

Clio's Scroll



The Berkeley Undergraduate History Journal
Vol. 20, No.1

Fall 2018

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Clio's Scroll, the Berkeley Undergraduate History Journal, is published twice yearly by students of the Department of History at the University of California, Berkeley. The journal aims to provide undergraduates with the opportunity to publish historical works and to train staff members in the editorial process of an academic journal.

Clio's Scroll is produced by financial support from the Townsend Center for the Humanities, the Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC), and the Department of History. *Clio's Scroll* is not an official publication of the ASUC or UC Berkeley. The views expressed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the journal, the editors, the university, or sponsors.

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Note from the Editors

We are proud to present the fall 2018 issue of *Clio's Scroll*. The articles featured here span across the globe, all with a unique perspective on reimagining our conceptions of familiar historical periods. In their article "The Dialectic of Amnesia," recent McGill University alumni Ha Dong examines the creation (and removal) of memory in reference to the Lebanese Civil War, as sanctioned by the official government and cultural forces. This intellectual history presents a fascinating view of how a society remembers and forgets historical events, and how the manufacturing of war memories underscores a greater political struggle. Stanford University senior Gabriela Romero in "Inhabitants and Citizens" looks at the Founding Fathers' conception of American citizenship, showing that they understood it as a type of social contract. Her essay also highlights the exclusionary role that this conception played, as certain groups were not allowed into this contract. Her work is a timely reminder to us of the power of intellectual ideas to shape political reality. Lastly, University of Texas at Austin graduate Anton Ermakov presents a detailed history of the USSR's unique attempt to transform the New Year celebration into a form of political propaganda in "Grandfather Frost Meets Comrade Stalin." This thoroughly original paper offers excellent insight into the ways that politics shapes culture.

While crisscrossing around the world and historical times-whether reexamining the nature of constitutional framework or cultural practices in a totalitarian society-these papers endeavor to help us understand, and perhaps reconsider, well-known events and societal practices. The papers all share a concern in how the definitions of various practices or events can be shifted for different reasons, whether it be Christmas or citizenship. Understanding the past world in a new light creates deeper implications for this divisive time we now occupy. How will history imagine our society, and what will our period reveal under intense scrutiny and analysis? All of these papers-to one degree or another-reference the power of the political sphere. They beg us to question our currently bipolarized politics will shape the course of our time, and how they bear relevance to the past. We hope that through Dong's, Romero's, and Ermakov's work, and through new, specific examination of well-known eras, we can apply their forms of thinking to our current time. The Editorial Board of *Clio's Scroll* would like to thank the Townsend Center for the Humanities and the Associated Students at the University of California (ASUC) for their generous funding that makes this publication and editorial process possible. As always, the Editors are indebted to Berkeley's Department of History for its endless support, guidance, and encouragement. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our contributors. Please, enjoy.

Sincerely,
The Editors

Contributors

HA DONG is a recent graduate of McGill University, where they studied World Islamic & Middle East Studies and Political Science. Passionate about the history of the Middle East & North Africa, their research interests lie in nationalism and the formation of the nation-/state in the region, as well as colonial and postcolonial histories, gender in the colonial and "post"-colonial era, language politics, and memory and identity politics. They would like to thank Professor Malek Abisaab for his perspicacious observations not only throughout their research project, but also throughout their undergraduate career.

GABRIELA ROMERO is a senior at Stanford University pursuing a major in American Studies and a minor in Political Science. Her research interests include nineteenth-century American political history, the Civil War, citizenship, and New Mexico history. She currently serves as editor-in-chief of *Herodotus*, Stanford's undergraduate history research journal. She wishes to thank Professor Jonathan Gienapp for his excellent guidance and support throughout the research and writing process.

ANTON ERMAKOV recently graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a double major in History and Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies. His research interests include Soviet anti-religious policy, secular ritual, and the history of everyday life in the USSR. He wishes to thank Professor Joan Neuberger for her invaluable mentorship and support.

