could be dedicated to the social drama that has unfolded on this front. Teaching Orthodox Culture as an obligatory subject was long promoted by the hierarchy of the ROC and allied activists. The introduction of the course was a win for desecularizing actors and activists on yet another front, public education. We will see that the Pussy Riot performance addressed this ROC victory among others.

Gundyayev’s rise to primacy was followed by a series of embarrassing scandals. In particular, during his visit to Kyiv in July 2009, Ukrainian photojournalists managed to take a picture of his watch, which turned out to be a Breguet that costs around 30,000 euros (close to 45,000 USD at the time). The news quickly spread to the Russian media and was awkwardly and unconvincingly disputed by ROC MP (at one point, the infamous watch was redacted out of an official photo of the Patriarch, but its clear reflection on a polished table surface was left untouched, causing widespread ridicule). As an Orthodox Patriarch, Kirill is supposed to be a monk, which presumes an ascetic lifestyle in self-imposed poverty. The 30,000-euro watch was a clear indication that Gundyayev’s actual lifestyle was far from that. The uproar caused by the evidence of the Patriarch’s attachment to earthly luxuries was further magnified by yet another scandal. It turned out that Gundyayev owned a luxury apartment in a historical building in the

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206 The Brequet scandal revitalized earlier accusations of Kirill’s involvement in profiteering from tobacco and alcohol sales in the 1990s, when the Church was given tax exemptions aimed at improving its well-being.
center of Moscow that was likely worth millions. What is more, a mysterious woman, someone named Lydia Leonova was found to have resided in this unusual monastic cloister. Furthermore, in November 2011 a Moscow court awarded Leonova close to 20 million rubles (nearly $660,000 at the time) for damages caused to furniture and books in Gundyayev’s residence by dust coming from a neighbor’s apartment.\footnote{See Newsru.com (2012a), “The ‘Housing Problem’ of Surgeon Shevchenko Resolved” (Kvaritnyi vopros khirurga Shevchenko reshion), at: http://www.newsru.com/russia/20sep2012/hata.html.} In addition to raising questions about the strange cohabitation, the story further shook the Patriarch’s reputation as a monk and moral example to his much impoverished flock. And again, the Pussy Riot performance evokes the issue of greed and monetary gain behind the ROC MP’s desecularizing push and its leaders’ rise to positions of influence in society.

Importantly for this study, on February 4, 2011, (two years after Gundyayev’s enthronization as Patriarch) the Hierarchical Council (Arkhiereiskiy Sobor) of the ROC adopted a new and consequential policy document detailing the Church’s approach to “public blasphemy” and “slander against the Church.”\footnote{See “The Position of the Orthodox Church towards Publicly Deliberate Blasphemy and Slander Against the Church” (Otnoshenie Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi k namerennomy publichnomy bogokul’stvu i klevete v otnoshenii Tserkvi) (2011) at: http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1401898.html.} The document was adopted before the apartment scandal and then redacted with the infamies of 2012, and therefore its meaning cannot be reduced to protecting Gundyayev’s reputation (although the policy certainly became handy for this purpose as well). The scope and meaning of the document is much broader and it clearly harkens back to the previous acts of our social drama when the ROC confronted the perceived “enemies of the church” and “blasphemers.” The declaration of the new policy also appears functional in the context of ROC’s struggles on the education and property fronts, where it
encountered fierce opposition and critiques. The policy document gave blasphemy a rather broad interpretation, In particular, it says:

Closely linked to blasphemy are such sins as sacrilege and desecration of shrine (oskvernenie svyatyni—holy object or place) … One of the forms of blasphemy is slander against the Church as the Body of Christ, “the pillar and affirmation of truth” (1 Tim., 3, 15). [let us note that the insertion of the Biblical quote may (perhaps not unintentionally) lead the readers to believe that the entire definition of slander against the Church as blasphemy is also from the Bible – R.S.] … A particular case is intentional blasphemy or slander as a provocation that is designed to malign Christian teaching and cause harm to Christ’s Church. Imperfections in the life of the earthly Church are used by her adversaries [emphasis added – R.S.] for justification of blasphemous actions and slanderous accusations that become instruments for public campaigns of propaganda of socially important decisions that contradict Christian morality and establish anti-Church ideas in mass consciousness. But most often blasphemy and slander are used as a tool in the struggle against religion, which is justified by references to the freedom of consciences, of speech or creativity.

Thus, the new document was sharpened against several targets that are portrayed as one. The targets include propaganda of policy decisions that contradict the Church’s viewpoint. This is clearly functional in the context of struggles on such fronts as religious education, property transfers, and many others. Next, the document also targets potential critics of the “imperfections” of the earthly Church (which must include the imperfections of its hierarchs). Last but not least, there is also a clear reference to those “blasphemers” who justify their act by invoking the freedom of conscience, speech, and creativity. It is hard not to read this as a reference to the ROC struggles against nonconformist artists and their supporters, to which the previous three chapters were dedicated.

What about the remedies that the Church found appropriate? There are several remedies against “intentional blasphemy” and slander listed in the document. Of special relevance to this study are the following items:
• Assistance to laity in actively reacting to blasphemous acts by using information instruments and other actions permissible by law, such as argumentative critique, boycott, and picketing;

• Blessing laity and their organizations to engage in peaceful civic counteraction to blasphemy as a subspecies of humiliation of the believers’ human dignity and insult to their religious feelings;

• Submitting a complaint against the author of blasphemous or other sacrilegious material that humiliates the believers’ human dignity and insults their religious feelings to self-governing journalistic organizations, and to third-party organizations (treteiskie organizatsii)

• Appealing in accordance with the legally established order to the organs of state power for the purpose of conflict resolution, as well for curtailing and punishment of actions aimed at desecration of religious symbols and at insulting religious feeling of the believers, if such actions are of illegal character (nosiat protivozakonnuyi kharakter).

Thus, the document offers a spectrum of responses to the broadly defined blasphemy and slander. Notably, some of the ways of acting endorsed in the document clearly were among the tactics used in the previous acts of the social drama, and especially in the struggles surrounding the “Beware, Religion!” and “Forbidden Art” exhibitions. Mobilizing lay organizations and activists and filing legal complaints are among those tried and proven remedies.

Another persistent motif of the document is the connection it establishes between blasphemy and the resulting insult of religious feeling. This motif permeates the entire list of
endorsed remedies against those described as the “adversaries” of the Church (the term “enemies of the church,” albeit not used in the document verbatim, is evoked here by association). The last of the remedies listed (appealing to the organs of state power) includes the following meaningful caveat: “if such actions [i.e., the ones that desecrate religious symbols and insult religious feelings] are of illegal character.” Yet, by the time the document was adopted there was no law criminalizing insults to religious feelings. Thus, what action was to be deemed as being illegal was open to arbitrary interpretation. Moreover, by including this caveat, the document, albeit indirectly, invites legislation that would address insults to religious feelings of the Russian Orthodox believers. Such a legislative move was indeed made shortly after the Pussy Riot act, and it is important to note here that it was prefigured in this ROC policy document. The ROC at this stage was clearly poised for decisive struggles for domination, the struggles in which it counted on the support of the organs of state power that would “curtail” and punish the actions of its adversaries. And by 2011 it was probably very clear to the ROC hierarchy that it was facing serious resistance to its expansion into such secularized institutions as public schools or historical monuments and museums. Breaking resistance to the desecularizing push required a punitive law that would criminalize the opponents’ statements and acts as adversarial to the Church and thus as blasphemous and offensive to believers’ religious feelings.

Here we arrive at one of the central points of this study – namely, the reason why, out of all the social dramas of Russian desecularization (which, as I mentioned, include the struggle for property, for religious education in public schools, for control over the military, and on other fronts), it is crucial to focus on the clashes leading directly to the making of the desecularization’s punitive regime. This specific focus is crucial because the emergence of a
punitive regime that breaks the resistance of the “enemies of the church” by labeling their acts as blasphemous to the Orthodox people’s feelings is a prerequisite for the success of a desecularization that is imposed on society “from above.” Thus, the ROC’s fight against the motley crew of nonconformist artists, museum managers, former Soviet dissidents, journalists and human rights activists that we have seen in the social drama’s previous acts was essential for expanding the Church’s hegemonic control of social institutions in other spheres and for suppressing or preventing resistance among larger groups (e.g., school teachers and administrators, museum workers, military officers, and others). The ROC policy document that was analyzed above made it clear that the Church hierarchy was intent on going after any individuals and groups whose offenses to (Russian Orthodox) religious feelings would be illegal. Potential offenders were legion, and what stood in the way of unleashing “organs of state power” on them was the absence of a law that would criminalize their offensive acts.

Having summarized relevant developments within the Church and its relationship with the state, let us now turn to the political environment of these changes. As shown below, in the relatively short time between the “Forbidden Art” and the Pussy Riot acts, significant changes took place in Russia’s political regime.

Political Context

In 2006-2007, political experts were intensely discussing the intriguing prospects for the transfer of power in Russia, as president Putin’s second, and according to the Constitution, last consecutive term was nearing its end. A nearly consensual point of view was that Putin would not release, but how exactly he would manage to stay in control was anybody’s guess. The
intrigue did not last too long though, and in March 2008 the former prime minister Dmitry Medvedev was elected the new president, while Putin made himself comfortable in the vacated position of prime minister. The castling was strikingly simple. It also confirmed the expectation that Putin was to stay in control, and now the experts were trying to guess his intension with regard to the next presidential elections, which were to be held in 2012. During his four years in office (which included a short but consequential war against Georgia, as a result of which Russia’s southern neighbor lost twenty percent of its territory), Medvedev initiated a legal change that increased the Russian president’s term in office from four to six years. Given the fact that Putin legally could run for presidency again after the break he took in his role as the head of the government, commentators now were discussing the possibility that Putin would indeed return to office in 2012 and stay in power at least until 2018, or perhaps even 2024 (two six-year terms in accordance with the new law), which would make his rule the longest in the history of the Soviet and post-Soviet Russian state. A lasting personal dictatorship became highly likely, especially in the atmosphere of intensifying suppression of political opposition, bans on public protests, persecution and prosecution of NGOs accused of being “foreign agents,” and escalating political censorship. The authoritarian tendencies were further reinforced by the events of the end of 2011. In September of that year then president Medvedev nominated Putin as the presidential candidate of the ruling United Russia party (soon to be christened by the opposition as “the crooks and thieves party [partiya zhulikov i vorov]”). Not surprisingly, Putin accepted the nomination.

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209 Thank you to Vyacheslav Karpov for this apt metaphor drawn from chess.
Next, elections for the State Duma were held on December 4, 2011, in which the aforesaid party predictably won with multiple blatant violations and manipulations of the process as reported by independent observers and the political opposition. The violations caused widespread indignation and street protests that started in Moscow on December 10, 2011, and then culminated on December 24. The habitually extra-long Russian New Year/Christmas break (that many begin to celebrate according to Western tradition on December 24 and finish on January 14, the New Year’s day according to the “Old Calendar”) cooled the protest activities. Yet they were to be reignited by the presidential election scheduled for March 6, 2012, which was just ten days after the Pussy Riot performance in Christ the Savior Cathedral. Indeed, the opposition accused the ruling regime of numerous violations in this election, and a series of mass protests followed, culminating in a mass rally on Bolotnaya\textsuperscript{210} in Moscow on May 6, 2012, when security services used force against peaceful protesters, which resulted in dozens of people wounded and hundred arrested. According to some commentators, the rally expressed the discontent that was especially strong in the Russian middle class that was boosted by the relative prosperity of the first decade of Putin’s rule.\textsuperscript{211} The Bolotnaya rally was followed by a series of lesser protest actions, which noticeably subsided by the summer vacations season. Yet, the consolidated Putin regime was not about to forget and forgive the protests, and arrests, prosecutions, trials and imprisonments of the Bolotnaya protesters continue to this day, resulting in dozens of political prisoners in addition to many who fled the country to avoid persecution.

\textsuperscript{210} For an overview of the Bolotnaya events, see Earle, O’Flynn, and Amos (2012), “A Day-by-Day Look at This Week’s Protests,” in \textit{The Moscow Times} at: \url{http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/tmt/458198.html}

Importantly as Karpov (2013) notes, the ROC aspirations for a desecularization from above resonated with tyrannical tendencies present in the Russian state. Aversion to democracy was a point of convergence of the religious and state elites’ interests. In particular, Karpov (2013: 17-18) explains,

[anti-democratic ideology is functional for desecularization from above which in an officially secular state can be more easily achieved by authoritarian than by democratic means. At the same time, an openly undemocratic stance of religious elites is useful to their secular counterparts who are otherwise forced, by international pressure, to maintain a visibility of a commitment to democracy and human rights. Religious leaders, on the other hand, do not have to pay even lip service to democratic values. They can openly challenge the idea of human rights and criticize the very idea of democracy. Such anti-democratic pronouncements of religious leaders ideologically justify authoritarian actions of secular rulers.

It was symptomatic that on February 8, 2012, less than a month before his reelection and less than two weeks before the Pussy Riot performance, Putin held a meeting with Patriarch Kirill, the new head of DECR Metropolitan Illarion (Alfeev), and the heads of Russia’s “traditional” religions. At the meeting Putin gave generous promises of support for the ROC and other official religions, apparently in exchange for their full support of his leadership.212

Such was the environment in which the next act of our social drama unfolded. In brief, the environment could be characterized as one in which the ROC push for further desecularization from above expressed itself in an increasingly punitive and authoritarian orientation that was in harmony (or shall one say symphonia?) with the increasingly clear

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212 For details, see “A stenographic record of the meeting of the President of the government of the Russian Federation V. V. Putin with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and leaders of traditional religious communities of the Russian Federation” (Stenogramma vstrechi predsedatelya Pravitel’stva RF V. V. Putina so Sviateishim Patriarkhom Kirillom i Liderami traditsionnykh Religioznykh Obschin Rossii) (2012), at: www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/2005767.html.
tyrannical tendencies of the Putin regime. Let us now turn to the new act’s protagonist, Pussy Riot, and their performance.

Pussy Riot’s Connection to the Social Drama’s Previous Acts

This connection has received surprisingly little attention in the literature devoted to the Pussy Riot case. Scholars have developed interesting arguments about the meaningful connection of Pussy Riot to the Soviet-era dissident movement, including religious dissidents (Vaissie 2014). Gessen’s (2014) journalistic account includes a discussion of their connection to Voina, an avant-garde actionist group that I mentioned in the previous chapter, and Jonson (2015) discusses the connection as well. Indeed, the band can be seen as an offshoot of Voina. Yet the connection I am referring to goes farther than that and is more meaningful in the context of the social drama surrounding Russia’s desecularization.

To begin with, the likely model for the Pussy Riot action was perhaps not so much the Voyna performances, as the much earlier aktsionism of Alexander Brener, whose protest performances I described in Chapter 3 (dedicated to the social dramas of the 1990s). The Brener connection was duly noted by Marat Gel’man, who has been long- and extremely intimately involved with the development of Russian avant-garde. In an interview he gave to the Ukrainian newspaper Segodnia on January 16, 2013 he said that Pussy Riot members were inspired by Brener’s example and followed it:

More than twenty years ago he [Brener – R.S.] …carried out two actions (meropriyatiya) which Pussy Riot lately, essentially copied, adjusting them to their own needs…. When the first Chechen war started, Brener carried out the action named “Yeltsin, come out!” Simply, he came to Lobnoe Mesto213 on Red Square in shorts214 and

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213 A Medieval execution site on Red Square in Moscow
214 The war started in winter.
boxing gloves and started shouting that he challenges the ex-president of the Russian Federation to a match. And a little later he burst into Elokhovskaya\(^{215}\) church, ran around the temple as if he was possessed, overturning chairs, tearing his clothes, and shouting: “Chechnya!” Recall that the girls also had an action on Lobnoe Mesto called “Putin wetted himself! (Putin zassal!),”\(^{216}\) and then the scandalous action in Christ the Savior temple.\(^{217}\) Truth be told though, unlike Alexander Brener, they did not cause property damage. Meanwhile, Brener got away easily. He spent in the militsiia [militia, Soviet and post-Soviet term for police] monkey cage [obeziannik, a slang for a cage for detainees at Russian police precincts] four hours and paid a fine of 500 rubles. And the Pussy Riot activists found themselves behind bars for two years…\(^{218}\)

Indeeed, it is difficult to bypass the clear isomorphism between Brener’s prototypical actions and their modification in the Pussy Riot performances. Differences aside, there is the same two-punch structure. One action at Red Square’s ominous execution site, right by the Kremlin walls, with a direct challenge to the national leader. The second one at a famous centrally located cathedral. In 1995, when Brener carried out his protests, Christ the Savior was still being rebuilt; otherwise he probably would have chosen it for his act.\(^{219}\) Two hits at two

\(^{215}\) This must be a typo. Gel’man definitely refers to Elokhovskaya church (Bogoyavlensky Cathedral) in Moscow

\(^{216}\) Slang for “Putin got very scared” – a reference to his perceived reaction to mass protests against unfair elections

\(^{217}\) Gel’man does not mention here that the initial, video-recorded performance of Pussy Riot also took place in the same Elokhovskaya church.

