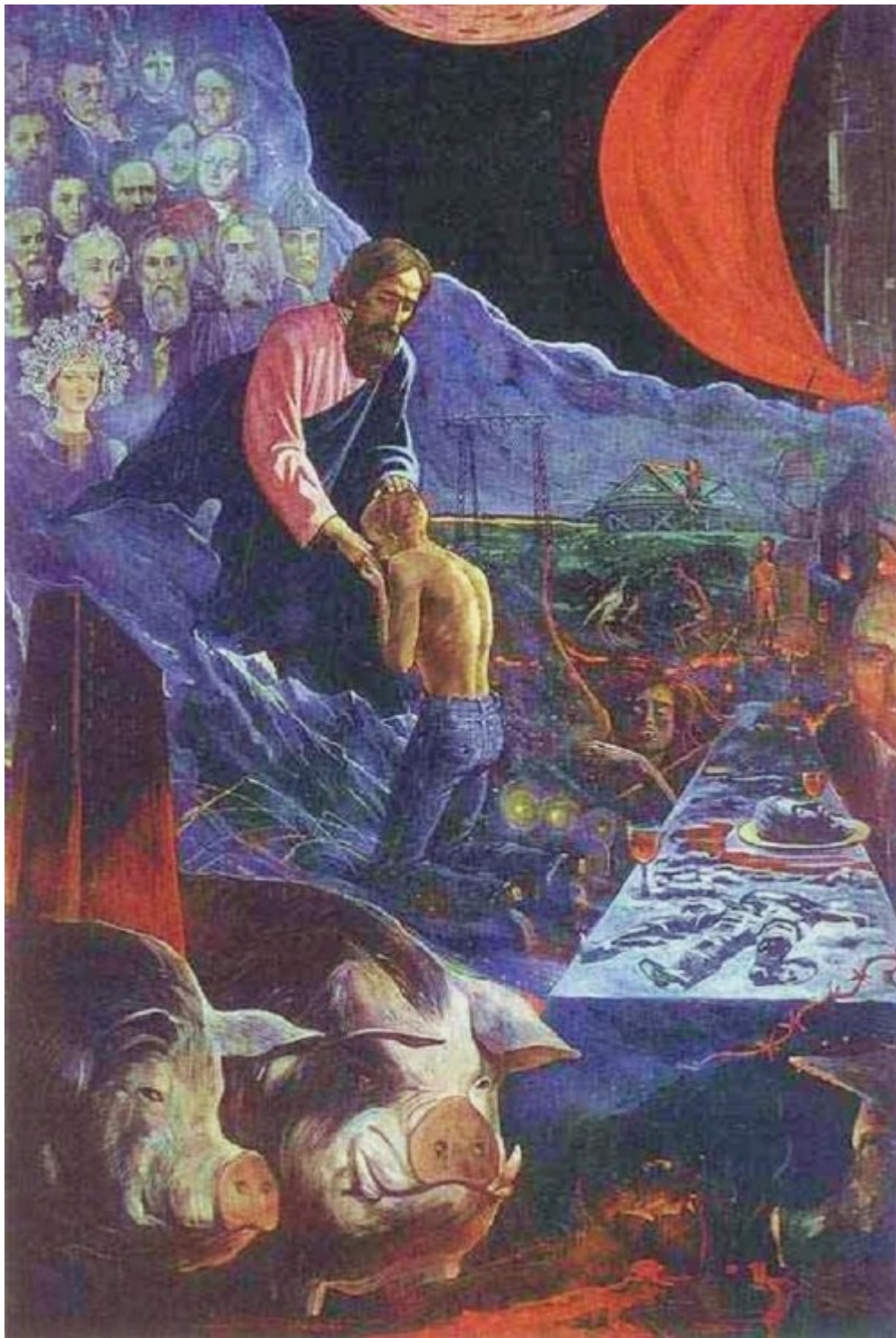


Russia or the West?



The Return of the Prodigal, Ilya Glazunov, 1977

I well remember seeing the above picture reproduced in 'The Daily Telegraph' newspaper 31 years ago in 1977. At that time it had just caused great scandal at an exhibition in Soviet Moscow. It made a great impression on me, since it summed up my own conclusions. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. The picture shows the new generation of Soviet youth turning away from the feeding troughs of the Western-imported Marxist materialism of the Soviet Union, returning from the two swine of Marx and Lenin to Christ. Behind Him stand all the great of Russian history, everything good in Russia, led by her saints, whose heritage had been viciously renounced and persecuted by Soviet atheism. Everything takes place against the background of the spiritual and cultural ruins caused by devilish militant atheism. The youth is dressed in Western jeans, symbolic of the latest form of Western materialism, consumerism, which was already replacing old-fashioned Marxist materialism at that time. The youth is waiting to be re clothed by Christ, as the Prodigal by his father, who cried, 'Bring forth the best robe'. This prophetic picture still illustrates the situation of many in Russia today, waiting to repent and be re clothed.

In the seventies, after two visits to the Soviet Union, it was quite clear to me that the obscene Communist experiment that had led to mass genocide was over. The Soviet system owed its continued existence only to its own inertia. It was all a question of time, patience. I had already written of this in 1974 in 'Premonition', later published in 'Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition'. On the other hand, if it were clear by the 1970s that the Soviet Union was at last waking from its materialist nightmare, it was also clear that, after the disasters of the 1960s, Western society was entering into a period of its own genocide, parallel to that already imposed on the Soviet Union. With the abortion holocaust, the West was entering into its final phase of suicidal degeneration, the end of the long spiritual process that had begun in Western Europe a thousand years before. Like all conscious Orthodox believers, Solzhenitsyn had seen this very clearly in the 1970s. In this way, the Western world and the ex-Orthodox world were like two trains speeding in opposite directions, even then destined to pass one another.

Today, many in the Orthodox world, at least in its ex-Communist 90%, though not in its heavily Westernised and somewhat spiritually compromised 10%, is doing what the youth above is prophetically shown as doing, repenting. On the other hand, the process of degeneration in the Western world has continued and is still in the middle of its politically correct, = spiritually incorrect, phase. Thus, in atheist America and Britain the abortion industry thrives, whether under present and past or future ruling regimes. In British Oxford, as in American New York, there are those on the City Council who wish to abolish Christmas 'for fear of offending Jews and Muslims'. In American Washington, as no doubt soon in British London, buses are now decorated with atheist slogans. From now until the end of December there they will carry the militant humanist slogans: 'Why believe in a God? Just be good for goodness' sake'.

The Orthodox politician and commentator, Natalia Narochnitskaya, was recently asked what she thought about such events, whether the world is moving to Resurrection or the Apocalypse. She replied: 'I think that as with anyone, this comes and goes in waves. There is sadness and worry, there is hope and inspiration. But it is not the government that has foisted on us the discussion in society about the rebirth of Russia, about faith, about our homeland or about social justice. All of a sudden society has itself put these questions onto the agenda after a decade of wild materialism. That inspires optimism. My friends, who are European conservatives, simply look to Russia with hope. They say, you were frozen by Communism and so did not have to go through the degeneration that we went through. And now you have thawed out, you have the chance to fight for those values which are largely lost in Europe...'

Fr Andrew

2/15 November - Hieromartyr Victorinus of Pettau in Styria