The Dialectic of Amnesia

The Lebanese State and Civil Society in the (Re)Construction and Evocation of War Memories in Post-Civil War Lebanon (1990-2005)

Ha Dong

Introduction

Much has been written about the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), which broke out as a result of deep-rooted socio-economic inequalities across sects and geographical regions, uneven political representation, and the Palestinian refugee crisis. As hostilities erupted in 1975, Maronite Christians had already formed the Lebanese Forces, aiming to rid the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) from Lebanese territory and maintain their political domination, whereas the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) united left-wing Lebanese groups, Arab nationalist forces, and the PLO, demanding social and political reforms and declaring their support for the Palestinian cause. Considering the number of actors involved, most scholars of the subject have emphasised the dialectic of outsiders-insiders as the roots and complicating factors of the civil war. Walid Khalidi, a scholar in Lebanese studies, avers that the causes of the war and the escalation of violence emanated from internal and external developments, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict and inter-Arab rivalries.¹ In a similar fashion, Farid El-Khazen argued that state, non-state, local, and foreign parties were involved in a conflict over values, beliefs, ideologies, and interests, climaxed by local political crises and socio-economic inequalities.² Likewise, Samir Khalaf, whilst examining "civil" and "uncivil" violence in Lebanon, concluded that previous unresolved socio-economic and political grievances fueled civil strife,³ as outside protectors guaranteed domestic actors' prosperity⁴ and supported local groups whose interests were linear with theirs, thus converting Lebanon into a proxy battlefield⁵ and entrenching domestic

¹ Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1979), 13-14.

² Farid El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 3-5.

³ Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Contact* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), ix-x.

⁴ Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon, A Shattered Country: Myths and Realities of the Wars in Lebanon* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996), x-xi.

⁵ Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, xii.

cleavages.⁶

Taking these facts into considerations, the civil war remains a difficult topic in the consciences of those who endured it. In a post-war context, the war has provided a narrative framework for all groups in the political and social arenas to reconstruct and represent their memories, altogether intertwined with sectarian strife which further fuels animosity. Not only did war take away meaning from human existence, it also erased the empirical world in which the survivors remain, namely public spaces. Each fragment of the damaged public spaces represents an individual fragment of war memories; who is then, to blame for the destruction of these symbolic spheres that once bound different individuals together? How do individuals and groups make sense of the rapid succession of events? As Maurice Halbwachs has shown, individual memory is intimately linked with collective memory in an organic fashion because the individual is not alone in the act of remembering and representing war memory.⁷ Rather, the collective body aids the individual in remembering and reminiscing through a system of signs, symbols, and ideas showcased in the public sphere. Hence, the (re)construction of war memories rests upon common notions that reside in both individual and collective spirits. Halbwachs also makes a distinction between history and collective memory; whilst considering the former as an anthology of events regarding changes and ruptures, the latter is maintained along a continuity and retains past occurrences pertinent to the group's existence and identity.⁸

Likewise, Pierre Nora adds another dimension to the theoretical distinction between history and memory by affirming that history remains a problematic and incomplete reconstruction of the past, in opposition to memory, while subject to manipulation and appropriation, interlaces the dialectic of remembrance and amnesia.⁹ In addition to portraying a bond that connects members of a group to the present in an affective and symbolic way, by relying on images, symbols, and spaces in the empirical domain, memory also aims to produce an illusion of timelessness of past events, which remain politically relevant to the group's identity.¹⁰ This ongoing reiteration of

⁶ Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics in a Fragmented Society* (London: Routledge, 1996), 4-6.

⁷ Maurice Halbwachs, *La Mémoire Collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968, second edition), 36-37.

⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *La Mémoire Collective*, 77-78.

⁹ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," translated by Marc Roudebush, *Representations no.26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-memory* (Spring 1989), 8.

¹⁰ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History," 9.

past events delineates each group within a grand narrative of differences, for the variation in memory-making is transposed onto political, social, and even economic implications. Especially when much ink has been spilled over the issue of the reconstruction of public spaces, the revival and representation of war memories have remained a site of contestation amongst state officials and civil society actors.¹¹ Crucial in this process of interpretation is the role of civil society and state institutions as knowledge (re)constructors, for they collect fragments of war memories to (re)construct their narratives and strive at the status of hegemony in the control of the past, by meticulously choosing and giving meaning to each memory, in order to legitimise their identity and political action.

I argue that this selective use of symbols, ideas, and events constitutes a political act because behind every idea and symbol, lies an expression of power struggle and contestation of other representations of the war in the public sphere. I will focus on the multiple manners in which the state and civil society actors, namely the artistic, intellectual, and religious circles, crafted war memories. Specifically, my examination will uncover the role of the media in creating a unified sphere of exchange and communication to help memory makers become aware of one another's ideas, yet it is far from being unifying, let alone conducive to the consolidation of a Lebanese "national consciousness." Debates triggered by state institutions, such as the post-war legislation on amnesty, or the reconstruction of downtown Beirut, are expanded into civil society which formulates counter-hegemonic strategies to challenge the manner with which the state attends to war memories. Therefore, I aim to elucidate on the role of artistic, intellectual, and religious circles in the depiction of war memories and the creation of an epistemic framework from which reconciliation can emanate, as well as attending to the legacies of the civil war. To conclude, I will show the limits of post-war reconciliation and the obstacles to reaching unity, particularly the actualisation of war memories with the 2005 assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri (1944 – 2005) and recent sectarian animosities.