\(^{218}\) The interview of Gel’man by Zolotukhina (2013), “The Teacher of Pussy Riot Member Nadezhda Tolokonnikova was the ‘Man-Dog’ Oleg Kulik,” can be found on Segodnia.ua at: http://www.segodnya.ua/life/stories/Uchitelem-uchastnicy-Pussy-Riot-Nadezhdy-Tolokonnikovoy-byl-chelovek-sobaka-Oleg-Kulik.html

\(^{219}\) Actually, one of Brener’s performances was in May 1994 on the site where Christ the Savior was going to be built, soon after the rebuilding plans were approved by the governments of Moscow and Russia. Brener’s action seems to have been aimed at disrupting a larger collective action by a group of nonconformist artists that took place on May 27, 1994, the so-called “Project Swimming Pool ‘Moscow.’” Brener’s action and the project are described in Kovalev (2007: 148-149). The proclaimed goal of the project was to solicit ideas from Moscovites (many celebrities were personally invited) as to what possibly could be built on the site of the already closed swimming pool that previously had filled the void after the demolition of Christ the Savior. While the idea of seeking alternatives to the already approved rebuilding project could be understood as a challenge to the massive restoration of religious buildings that was underway at the time, the artists did not make their action explicitly challenging to the resurgent Orthodox Church. There is little in the description of the exhibit that suggests expressed anti-religious or anti-clerical motivations. However, Orthodox activists reacted angrily, and accusations of Satanism were made against the project organizers, and protesters with religious banners and incense showed up at the performance site. Amidst all that, Brener, who is quoted by Kovalev (2007: 148) as saying he disliked both the cathedral and the collective project, went up to a diving board, and, standing above the artists and their opponents started masturbating while a friend of his was screaming curse words in French. Since neither the collective project nor Brener’s action were clearly directed at subverting the emerging Orthodox hegemony, I did not include these events in my analysis of the dramas of the 1990s. While early signs of “anti-clericalism” may be sensed in the collective project, its spirit resonated far more with a considerable scepticism that many members of Moscow intelligentsia expressed at the
centers perceived as sites of power, the state and church. At the time of Brener’s original
performance the symbiosis of the two was not yet obvious. By the time Pussy Riot arrived with
their performances, the symbiosis was too clear not to be noticed, and the self-proclaimed punk-
rockers clearly targeted it in their two-punch act.

Furthermore, in the context of our study, Pussy Riot’s genetic connection to Voina is
important not only as the origins of their artistic protest, but, first and foremost, for
understanding their act in the context of the paradigm of resistance to “clericalization” that we
described in Chapter 5. Indeed, as I already mentioned, during the “Forbidden Art” episode, a
significant segment of human rights activists, including Elena Bonner, and fellow artistic
intelligentsia distanced themselves from the exhibit and, in part, accepted the hegemony of the
paradigm of radical desecularization. Against this background, Voina and other actionists held
the anti-clericalization line far more steadfastly. Thus, the Pussy Riot performance continues this
line of Voina’s actions and partakes in their opposition to clericalization. This continuity is
clearly seen in the text of the Pussy Riot punk prayer that I analyze below.

The Breach—A Disrupted Action at Christ the Savior Followed by a YouTube Video

The breach that started this, the most contentious act of social drama occurred on
February 21, 2012, the Tuesday of the week of “Maslenitsa” (Cheesefare, the last week before
Orthodox Great Lent), when five members of the feminist punk band Pussy Riot, nicknamed
Garadzha, Tyurya, Shumakher, Serafima and Kot, donned their characteristic brightly colored
ski masks to hide their true identities and attempted to sing what they described as a “pank

[Student's handwritten note: time regarding a monstrously expensive church restoration project in an impoverished Russian capital where many historical landmarks were being destroyed at the same time (see Remnick 1997: 173-177).]
moleben” (punk-prayer service) called “Bogoroditsa, Putina progoni!” (Holy Mother of God, chase Putin away!) on the ambo of Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow. The young women hurriedly tried to set up their guitars and amplifiers, and began to sing a cappella while being filmed.

It took less than a minute, however, before members of the cathedral security and other visitors began attempting to kick the women out. Ultimately they were forced to leave the cathedral without completing their performance. But the women used footage from another of their earlier actions (aktsiya) at the lesser-known yet also famous and historically important Bogoyavlensky Cathedral in Moscow. This was the very “Elokhovskaya church” where Brener staged his “Chechnya!” action in 1995. Remarkably, the performance in Bogoyavlensky Cathedral went without a scandal and practically unnoticed until its interior was recognized by some viewers of the YouTube video that the band released following their curtailed action in Christ the Savior. The YouTube video was a short video montage of their “punk-prayer,” which they also posted to the Live Journal site they created to document this action. In the video the women can be seen performing on the cathedral’s ambo crossing themselves, doing prostrations, pumping their fists into the air and kicking their legs while singing the text that I analyze below. However, before I talk about the text of their “punk prayer,” the Pussy Rite performance site(s) need to be discussed.

The Site

Actually, there were, as I already explained, two sites where the Pussy Riot action took place, the Bogoyavlensky and Christ the Savior Cathedral. Both are of historical and religio-political significance for Russia. The first one was originally built in the 18th century, and the famous poet Alexander Pushkin, one of the symbolic figures of Russian cultural pride, was baptized there in 1799. The Cathedral was to be closed by Soviet authorities in June 1941, but the closing never happened, possibly because of the beginning of the war against Germany. Importantly, from 1945 to 1991 the church enjoyed the highest status of a Patriarchal Cathedral. It is hard to say if the choice of Bogoyavlensky Cathedral as the setting for video-recording the Pussy Riot performance was informed by the Cathedral’s historical status, or simply by the desire to follow in the footsteps of Brener, or, quite simply, because its impressive iconostasis and spacious ambo provided a good background and stage for the video. What is puzzling, however, is that the band apparently was able to perform there without an interruption. How this was possible is puzzling indeed. It does sound like a conspiracy theory, but one is tempted to think that such an act would not be possible without insider collaboration. Whatever the explanation, the sentence in the Pussy Riot trial cites (referring to the testimony of one of the plaintiffs) the fact that the video recording took place in Bogoyavlenfsky Cathedral, “which before the erection of the Temple of Christ the Savior was the main Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church,” as an additional proof of the performance’s offensive intent.221

Yet, while Bogoyavlensky Cathedral played a role in the performance and reactions to it, its main site was Christ the Savior Cathedral. According to Karpov (2010: 247), the gigantic cathedral that was designed and consecrated in 1883, demolished in 1931 (with an open-air swimming pool opened in its place), and rebuilt in the 1990s, “is emblematic of the secularization and counter-secularization of Russia.” Gan (2015) provides an overview of the cultural history of the site and the meaningful role the site played in the performance. Interestingly, in his interpretation, Christ the Savior Cathedral could be seen, in a sense, as an actor that affected the performance and the performers. One can agree or disagree with this interpretation. I find the language that allows one to see places as actors obscuring rather than revealing, even though some social scientists might find it appealing. Dubious metaphors of places as actors aside, it seems obvious that the symbolic importance of the site predetermined its choice by the band and also affected public perceptions and the eventual punishment of the performers. However, absent from Gan’s (2015) analysis (and much of other scholarly work) is the Cathedral’s well-known place in Russian political life. Both Putin and Medvedev as well as many other high-ranking Russian state and business leaders attended nationally televised services there, typically during major Church holidays,222 and even a cursory look at the Russian internet would capture numerous photos of state bureaucrats side by side with hierarchs of the ROC, including its patriarchs Alexii II and then Kirill. Christ the Savior Cathedral is perhaps a perfect embodiment of the alliance of the elites of Church and State. The restored grandeur of the Cathedral (whose architectural and ornamental style even originally reflected the Imperial side of

222 Perhaps in reaction to televised images of high-ranked state bureaucrats who did not show much competence in what believers are supposed to do during Orthodox liturgy and sometimes were just standing there with lit candles in their hands, a sarcastic folk term “podsvechniki” (candle-holders) became a reference to these political dignitaries.
Russian Orthodoxy) is a perfect setting for the elites’ sorobotnichestvo\(^{223}\) – a nobly sounding, old-style term that literally means collaboration and is often used by ROC hierarchs to describe the Church’s role vis-à-vis the Russian state. It is remarkable how often this aspect of the Cathedral’s symbolic place in the life of the Russian State and Church is disregarded in scholarly analyses of the Pussy Riot case.

Finally, there is a rather peculiar aspect in the status of the cathedral that was brought up by the Pussy Riot legal defense during their trial. The most visible and politically important building of the Russian Orthodox Church is not in fact legally registered as a religious “juridical person” (a Russian legal term denoting organizations as legal actors) in its role as a Cathedral. The management of the enormous complex is entrusted by the government of Moscow to a non-governmental, non-profit organization named The Fund of the Temple of Christ the Savior. Furthermore, in addition to the parts of the structure where religious services are held, the enormous complex also houses various businesses. Therefore, the band members and their legal defenders could argue that, technically as well as substantively, the performance did not take place in a Temple. Here is a relevant part of an interview that Pussy Riot gave to a news outlet and that was quoted in the text of their sentence:

Many reacted with indignation because we gave a punk-concert in a temple. As for us, we believe this is not a temple, but a shame [Russian word “khram” (temple) rhymes with “sram” (shame)]. Shame of Christ the Savior. And this is not a house of the Lord, but an office of the ROC.\(^{224}\) We officially came to the ROC office to speak our thoughts. KhKhS [commonly used Russian acronym for Temple of Christ the Savior] looks not like a locus of religious life, but like a business-center: [it has] banquet halls that are rented

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\(^{223}\) See, for instance, the interview of Metropolitan Hillarion (Alfeev) to the journalist Nikolai Svanidze (2013) on the official site of DECR of ROC MP found at: https://mospat.ru/ru/2012/09/16/news70497/.

\(^{224}\) The building actually includes the hall where the official meetings of the Synod of ROC take place.
out for large amounts of money, cleaners, a laundry, and a guarded parking lot for automobiles.”

The content and tone of the statement does indeed evoke the themes of radical condemnation of the hypocrisy of money-changers and profiteers and their expulsion from the Temple by Christ himself. Moreover, the references to businesses operating under the auspices of the cathedral complex are factually correct. The characterization of the site as an “office” is also remarkable in its clearly negative, even pejorative connotation of the bureaucratic side of the operation of the Church.

The band’s legal defense team elaborated on these characterizations, and the arguments of the defense are thus summarized in this sentence:

[T]he defendants’ actions cannot be construed as ones that took place in a Temple, because the Temple of Christ the Savior is not a temple and was never transferred to the ROC and simply is used by the Fund of the Temple of Christ the Savior, and the conduct of religious rituals is not an activity included in the statutes of the Fund of the Temple of Christ the Savior ...[which] is an imitation of a religious structure. (“Official Findings” 2012)

As Ponomariov (2013) notes, the court countered this argument aptly by saying that while the building is owned by the city of Moscow and managed by the Fund, it is given to the ROC for unrestricted, free-of-charge use, has all the attributes of a temple, and was consecrated. I need to add to this yet another important dimension of the dispute about the nature of the site.

The court sentence remarked that even the presence of businesses and offices on the cathedral’s territory does not diminish its status of a Temple from the perspective of believers.

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225 This quote comes from the “Official Findings of Criminal Court Case of the Russian Federation No. 1-170/12” (Delo N 1-170/12 Prigovor imenem Rossiiskoi Federatsii) (2012), at: https://snob.ru/selected/entry/51999?v=1466160278.

226 See Ponomariov (2013), “The Pussy Riot case in Russia: Orthodox Canon Law and the sentence of the secular court,” in Ab Imperio at: https://muse.jhu.edu/article/539832/pdf. (This is the same Ponomarev I mentioned in previous chapters, but I am using a different version of transliteration for his name to keep it consistent with the publication cited here.)
The court thus took on itself the function of representing the not only the official plaintiffs but also abstract, generalized believers in deciding the nature of the site and the offense committed on it. By doing so, the court excluded Pussy Riot and any of their Orthodox supporters from the imagined community of “believers.” The court thus takes on an essentially religious function by defining insiders and outsiders in the Church, which, coincidentally, claims to be the church of the Russian people. Meanwhile, as Vera Shevzov (2014) writes, the insider/outsider issue in the Church is an extremely complex one, and it was this issue, among others, that were at the center of the Pussy Riot challenge to the status quo in the ROC.

Importantly, because of the nature of the site, the Pussy Riot action differed markedly from a vast majority of the episodes in the unfolding social drama (with the exception of Brener’s 1995 action in Bogoyavlensky Cathedral, which was brief and did not touch upon sensitive religious issues). The two controversial exhibits that I looked at in the previous two chapters were held in a secular and private institution, the Sakharov Museum. Thus the interventions of the ROC and its unofficial supporters, including the vandals from the first episode, were essentially attempts to censor secular and private space by imposing informal norms of a resurging public religion. Against this background, the Pussy Riot punk prayer was an intrusion of a secular artistic and political activist group (even though its members might have had personal religious beliefs) into the sacred space of the politically most important temple of official Orthodoxy. The band’s intrusion into the ROC’s space was bound to provoke a much harsher reaction than the two previous episodes. And we will indeed see that reaction was harsh and swift. Yet before we do this, let us look at the content of the prayer service.
The Punk-Prayer Services and Its Contested Meanings

Let us start with the text of the punk prayer. There are several translations available, and they all more or less agree with each other, and divergences are minor. Below I provide my translation\footnote{Thank you to Vyacheslav Karpov for his assistance with this translation.} with minor clarifications in parentheses:

O Mother of God, Holy Virgin, chase Putin away
Chase Putin away, Putin chase away
A black cassock, and golden epaulets
All parishioners crawl to bow
A phantom of freedom in the heavens
Gay pride has been sent to Siberia in shackles
The head of the KGB, their head saint
Sends prisoners to SIZO [pre-trial detention] under armed convoy [escort]
Not to offend His Holiness
Women need to give birth and to love
Crap, crap, Lord’s crap [some translations: Holy shit!]
O Holy Virgin, Mother of God, become a feminist
Become a feminist, a feminist become
Church praise for leaders [chiefs] rotten-through
Religious procession of black limousines
A preacher is coming to your school—
Go to your class, bring him money!
Patriarch Gundyay [a pejorative inflection of Patriarch Kirill’s last name] believes in Putin
Would be better, bitch, if he believed in God
The sash of the Virgin\footnote{A part from the presumed wonderworking sash of the Theotokos was brought to Russia from Mt. Athos in November 2011, and with a great pomp presented for veneration in several major churches, including Christ the Savior. Tens of thousands stood in long lines to venerate it. According to some reports, VIP pilgrims (from among the political and business elite) did not have to stay in lines but had special access, just like the old Soviet elites once had access to consumer goods in short supply. See, for instance the Newsru.com (2011) report, “Excitement around the Sash of the Virgin” (Azhiotazh vokrug pyasa Bogoroditsy), at: http://newsru.com/reliog/24nov2011/poyas.html#1 .} is no substitute for rallies [of protest]
At the rallies, the Ever Virgin Mary is with us!
O Holy Mother of God, Holy Virgin, chase Putin away
Chase Putin away, Putin chase away!229

Existing interpretations often focus on distinct aspects of the text. Bernstein (2013), for instance, emphasizes its political content that was purposefully denied by the prosecution and the court who insisted on portraying the action as anti-Orthodox yet non-political. She also emphasizes the feminist component and criticizes persistent gender bias within the way the band was perceived even among the generally liberal Russian opposition. Others (e.g., Denisenko 2013) talk about the religious content of the punk prayer (such as appeals to Mary and subversion of Kirill, a dissident take on the sash of the Theotokos, and so on). Yet others talk about a combination of feminism, religion, and anarchism (Willems 2014).

Against this background, I submit that a more productive view of the text (both verbal, but also contextual and non-verbal) of the punk prayer is to see it, borrowing terms from Walter Benjamin (1968) and Theodore Adorno (2007[1973])230 as a “constellation” saturated with tensions. The essence of this negative-dialectical approach is to allow objects of historical study to appear in their fullness, without trying to fit them into a Procrustean linear narrative, whatever the narrative nature, political or religious, liberal or feminist. Historical objects bear all marks of the dialectical contradictions of the history of which they are embodiments. They are not logical systems, but constellations of elements that typically are in contradictory relations with each other. From this perspective, the verbal text and the non-verbal context of the performance are clearly permeated with contradictions that nevertheless form a coherent, even if tense, meaningful entity. Advocacy for gay rights and freedom to conduct gay pride parades, clear

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229 See again the LiveJournal link for Pussy Riot (2012).
230 I owe Vyacheslav Karpov for this insightful perspective utilized in this section.
references to the ROC stance on abortion, and feminist appeals are side by side with a very
traditional search for the protection of the Mother of God. Clearly political, present day
references are wrapped in repetitive prayer lines typical for the Orthodox liturgy, and so on. The
strategy of profanation (Prozorov 2014) cohabits in the performance with “prophetic mockery”
(Denisenko 2013) typical of the act of the Medieval fools of Christ (yurodivye). Any either/or
interpretation of this text would be one-sided and thus misleading, as I already mention when
commenting on David Marin’s remarks. And even the scandalous visual dimension of the
performance, as Willems (2014) and Ponomariov (2013) notice, is contradictory. The Pussy Riot
act appears blasphemous, and yet they condemn blasphemy of the worship of state power by the
hierarchy of the ROC (Volkova 2014) The young women, as Willems notices, are on the solea,
but they do not cross into the altar. They wear masks, but that is also a way to cover their heads,
which is appropriate in a Russian Church. They wear colorful short dresses and leggings, but
they do not wear pants (again, in compliance with a typical dress code in the Russian Church).
They kicked their legs up, but they also kneeled prayerfully.

