

Mother Russia by Luba George

'Memory' of imperial past revived

A 19th-century Russian version of Khomeini is being spruced up for the millennium: N.M. Karamzin.

Both the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) wasted no time in proclaiming 1988 the year of reviving Great Russian traditions. Patriarch Pimen, the head of the ROC, delivered a New Year's message at Moscow's Epiphany Cathedral—broadcast on Soviet radio and TV—noting that “we have entered 1988, the 1,000th anniversary of the Christianization of Russia.” He forgot to mention that in 988, neither Russia nor Moscow existed. Moscow first appeared as a village in 1147.

Also on Jan. 1, the Soviet government announced that the renovation of Moscow's Andronika Monastery had been completed in time for the 1988 celebrations. On the monastery's premises, the world's largest icon museum was opened—the Central Museum for Ancient Russian Culture and History, housing over 5,000 ancient icons.

Befitting the opening of the post-INF Treaty era, in which Moscow anticipates an early domination over Europe, the 1988 millennium coincides with a revival of Russia's role in the 1815 Treaty of Vienna and the Holy Alliance—the 1815-48 period when Europe was run in an arrangement between Western oligarchs and Russia, and Orthodox Russia played the policeman for the New Order.

The Soviets have decided to dust off imperial historians S. Solovyov (father of the late 19th century gnostic and “prophet of the Bolshevik Revolution”), V. Klyuchevsky, and N.M. Karamzin, the Holy Alliance supporter and one of the chief architects of the Freemasonic-Slavophile movement.

The Soviet authorities will reprint, for the first time in the Soviet Union, Karamzin's 12-volume work *The History of the Russian State (1816-24)*.

Nikolai M. Karamzin (1766-1826), adviser and court historian to “Holy Alliance” Tsar Alexander I, strongly defended autocracy, serfdom, and the old Muscovite belief that Providence was on Russia's side if it remained true to the “Third Rome” tradition. His writings epitomized the Muscovite hatred for things Western.

Denouncing the “corruption” of autocratic Russia by Western influences, Karamzin wrote in 1812: “Has the name Russia still the inscrutable force for us which it formerly had? Our ancestors, even if they enjoyed many advantages of Western customs, remained always of the opinion that the Orthodox Russian is the most perfect citizen on earth and Holy Russia the first state. . . . One may call that an error, yet how it promoted the love of the fatherland and its moral strength. Now, however, after more than a century of foreign education, we call all the Europeans, whom we formerly called infidels, our brothers. I ask, for whom will it be easier to subdue Russia, for infidels or brothers? Peter [the Great] is responsible.”

The traditional Soviet approach to Karamzin was summarized by historian I. Kudryavtsev in the 1965 volume of the *Soviet Historical Encyclopaedia*, where Karamzin's historical and political views were called “reactionary” and “monarchist.” Now, with the “newspeak” that accompanies glasnost, Soviet philologists are being called on to “re-evaluate” Karamzin

as a “liberal person” and an “unbiased cosmopolitan” of the Holy Alliance.

As early as 1980, Valentin Rasputin, a leading member of the Russian arch-chauvinist Pamyat Society, and today on the board of Raisa Gorbachova's Soviet Culture Fund, declared Nikolai Karamzin one of his favorite historians. He called it a “scandal” that “we can buy the history of Guinea or Ancient Rome, but we are deprived of the possibility of acquainting ourselves with the recognized and best examples of our native historiography.”

Shortly before the August 1986 founding of the Culture Fund, a big push to resurrect Karamzin was given by the Soviet Culture Fund's founding member and chairman, Dmitri Likhachov, a descendent of an old Russian aristocratic family. Speaking before the June 1986 U.S.S.R. Writers' Congress, Likhachov called Karamzin's history “a magnificent and enormous literary work.”

The East Germans and the Czechs began publishing Karamzin's works during 1987. Their example was not followed by Poland, to which Karamzin is anathema. Karamzin despised Poland and for that matter, the Ukraine, as embodiments of hated Western culture and Catholicism.

In his New Year's Message in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* Jan. 1, Rasputin demanded that the authorities do everything to restore the “memory” (*pamyat*) of the Great Russian past by reviving the historiography of Solovyov, Karamzin, and Klyuchevsky, along with Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy. Echoing Karamzin, Rasputin stressed the dangers of foreign ideas penetrating a “memory-less” people: “If the hearts [of the Russian people] are not occupied by us—then without delay, they will be occupied by the enemy.”