I. The Dialectic of Amnesia and Nostalgia in Post-war Governance and the Political Elite's Post-war Reconstruction of Downtown Beirut.

Recent Lebanese history has been deeply marked by wars and threats of invasion. The transition from the 15-year-long civil war into peace-time stability was not without the mediation of the international

¹¹Maurice Halbwachs, *La Mémoire Collective*, 166.

community. In 1989, leaders of different Lebanese factions congregated in Ta’if, Saudi Arabia, to lay out the institutional framework for the reconstruction of a more balanced confessional power-sharing system, the disbandment of militias, and the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanese territory.¹² Branded as a new assertion of Lebanese sovereignty, the Ta’if Accord postulated the institutionalisation of a parliamentary democratic system, which allowed for better Muslim representation at the state level, reinforced the Prime Minister’s power and diminished executive dominance.¹³ However, the next fifteen years would mark the transformation of Lebanon under Syrian tutelage.¹⁴ The Ta’if Accord granted Syria the military power to act as the umpire of Lebanese politics whilst deriving legitimacy from the foreign powers of the United Nations and the Arab League;¹⁵ this crafted an illusion of stability emanating from an external source (instead of domestic actors) and highlighted the fragility of the Lebanese state in the quest for post-war unity at the institutional level. Post-war legislation on war memories put forth by the Lebanese political elite also reflected this malaise in reaching unity at the state level. Borrowing from El-Husseini’s definition of “political elite”, I shall identify this group as individuals possessing influence upon political decision-making over society, such as state officials, leaders of industries and corporations, owners of media companies, and leaders of sectarian communities.¹⁶ Within the boundaries of state institutions, the political elite adopted a dialectic of amnesia and nostalgia through a policy project that has been qualified as “state-sponsored amnesia” – a condition coined by the Lebanese intellectual Samir Kassir¹⁷ (1960 – 2005) – whilst also selectively projecting its nostalgic vision of the past in the reconstruction of downtown Beirut, in order to forge a questionable model of authenticity. The Lebanese political elite endeavoured to invent a new historical narrative and a new version of authenticity, thus striving at the status of hegemony in the politics of remembrance and repressing guilt and shame. To illustrate the extent to which the political elite constructed the dialectic of amnesia and nostalgia, I will use as evidence the 1991 law on general amnesty, the subsequent state-sanctioned censorship law, and

¹² Rola El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana: Elite Politics in Postwar Lebanon* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 13-14.

¹³ Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, 296.

¹⁴ Rola El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 15.

¹⁵ Rola El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 17.

¹⁶ Rola El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, xvi-xvii.

¹⁷ Samir Kassir, “Dhākir Lilmustaqbal,” *An-Nahar* (11 February 2000), 11, <http://samirkassirfoundation.org/documents/articles/pr000392.pdf>.

eventually the 1992 arrival of Rafiq al-Hariri to Prime Ministership in the following sections.

Firstly, the promulgation of the 1991 law on general amnesty translated the elite's official doctrine *vis-à-vis* war memories, which was intertwined with the political reality of Syrian tutelage of Lebanon and reminiscent of the adage of the short-lived 1958 civil war "لا غالب لا مغلوب" (no victor, no vanquished).¹⁸ By withholding the condemnation of any actor for fuelling the civil war, the post-war regime censored memories of external involvement in the bloodshed, specifically Syrian and Israeli interventions, and refused to censure actors who were previously supported by or sought external influences to perpetuate the armed struggle. It is also important to underline that the 1991 law solely applied to crimes committed before May 1991,¹⁹ whilst immunising former warlords from judicial constraints; militia chiefs, such as Nabih Berri, of the Shi'a AMAL militia, or Elie Hobeiqa, and many others of the Maronite Phalangist movement that were implicated in the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre and notorious for mass rape,²⁰ torture, and kidnapping,²¹ continued to enjoy impunity and held key positions in the state.²² Initiated from above, state policies, on one hand, encouraged society towards collective amnesia and attempted to make peace with past traumas, yet simultaneously failed to hold any actor accountable for the violence committed against civilians. These policies masked the deep-rooted problems and malfunctions of the political and economic system in Lebanon. Because the post-war regime was founded upon Syrian guardianship and the monopoly of former warlords over political institutions, establishing truth and reconciliation committees and declassifying war files would lead to the delegitimization of the nascent regime. The invalidation of Syrian intervention into Lebanese domestic politics would also allegedly engender greater chaos, in times where order and stability were of utmost importance in the eyes of the elite.²³ Ironically, the name of the Ta'if Accord is a wordplay on "sectarian" in Arabic, or "طائفي", which indicates the absence of a neutral, non-

¹⁸ Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs in Modern Lebanon* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 22.