My next argument is that this “constellation saturated with tensions” was an expression
of a modified paradigm that we saw forming in the movement of art protestors and their
supporters among the human-rights community and opposition politicians. This is the paradigm
of resistance to radical and repressive desecularization (often denoted in the past by the fuzzy
term “clericalization”). The aggressive tone and style of the expression of this paradigm can be
seen as reflection of the gains of the opposite paradigm. Even since the end of the “Forbidden
Art” case the paradigm of radical desecularization made further inroads in public life, as I
showed in the contextual analysis earlier in this chapter. The punk prayer is directed against the
ROC hierarchy and the Putin tyranny at once because the performers see them as fused together (a Putin believing patriarch and a religious procession of black limousines). The motif of defending a “true” and authentic Christianity from its perceived distortion is also already familiar to us (already from the “Beware, Religion!” episode). The radical nature of the protest can in part be explained as a reaction to the capitulation of part of the human-rights community in the face of rising hegemony of the desecularizing paradigm. Furthermore, we see in the text that the “anti-clericalization” paradigm is substantively expanded. The new elements that it now incorporates come from two sources. The first source is feminist and LGBTQ movements. Hence the references to the persecution of gays and to the patriarchal construction of women’s roles. The broadened paradigm contained a promise of a broader support for it, and it seems indeed that at least part of the international appeal of the Pussy Riot protest has been indeed due to the inclusion of these new elements, because they resonated clearly with some of the central themes of globalized women’s and minority rights movements. The second source is domestic, and it is the protest movement, largely of urban, better educated and younger Russians that seemed to be getting momentum in the early months of 2012. Not surprisingly, there was a considerable support for the band from the ranks of the movement, and one of the groups at the May 6, 2012 Bolotnaya rally marched under “Free Pussy Riot” banners.231

Finally, given the constellation of the Pussy Riot performance, attempts to separate the religious from the political in their action hardly make any sense. Bernstein (2013: 232-235) unmasks the attempts of the Putin regime to disregard the political nature of the action and to

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present it as an apolitical event in the religious sphere. Rightly so. Yet, Bernstein’s own emphasis on the political downplays the religious dimension of the action. The Pussy Riot interview fragment quoted in their court sentence as evidence of their intent was probably a rather honest expression of their belief:

We are criticizing the church’s aspiration to achieve a dominant role in the public and political life of Russia. There are believers among us, we approach religion, and Orthodoxy in particular, with respect, and precisely for this reason we are disturbed by the fact that this great and bright philosophy is being used in such a dirty way. We go nuts because of how what is the most beautiful is being screwed. (Vedomosti 2012)

A Crisis of Unprecedented Scale

The crisis phase of the social drama arose swiftly as paradigm-bearers for the ROC and those in defense of Pussy Riot took to the public sphere through the utilization of blog sites, broader websites, media sources and public demonstrations to contest their cultural scripts. The first movement of the crisis phase began with the appearance of Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin (2012) on the television program Dozhd’ on February 21 where he voiced his displeasure with the Pussy Riot action at Christ the Savior. He quickly followed these comments with a more extensive blog post the next day on the collective site Pravoslavnaya politika (Orthodox Politics) where he argued that the punk band had violated statutes on anti-extremism and that their action was criminal and offended the feelings of believers. Interestingly, he also argued that politicians who did not condemn the Pussy Riot action “may stop counting on the support of the Orthodox” and also that the legal standards surrounding acts that offend religious feelings should be strengthened, both of which comments seem to reflect direct attempts to influence the political field concerning the Pussy Riot action (Interfaks 2012a). Chaplin’s comments proved to be the
first salvo in an intense struggle. The tensions of the crisis phase increased when the prosecutor’s office received an official complaint from the rector of a local Orthodox school on February 22 stating that the Pussy Riot action was a “sacrilegious concert” that offended his feelings as an Orthodox believer, and that the young women should be arrested for “hooliganism” and for the inciting of religious hatred (article 213) (Gazeta.ru 2012). Other complaints against the women were to follow, each documenting the perceived blasphemy and sacrilege of the action and the offence against the religious feelings of the complainants. Ultimately, on March 3, 2012 (the day before the presidential elections), two members of Pussy Riot, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alekhina, were arrested and taken into custody. A third member, Ekaterina Samutsevich, was arrested on March 16.

The struggles that followed in the crisis stage differed greatly from what we observed in the previous acts of the drama. There are, as we show below, five important characteristics that set the punk prayer episode apart. The first one is the unprecedented public attention that the episode received in Russia, which was reflected in the scale of its coverage on the internet and in official media sources. Second, there has been a much broader range of social actors involved in this episode. It was no longer between the ROC establishment and its unofficial storm troops on the one side and a narrow circle of the critical intelligentsia on the other. Gradually, the Pussy Riot affair involved much broader constituencies both within Orthodoxy and outside it. The third distinctive feature is the obvious politicization of the act, which involved both the establishment and the opposition political forces. The fourth distinctive characteristic is that, unlike in previous acts, there clearly appeared signs of disunity among the Orthodox, with a vocal part of the Orthodox intelligentsia and activists opposing repressive actions against the band. Fifth, the
conflict was for the first time broadly internationalized and involved a growing number of governmental and nongovernmental responses from Europe and the United States. Let us consider these characteristics in greater detail.

*Public attention* to the case has been unprecedented indeed. Russia’s leading newspapers provided coverage of at least some aspects of the case. State-controlled television as well as the internet-based television channel *Dozhd’* had multiple shows dedicated to the conflict. The internet and social media exploded with postings on the case. As of August 13, 2012, *Google* gave us 256,000 links to materials on Pussy Riot (spelled in Russian), and the main Russian search engine, *Yandex*, 113,000. Since many Russian websites used the English spelling of the band’s name, the actual number of internet items covering the case must be much larger than this. For comparison, our search of materials on the ‘Beware, Religion!’ exhibition (also in Russian only) yielded 84,000 and 50,000 results respectively. Furthermore, as we show later in this paper, as the crisis unfolded, public opinion polls indicated a growing awareness of it far beyond the usually politically attuned circles of the educated inhabitants of Moscow and St. Petersburg. A national survey conducted at the end of July 2012 found that only 21 percent of all Russians did not know anything about the case (Levada Center 2012).

The *social actors* involved in the conflict were no longer limited to the relatively narrow groups we saw participating in the previous acts of the drama. At the various points in the crisis stage new participants voiced their opinions. For instance, participation by the intelligentsia was no longer limited to the “usual suspects,” avant-garde artists and human rights activists. On June 27, 2012, an appeal by 103 leading artists, writers and other members of the intelligentsia to the Supreme Court was published (Appeal 2012). Among those who signed were celebrities
previously known for their loyal attitudes toward Putin and Russia’s current regime. Moreover, the appeal was supported by the presidential Council on Human Rights (Council 2012). The appeal, however, was later countered by a letter supporting the prosecution that was signed by self-described patriotic members of the intelligentsia.

*The involvement of Orthodox Christians was also incomparably broader and, at the same time, polarized.* The aforementioned comments by Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin were almost immediately countered by those of a popular and influential Orthodox commentator, Deacon Andrei Kuraev (2012a), who suggested that “the girls” needed to be fed *bliny* (pancakes, a traditional Russian meal during the week preceding Great Lent, when the punk prayer was held), “pinched” (this playful part of Kuraev’s comment angered feminists), and let go. Kuraev has been an influential public figure in the ROC (his school textbook *Foundations of Orthodox Culture* [Kuraev 2012b] was officially approved by the Patriarchate) and his disagreement with Fr. Vsevolod Chaplin signaled potentially serious disunity in the establishment of the ROC. Yet disagreements and polarization were even more pronounced outside that establishment. Experts have long discerned unofficial factions within the ROC. Zoe Knox (2005: 95-104) wrote about tensions between the ‘reformist’ and the ‘traditionalist’ factions. More recently Irina Papkova (2011) has described three rather than two influential groups within the ROC (liberals, traditionalists, and fundamentalists). Liberals, Papkova suggests, have mostly chosen to stay away from open intra-ecclesial struggles after they suffered setbacks in the 1990s. Thus liberal influences, while potentially considerable, have become less noticeable. By contrast, fundamentalists have been visible and outspoken, which makes them seem more dominant than traditionalists, while in reality, according to Papkova (2011: 67), the latter have been more
influential. However, in my observation, divisions and polarization around the Pussy Riot case have been along the liberal-fundamentalist fault lines, and it would be difficult to pinpoint a middle-ground, traditionalist line.

The conflict mobilized liberal forces in the ROC. Debates in the media made liberal voices heard more broadly than in recent years. In multiple blogs on LiveJournal Orthodox priests, usually younger and better educated, expressed their disagreement with and often open condemnation of the actions of the Patriarchate and the state (no references to these blogs are provided here out of concern for the possibility of punitive action against the Orthodox clergy bloggers). Some expressed their disagreement openly in the secular media. For instance, Fr. Vyacheslav Vinnikov (2012) published an article tellingly titled “Sviatye devochki” (Holy girls) on a liberal website, *Grani*, in which he evaluated the punk prayer as a valuable critique of the ROC’s embrace of the state. On March 6, two weeks after the incident, a group of Orthodox laypeople appealed to Patriarch Kirill asking him to intercede for the arrested band members (Open Letter 2012). The appeal was signed by over 2,000 people including dozens of clergy. In June 2012 there was another appeal signed, among others, by well-established and reputable Orthodox intellectuals, such as the poet Olga Sedakova, the writer Maya Kucherskaya and the Bible scholar Andrei Desnitsky (*Regions.ru* 2012). On the other side, there was outrage verging on hysteria among Orthodox commentators and activists gravitating to the fundamentalist camp. Many suggested, publicly or in personal blogs, that the band members should be executed, or burned alive and their ashes scattered over the Moscow River, or publicly flagellated. There were

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232 We use the word “liberal” here largely for the lack of a better term to refer to those who resist authoritarian, chauvinistic and xenophobic tendencies within the ROC and society, and who are not necessarily liberal in their theological orientations or indiscriminately pro-Western in their political and cultural views.
reports of Cossacks gathering to protect Orthodox churches. In Krasnodar, protest rallies were held featuring clergy, Cossack leaders and local administrators pledging their support for the faith. According to multiple internet publications, in churches in Moscow and elsewhere, on orders from the Patriarchate, a letter to the procurator’s office was circulated that demanded punishment for the perpetrators of blasphemy in the Cathedral as well as for the journalists who covered the act (Novaya Gazeta 2012). Circulating of such letter was not a new technique of mobilization – we already saw similar tactics used in the two previous cases.

On April 22, 2012 the Patriarchate organized a “molitvennoe stoyanie” (prayerful standing) near the Cathedral to pray for the protection of the ROC against its persecutors. Ironically, the rally was held on Thomas Sunday, the first Sunday after Easter, that in 2012 coincided with Lenin’s birthday, and the coincidence was noted in many venomous remarks by the Pussy Riot supporters. In his address to the rally, Patriarch Kirill unequivocally characterized those who opposed the Patriarchate’s hard line as “traitors in cassocks” (Slovo 2012a). Not surprisingly, after this characterization some of the previously critical Orthodox clergy bloggers whose posts I already mentioned, went silent on the Pussy Riot issue.

The rally showed that the Patriarchate construed the Pussy Riot case as one of many attacks on the ROC by its enemies, such as desecration of icons by vandals in a provincial church, or ridicule of Patriarch Kirill for his subordinates’ failed attempt to “photoshop-out” his scandalously famous watch from an official photograph (as discussed earlier). References to the persecutors and enemies of the ROC in Patriarch Kirill’s speech at the stoyanie (Slovo 2012a) are wrapped in theological and historical discourse. The patriarch creatively fused Biblical quotes with contemporary political jargon, sometimes within a single sentence. The official press
release put such “fused” sentences in quotation marks, creating the perception that the sentences were direct quotes rather than freestyle variations on scriptural themes. For instance, at one point the following sentence appears in quotation marks: “It is better that one man die for the people than for all to die [which up to this point is an altered version of John 11:50 without attribution to the source – R.S.], because otherwise the Romans would harden their occupation regime.”

(Luchshe odin chelovek umret za narod, chem vsem pogibnut’, potomu chto inache rimliane uzhestochili by svoy okupatsionnyi rezhim) (Slovo 2012a). Characteristically, the term “occupation regime” had been widely used by the radical nationalist opposition to liberal reforms long before the speech. By using the term, nationalist radicals implied that democratic and liberal reforms have foreign domination (typically, specified as American and Jewish domination).

Overall, the patriarch’s speech was saturated with altered and unattributed references to well-known scriptural passages that have traditionally been used to blame the Jews for the death of Christ and for denying his resurrection. These include bits and pieces from John 11:50 (Caiaphas saying that it is better that one man die for the people), Matthew 27: 63-64 (Pharisees asking Pilate to prevent the disciples from stealing Christ’s body in order to say that he rose from the dead), Matthew 28: 12-15 (chief priests paying the soldiers to lie that the body was indeed stolen, and the Jews accepting the lie), and John 20:19 (the disciples hiding behind shut doors because of the fear of the Jews). While the speech never mentions the Jews directly, the entire frame of scriptural references unequivocally points in this direction. It is in this context that the patriarch brought up and characterized the contemporary persecutors of the ROC. He said in particular:

The same people who shouted “The disciples stole Him at night!”—the same people during the moment of a severe economic crisis were saying: “Why do we need to restore
the temple of Christ the Savior?" For this amount of money one could buy and do this, that and the other. There were also traitors in cassocks, just as even today there are those among us who say: “And why gather for this prayer? Let us forget about it! Let us pretend that nothing is happening in our life today.” (Slovo 2012a)

It would be difficult not to read this passage as a barely veiled suggestion that the enemies outside the ROC and traitors within it are essentially the same people who were responsible for the death of Christ and then accused his followers of stealing his body: the Jews or their mercenaries. In other passages, parallels were drawn between the ROC’s contemporary persecutors and their Soviet-era predecessors. While the leaders of the Patriarchate were thus trying to present themselves as the persecuted church of old, the presumed persecutors, or at least three of them, were in the meantime in prison awaiting trial.

“Enemies of the Church” Again

Importantly, the idea of “enemies of the Church” was anything but an ad hoc figure of speech used by the patriarch. The discourse on the powerful enemies of the ROC who need to be unmasked and resisted has long been part of the ROC’s post-Soviet ideology. Let me remind that, as I already mentioned in the last chapter, in June 2006, at an official meeting in the Danilov Monastery, the head of the Patriarchate’s Synodal Department for Interaction with the Armed Forces, Archpriest Dmitri Smirnov, already proposed compiling and publishing online lists of the ROC’s enemies along with their addresses and quotes from their works. And Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin indicated that such lists were actually already prepared (Izvestiia 2006). On Palm Sunday, April 8, 2012, an appeal from the Patriarchate to unite against the

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233 It is difficult not to think that Gundyayev evokes the 1994 art protests in connection with the Pussy Riot action here.
enemies of the ROC (“anti-Church forces”) was read in many ROC churches (Newsru.com 2012b). The religion scholar and journalist Valeri Otstavnykh commented in his blog: “‘Enemies of the Church’ are marked. Has the war started?” (Newsru.com 2012b). Let us not forget that, given the emphasis on the inseparability of nation, faith, and state in the ideology promoted by the Patriarchate and its allies, the term “enemies of the Church” has far-reaching implication. Since the ROC, the Russian people and the state are inseparably united, an enemy of the Church is also an enemy of the people and of the state, which brings up horizons of meanings associated with Russia’s Stalinist past. The war, apparently, did not presume compassion for the enemies. When asked for compassion and intercession for the three jailed women, spokesmen for the Patriarchate took the previously tested approach of discursive distancing. In a nutshell, their argument was that the ROC did not jail the women, and it cannot intervene in the juridical process (see, for instance, Metropolitan Hillarion 2012).

The level of politicization of the crisis was also unprecedented. High-ranking officials were involved in debates and disputes. Interestingly some support for freeing the jailed Pussy Riot members was voiced by establishment groups and figures. On July 2, 2012 the presidential Council on Human Rights made a statement supporting the intelligentsia appeal to the Supreme Court (Council 2012). The ombudsman Vladimir Lukin was of the same opinion. However, there also has been strong support for repressive action from other corners of the political establishment. The head of the Constitutional Court Valeri Zor’kin publicly opined that actions that (like Pussy Riot’s) offended someone’s religious feelings were not only immoral, but also against the law (Zor’kin 2012). Importantly, the opinion had been expressed before the trial began, thus creating a strong bias against the accused. The Ministry of Culture held a behind-
closed-doors meeting of media managers to discuss the coverage of the affair (*Portal-Credo.ru* 2012). The results of the meeting were not disclosed, but the official media engaged in a propaganda attack strongly resembling those of the Soviet era, only now they were defending the ROC instead of the Communist Party. Their coverage, such as in the prime-time show ‘Provocateurs’ (*Provokatory*)\(^{234}\) on state-run television on April 24, 2012 and anchored by the well-known journalist Mamontov blamed enemies of the Russian state and people and foreign conspirators.

At the same time, opposition forces embraced the Pussy Riot case as one of the rallying points against the regime. Mass demonstrations of protest held in Moscow on May 6 included, as I already mentioned, a large group marching in support of Pussy Riot. One of the best-known opposition leaders, Aleksei Naval’ny, participated in protests.\(^ {235}\) Eduard Limonov, the leader of the now illegal National Bolshevik party, expressed appreciation of the imprisoned women’s act (Limonov 2012). The imprisoned businessman and opposition figure Mikhail Khodorkovsky also expressed support for the band members (Khodorkovsky 2012). Most opposition media outlets, ranging from *Novaya Gazeta* to multiple liberal-democratic websites, published countless reports and columns on the case.

Finally, the level of internationalization of the conflict was also unprecedented. Unlike the Sakharov Museum cases that were known perhaps only to a handful of human rights activists and specialists in the West, the Pussy Riot drama slowly but surely gained attention in Europe and North America. Among foreign leaders, the Estonian president Ilves was one of the first to

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\(^{234}\) The episode (*Provokatory* 2012) of the show is available on *YouTube* at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98oB9jAhGtM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98oB9jAhGtM).

\(^{235}\) Even though as Bernstein notes (2013: 234-235), his characterization of the Pussy Riot act was far from flattering.
express support for Pussy Riot by attending a concert dedicated to them (*Moscow Times* 2012). Later, expressions of concern or demands for liberation of the women came from the U.S. Department of State, the German Bundestag, French cabinet ministers and many others. Amnesty International declared the three women prisoners of conscience.

Paradigms Further Modified and Crystalized

The cast of actors involved in this act of the social drama as well as the views they expressed attest to a modification in the construction of root paradigms expressed by the opposing sides. Specifically, now on one side we see a broad coalition of the intelligentsia (including people of high status previously not known to be in opposition to the Putin regime), political opposition leaders from right to left, human rights groups and their international supporters, and, importantly, a part of the Orthodox laity and clergy, perhaps relatively small but vocal, and perhaps limited to the largest cities yet influential in the media. On the other side, there is an alliance of Patriarchate leaders with President Putin and his loyalists among the secular elites, the Orthodox intelligentsia of nationalist and pro-establishment persuasions, multiple groups of Orthodox activists, ranging from official to unofficial, and others. Political power as well as the repressive apparatus are, needless to say, in the control of the latter.

In terms of paradigms and cultural scripts, an important shift in comparison with previous cases is the expansion of the platform of the opponents of the desecularization strategy and ideology promoted by the Patriarchate and its patrons in the Russian state. While they do not necessarily all speak the same language as their secular and especially militantly secularist counterparts, the emergence of an Orthodox Christian current within this camp is consequential.
for the ideological realignment in the course of the social drama. The conflict fault lines have now cut across the churched and un-churched, Orthodox and non-Orthodox populations and orientations. Despite claims to the contrary by spokesmen for the Patriarchate, it is now impossible to say any more that the clash is between Orthodoxy and its enemies without presenting an influential Orthodox minority essentially as apostates.

Yet as we have seen this has not prevented the Patriarchate and its allies from escalating the rhetoric and actions directed against the presumed “enemies of the Church.” Those Orthodox who were on the wrong side of the conflict were either not truly Orthodox, or outright “traitors in cassocks.” In his address after the liturgy in a Moscow church on March 24, 2012, Patriarch Kirill referred to the events in Christ the Savior and said that there were still “people who justify this blasphemy, minimize it, try to present it as an entertaining joke. And it is sad, and my heart is broken by bitterness because among these people are also those who call themselves Orthodox” (Slovo 2012b). The implication is clear. Those who disagree with the Patriarchate’s treatment of Pussy Riot and other “enemies of the Church” are not Orthodox, even though they may call themselves so. Ironically, this comes from the same hierarch who, together with his followers, has long insisted that Russians are essentially Orthodox as if by birth or heritage, even though they may not go to church or know much about the faith. This is a paradoxical construction of the meaning of being Orthodox. Apparently, in the eyes of Patriarchate leaders even un-churched Russians are Orthodox as long as they are willing to join the struggle against the enemies of the Church. Yet those who are churched, or even clergy who oppose persecution and prosecution of the “enemies,” are not Orthodox. Thus the crisis stage of the Pussy Riot
drama brought into contestation even the very meaning of Orthodox identity, which has implications for the theoretical interpretation that I provide in the conclusion of this dissertation.

Redressive Mechanisms in the Short-Term

Unlike previous acts of the social drama, the Pussy Riot act triggered not only the use of short-term *redressive mechanisms* (detention, trial, conviction, imprisonment), but also the making of new ones, applicable in a longer-term beyond this particular case. The long-term change in *redressive mechanisms* included a materialization of the ROC aspiration to have a law that would punish insults to religious feelings of the Russian Orthodox people, including the insults that result from “intentional blasphemy” and slander against the Church (see my analysis of the November 2011 policy document above). I will begin by describing the redressive mechanisms that were applied in the short-term, and subsequently switch to the new, long-term ones.

Despite the protests, pre-trial imprisonment for the band members was extended twice by the court, and then a trial began that, by many journalistic accounts (live coverage was banned) was remarkable in the degree to which procedural norms and legal rights of the defendants were violated. The Russian Legal and Court Information Agency (*Rossiiskoye Agentstvo Pravovoi i Sudebnoi Informatsii*) (an official organization jointly established in 2009 by Russia’s Supreme and Constitutional Courts and the Russian Information Agency) evaluated the trial as more scandalous than the Pussy Riot action itself (RAPS1 2012). The official indictment (*Novaya Gazeta* 2012c) of Pussy Riot is remarkable in how it interprets the nature of their offence. They were accused, in particular, of intending to openly express “disrespect for the Christian world
and church canons,” to “desecrate” the church and to “inflict deep wounds on Orthodox Christians.” And perhaps the strongest formulation of this nature is that the women committed a “maliciously conscious and thoroughly planned action of humiliation of the feelings and beliefs of multiple adherents of the Orthodox Christian confession and diminishment of the spiritual foundation of the state” (emphasis added – R.S.). As I have already suggested, and further argue below, the idea that Orthodoxy is inseparable from the state is crucial to the root paradigm promoted by the Patriarchate and its allies both within and outside the ROC. In this remarkable document, the prosecution goes so far as to make this idea official and its subversion a criminal offence.

During the trial President Putin said in an interview in London on August 2, 2012 that while he did not see anything good in the Pussy Riot action in his view the accused should not be punished “so very strictly” (tak uzh strogo) (Putin 2012). Soon after that during the concluding statements the prosecution demanded three years in prison for the accused (the maximum they could face was seven years). The court’s decision was announced on August 17, 2012. The defendants were found guilty and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in a correctional colony for hooliganism motivated by religious hatred (Putin 2012). The sentencing, as we will see below did not end the workings of redressive mechanisms, and some of them were being designed as Pussy Riot members went to serve their terms.

Provincial Repercussions of Moscow Passions—“Enemies of the Church” and “Punitive Psychiatry”

In Soviet times repressive initiatives originating in the capital cities were often magnified enthusiastically in the provinces, where such nuisances as the presence of foreign journalists and
diplomats could not confine bureaucratic zeal. Writer and philosopher Alexander Zinoviev once wrote sarcastically that the severity of repression is usually proportional to the squared distance from Moscow. I suspect that the application of redressive mechanisms against “the enemies of the church” in the provinces during the Pussy Riot act of the drama could show a somewhat similar pattern. Let me present one case study to illustrate the point. Unfortunately, repression in the Russian provinces is rarely publicized enough to receive the same level of attention as events in Moscow usually do.

On December 31, 2011, Maksim Yefimov wrote one of his usual critical blog posts for the Chas Nol’ newspaper section of the website of the Youth Human Rights Group of the Republic of Karelia; its title was “Karelia is tired of priests” (Kareliya ustala ot popov) (Yefimov 2011). This post was to initiate the breach phase of another social drama, which is to a degree an extension of the third act of the larger Pussy Riot social drama since it overlapped with and had ramifications for the Pussy Riot case as well.

In his short blog post Yefimov argues that an “anti-clerical mood” is growing in Karelia and he criticizes the growing sphere of influence of the ROC in public life. Specifically, he writes that the ROC is corrupt and that it is just an extension of the provincial government and the Edinaya Rossiya (United Russia) party. He argues, furthermore, that the ROC receives money from the provincial government budget to build churches when there are not enough kindergartens for children. At one point in the post, Yefimov describes Orthodox believers as “otrod’ye” (spawn).

His post triggered a fairly contained crisis phase that received little public attention in Karelia or in wider Russian society. However, on March 7, 2012, Yefimov was charged with
“extremism” (article 282, part 1) for “inciting religious hatred” with his blog post (Newsru.com 2012b). In the course of the investigation of his case, Yefimov was required by the prosecutor’s office to undergo a psychiatric evaluation. This particular form of *adjustive or redressive mechanism* marks a new phase in the progression of harsh responses to perceived anti-Orthodox or anti-Church activities in the larger social drama. The four members of the commission that carried out the evaluation recommended that Yefimov be hospitalized for further evaluation. The main investigator deferred to the commission’s findings and on May 12 Yefimov was sentenced to forced psychiatric hospitalization to begin ten days later. Yefimov began the appeal process, but the ten days expired before the appeal was decided. On May 21, 2012 Yefimov disappeared before his hospitalization was to begin, he fled abroad and applied for political refugee status in Estonia (Newsru.com 2012c; Yefimov 2012).

Yefimov’s case is included as an escalation of the larger social drama in that the *redressive mechanisms* applied clearly hark back to the use of “punitive psychiatry” (karatel’naya psikhiatriya) in the Soviet period to silence dissidents. It led to the larger question of whether the Yefimov affair was a “test case” for the widespread re-implementation of “punitive psychiatry.” This question loomed larger after the three Pussy Riot members were also forced to undergo psychiatric evaluations as part of the prosecution’s discovery process to gain evidence for their trial (Novaya Gazeta 2012c). At the least, Yefimov’s sentencing to forced psychiatric hospitalization shows a clear increase in the severity of punishment for anti-clerical views, and it perhaps—at its worst—stands as a precedent and a warning to other bloggers and journalists: if you criticize the ROC you may be declared “mentally ill,” and the institution of psychiatry may be used to “treat” you.
Redressive Mechanisms for Longer-Term—The Making of a New Law

Now that we looked at how existing *redressive mechanisms* were applied, let us turn to longer-term consequences of the Pussy Riot act. The consequences, as I show below, were serious and far-reaching. The preparations for a more fundamental change in the treatment of “intentional blasphemers,” “slanderers against the Church,” and, in short, all those “enemies of the church” who offend religious feelings of the Russian Orthodox people must have been underway for a long time, perhaps even before the Pussy Riot performance in Christ the Savior. Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain the swiftness with which new legal weapons to combat the “enemies of the church” were manufactured. Another reason to think about a long-prepared action is a remarkable degree of coordination between the ROC, Duma, Federation Council, and president Putin. In favor of the hypothesis of a plan that had been long in the making was also the November 2011 policy document of the ROC that I discussed earlier in this chapter. To remind, the document called for referring the cases of the offenders of religious feelings to the organs of state power for the purpose of curtailing or punishing offensive acts should the acts be of illegal character. The policy was in place, and the only missing link was the absence of a law that would criminalize offenses to religious feelings, for which at the time only administrative punishments existed. And then, right after the Pussy Riot case, the process of the creation of such a law was initiated.

Yet another dissertation could be and perhaps should be written on all the details of the development of the process of the creation and enactment of the new law. Such a dissertation would tell a lot about the inner workings of the machine of the Russian state. The process
involved struggles when attempts were made by more moderate elements in the establishment accompanied by a small and shrinking chorus not yet silenced or muted voices in the media to question the necessity and reduce the severity of the proposed law. Yet, the defeat that the opponents of “clericalization” suffered in the Pussy Riot case and perhaps the growing fear of repressions in the aftermath of that case as well as of the Bolotnaya protests made resistance rather tame in comparison to what was going on in Russia before the punk-band conviction. No full-scale social drama with breaches, crises, and redressive mechanisms developed. Rather, there was a swiftly developing and weakly contested process. Below I summarize the process’s key documented developments.

On September 13, 2012, just one month after judge Syrova signed the Pussy Riot sentence, president Putin addressed journalists in his residence in Bocharov Ruchei (near the Black Sea resort of Sochi) and declared that the state should react harshly and in a timely manner to provocations against religious feelings, or else people whose feelings are offended will react by using unacceptable methods (a rhetorical figure that Putin administration has used more than once portraying its repressive rule as a way to preclude a disastrous popular backlash from below). Here is the quote provided by Interfaks (2012b):

All of us must with special attention and very caringly treat religious feelings, including religious feelings of people pertaining to very different religious confessions….If the state does not react harshly and in a timely manner to provocations directed against people’s religious feelings, then those people who are offended, insulted, and humiliated, they themselves begin to defend their views and interests….And sometimes in unacceptable forms and they act by using unacceptable methods.

Thus, Russia’s president called for harsh and swift reaction to offenses against religious feelings. His ominous warning about a possible backlash from below was a clear indication that such harsh and swift measures need to be worked out right away, and that existing,
administrative punishments were not enough. (Let us recall that Pussy Riot were punished for hooliganism motivated by religious enmity, and their predecessors—for inciting enmity. There was no law that would criminalize offenses to religious feelings, even though that was precisely the accusation raised from one case to another against the “enemies of the church.”)

It is very difficult to believe that it was by mere coincidence that on the very day Putin spoke about the need to treat offenders of religious feelings harshly and swiftly the head of the Legal Department of Moscow Patriarchate Ksenia Chernega (whom the reader already met on the pages of this study) proposed to introduce into the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation a new article that would envision imprisonment for offending believers’ religious feelings. Nor is it easy to believe that it was a mere coincidence that she made the statement addressing the meeting of the council of experts of the Duma Committee for the Affairs of Public Associations and Religious Organizations. Said Chernega (Nakanune.ru 2012):

Presently there is only one article against offending religious feelings in the Code of Administrative Violations. It says that an offense of believers’ religious feelings leads to the imposition of a fine from 500 to a thousand rubles. It is obvious that this norm is not enough, therefore I consider absolutely correct the proposal the well-known jurist Ponkin to include in the Criminal Code of RF an article that introduces a criminal punishment for actions of this nature.

Chernega also said that the ROC proposed to define “reputation” more broadly in the new law. She explained that at the moment courts usually restricted cases to violations of business reputation. Chernega proposed that if “reputation” in general, instead of business reputation, is protected by law, the Church would be able to defend itself better.

All in all, Chernega presented to the Duma experts the demand for a new law that was implicitly contained in the November 2011 ROC document against blasphemy and slander. Remarkably, both aspects, the insult of religious feelings and subversion of the reputation of the
Church (broadly understood, which might include qualities of its leaders or theological competence, for instance) were brought to the attention of the Duma.

To those in the academic community who struggle to understand how the Byzantine concept of *symphonia* applies to church-state relations in the twenty-first century Russia, or how the much glorified sorabotnichestvo (collaboration) between the Church and the State works, the two events happening on the same day might explain a lot. The state, speaking in Sochi in the voice of its head, says there is a need for swift and harsh punishments to offenders of religious feelings. And, low and behold, a couple thousand miles away, in a perfect point-counterpoint, a nun in charge of the ROC legal affairs simultaneously tells the Duma experts in Moscow that a new criminal law is needed to deal with such offenses.

The Duma proved remarkably receptive to the words of the ROC lawyer, and of the president. One of the co-sponsors of the future law, the LDPR deputy Yaroslav Nilov, retrospectively described the motivation of the Duma in the following way:

> The pre-history of the emergence of these amendments is as follows. There were 20 co-authors of the amendments to the UK [Criminal Code], including heads of all of the Duma fractions, and I was one among them. In 2012 we were on the threshold of a serious spiritual crisis, a troubled time, when in the Internet it was possible, for instance to find information about how much one gets paid for desecrating icons [perhaps a reference to the much earlier case of Ter-Ogan’ian – R.S.]. It was when even our pro-government media showed how a naked woman in Ukraine is sawing off a cross, and a cross in memory of the victims of political repression at that [a reference to a real event, the demolition of large wooden memorial cross in Kyiv by the self-defined “sextremist” feminist protest group Femen]. And they showed it so that the message of the show could be taken to be a directive to act.

And so, simultaneously with “krestopoval” [the name of the Femen action of the demolition of the cross] there was the performance of Pussy Riot on the ambo in an

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236In fact, the two events were not simultaneous at all. Femen carried out their krestochnoval on August 17, 2012, days after the sentencing of Pussy Riot and explicitly in solidarity with the Russian punk band. Following the Femen case, the Russian media reported a series of presumed copycat actions. On March 26, 2013, the news site Newsru.com reported all in all eleven such cases that had taken place from the fall of 2012 through March of 2013.
Orthodox temple, and there were explosions in Tatarstan, Osetia [difficult to say what exactly the Deputy means here, except to assume a vague reference to Islamist radicals] … A psychosis and hysteria were beginning, and then the State Duma adopted a draft declaration in which it condemned the attempt to ignite divisiveness in our multi-confessional state (even though the state-forming nation are [ethnic] Russians, of whom a majority adhere to the orthodox faith). The State Duma had to push back against the attempt to pit the people against each other on religious grounds, and this is how the bill was born. It was needed by the society. 237

This is a remarkable account that aims at recreating the sense of absolute urgency and societal necessity that the Duma deputies supposedly perceived in 2012. The Pussy Riot case is prominently present among the motivators, and it is listed alongside the events in Ukraine and possible terror attacks in Tatarstan and Osetia. Then a mysterious “attempt” to ignite religious conflict is mentioned, without an indication of who exactly was behind the attempt. It is also noticeable how the narrative conveys the same sense of urgency, and essentially the same argument that we saw in Putin’s lapidary statement in Bocharov Ruchei.