¹⁹ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 71.

²⁰ Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men: The Social Origins of War in Lebanon* (Oxford: Center for Lebanese Studies, 2001), 62.

²¹ Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs in Modern Lebanon*, 107.

²² Craig Larkin, *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon: Remembering and Forgetting the Past* (London: Routledge, 2012), 5.

²³ Craig Larkin, *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon*, 5.

sectarian umpire, such as war tribunals or reconciliation and truth committees. As Sune Haugbolle emphasises, "no victor, no vanquished" represents the state's avoidance in the discussion of recent traumas and the reconstruction of a coherent narrative of the war, which is akin to Ghassan Tueni's infamous 1985 book title *Une Guerre Pour Les Autres*, implying a lack of public accountability and a denial of complicity in engendering atrocities.²⁴ This notion of a "war of the Others" orbits around a central question: was the war from 1975 to 1990 a civil war, or was it not?

From this perspective, because the war was "one of the Others," Lebanon was merely a victim of a proxy war for external influences to use its state institutions and militia groups to serve their own interests.²⁵ This mythologisation of the civil war based on the vague idiom of a "war of the Others" mirrors the state's proclamation of "no victor, no vanquished" and amnesty legislation, because the war was caused by outside actors, thus a projection of shame and guilt upon the Others to camouflage the deep-seated political and economic malfunctions having plagued the country for decades. The binarism of "victory" and "defeat" is not representative of the aftermath, during which instances of fratricide and were masked, such as the 1975-1976 clashes between the right-wing Lebanese Front and the left-wing PLO-LNM coalition and the creation of a Green Line separating Christian East Beirut and Muslim West, or the 1983 War of the Mountain between Druze and Maronite communities.²⁶ The myth of a "war of the Others" also enlarged the scope of the blame game; whilst Maronites inculpated the Palestinians and Syria for creating bloodshed, Shi'ite groups, such as Hizbullah and AMAL, cast the blame on Israel.²⁷ However, to say the civil war was simply a sectarian conflict is reductionist; the essence of any conflict is the struggle over power, survival, and the fight for the hegemonic definition of a nation, whether they be class-based, non-sectarian, or ideological, which incited violence throughout and even after the civil war, especially the division between the left-wing, pro-Palestinian Lebanese National Movement and the Syria-backed and Zionist-backed right-wing Lebanese Front.²⁸

Moreover, any open discussion about the war would mirror society's questioning of the post-war regime, which seemed unnecessary as both the political elite and civilians were still

²⁴ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 13.

²⁵ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 17-18.

²⁶ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 20-21.

²⁷ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 18-19.

²⁸ Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics*, 176.

endeavouring to make sense of the rapid succession of traumatic events. The omnipresence of former war criminals within the post-war government was parallel with the increasing repression against civilians. For example, a 1996 citizen effort mobilised against the 1993 legal prohibition of public protests, yet the mobilisation was met with the army's immediate deployment to end the alleged "civil disobedience."²⁹ The repression of traumas was also manifested in the 1994 broadcasting law against audio-visual content inciting sectarian violence, which represents a form of self-censorship and repressed memories, rooted in the general ill-at-ease feeling generated by the lack of discussion in order to make sense of the civil war.³⁰ From the political elite's point of view, the past needed to be forgotten. Therefore society had to forgive, forget, and march forth into the future. By adhering to a progressive vision of history, the state projected its own telos towards a better future, free from the guilt and shame of the civil war; yet, paradoxically, with the 1994 legislation on media censorship, it hindered constructive intellectual discussion of historical events, which generated barriers to the contestation of state's policies from civil society actors.