Already on September 17, 2012, just four days after Putin spoke and Chernega opined, the Interfaks238 (2012c) agency reported that Nilov’s committee was working on a bill following its meeting with representatives of religious organizations. Given the fact that Putin’s remarks

Importantly, in most of the cases there was no mention of anti-church motivations. (See Newsru.com. [2013] at http://www.newsru.com/religy/ 26mar2013/ krestopoval.html.) There were also unconfirmed media reports that an organization named Narodnaya Volia (People’s Will, which was the name of the 19th century clandestine terrorist group) was responsible for at least some such actions. Presumably, a Facebook post by the new Narodnaya Volia, according to the Russian news agency RBK, declared that the group’s actions were in retaliation for the imprisonment of Pussy Riot and for Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov’s offensive remarks against Vladimir Lenin (RBK [2012], “Otvetstvennost’ za ‘Krestopoval’ Vziala na Sebia ‘Narodnaya Volia,’” at http://www.rbc.ru/society/28/08/2012/666613.shtml.) This sounded like a dream “enemy of the church” for Smirnov and other ROC spokesmen – a group that is pro-Pussy Riot and also Leninist. Interestingly, the group must have disappeared without a trace, if it ever existed. There is no mention of its prosecution in later news reports. The August 28, 2012 story might have been a propaganda creation in the preparation for Putin’s September 13 speech and the ROC legal initiative.

237 For his full comments, see Vinokurova (2016), “Fear Allows the System to Exist” (Strakh pozvoliaet systeme suschestvovat’), at: https://www.znak.com/2016-03-10/soavtor_zakona_ob_oskorblenii_chuvstv_veruyuchih_nedovolen_tem_chno_poluchilos
were on Thursday and the *Interfaks* report appeared the following Monday, one can conclude that it took the Deputies just one business day to launch the legislative initiative. And they must have worked hard, because seven business days later, on June 26, the Deputies introduced a bill that envisioned criminalization of insults to religious feelings. The proposed article 243.1 spelled up to three years of imprisonment for milder forms of insulting religious feelings, and five years for more blatant forms. The bill, however, was criticized by some deputies and legal experts, and the remaining critical voices in the media raised concerns about its harshness. The process was delayed, and a modified bill was reintroduced on March, 22, 2013. It still contained the same harsh punishments (three years and five years). Remarkably, that both versions presumed punishments for offending religious feelings of those who “profess religions that form an indispensable part of the historical heritage of the peoples of Russia.”239 In other words, the law was supposed to protect the so-called “traditional religions” (Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism), which might have been read as an announcement of an open season on all other faiths.

After yet another series of revisions, finally a new legal Code was enacted on June 29, 2013 that contained a new Article 148. It presumes punishment for offending religious feelings in the form of fines of up to 300,000 rubles or a prison term of up to one year. In the cases when the offense is inflicted in places specially designated for religious activities, prison terms increase up to three years. Changes were also made in the Administrative Code, increasing fines for less severe offenses hundred-fold (50,000 to 100,000 rubles instead of 500 to 1,000 as it used to be in the past) (see “Federal’nyi Zakon” 2013).

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The official commentary on the new law published on the website of the Moscow Patriarchate gave a very positive appraisal of the new law. Importantly for this study, the statement (likely written by Chernega) did not hesitate to relate the law to the cases we considered above. For instance, when explaining the concept of “obvious disrespect for society” that the legal commentary deploys, she\textsuperscript{240} wrote:

By obvious disrespect for society the contemporary practice of the application of law means violation of commonly recognized norms and rules of conduct that is dictated by the desire of the guilty persons to oppose themselves to those around them (in this case, with regard to their religious feelings). … Thus, the very dance on the solea of the Temple of Christ the Savior as well as the indecent body movements of the dancers had the character of the obvious disrespect for society.

In yet another demonstration of the connectedness of the new law to the incidents that took place after as well as long before the Pussy Riot case, the commentary says:

Public desecration of religious or worship-related literature, of objects of religious veneration, of signs and emblems pertaining to worldview symbols and attributes or damage inflicted on them or their destruction committed with the goal of offending citizens’ religious feelings also falls under part 1 of the article 148 of the UK of RF. Under this category of crime are subsumed “krestopovals” [the term introduced by Femen is used in plural]. Axing and desecration of icons for “cultural purposes” [a clear reference to Ter-Oganian, “Beware, Religion!” and “Forbidden Art”] and other sorrowfully familiar actions.\textsuperscript{241}

It almost seems that the author(s) of the commentary are gloating in their long-expected victory and not missing a chance to remind about the enemies defeated. Pussy Riot were sentenced to two years, but according to the new Law they could get up to three. Same with Brener, Ter-Oganian and others who used to get off the hook relatively easily. A couple more nuances matter here. First, offenses to religious feeling do not need to be inflicted in explicitly

\textsuperscript{240} For the full comments, see “The Law on Criminal Responsibility for Insulting the Religious Feelings of Believers: Commentary by the Juridical Services of the Moscow Patriarchate” (2013) at: www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3093568.html.
\textsuperscript{241} See again the link in note 42.
religious settings. Any public statement or action can qualify for punishment by imprisonment for a year. Secondly, as the commentary readily explains, the number of people offended does not matter at all. Put simply, one offended citizen can trigger prosecution for, say, a Facebook post, and the author of the post can go to prison. In July 2013 this sounded like a mostly hypothetical scenario, but by 2016 there remained little doubt that the Law worked that way. Thus, in March 2016 the Russian internet exploded with news stories of a resident of Stavropol, Victor Krasnov, who faced up to one year in prison for his October 2014 post in the social network VKontakte where he stated that “There is no God,” and that the Bible is a collection of “Jewish fairytales.”

Conclusion

The Pussy Riot case is a culmination of the social drama to which this study is dedicated. In the context of the ROC’s relentless push for desecularization from above and consolidation of the Putin regime’s tyrannical tendencies this nonconformist band launches an incursion into the inner sanctum of the mutually beneficial church-state symbiosis, Christ the Savior Cathedral, and performs a “punk-prayer service.” The performance’s meaning can be described as a constellation of religious and political, traditional and ultra-modern, feminist and radical-Christian symbols and ideas, in which the religious and the political cannot be separated even for analytical purposes. Moreover, the syncretistic nature of the performance reflected a modified and expanded paradigm of the opponents of “clericalization” that was already familiar to us from

242 See Djanpoladova (2016), “When You Are Killed, Then Come” (Kogda vas ubiut, togda i prikhodite), on Radio Svoboda at: http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/27584878.html. As this dissertation is submitted, the court case against Krasnov is suspended. However, his prosecution is absolutely legal from the point of view of the new Law.
the social drama’s previous acts. The paradigm now incorporates feminist and gay rights ideas alongside support for the protest against Putin’s autocracy. The “anti-clericalization” directedness of the performance is further clarified through its genetic connection to the social drama’s previous acts and their protagonists (Brener and Voina most notably). This connection is neglected by most commentary, which leads to one-sided interpretations of the act.

The crisis phase of the Pussy Riot case is unprecedented in its scope, publicity, and involvement of a broad range of social actors in Russia and abroad. A distinctively new feature is division and polarization among the Orthodox to a degree unseen in the drama’s previous acts, which raises questions concerning the conflicting ways in which Orthodox identity is interpreted.

Yet another new aspect of the crisis is the much smaller role that the radical Orthodox “street” plays in it in comparison with “heavy-weight” actors, such as the officialdom of the ROC and the state. There is simply not that much need in the street soldiers of desecularization in this case. What used to be the paradigm of radical desecularizing activists now entered the scripts of the public presentations of ROC leaders, from Smirnov and Chaplin to Alfeev and Gundyayev. There is no longer a need in exerting pressure from below; the state proved more increasingly eager to accommodate the Church’s push for desecularization. What the ROC needs is a powerful legal weapon to crush opposition to its expansion into the public sphere. The need proved to be understood and supported by the state, and the Pussy Riot performance and reaction to it triggered the process of creation of such a legal weapon.

We saw also that, unlike in previous cases, the redressive mechanisms of the drama include the creation of new instruments applicable beyond the particular case. The short-term solution was the imprisonment of Pussy Riot, which marked a drastic increase in punitiveness
compared to the drama’s previous episodes. Moreover, the handling of the case by the court focused, in addition to addressing particular complaints against the band, on the defense of what an imagined generalized believer found important. Thus, the secular court essentially found itself applying intrinsically religious criteria of defining insiders and outsiders within Orthodoxy. The long-term solution was the making of the new law that criminalized offenses to religious feelings. While the final decisions concerning the creation of the new law were obviously made during this act, we only need to look back at previous acts to see how the entire logic and vocabulary of accusations and convictions gradually centered on the issue of religious feelings. In this sense, the new law was the ultimate normative crystallization of collective representations that, through the acts of radical street activists and their supporters were made increasingly routine, tolerable, and then acceptable and, ultimately respectable and dignified with political and religious establishment. While Russia’s presumed Orthodox majority was silent and uninformed, radicals on the streets acted on its behalf, gradually making the case that their radical neo-traditionalism is the voice of the Russian Orthodox people, and that the people stand offended by the alien subversive elements.

The making of the new law demonstrates a new level of church-state symbiosis and collaboration in the suppression of their now obviously common enemy (as I already argued earlier, in the logic of radical desecularization, that by 2012 went mainstream, enemies of the church were by definition also enemies of the Orthodox Russian people and its state). More importantly in the longer run, even though the new law was created as a result of the fight against nonconformist artists, human rights groups, and opposition activists, it is of potentially much broader applicability. Now any opposition to Orthodox hegemony, be it in politics,
education, artistic production, morality, or any other sphere can be labeled offensive and thus criminalized. An invaluable instrument for sustaining desecularization from above was created and put to work.
CHAPTER 7

RUSSIA’S SILENT MAJORITY AND “THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH”

Introduction

The comparative-historical case study that was presented in the previous four chapters has demonstrated how an increasingly punitive regime was gradually brought into being through a series of conflicts between the advocates of uninhibited freedom of artistic and ideological expression on the one hand and the growing ranks of the supporters of hegemonic desecularization rallying under the banners of the Russian Orthodox Church. Yet, a solid desecularizing regime as a set of normative, legal, and political arrangements that allow to sustain and expand desecularization requires a degree of legitimacy with the general public, not just radical activists and their high-ranked supporters within the religious, state, and cultural establishment. And, for a regime that increasingly shows punitive tendencies, part of the legitimacy must come from a broad popular agreement that restrictive and punitive measures against the “enemies of the church” are needed.

So far, my analysis made it clear that there was a high level of intolerance to perceived anti-religious or anti-Orthodox activities among the elite paradigm-bearers, the official ROC hierarchy and its supporters among state bureaucrats, politicians and cultural elite; but to what extent does this intolerance reflect popular sentiment in Russia? Let me remind that, as was shown in Chapter 5, the first relevant public opinion data (on the conflict around the “Forbidden Art – 2006” exhibit) indicated that Russia’s silent majority had no knowledge of the situation.
Yet, at the same time, the opinion poll also showed a considerable punitive tendency with regard to those who criticize religion and subvert the reputation of the Church. Moreover, nearly four out of ten Russians were in favor of censoring potentially offensive art. These data, however, were limited by the scope and the nature of questions asked in the survey, and are insufficient to understand if and to what extent Russia’s so-far silent majority was likely to support the increasingly harsh punishments against the perceived “enemies of the church” and thus acknowledge the legitimacy of the emerging punitive regime of desecularization.

This chapter addresses these questions. To address them, I look at published data collected by Russian pollsters (and I am fairly confident that hardly any significant relevant study escaped my attention). Furthermore, I go beyond the overview of published research and conduct statistical analyses of data from a representative national survey conducted in Russia in 2005. As shown below, the analyses attest to a considerable level of intolerance towards the opponents of organized religion. This, I argue is a remarkable fact given that only a small fraction of Russians at the time the surveys were conducted regularly participated in the life of the church. To further understand this phenomenon, I turn to comparing the attitudes in Russia with those in two countries that are known for much higher levels of personal piety of their populations, the United States and Poland. I find that the intolerance levels in Russia, even prior to the 2012 escalation of tensions, was somewhat higher than in Poland and the U.S., and that personal pity was not its substantive predictor. This leads me to conclude that the development of Russia’s punitive desecularizing regime was bound to resonate with the intolerant tendencies in the country’s collective psyche. Yet this also leads me to raise questions about the nature of this mass intolerance, and I later return to these questions in my theoretical conclusions presented in
the dissertation’s last chapter. Now let us turn to the data, beginning, as I said, with the published findings from Russian studies.

Estimating Mass Participation in Prayer Services in Support of the Church

A good point to begin our evaluation of the popular support for the forming desecularizing regime is to look at the extent to which the Russian public took part in the April 2012 activities aimed at protecting the Church from its many alleged enemies. Official estimates of the attendance at the “molitvennoye stoyaniye” (prayer service) on April 22, 2012 are placed at about 60,000 people, which seems to indicate that popular sentiment is aligned with the official sentiments of the ROC and its supporters. However, unofficial estimates of attendance at the service are closer to 35,000 people. There are also multiple sources of evidence that point to the use of “busing,” whereby parishes were required to provide a certain quota of attendees for the event (Solodovnik 2012).

One representative national survey (VTsIOM 2012a) found that only 43% of the respondents had not heard anything about prayer services in defense of the ROC that were held throughout Russia, while 37% learned about the services from the media, and 14% watched such services live on television. Furthermore, 2% of the respondents participated in such services (VTsIOM 2012a). The last figure (2%) is hardly surprising since this is roughly the percentage of Russians attending religious services at least weekly. Since the prayer services in defense of the ROC were held in conjunction with Sunday liturgy on April 22, 2012, those who attended the liturgy were also likely to attend the prayer service. It is also unclear what the motives of the participants in the prayer services were. Were they there to pray specifically for the defense of
the faith, or were they there because it was a traditional prayer service for Apostle Thomas Sunday as some commentators argued? (Solodovnik 2012). It is also difficult to judge the numbers of participants and the participants’ motives in the protest rallies in Krasnodar that we mentioned earlier. Thus, these are not sufficient indicators to estimate whether the intolerance to anti-religious or anti-Orthodox actions shown by the Patriarchate and its supporters is representative of the overall environment of public opinion. In the following section of this chapter I look at multiple sources of survey data to estimate more clearly the levels of intolerance to anti-religious and anti-clerical activities present in popular opinion.

Russian Opinions on the Pussy Riot Action

To gauge the extent to which the aggressive ROC stance towards the Pussy Riot action is supported by popular attitudes I further look at available public opinion poll data from representative national sample surveys, mainly by the Levada Center and the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM) (Levada Center 2012; VTsIOM, 2012a, 2012b). Levada Center data show that in the initial period of the breach and resulting crisis phase awareness of the Pussy Riot action at Christ the Savior Cathedral rose quickly (an increase from 54% of respondents who had heard at least something about the action in March to 73% in April and 80% in July). The percentage of Russians unaware of the action decreased significantly in this period as well (from 46% to 21%).

When asked to characterize the nature of Pussy Riot’s offence in July 2012, 4% of respondents who had heard of the action regarded it as blasphemy or sacrilege of a holy place and an insult against believers, 29% as “hooliganism” or an offense against the social order, and
only 17% as a politically motivated act against President Putin (Levada Center 2012).

Interestingly, when given the option in a VTsIOM survey (2012b) in March, only one percent of respondents chose to characterize the action as “art,” which together with the previous data shows that the participants’ self-definition of the Pussy Riot action as a harmless act of artistic self-expression that focused on elements of political and social dissidence has not been embraced by the general public. More specifically, when asked why they thought that the charges against the women were so severe, 47% responded that it was because “the participants in the action grossly violated the moral norms of society” (Levada Center 2012). It seems that the ROC paradigm-bearers’ description of the event has been more generally accepted by the public. Pussy Riot’s crime is thus perceived as a crime against the moral order of society, and therefore, given the nature of the action, it is clear that almost half of the respondents see the ROC as the primary provider of the moral framework of Russian society, perhaps including the social norms that form the basis of the secular institutions of the courts.

If there is an acceptance of the ROC paradigm-bearers’ definition of events, is there also an acceptance among members of the public of the aggressive and harsh response of the ROC to the Pussy Riot members? Data show that in the months following the Pussy Riot action close to half of all Russians (46% in March to 47% in April) approved of the harsher punishment of two to seven years imprisonment for the women, which was a position propagated by the ROC paradigm-bearers. And although this preference for a harsh sentence was tempered in the interceding months, in July it was still at 33% of respondents who found this punishment “adequate” and not “extreme” (Levada Center 2012). Overall, 86% of respondents agreed that the women should be punished (Levada Center 2012; VTsIOM 2012b). 37% of respondents
supported at least some period of imprisonment, including 16% who supported a period of two or more years and 10% a period of one and a half to two years. Only 5% responded that the women should not face any punishment while 29% supported community service and 20% agreed that severe fines would be sufficient. In addition, 47% of respondents also agreed in varying degrees to the continued confinement of the women before and during their trial. These data do seem to demonstrate a significant level of acceptance of the aggressive and potentially severe punishment of the Pussy Riot members, which was a position propagated by the ROC.

This acceptance of the need to punish the Pussy Riot members seems related to the fact that 46% of the respondents felt that the ROC needed to be defended (VTsIOM 2012a). Consequently, when asked directly “Do citizens have the right to publicly protest against the position of the ROC on important social questions, and express criticism of the action and private lives of the church superiors (vysshikh lits tserkvi)?,” more than a quarter of respondents chose “No, never, not in churches nor in any other place,” and 53% chose “Yes, but not in churches.” Only 7% chose “yes, even in churches” (Levada Center 2012). These data show a clear trend among a significant portion of the population towards a general intolerance of the participants in the Pussy Riot action at Christ the Savior as well as a general acceptance of the harsh response to and punishment of them. It is also clear from the data that the intolerance is directed towards the perceived anti-religious or anti-Church character of the action. The data thus seem to demonstrate public support for the ROC position and for the growing punitive tendency with regard to the “enemies of the church.”

But is this intolerance directed only against the actions of the Pussy Riot members in Christ the Savior Cathedral, or is it directed against perceived anti-religion or anti-clerical
activities, indicative of a larger social trend of intolerant public opinion? To answer this question, I turn to representative national surveys that measure Russian attitudes towards the opponents of organized religion.

Are Russians Intolerant of Anti-Religionists and Atheists?

Statistically, by the middle of the first decade of this century, believers constituted a solid majority of Russia’s population, with 80% of self-identified Orthodox and 5% of other faiths (Furman, Kaariainen, and Karpov 2007). As to self-avowed non-believers and atheists, they formed a minority both statistically and sociologically. To what extent then is this new minority group tolerated by the newly formed religious majority? Are the manifestations of intolerance we have seen regarding the Pussy Riot action indicative of a more widespread trend of intolerant public attitudes towards atheists and perceived anti-religious or anti-clerical activities?

To answer these questions, I turn to statistical analysis of the data from representative national surveys. Thus, I first look at a 2005 representative national survey conducted in Russia in order to assess the level of intolerance to anti-religionists and their activities. I then compare the Russian attitudes to those expressed by people in countries where organized religion has long enjoyed a more dominant position in society and participation in it is much higher than in Russia, namely the U.S. (Davis and Smith 2009) and Poland (Cichomski, Jerzynski, and Zielinski 2006). In this context, by using multivariate analysis, I also compare the relative impact of religious participation on intolerance in the three countries.

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243 These statistical analyses were done in collaboration with Vyacheslav Karpov for a conference paper presented at the 2011 Annual Conference for the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion titled, “Tolerance and Intolerance to Atheists in Post-Atheist Russia.”
Let me clarify who the target groups in this study of intolerance are. My analyses focus primarily on attitudes towards those openly opposed to and critical of religion and church. Separately from this group, I also briefly look at the attitudes towards atheists as such. Not every atheist is actively opposed to religion, and not every atheist opposed to religion and church expresses his/her view in public speech or action, and it is theoretically possible that people may tolerate atheism as long as it does not translate into anti-religious and anti-church activities (actually, this is the case in Russian public opinion, as I will show). Thus I first focus on attitudes towards those who publicly express their opposition to religion and church. For analytical purposes, we call them “anti-religionists.” Subsequently, we examine attitudes to atheists in general.

Data on tolerance towards anti-religionists in Russia are from a representative national survey conducted in 2005.244 The survey focused primarily on religious tolerance and intolerance and their determinants and its findings were broadly published (Karpov and Lisovskaya, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2008 and Furman et al., 2007; Karpov, Lisovskaya, and Barry 2012).

Measurement of Intolerance

The survey contained three variables that measure various aspects of intolerance towards anti-religionist activities. Thus, the respondents are asked whether or not they would allow

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244 The survey was conducted as part of the international collaborative study 'Religious Intolerance among Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Russia: How Strong is it and Why?' (in which Vyacheslav Karpov was principal investigator) and used a representative national probability area sample of the adult household population of Russia. Of the 2972 interviews, 1651 were part of Russia’s national sample, and 1321 more were from oversamples in Muslim regions. The response rate (measured according to strictest criteria as the ratio of completed interviews to the total number of attempted contacts) was 64 %. This research was supported by funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER) under authority of a Title VIII grant from the US Department of State. Neither NCEEER nor the US government is responsible for the views expressed in this dissertation.
someone who is against religion and church to engage in specific activities in their hometown. The activities include giving a public speech, teaching in colleges, and keeping an anti-religionist book in a public library. The answers are coded as 1 (yes, allow), -1 (not allow), or 0 (if the respondent finds it difficult to decide whether he/she would allow a specific activity). Consistent with the longstanding tradition of research on tolerance that goes back to Stouffer (1955), this measurement technique focuses on concrete and context-specific indicators of whether a respondent would extend certain civil liberties to the perceived outgroup. The advantage of this approach is that it avoids focusing on general, abstract questions about freedom of conscience and speech, to which people usually give socially desirable answers.

Furthermore, to obtain a generalized measure of intolerance for subsequent multivariate analysis, I then used factor analysis of the original three variables. The analysis yielded one factor with eigenvalue of 2.1 accounting for 71% of variance. This allowed me to use scores resulting from the factor analysis to measure generalized intolerance towards anti-religionists. This generalized measure is a statistically-analytically detected latent dimension of intolerance that “manifests” itself in the three original variables and is strongly associated with every one of them. By using this generalized measure in multivariate analysis we arrive at a more parsimonious model of intolerance and its predictors (simply, one dependent variable is used instead of three).

Importantly, the intolerance of anti-religionists is measured exactly the same way in the Polish and American survey (actually, both the Polish General Social Survey and the Russian survey that I analyze in this chapter used the measurement technique originally developed by Stouffer [1955] and subsequently utilized in the American NORC GSS surveys since 1972).
Accordingly, generalized measures of intolerance were constructed in the same way for the Polish and the U.S. datasets. In both cases, factor analysis resulted in extracting one factor explaining almost 70% of variance. The similarity of factor structures of the dependent variable across the three national datasets allows the making of valid cross-national comparisons.

Dimensions of Intolerance Towards Anti-Religionists

Frequency distributions show that less than half of all Russians (45%) would allow an anti-religionist to speak publicly. Interestingly, 22-24% of atheists and unbelievers would not allow public anti-religionist speech, as was shown in previous research on the issue (Furman et al. 2007: 40). Russians were only somewhat more tolerant of an atheist teaching in college (54%) or having anti-religionist books in a public library (57%).

But how high are these levels of tolerance and intolerance on a comparative international scale? To answer this question, we compared the levels of tolerance in Russia (using the 2005 survey data), Poland (the 2005 data from the representative Polish General Social Surveys by Cichomski et al. 2006) and the USA (the 2004 data from the General Social Surveys by Davis and Smith 2009). These comparisons showed that Russians were slightly less tolerant than Poles and noticeably less than Americans. In particular, as shown it Table 1, 77% of Americans and 51% of Poles would allow public anti-religionist speech (as mentioned above, only 45% of Russians would do so). Similarly, Americans and Poles are more willing to allow an atheist to teach in college (62 and 58% respectively, compared to 54% of Russians). Finally, 73% of Americans and 64% of Poles (compared to 57% of Russians) would tolerate anti-religionist books in public libraries.
Table 1

Tolerance Towards Atheists in the US (2004), Poland (2005), and Russia (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>USA (N=1818-1820)</th>
<th>Poland (N=2463-2472)</th>
<th>Russia (N=1651)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allow to speak</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow to teach</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow books in library</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religiosity and Intolerance

It is common knowledge that post-Soviet Russians are on average less pious (that is, likely to hold consistent religious beliefs and go to church) than Poles or Americans. For instance, at the time the surveys were conducted, close to 40% of American and 45% of Polish respondents reported attending religious services weekly, while in Russia, only 2% were in this category. Thus, Russia had intolerance levels comparable or higher than Poland or the US while its population showed lower levels of personal individual religiosity. Moreover, our analyses show that greater religiosity is associated with more intolerance towards anti-religionists in all three countries, and in the U.S. and Poland religiosity is somewhat more closely associated with intolerance than in Russia. As shown in Table 2, controlling for the effects of age and education,
standardized coefficients for the effects of church attendance on intolerance are .2 for the US and Poland and .1 for Russia.

Table 2

Determinants of Tolerance Towards Atheists in the U.S., Poland, and Russia
(OLS Regression; standardized coefficients)\textsuperscript{245}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Russia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.08**</td>
<td>-.20***</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>.18***</td>
<td>.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church attendance</td>
<td>-.20***</td>
<td>-.19***</td>
<td>-.08**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R square</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < .0001; ** p < .001; * p < .01

How is it then that, with higher levels of piety that is, in addition, more strongly associated with intolerance, Americans and Poles are overall no more, but rather less intolerant of anti-religionists than are Russians? A systematic answer to this question would take an entirely different study, and the question is beyond the scope of this dissertation. One can hypothesize, however, that the general politico-cultural climate that favors freedom of speech mitigates the effects of personal piety on intolerance. The sizeable effect of education and age on intolerance (with younger and more educated respondents showing great tolerance) in the U.S. and Poland give some support to such a hypothesis. Yet in Russia the association between education and

\textsuperscript{245} I limit multivariate analysis to just three variables that are routinely used as predictors of tolerance across national settings because of discrepancies between national surveys in the ways other potentially relevant variables were measured.
tolerance is noticeably weaker, and there is no significant association between age and tolerance towards anti-religionists.

Overall, to repeat, what we see in the Russian data is that lower levels of individual religiosity translate into somewhat higher levels of intolerance. This logically leads me to hypothesize that the roots of Russian intolerance towards anti-religionists may not as much in the individual-level piety as in collective, supra-individual-level representations about the role of religion and church in society and inadmissibility of challenging it through subversive, anti-religious speech or action. Furthermore, the intolerance that the polls showed with regard to the Pussy Riot action does indeed reflect a much broader sentiment in Russian society. If, indeed, Russians are so intolerant of public anti-religionist speech, atheist college professors, and books in libraries, they can be expected to be even more intolerant of more aggressive acts and potentially far more offensive acts by the perceived enemies of the Church, such as the Pussy Riot performance or even the exhibits in the Sakharov Museum.

Dislike of Atheists does not Explain Intolerance

Yet how do we know that this intolerance towards atheists in Russia is not driven simply by a backlash against the forced atheism of the Soviet period? This indeed appears to be a theoretically plausible explanation. However, it is not supported by the data. A 2007 survey conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation (FOM 2007), which defined atheism as a “systematic view that rejects the existence of God,” found that atheism “does not bring out strong emotions for a majority of respondents” (FOM 2007). Specifically, 52% of respondents said that they were indifferent to atheist doctrine, and 83% said that they were not inclined to
condemn atheists. The ISSP Religion III survey data (SSP 2012) paint a similar picture in that 46% of Russian respondents reported having very or somewhat positive attitudes to atheists, 36% reported “neither positive or negative” attitudes and only about 6% reported negative attitudes. It is thus clear from these data that the intolerance that we found is not driven by a backlash against Soviet atheism since Russians demonstrate a neutral or positive attitude to atheism in general.

Why is it, however, that these data show neutral or positive attitudes while measure of intolerance show intolerant attitudes to anti-religionists? The explanation lies in the definition of outgroups used in the surveys. The FOM and ISSP surveys define atheism only at the level of beliefs, whereas measurement of tolerance in our surveys emphasizes behavior: asking whether people would give someone who is against all religions and churches the right to speak publicly in their home town, to teach in college, or to have books in public libraries.

My analysis of intolerance thus points to the heart of the issue. In general Russians are not intolerant towards atheists, unless they speak out publicly in a critical manner against or otherwise act against religion and/or churches. The intolerance is thus initiated by public actions that are perceived as anti-religious or anti-ecclesiastical in nature, which is exactly how each breach phase began in our progression of social dramas discussed above. The two exhibitions at the Sakharov Museum, the Pussy Riot action in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, and Yefimov’s blog post each represented a public action that was deemed to be anti-religious or anti-church in nature, thus initiating the process of societal contentions between paradigm-bearers and triggering the application and creation of redressive mechanisms.
Conclusion

If a backlash against Soviet atheism does not explain this new religious intolerance to anti-religious or anti-clerical acts, what does explain it? And what explains the growing severity and aggressiveness of both the official and the public reactions to these events, especially if the intolerance and increasingly punitive reactions are not tied to levels of individual religiosity? In my view, a more promising explanation deals with the nature and patterns of the process of desecularization in Russian society and the impact they have had on the formation of social identities along with the in-group/out-group dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that this process entails. I will return to this issue in the final chapter of this dissertation. For now, in conclusion to this chapter, let me just note its key findings. First, as the Russian public grew more informed about the crimes and punishments of the “enemies of the church,” punitive tendencies in public opinion became more pronounced. Secondly, punitive attitudes that many Russians expressed with regard to the Pussy Riot affair and questions related to it appear to resonate with a considerable undercurrent of intolerance towards anti-religionist speech and activities. Thirdly, this intolerance cannot be attributed to a growing individual-level religiosity. Russians, for example, are less pious than Poles or Americans, yet somewhat more intolerant of anti-religionist activities. Next, the intolerance towards the critics of religion and church is not an expression of a profound anti-atheist prejudice. In fact, Russians do not think of atheists all that badly. Yet half or more of all Russians even in 2005, seven years before the hysteria surrounding the Pussy Riot case, the krestopoval and other perceived crimes of “the enemies of the church” were unwilling to allow anti-religionists even rather respectable activities, such as teaching in the institutions of higher learning or keeping books in public libraries. This is a fertile soil for
popular support of a punitive desecularizing regime, and I presume that if a similar intolerance survey were to be conducted today it would produce even more striking evidence of widespread intolerance. Thus, the question of legitimacy of the punitive desecularizing regime that we saw forming can be answered positively. Such a regime would be perceived as legitimate by Russia’s silent majority. And finally, I suggested that the roots of support for the punitive treatment of the “enemies of the church” can be traced to the process of formation of social identities and the dynamics of the exclusionary treatment of outgroups that the process involves.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This dissertation investigated the emergence, through cultural clashes between desecularizing activists and their opponents, of a particular punitive desecularizing regime in post-Soviet Russia. Such an investigation necessarily hits at the heart of the discipline in that it is a study of the processes of structuration, or in Berger and Luckmann’s words (1989 [1966]: 18), “how subjective meanings become objective facticities.” My study showed how the objective facticities of written and enforced laws are embodiments of collective representations that crystallize through social actions of the antagonists of the social drama of Russian desecularization.

This chapter summarizes the study’s findings, subjects them to theoretical interpretation, lists the investigation’s key contributions to theory, methodology, and empirical knowledge, overviews the project’s limitations, and sketches possible directions for further research. Let us begin with a summary of findings.

Outcomes of Theoretical and Methodological Analysis

The first set of my findings is a result of my theoretical and methodological analysis of the study’s central question. The analysis has lead me to conclude that while existing theory is well equipped to study the social dynamics of desecularization (i.e., its approach is agency-
focused and concentrates on desecularizing activists and actors’ interests, strategies, and visions), it stops short of explaining how this important social change happens, and how desecularizing regimes emerge. Closing this gap requires a processual view of the emergence of social structure. I further find that current theory’s focus on desecularization as essentially transitional, inconsistent, and contradictory is a good starting point for developing a processual approach that focuses on how secularizing and counter-secularizing forces clash and interact in an anomic environment where alternative modes of world-construction and maintenance exist side by side.

My theoretical analysis further includeds: (1) a revision of the concept of culture wars in favor of an interpretation that is fitting for broad, comparative studies instead of focusing on specifically American forms of *kulturkampf*; (2) an application of Durkheimian dialectic of norm and deviance to the anomic situation of clashing secularizing and desecularizing forces; (3) employment of the Foucauldian notion of disciplinary modality of power and Agamben’s (2009) idea of paradigmatic uses of the modality; and (4) incorporation of elements of social identity theory. I return to these ideas in the theoretical interpretation section of this chapter.

Next, I turned to defining a fitting method (general logic of inquiry) that would guide my theory-building enterprise of the study of the dynamics of desecularization. I found such a fitting method in Victor Turner’s social drama approach that has been underutilized (to say the least) by sociological studies of social and cultural conflicts. The approach is designed to explore “social dramas” whereby antagonistic actors inspired by conflicting root paradigms clash, and through a phased process (that includes breaches, crises, redressive mechanisms, and reintegrations), redefine and reconstitute social order. While I find this approach generally fitting the purpose of a theory-building study of the dynamics of desecularization, I also conclude that aspects of
Turner’s methodology (in particular, his idea of communitas) are problematic and inapplicable. Moreover, I sharpen Turner’s methodological instrument by fusing it with the elements of Jeffrey Alexander’s (2006; 2011) performance theory and Wagner-Pacifici’s (1986) emphasis on emplotments and alternative interpretations that clash in the context of social drama. As a result, a more nuanced methodological approach emerges with a clearer understanding of the nature of clashing paradigms and relevant audiences of the antagonists’ performances. I also elaborate on Turner’s framework by integrating it with Bourdieu’s understanding of “fields.” This later allows me to see the process of desecularization as one in which desecularizing activists transgress the boundaries of previously secularized fields to impose the rules and criteria of the religious field with which they identify. I subsequently apply these theoretical and methodological ideas to a comparative-historical study of two waves of social dramas of Russian desecularization (the logic of case selection was explained in Chapter Chapter 2).