The contradiction of state-initiated acts of amnesia was further entrenched by the arrival of Rafiq al-Hariri to Prime Ministership in 1992, following the 1992 legislative elections and President Élias Hrawi's (1926 – 2006) nomination of Hariri to the office.³¹ Hariri's mandate signalled the start of what he advertised as an "economic revival" of Lebanon, as well as the rise of corporate interests in the crafting of war memories using the dialectic of amnesia and nostalgia. Hariri was at the forefront of the Future Movement, which regrouped a congregation of corporations, not only the *Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction du Centre-ville de Beyrouth*, or Solidère, (which was in charge of reconstruction since 1994), but also the influential media "Future" channel owned by the Hariri family. His hopeful vision of the reconstruction of downtown Beirut and of the revival of the Lebanese economy were embodied in the name of his political movement: the Future movement. This optimism following traumas of the past repressed painful memories of the civil war and selectively revived historical narratives of glory and pride, thus kickstarting the search for lost times and fusing what-is-no-longer with the present, now in a state of *tabula rasa* with the demolition of historical buildings and pre-war neighbourhoods, in order to conceive

²⁹ Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men*, 239.

³⁰ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 72.

³¹ Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and Politics*, 277-278.

the future.³² Although reconstruction plans had dated back to 1977, with initial proposals from the Council for Development and Reconstruction to rebuild the central district ravaged by the civil war which aimed to restore the cosmopolitan heritage of Beirut and highlighted its modern aspects, fighting abruptly resumed, thus postponing the plans.³³ Solidère's advertisement "Beirut – Ancient City of the Future" laid out the architectural and ideological framework for the reconstruction project, yet without any consultation with intellectuals, experts, and the public, the entirety of the project was anchored by the logic free-market economy, whilst discarding moral, intellectual, and historical considerations.³⁴

Additionally, the Future Channel, owned by the Hariri family, displayed Hariri's post-war policies and reconstruction of downtown Beirut, and broadcasted spectacular promotional images of the rehabilitation programme.³⁵ Advocates of Hariri and Solidère's plans resuscitated Beirut's Phoenician past, composed of glorious Roman cultural, artistic, and intellectual heritage; they also claimed that the city had offered a safe haven to outsiders who, in turn, ravaged the city and played Lebanese off one other.³⁶ Similar to this romantic vision of Beirut, other proponents of the project also reminisced over the Ottoman period which had endowed the capital with charming architecture, public gardens, thriving educational institutions, and healthcare facilities.³⁷ The "Beirut – Ancient city of the Future" slogan was evidently linear with the dialectic of amnesia and nostalgia;³⁸ by highlighting the heritage, or *turath*, of Beirut,³⁹ and by reviving the image of the city as having once been the "Paris of the Middle East,"⁴⁰ Solidère fabricated an illusion of the eternity of Beirut's charm and sensuality and feminised its urban composition, as the corporation revamped the empirical domain of urban landscape into a fragment of imagination. Not only did the rehabilitation project along a capitalist line and a laissez-faire attitude correspond to the re-writing of the

³² Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 84-85.

³³ Saree Maksidi, "Laying Claim to Beirut: Urban Narrative and Spatial Identity in the Age of Solidère," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23 no. 3 (Spring 1997), 666-667.

³⁴ Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut: Memory and Space in a Postwar Arab City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 30.

³⁵ Bassel F. Salloukh, Rabie Barakat, Jinan S. Al-Habbal, Lara W. Khattab, Shoghig Mikaelian, and Aram Nerguizian, *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 138-140.

³⁶ Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut*, 31-32.

³⁷ Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut*, 32-33.

³⁸ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 86.

³⁹ Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut*, 36.

⁴⁰ Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut*, 89.

city's history through a careful process of selection and omission, but it was also a truism of self-Orientalisation. If Orientalism invents the Orient, its people, its cultures, and its institutions,⁴¹ then the self-Orientalising penchant, which was cardinal in the Lebanese political elite's programme of reconstruction of downtown Beirut, re-imagined Beirut and restored its past sensuality and romanticism. The Beirut urban landscape was, hence, converted into a spectacle which mirrored the logic and hegemony of capitalism; reconstruction was both the project and the result of the capitalist mode of production.⁴² The empirical domain became an accumulation of spectacles.⁴³ These spectacles would evolve into the new reality, whereas reality would re-emerge within the spectacles⁴⁴ to produce a sense of loss and alienation amongst residents who were once familiar with the pre-war urban configurations. This "monopoly of appearance"⁴⁵ turned Beirut—as well as the historical knowledge stored in its ruins—into a commodity, devoid of any contextualisation and history. This monopoly then tacitly encouraged ordinary citizens to identify themselves with the flows of free-market economy, because the sole direction of history was the progress towards capitalist development, now that war had annihilated what was left of Beirut. Not only was reality metamorphosed into a theatre of capitalism, it was also transformed into an illusion of the sempiternity of past romanticism and lost times; the banality of capitalist hegemony, routinised by Hariri's revitalisation plans, made reality an advertisement and triggered the commodification of time.⁴⁶ Although this well-calculated project essayed for the reinvigoration of Beirut's profile in the aftermath of destruction, it paradoxically utilised memories from lost times to commodify urban terrain, in order to forge the elite's narrative of authenticity, which signified a form of paralysis of historical development – a dead-end which the political elite faced in the actualisation of the past in the present for future capitalist goals.