Findings from Comparative Case Study

The comparative study presented in this dissertation focused on two wave of cases that took place between 1994-1995 and 2012-2013. The first wave begins with the onset of the first Chechen war, develops during the Yeltsin era with its relatively more liberal atmosphere and ends with Putin’s rise to presidency. The second wave of cases unfolded from 2003 to 2012-2013, as the Putin regime was consolidating.

The first wave included five cases: (1) Brener’s (1995) “Chechnya!” action at the Elokhovskiy Cathedral; (2) the showing of the Last Temptation of Christ on NTV (1997); (3) Ter-Oganian’s (1998) axing of icons at the Manege Gallery; (4) action “Kh.V.1999” where
artists covered the cupola of the Moscow planetarium as an Easter egg; and (5) Mavromatti’s (2000) self-crucifixion across the street from Christ the Savior Cathedral. As these cases developed, tensions were building between the desecularizing activists, namely the neo-traditionalist Orthodox “foot soldiers,” and their opponents in the artistic and human rights communities. These tensions were left unresolved, however, as the social dramas of each case were left unrealized or aborted, thus leaving it unclear how court cases and other potential punishments would play out. Ultimately, the first wave was characterized by the transitional nature of the religious, cultural, and political fields of the early post-Soviet period in Russia, something that would change markedly by the second wave. Throughout these cases we see a rather small and not very well organized group of non-conformist artists and their supporters among the human rights activists, journalists, and dissident (“liberal”) clergy. These actors are not well organized yet, at this stage they still seem to take for granted the spirit of unprecedented freedom that characterized the 1990s, and especially the first years of the decade. Indeed, until 1997 there still were weak barriers to religious freedom. Till the end of the decade there still were independent media (and we see how NTV journalists and even management took a stance similar to that of the maverick artists in the case of The Last Temptation of Christ). However, this reliance on the newly found post-Soviet freedom by the end of the decade becomes outdated and a “cultural lag” of sorts. Increasingly, the challengers of the ongoing desecularization face growing, organized, and influential opponents. The paradigm-bearers of the desecularizing forces at this stage largely include radical ideologues and organizations outside or on the fringes of the Orthodox mainstream. Yet they are organized into interlocking groups, such as SPB and SPKh. They have spiritual guidance form official clergy and easily find support from highly
ranked Orthodox officials, from DECR bureaucrats to metropolitans and the patriarch himself. The early entry of (then) Metropolitan Kirill (later patriarch of the ROC) and Archpriest Vsevolod (Chaplin) is important, since they became crucial speakers for the ROC MP cause in the following decade. And what at this stage could appear as extravagant and provocative ideological orientation of such priests as Shargunov, Sakharov and their lay associates Ageschev and Simonovich-Nikshich (all active players in the subsequent acts of the social drama) later will become mainstream discourse in the official Orthodox forces. The paradigm of radical Orthodox neo-traditionalism that fuses the faith with rigid ethno-nationalism and political authoritarianism was forming and on its way to becoming dominant in the Russian desecularizing regime.

Moreover, in these initial and unfinished dramas we see how the punitive features and mechanisms of that regime are taking shape, even though still tentatively. Free expression that is perceived as threatening to the forming Orthodox dominance is labeled as insulting religious sensibilities. Perceived insult is publicized in the allied media. Support from allied politicians is sought, and ultimately the repressive power of the state enters the equation. Prosecutors seek experts and find them in the developing segment of specialists in “spiritual security” and “cults of evil.” The legal basis of limiting artistic freedom is yet inadequate for full-blown repression. This mechanism will be brought to perfection a decade later. There is yet no criminal code article that would presume punishment for offending religious feeling. Therefore, the prosecution relies on articles dealing with incitement of ethnic and religious enmity. Even on these shaky legal grounds prosecution becomes increasingly serious and potentially consequential. The specter of real prison terms for offending religious feelings is about to materialize by the end of the decade, which seems congruent with the growing authoritarian tendencies of the rise of the Putin regime.
The second wave of cases took place amidst the growing authoritarian tendencies of the last decade. The 2003 “Beware, Religion!” case was the first in the wave and I termed it a watershed case for the following reasons. First, this is the first “complete” social drama episode that followed a series of unfinished or aborted dramas of the 1990s. The drama ran the full cycle of phases which gave the opportunity for the actors and paradigm-bearers to mobilize and articulate their paradigms more clearly. Second, broader and more salient alliances of actors emerged. Desecularizing activists who in the cases of the first wave looked like marginal radicals now found support at the most authoritative levels of Church leadership, the state apparatus, and cultural elite. The elite support manifested itself not only in the defense of those who vandalized the exhibit, but, more importantly, in the adoption of the paradigm that was first introduced by the radicals (in the case of the nationalist cultural elite representatives, the adoption was verbatim). Statements of the DECR of the ROC MP, cultural elite members, and Duma votes, included themes and symbols first employed by Orthodox neo-traditionalists. The themes converged into a rather coherent paradigm presenting the “Beware, Religion!” exhibition as an episode in the efforts of influential enemies of the Russian Orthodox people and the people’s Church to attack and desecrate national shrines, to incite inter-religious enmity, to humiliate national dignity and insult religious sensibilities of the Russians – all this in presumed collaboration with Russia’s foreign (Western) enemies and domestic subversive forces (ranging from Satanists and Chechens to bandits and oligarchs). The imagery (but not yet the terms) of “enemies of the Russian people” and “enemies of the Church” enters the official discourse of the Russian elite. Blended with pseudo-democratic political and legal discourse, this paradigm informed court decisions acquitting the vandals and convicting the exhibit organizers. The
ideology of the protection of the Orthodox Russian people from the attacks of anti-Orthodox (and therefore anti-Russian) wrongdoers becomes an issue of the protection of the Constitution, tolerance, and democratic stability. The emerging legal discourse did not, however, afford protections to free artistic expression, private institutions, and dissident belief. On the contrary, it justified censorship. Thus, thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the “Beware, Religion!” episode is a watershed social drama because we see in it a complete cycle of crystallization of the emergent, initially fluid collective representations of desecularizing activists into a well-defined paradigm of desecularization, and, subsequently, into new legal normative decisions and practices. On the other hand, there is a consolidation of the paradigm of the opponents of the emerging desecularizing order. Their numbers are not large, and include many who were dissidents in the Soviet times and/or democratic activists in the 1990s. Their paradigm incorporates a positive view of the secular state (that has deeper roots in Western rather than Russian historical experience) and a critique of clericalism, clericalization, and “clerical bolshevism,” which does not however amount to anti-religionism. Moreover, the opponents of clericalization at times portray themselves as Christian and as Orthodox, thus contesting the meaning of these central values of the desecularizing discourse. Yet, the paradigm that emerges appears strikingly defensive, suggesting that this was the first instance when those who attempt to challenge the forming desecularizing regime realized that they were overpowered, and that the best they could do was to protect themselves as a minority against the majority forming under the banners of radical desecularization.

The “Forbidden Art” episode can be seen as an extension of the previous act and as an attempted counter-offensive of the newly labeled deviant minority against its increasingly
powerful nemesis. The counter-offensive and its defeat bring new substantive elements into the
drama. First, we see here markedly growing signs of expanding religious censorship and self-
censorship. Next, the concept of the “enemies of the church” enters the discourse of
desecularizing forces, and is immediately endorsed by authoritative spokespeople of the ROC.
The logic of the paradigm that inseparably links Orthodoxy, the people, and the state makes the
enemies of the church into the enemies of the Russian people and its state. Moreover, the
discourse about the enemies of the church originated from the branch of the ROC in charge of
the Armed Forces and law enforcement. The perceived inseparable Church—Army unity is
further clarified when dissident artists dare to criticize the state of affairs in the military, and
Orthodox activists respond with anger and threats. Furthermore, in the “Forbidden Art” episode
we see a drastic expansion of the united front of Orthodox radical groups and their ultra-
nationalist, racist, and neo-Nazi allied formations. The broad alliance of these forces clarifies the
paradigm of desecularizing radicals. It increasingly includes blatantly racist, anti-Semitic, anti-
Western elements along with very clear threats of violence. While religious officials do not
openly use this discourse, Patriarch Kirill’s comment that the exhibit was provoking a
“nationalities conflict” leaves little doubt about the Patriarchate’s tacit endorsement of the radical
ideology. Importantly, in this episode we witness a partial falling apart of the previously unified
front of avant-garde artists, SMPC workers, and human rights activists. The exhibit organizers
were criticized by well-known human rights leaders and even the SMPC U.S. sponsors. Some of
their criticisms suggest a partial acceptance of the desecularizing paradigm according to which
the works of art that presumably offend religious sensibilities of the Russian Orthodox majority
should not have been exhibited. This partial acceptance of the desecularizing paradigm by its
initial opponents shows that the paradigm was becoming hegemonic. Next, a significant trait of the episode deals with harsher punishments for the convicts. They are still fined and not imprisoned. Yet, the fines are steeper, even though the verdict reads in part as a carbon copy from the previous episode. Thus, we are seeing the state showing a resolve to increase punishments for offending the Russian people and its Church. Finally, for the first time public opinion data relevant to the drama were made available. The data showed that throughout the act Russia’s presumed Orthodox majority stayed uninformed and uninvolved, which lends further credence to the “desecularization from above” thesis. Yet at the same time public opinion showed noticeable punitive tendencies with regard to potential critics of the church as well as to controversial art works.

The Pussy Riot case is a culmination of the social drama to which this study is dedicated. In the context of the ROC’s push for desecularization from above and consolidation of the Putin regime’s tyrannical tendencies this nonconformist band launches an incursion into the inner sanctum of the mutually beneficial church-state symbiosis, Christ the Savior Cathedral, and performs a “punk-prayer service.” The performance’s meaning can be described as a constellation of religious and political, traditional and ultra-modern, feminist, and radical-Christian symbols and ideas, in which the religious and the political cannot be separated even for analytical purposes. Moreover, the syncretistic nature of the performance reflected a modified and expanded paradigm of the opponents of “clericalization” that was already familiar to us from the social drama’s previous acts. The paradigm now incorporates feminist and gay rights ideas alongside support for the protest against Putin’s autocracy. The “anti-clericalization” directedness of the performance is further clarified through its genetic connection to the social
drama’s previous acts and their protagonists (Brener and Voina most notably). This connection is neglected by most commentary, which leads to one-sided interpretations of the act. The crisis phase of the Pussy Riot case was unprecedented in its scope, publicity, and involvement of a broad range of social actors in Russia and abroad. A distinctively new feature is division and polarization among the Orthodox to a degree unseen in the drama’s previous acts, which raises questions concerning the conflicting ways in which Orthodox identity is interpreted.

Yet another new aspect of the crisis is the much smaller role that the radical Orthodox “street” plays in it in comparison with “heavy-weight” actors, such as the officialdom of the ROC and the state. There is simply not that much need for the street soldiers of desecularization in this case. What used to be the paradigm of radical desecularizing activists now entered the scripts of the public presentations of ROC leaders, from Smirnov and Chaplin to Alfeev and Gundyayev. There is no longer a need to exert pressure from below; the state proved increasingly eager to accommodate the Church’s push for desecularization. What the ROC needed at this point was a powerful legal weapon to crush opposition to its expansion into the public sphere. The need proved to be understood and supported by the state, and the Pussy Riot performance and reaction to it triggered the process of creation of such a legal weapon. Unlike in previous cases, the redressive mechanisms of the drama include the creation of new instruments applicable beyond the particular case. The short-term solution was the imprisonment of Pussy Riot, which marked a drastic increase in punitiveness compared to the drama’s previous episodes. Moreover, the handling of the case by the court focused, in addition to addressing particular complaints against the band, on the defense of what an imagined generalized believer found important. Thus, the secular court essentially found itself applying intrinsically religious
criteria of defining insiders and outsiders within Orthodoxy. The long-term solution was the making of the new law that criminalized offenses to religious feelings. While the final decisions concerning the creation of the new law were obviously made during this act, we only need to look back at previous acts to see how the entire logic and vocabulary of accusations and convictions gradually centered on the issue of religious feelings. In this sense, the new law was the ultimate normative crystallization of collective representations that, through the acts of radical street activists and their supporters were made increasingly routine, tolerable, and then acceptable and, ultimately respectable and dignified with political and religious establishment. While Russia’s presumed Orthodox majority was silent and uninformed, radicals on the streets acted on its behalf, gradually making the case that their radical neo-traditionalism is the voice of the Russian Orthodox people, and that the people stand offended by the alien subversive elements. The making of the new law demonstrates a new level of church-state symbiosis and collaboration in the suppression of their now obviously common enemy. In the logic of radical desecularization, that by 2012 went mainstream, enemies of the church were by definition also enemies of the Orthodox Russian people and its state. More importantly in the longer run, even though the new law was created as a result of the fight against nonconformist artists, human rights groups, and opposition activists, it is of much broader applicability. Now any opposition to Orthodox hegemony, be it in politics, education, artistic production, morality, or any other sphere can be labeled offensive and thus criminalized. An invaluable instrument for sustaining desecularization from above was created and put to work. Thus, with this episode we see the ultimate crystallization of the paradigm of desecularization into new legal arrangements that are at the heart of Russia’s punitive desecularizing regime. Social action motivated by the
progressively solidified paradigm of radical desecularization generated new social “things,” new objective “facticities” (established legal norms). The emergence of a new order of things is thus an outcome of the social drama that the reader observed in this dissertation.

However, a solid desecularizing regime requires a degree of legitimacy with the general public, not just radical activists and their high-ranked supporters within the religious, state, and cultural establishment. And, for a regime that increasingly shows punitive tendencies, part of the legitimacy must come from a broad popular agreement that restrictive and punitive measures against the “enemies of the church” are needed. My analysis of survey data showed that there actually is a considerable degree of support among ordinary Russians for restrictive and punitive measures against the “enemies of the church.” First, as the Russian public grew more informed about the crimes and punishments of the “enemies of the church,” the punitive tendencies in public opinion became more pronounced. Secondly, the punitive attitudes that many Russians expressed with regard to the Pussy Riot affair and questions related to it appear to resonate with a considerable undercurrent of intolerance towards anti-religionist speech and activities. Thirdly, this intolerance cannot be attributed to a growing individual-level religiosity. Russians, for example, are less pious than Poles or Americans, yet somewhat more intolerant of anti-religionist activities. Next, the intolerance towards the critics of religion and church is not an expression of a profound anti-atheist prejudice. In fact, Russians do not think of atheists all that badly. Yet half or more of all Russians even in 2005, seven years before the hysteria surrounding the Pussy Riot case, the krestopoval, and other perceived crimes of “the enemies of the church” were unwilling to allow anti-religionists even rather respectable activities, such as teaching in the institutions of higher learning or keeping books in public libraries. This is a fertile soil for popular support of a
punitive desecularizing regime, and one could hypothesize that if a similar intolerance survey were to be conducted today it would produce even more striking evidence of widespread intolerance. Thus, the question of the legitimacy of the punitive desecularizing regime that we saw forming can be answered positively. Such a regime is likely to be perceived as legitimate by Russia’s silent majority. Finally, I suggested that the roots of support for the punitive treatment of the “enemies of the church” can be traced to the process of formation of social identities and the dynamics of the exclusionary treatment of outgroups that the process involves. I return to this idea later in this chapter.

Theoretical Interpretation

The theoretical interpretation that I provide below is a product of my comparative-historical study that was intended as a theory-building project. The interpretation builds on and develops ideas and concepts pertinent to desecularization and secularization theories and integrates culture wars analysis, the Durkheimian dialectic of norm and deviance, ideas of Foucault and Agamben on disciplinary modalities of power and their paradigmatic forms, and elements of social identity theory.

The starting point of my interpretation is the already stated idea that desecularization is essentially and inevitably unintegrated, contradictory, and inconsistent, develops in some domains of society and some social fields (in the Bourdieusian sense of the term) faster than in others, and co-occurs with persistent secular and secularizing tendencies. This is especially likely in societies which, like Russia, were subjected to lengthy forced secularization. Furthermore, in the Russian case the unintegratedness and contradictory nature of the desecularizing processes
are further increased by the country’s integration (albeit partial and conflicted) into the global economic and cultural system where secular influences are powerful.

The unintegratedness of desecularization and its co-occurrence with persistent or even growing secular influences inevitably translates into the coexistence of clashing cultural orientations. On the one hand, there is a resurging and expanding religious system of beliefs and values that is promoted as a basis of societal re-integration. On the other hand, there is an agglomeration of secular orientations and values implanted by the old, atheist regime, and revitalized by the secularist influences of globalization. On many issues, including those central to this study (such as limits to freedom of expression and the relationship between the sacred and the profane), the expanding religious and the persistent secular cultural systems have conflicting views and on some their positions are irreconcilable. Thus, culture clashes and perhaps protracted culture wars become virtually inevitable. The wars do not need to be fought American style (between broad coalitions of civil-society groups fighting for a weak hegemony). Rather, based on my study, I suggest that Russia’s culture wars are presently fought over the possibility of a strong hegemony and involve sizable “regular armies” of the church and state, their “paramilitary” allies from the ranks of radical desecularizing activists, and small “guerrilla” groups that attempt to resist desecularization either in general or in its current form.

The wars of desecularization are fought on many fronts, ranging from the struggles surrounding religion’s place in the presumably secular school to the role of the Orthodox Church in the military, and from the status of theology as an academic discipline to religious censorship of cultural production. My study, however, suggests that struggles over the control of artistic expression involving religious themes has become central to the formation of Russia’s
desecularizing regime. This is because clashes over censoring controversial artistic expression based on the standards derived from the religious field resulted in the emergence of a normative order capable of suppressing expressions of opposition to desecularization in virtually any sphere.

How this happened is demonstrated in my comparative case study. While the study focused on specific culture clashes of desecularization, I believe that the process that I described can be observed in many other fields, and future comparative studies may show its applicability beyond the Russian case. The process involves clashes of paradigm-bearing activist groups who dialogically adjust and solidify their paradigms towards greater certitude amidst heightened tensions and stirred passions of crises created by breaches of the status quo (by one or both sides) and make their cases appealing to influential, “heavy-weight” social actors (importantly, political, religious, and cultural elites) capable of employing and/or creating redressive tools in order to achieve a reintegration of a modified normative order. If dessecularizing action is to be successful, the activists who carry it out must succeed in transgressing the boundaries and redefining the rules of a previously secularized field (such as artwork and museum exhibitions) so that the new rules include elements derived from the religious field that the activists represent.

The activists’ performances that I described may at times strike the reader as lacking seriousness and gravity. Indeed, not just the extravagant artists like Brener perform provocative acts and make shrill statements. Their antagonists do the same – it is enough to look at the crowd of bearded neo-traditionalists with religious banners and their self-made Cossack allies dressed as though for a reenactment of a World War One battle. Both sides are in a way actionists and performance artists with a “theatrical” consciousness. This theatrical orientation is not accidental
– it is a functional element of performance in the context of a social drama. Yet, as I showed, the theatrical performances have utterly serious and far-reaching consequences as they begin to resonate with the interests of powerful actors and with deeply held collective representations.

Yet another important theoretical conclusion that emerges from my analysis of the role that desecularizing activists have played in the drama relates to the nature of Russian desecularization “from above.” Ultimately, my findings confirm the theoretical proposition that this has been the prevalent mode of Russian desecularization in which the interests and vision of religious and secular elites converged. However, my study adds an important qualification to this idea. Russia’s desecularization from above would have been impossible without the considerable and consequential involvement of activist groups acting “from below.” This is especially true for the early stages of the drama. As “heavy-weight” social actors enter the stage and adopt the paradigm of radical desecularization, the role of activist “foot soldiers” and “street fighters” is diminished. Paramilitary formations are no longer needed when well-equipped and resourceful regular armies are engaged in the battles of culture wars.

While the contextual and political circumstances of the formation of the punitive regime of desecularization were clarified in the preceding, empirical chapters, the place of punishment in this context requires further theoretical explanation. My explanation builds in part on the classic Durkheimian (1982) dialectics of norm and deviance, of the role that crime and punishment play in asserting a normative order and reducing anomie. I outlined this dialectic in Chapter 2. In this context, my analysis shows how resistance to the expansion of religious norms into previously secularized domains (such as artistic expression) is ultimately criminalized, and how through this process the new normative regime of desecularization is asserted. Thus, the
meaning of this process is broader than the victory of desecularizing forces over small groups of nonconformist artists and activists. This is a process through which a new system of collective representations acquires dominance by labeling resistance as deviance and ultimately a crime. As I argued earlier (Schroeder and Karpov 2013), from this perspective, the punishments of the “enemies of the church” in the “Beware, Religion!”, the “Forbidden Art,” and especially in the Pussy Riot episodes can be seen as landmark events on the road to the crystallization of the new social norms of Russia’s desecularisation. From moral, religious, political and legal points of view it does matter what in fact the five women did in Christ the Savior Cathedral, and whether or not the punishment they have been receiving is commensurate with their deed. Yet from a theoretical-sociological point of view what matters is what they were accused of (no matter whether rightly or wrongly, legally or not, morally or immorally, and so on) and what the punishment was. By understanding this, we will understand the nature of the new norms now being affirmed through their punishment.

If this is so, one needs to take the indictments, verdicts, and sentences in these cases, unconstitutional as they might have been from a legal point of view, seriously. For instance, the Pussy Riot members were accused of maliciously conspiring to desecrate the sacred space of the church, inflict wounds on the feelings of the Orthodox majority and diminish the spiritual foundation of the state. For these things they spent several months in jail, and were subsequently sentenced to two years in a correctional facility. Their reputations have been undermined by the official propaganda, and threats to their very lives have been publicly made by numerous zealots. Thus they have been severely (in comparison with the previous acts of the drama) punished for an offence against the ROC, the Orthodox people and the state, the inseparable trinity of the root
paradigm of the Moscow Patriarchate and its allies. An obedient acceptance of this inseparable unity is thus affirmed as a norm. You cannot call this unity into question by asking the Mother of God to chase Putin away. From this perspective, the punk band and its act have been extremely helpful in providing a unique opportunity for affirming the emerging norm of desecularizing Russia. Paraphrasing Voltaire, if Pussy Riot did not exist, they would need to be invented. Those who dare to openly challenge the norm must be ready to face severe consequences. The enactment of the law that criminalizes insult of religious feelings shows that the normative consequences of the social drama investigated in this dissertation are indeed far-reaching.

A related theoretical remark is that in order to understand the current desecularizing regime and the enforcement of its norms, our attention needs to be on actual norms, unofficial as well as official, and the mechanisms of their affirmation rather than on the officially proclaimed legal rules. The treatment of the Sakharov Museum and of the Pussy Riot cases is legal largely pro forma, yet in essence it is something else. It was against the law to punish a private organization for an exhibition held within its space, it was against the law to let vandals go unpunished, and it was against the law to jail people for undermining “the spiritual foundation of the state.” Yet all these observations are trivial and missing the point. The point is that the punishment of the opponents of the current desecularizing regime should not be seen as an implementation of the law, but rather as a form of disciplining in a Foucauldian sense (see an explanation of the term in Chapter 2). A part of the process of disciplining in the Russian context is the demonstration of the irrelevance of the law as something that can define a dissident’s right for self-expression or protect those rights. There is a law, but it does not protect the enemies of the Church. Their work can be vandalized, their private space intruded in, the head of the
Constitutional Court can pronounce them criminals before the trial, they can be tried for something that is not legally a crime. Those who publicly threaten their lives will not be punished, and so on. In this sense, the prosecution and persecution of Pussy Riot and other dissenters helps us understand what Giorgio Agamben, commenting on the work of Foucault, terms a “disciplinary modality of power” (Agamben 2009: 17). The persistent recurrence of this modality, from the first Sakharov Museum case to that of the blogger Yefimov, suggests that these cases became paradigmatic (to use another term from Agamben’s reinterpretation of Foucault [Agamben, 2009: 17-32]) for the disciplining of the opponents of Russia’s desecularising regime. Furthermore, with the enactment of the law that criminalized offenses to religious feelings, the disciplinary modality of power takes on a new shape. Since believers are now to be found everywhere, in every scene and arena of public life, the danger of offending the believers’ sensibilities becomes universalized. The readily offended believer is watching you wherever you go and wherever you communicate with others thus making your views “public.”

This situation can be seen as a peculiar version of Foucauldian panopticism as a disciplinary arrangement. The case of the blogger Krasnov that I cited in the beginning of this dissertation is paradigmatic for this panoptic arrangement. He dared to opine that there was no god, his Orthodox online interlocutors were offended, and then armed police officers showed up at the door of his apartment. The likely outcome of the application of this modality of power is the cultivation of a discipline of self-censorship in anything even remotely related to Orthodoxy.

In the context of the discussion of the law on religious feelings, let me also comment theoretically on the process of the making of this law that I described in Chapter 6. An influential existing theory of lawmaking (Chambliss 1979; Chambliss and Zatz 1993) emphasizes the
dialectical nature of the process, its development through contradictions, and in this regard my theoretical model seems close to this theory. However, I argue that my theoretical contribution goes farther than simply affirming Chambliss’s view. Chambliss’s famous essay “On Lawmaking” (Chambliss and Zatz 1993: 3-35) presents a model whereby an underlying structural contradiction (e.g., between Marx’s antagonistic social classes) translates into social conflicts and legal dilemmas through solving of which conflicts are also resolved, but only provisionally, as a new phase of conflict and new dilemmas arise from previous resolutions. This does look similar to the social drama process, but in reality is not. The problem is that the schema remains fundamentally structural, and the infusion of Marxist conflict theory does not transform it into a dynamic, processual view of how legal structures change. This is because agency is very obviously missing here. And even Chambliss and Zatz’s (1993: x) declared emphasis on ideologies, agency, strategies and “triggering events” does not make their model dynamic. Ideologies and strategies need to have foot soldiers on the ground and specific actors promoting them in specific interactions with antagonist actors. Triggering events are triggering only to the extent they spur specific actions inspired by a specific root paradigm. In this regard, I see my application of the social drama approach as a valuable contribution to the sociological understanding of how new laws are made.

The fact that, as survey data show, the disciplining of the enemies of the ROC appears to find considerable popular support also deserves a theoretical comment. As I explained in Chapter 2, social identity theory (Tajfel 1978; Hogg, Terry, and White 1995; Stets and Burke 2000) posits that people build their identities on the basis of self-categorization as members of large social formations, such as ethnic groups, nations and religions. An important question is how
contemporary Russians who typically do not go or rarely go to church and do not know much about Orthodoxy maintain a social identity as Orthodox. The same theory suggests a tentative answer. Social identities are maintained, in part, by establishing rigid boundaries between in-groups to which people belong and to which they ascribe positive characteristics, and out-groups, that are viewed negatively. From this perspective, a way to maintain one’s in-group belonging is by opposing the in-group’s out-group. Thus an easy way to maintain an Orthodox identity and sense of belonging to the Orthodox people (which popular mythology views as virtuous, righteous, spiritual, long-suffering yet invariably kind-hearted and generous) is by opposing the enemies of Orthodoxy (viewed as blasphemous, anti-Russian, unpatriotic, subversive, hostile to the Russian state and its army, and so on). This is an easily obtained and sustained social identity. One does not need to go to church, participate in sacraments, adhere to the Church’s creed, or even be baptized to have it, nor does one need to follow the moral precepts of Christianity. If you agree that Pussy Riot or atheist bloggers should be in prison, you are Orthodox. On the contrary, if you oppose persecution, you are not Orthodox, no matter how pious you are. My analysis indicated that the meaning of Orthodox identity was brought into the center of the contestation in the Pussy Riot case. In this and similar liminal situations, the practice of disciplining and punishing the “enemies of the church” offers Russians an easy way to acquire, affirm, and maintain an Orthodox identity by supporting disciplinary practices and punitive measures. Moreover, because the now dominant desecularizing paradigm inseparably links Orthodox identity with Russian ethno-national identity and love of the Russian state, people’s support for the punitive regime is also a mode of affirmation of their national and patriotic belonging.
The aforesaid fusion of Orthodox and Russian identities is yet another area where my study makes a theoretical contribution. The theory of ethnodoxy (Karpov, Lisovskaya and Barry 2012) is, in my view, very important for understanding the nature and consequences of fused ethno-religious identities in Russia and elsewhere. My contribution to this theory, as I show in Chapters 2 and 5, is that ethnodoxy, or at least important aspects of it, is “made,” enacted and reenacted by the performances of desecularizing activists in the context of culture clashes. The making and remaking of ethnodoxy is directed against the perceived enemies of the nation and its faith and, at the same time evokes deeply rooted collective representations about Russia’s Orthodox roots and soul.

Now that I presented my theoretical interpretation of the study’s findings, I will briefly summarize its main contributions. The summary is provided below.

Theoretical, Methodological, and Empirical Contributions of the Dissertation

The study’s contributions are briefly summarized below. They are grouped into three clusters: theoretical, methodological, and empirical.

Theoretical contributions can be summarized as follows:

- This study develops existing theory of secularization by advancing its agency-focused perspective and further theorizing the process by which actions informed by subjective meanings created objective normative orders. Thus, from within the sub-discipline of the sociology of religion, the study contributes to the central debates of sociological theory on the interplay of agency and structure in the process of social change. While the dissertation does not offer an abstract meta-theoretical model of structuration, it offers a
method that can be applied to theory-building beyond the sub-field of the sociology of religion.

- The dissertation’s specific contributions to desecularizing theory include: (a) a dynamic model of the process of desecularization that explains how the process develops through a series of social and cultural clashes between desecularizing forces and their opponents; (b) a theoretical model of the formation of desecularizing regimes as normative structures brought into existence by social actions and conflicts through which paradigms of desecularization are crystallized; (c) an elaboration on the idea of desecularizing actors’ visions as paradigms that are culturally rooted and yet dialogically revised and adjusted in culture clashes; (d) an important addition to the theoretical concept of desecularization “from above” as inclusive of the work of desecularizing activists’ groups initially emerging “from below” and subsequently losing their importance as the paradigms they develop are accepted by mainstream social actors.

- Furthermore, the dissertation offers an original theoretical framework that integrates theories of desecularization and secularization with a reinterpretation of the culture wars thesis, Durkheimian dialectic of norm and deviance and crime and punishment, Bourdeieusian concept of “fields,” Foucauldian idea of the disciplinary modality of power and Agamben’s notion of the modality’s paradigmatic properties, elements of social identity theory and sociology of lawmaking.

- The culture wars thesis is theoretically revised towards a greater comparative applicability beyond its original American context.
• The study demonstrates how the processual, social drama approach to structuration can enrich the sociological theory of lawmaking as agency driven and informed by contested root paradigms.

• The dissertation contributes to the theoretical understanding of the formation of social identities by demonstrating how ethnodoxy as an ideology is made and enacted by activists and actors in the context of culture clashes.

Next, methodological contributions of this dissertation include the following:

• The dissertation critically assesses and revises Victor Turner’s social drama approach by ridding it of its empirically problematic elements (such as the idea of communitas) and by integrating with it the more recently developed concepts of social performance theory, emplotment, and competing interpretations developing in social-dramtic contexts.

• The study, as a result, makes the social drama approach applicable for a large-scale comparative-historical and sociological case study of a consequential social conflict that has ramifications for the fields of religion, politics, law, ethno-national identity and inter-group tolerance and intolerance.

• The application of the social drama approach to the comparative-historical case study that is at the center of this dissertation is carried out as a multi-method project that employs archival research, combines “thick description” and discourse analysis with visual interpretation and statistical analysis of survey data.

Finally, the study’s empirical contributions deal with its following additions to existing knowledge:
The dissertation is a groundbreaking study of the historical process of Russian desecularization and the making of its punitive regime by focusing on the intersection of religious, cultural, and political fields.

An important contribution of this study deals with its use of a large number of archival sources most of which were not previously utilized in the sociology of Russian society, politics, and religion.

The study contributes to the understanding of the Russian Orthodox Church’s complex connections with unofficial, radical and extremist Orthodox and near-Orthodox groups and movements. Such an understanding has so far been underdeveloped in existing literature.

The dissertation also highlights important aspects of church-state relations and collaborations in the process of the formation and consolidation of Russia’s current desecularizing and political regime.

The study reveals previously understudied aspects of lawmaking in Putin’s Russia by detailing the making and enactment of the law on religious feelings.

This is the first study that details the emergence of religious censorship in the area of artistic production and discusses its subsequent expansion to other fields.

Furthermore, my study is the first to present systematic and comparative analysis of existing data on tolerance and intolerance of atheist and anti-religionist expression in Russia.
Limitations of this Study and Possible Directions of Future Research

I will conclude this dissertation by briefly commenting on its limitations and possible ways of overcoming them in future research. Perhaps the most important limitation of this study is that it theorizes and explores the dynamics of desecularization in the limited context of one country. This limits theoretical generalizations that can be derived from such a study. The remedy against this is obvious: comparative cross-national studies are needed to expand the empirical base of further theorization of the dynamics of desecularization. Furthermore, I focused on cases that started social dramas in which antagonistic forces openly clashed. Yet there obviously are cases where desecularizing changes were made without starting such dramatic developments. For instance, religion’s role in the military and law enforcement seems to have been asserted without much resistance (or, at least, the resistance was not nearly as public). Studies of such cases can contribute to a broader understanding of the ways in which desecularizing action can develop with or without contestation. Next, while my research has highlighted some aspects in which the developments in Russia reflect or are reactions to global influences, a closer look at the actors and activists’ global connections will help us understand the place of Russia’s culture wars in the processes developing around the globe. Finally, taking root paradigms seriously involves serious historical investigation of their origins in the cultural and historical past. A long-term historical perspective was not part of this study. Instead, my focus was predominantly on the events of the last quarter of a century. In my future research, however, I hope to place these recent developments in the context of a long-term view of religion’s role in Russian life.
Appendix

HSIRB Approval Letter
Date: June 14, 2016

To: Vyacheslav Karpov, Principal Investigator
    Rachel Schmoller, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Nugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSSIRB Project Number 16-06-18

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Rising Against the Enemies of the Church: The Dynamics of Russian Decenteralization and the Making of Its Punitive Regime” has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may only be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under “Number of subjects you want to complete the study”). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: June 13, 2017
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