Correspondingly, Samir Khalaf contends that to remember is to consolidate collective memory and the group's identity and existence, whereas to forget is to escape from the uncertainty of the present to take refuge in nostalgia, in order to scrupulously reinvent a new narrative of authenticity rooted in past events.⁴⁷ Therefore, the political

⁴¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 3.

⁴² Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 17.

⁴³ Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, 15.

⁴⁴ Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, 19.

⁴⁵ Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, 20.

⁴⁶ Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, 154.

⁴⁷ Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, 307.

elite generated a discursive framework of oblivion and remembrance founded upon global capitalism and a debatable model of authenticity to craft artificial legitimacy, a "culture of disappearance,"⁴⁸ even in which individuals would think, act, and evoke war memories. From this viewpoint, memory acts as both representation and misrepresentation of the past,⁴⁹ after having undergone a meticulous process of selection and omission. To equate corporate narrative of war memories with an ordinary Lebanese citizen's remembrance of the war and of the Beirut urban configurations (whether it be from a Muslim or Christian perspective) is to cover up the inequalities and tensions that underlie society. Capitalist interests do not capture the diversity of human experiences, albeit the goal of reparation is to soothe the dolorous marks of war which have stained the city; yet, by manipulating and appropriating past memories, it is an act of voluntary amnesia. Furthermore, whilst the post-war reconstruction was solely limited to Beirut, other spaces, such as the south of the country, remained a war zone amidst the high tides of reconstruction. Notably, as part of their Operation "Grapes of Wrath" to spite Hizbullah's troops, the Israeli Defense Forces committed the 1996 Qana massacre in the south of Lebanon at the site of a United Nations compound sheltering Lebanese civilians.⁵⁰ This raises the question of the state's priorities and its capacity to establish sovereignty over its territory to protect citizens who reside in the peripheries. Evidently, Beirut is the capital city of Lebanon and ought to match the polished image which its reconstructors wished to deliver to the world; however, the state simultaneously neglected areas where war memories and massacres perpetrated by external forces, namely Israel, remained very much lived realities for the inhabitants.

Nevertheless, despite highlighting the flaws in post-war remembrance initiated by state legislation, Haugbolle affirms that the state's avoidance *vis-à-vis* the reconstruction of war memories signified a step towards the decentralisation of war memory, thereby paving the way for the creation of alternative war narratives.⁵¹ Likewise, Lucia Volk argues that the 1991 amnesty law granted memory makers new opportunities to give shapes and meanings to war narratives, and eventually to attain reconciliation,⁵² because public spaces are an implicit field of the power struggle over the control of the past

⁴⁸ Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, 307.

⁴⁹ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 9.

⁵⁰ Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 117-118.

⁵¹ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 27.

⁵² Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 193-194.

between state institutions and civil society,⁵³ as well as the depiction and evocation of war memories, which can be examined via the lens of the politics of remembrance. Despite the fact that state legislation aspired at amnesia, the decentralisation of memory represented the first step towards reconciliation, by allowing civil society groups to conceive their own narratives to challenge the official doctrine and the elite's version of authenticity.⁵⁴ Thus, by creating a regime of amnesia and erasing traces of the war, the Lebanese political elite enabled other agents in the Lebanese civil society to craft and circulate memories in the public sphere, which I will discuss further in the second part.

II. Attempted Challenge to "State-Sponsored Amnesia": an Emerging Public Debate (mid-1990s-2005).

In opposition to the "culture of disappearance", Samir Khalaf stresses the emergence of the "culture of resistance" amongst Lebanese civil society actors to the lack of elite remembrance of the war, as well as to corporate reconstruction of downtown Beirut.⁵⁵ For a long time, the concept of "civil society" has been associated with the paradigm of Western liberal democracy, in which the state and civil society engage in a complementary, synergetic relation.⁵⁶ This concept gained more relevance in the aftermath of the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, triggered by citizen agency, and was thus instrumentalized by Western scholarship to illustrate the triumph of the model of liberal democracy over "Eastern authoritarianism,"⁵⁷ or even the "self-management" of civil society which puts forth the prospect for political reform.⁵⁸ Deep-rooted in the Western tradition of political philosophy, the idea of "civil society" appeared as early as the classical writings of Aristotle and Cicero, in which civil society was linked with civilisation and civility amongst political actors, altogether reigned by the rule of law.⁵⁹ During the Enlightenment era, the concept evolved into the secular antithesis of despotism,⁶⁰ and hence, "civil society" represents the bedrock for democracy in Western democratic contexts,⁶¹ as previously argued by Alexis de Tocqueville, Max Weber,

⁵³ Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 4-5.

⁵⁴ Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 23.

⁵⁵ Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, 307-308.

⁵⁶ Krishan Kumar, "Civil Society: An Inquiry into the Usefulness of a Historical Term," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 44 No. 3 (September 1993), 375-376.

⁵⁷ Krishan Kumar, "Civil Society," 375-376.

⁵⁸ Krishan Kumar, "Civil Society," 386.

⁵⁹ Krishan Kumar, "Civil Society," 376-377.

⁶⁰ Krishan Kumar, "Civil Society," 377.

⁶¹ Michalle Browsers, *Democracy and Civil Society in Arab Political Thought: Transcultural Possibilities* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 5-6.

and Robert Putnam.⁶² Nonetheless, both Krishan Kumar and Masoud Kamali contest the notion of "civil society" as an intrinsically Western phenomenon; Kumar argues that civil society emerges even in countries without an entrenched democratic system, which serves as a counter-hegemonic sphere to the state dominated by a self-interested elite and constitutes an alternative model of governance.⁶³ Similarly, whilst Kamali points out the lack of consensus on a fixed definition of "civil society," he nevertheless stresses that certain agreed-upon characteristics, such as individual liberties or democratic institutions, deny the existence of a civil society in the Arab world.⁶⁴ Traditional forms of socialisation—such as critical sermons, welfare institutions, intellectual circles, and solidarity networks—constitute an alternative model of civil society in the public sphere which does not conform to the Western definition of the concept;⁶⁵ they enjoy a relative degree of autonomy from the state, and their legitimacy derives from social authority and the extent of their socio-economic networks.⁶⁶ Thus, neither individualism nor democratic institutions are the pre-conditions for the creation and consolidation of civil society, because these ideals attempt to universalise the Western version of modernity, whereas existing structures form an alternative model of modernity in the Arab world and do not fall under the conventional, hegemonic understanding of modernity.⁶⁷ Taking this critique of the Eurocentric definition of the concept of civil society into considerations, I will explore the role of religious groups, such as Hizbullah, and the artistic and intellectual circles in challenging the state's narrative of the war and legislated policies to enforce amnesia.

In the 1980s, Western-educated Arab scholars began discussing the idea of "civil society," as a parallel with the zenith of the international human rights and democratic discourses and with the anti-Apartheid and post-Soviet context, meaning that the international interest in the civil sphere of society in relation to the state was a recent phenomenon.⁶⁸ This concurrent timeline is crucial in my examination of post-war remembrance in Lebanon, because the 1980s witnessed the appearance of early narratives of the civil war,

⁶² Samar El-Masri, "Interethnic Reconciliation in Lebanon after the Civil War," in Joanna R. Quinn, ed., *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Postconflict Societies* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 264.

⁶³ Krishan Kumar, "Civil Society," 383.

⁶⁴ Masoud Kamali, "Civil Society and Islam: A Sociological Perspective," *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 42 No. 3 (December 2001), 457.

⁶⁵ Masoud Kamali, "Civil Society and Islam," 457-458.

⁶⁶ Masoud Kamali, "Civil Society and Islam," 459.

⁶⁷ Masoud Kamali, "Civil Society and Islam," 458.

⁶⁸ Michaele Browers, *Democracy and Civil Society*, 62.

produced by Hizbullah-affiliated intellectuals acting as moralising makers of war memories.⁶⁹ In Hizbullah's 1984 publication of *Al-'Ahd*, the Christian "Other" was responsible for the outbreak of the civil war, by meticulously choosing the memory of the Bus Massacre of Ayn al-Rumana, committed by the Phalangist *Kata'ib* in 1975 against Palestinian refugees.⁷⁰ To define the culture of the "Other" as the "culture of massacre" in *Al-'Ahd*,⁷¹ Hizbullah studied Maronites through a selective series of events related to crimes committed by the Other, like the Shatila and Sabra massacre in 1982, following the Israeli invasion of the South in favour of right-wing Christian parties.⁷² It is also important to mention that these massacres were carried out against the Palestinian Others and non-Lebanese communities, as well as against Lebanese Muslims, as a form of vengeance of the Others who contributed to the disintegration and devastation of Lebanon.⁷³ In this optics, Hizbullah viewed certain Maronite compatriots who fell under the spell of Israel in a treacherous way. By instrumentalising the printed press, Hizbullah reconstructed some memories of the war to generate division, acting as a fervent critic of Maronite domination within Lebanese political institutions, and held Maronites accountable for the civil war and for their cooperation with Israel.⁷⁴ Hizbullah, writing its own war narrative, enumerated its legacy of resistance and martyrdom, to juxtapose itself with the "culture of massacre" of Lebanese chauvinists, compatriots yet collaborators with the Zionists; as Sadde suggests, the centrality of the commemoration of martyrs constitutes the group's politics of remembrance, which is inserted into Hizbullah's larger narrative of continual struggle against Israeli occupation.⁷⁵ Consequently, the constructive resurrection of war memories by Hizbullah marked its background effort, amidst the last episodes of the civil war, in spawning divisive and sectarian war narratives in the public sphere, thus adding a ferocious discursive dimension to the carnage.

Starting in the mid-1990s, Lebanese intellectual and artistic circles prompted debates over the meaning of recent war memories to defy the state's official amnesty. In the field of performing arts, the *Masrah al-Medina* theatre became an arena for prominent

⁶⁹ Bashir Saade, *Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance: Writing the Lebanese Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 63.

⁷⁰ Bashir Saade, *Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance*, 69.

⁷¹ Bashir Saade, *Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance*, 70.

⁷² Bashir Saade, *Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance*, 69.

⁷³ Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men*, 62.

⁷⁴ Bashir Saade, *Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance*, 68.

⁷⁵ Bashir Saade, *Hizbullah and the Politics of Remembrance*, 46-47.

discussions.⁷⁶ One of the figures at the forefront of the intellectual movement against amnesia was the novelist Elias Khoury, whose play *Mudhakirat Ayoub* dealt with the issue of kidnapped Muslim and Christian children during the civil war and warned of the dangers of forgetting the past.⁷⁷ Moreover, because intellectuals and artists showed no confidence in the political elite's dealing with war memories and because of the 1996 Qana massacre perpetrated by Israeli forces in a post-war context, the televised media reckoned that discussions about the war and whether it had ended were of utmost importance; as a result, the media gave rise to new discussion sections about the civil war on televised talk shows, notably *Kalam An-Nas* or *Sira wa Infatahit*.⁷⁸

By the same token, the need for a more critical perspective towards the commodification of public space led to the emergence of public art as a form of contestation. At the beginning of the 2000s, art represented a quest for authenticity and nostalgia, in addition to being a counter-hegemonic tool to the culture of amnesia of the political elite. For example, Nada Sahnaoui's 2003 installation *Ataddhakar* in Martyrs' Square attempted to capture public attention into the remembrance debate, because certain memories had been strategically omitted and erased by the political elite; therefore, the need to restore these forgotten memories equaled the need to reclaim Beirut and citizens' spatial and emotional attachment to its urban configurations.⁷⁹ Likewise, Hassan Saouli's 2003 artwork "13th of April," composed of a replica of the original 1975 passenger bus which was ambushed by *Kata'ib* militiamen, raised the questions of guilt, shame, and public accountability, by utilising disturbing symbols to help individuals interact with their remembrance of the civil war.⁸⁰ Remembrance and reminiscence-facilitated by art- were the sole manners with which individuals could access public sites, which had been privatised by corporate interests and the elite's rehabilitation programme. Through these means, they could reach the echoes of the past and the spaces that were once present, such as coffee shops or public markets – spaces that once symbolised unity and debate amongst people, regardless of their sectarian confession.⁸¹

Subsequently, intellectual and artistic pioneers raised the issue of the absence of public commemoration of the outbreak of the civil

⁷⁶ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 75.

⁷⁷ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 75.

⁷⁸ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 77.

⁷⁹ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 117-118.

⁸⁰ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 132-133.

⁸¹ Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut*, 12.

war and the tragic events that had made up its bloodiest episodes. Another initiative was the 2001 *Memory for the Future Colloquium*, founded by historian Amal Makarem and journalist Samir Kassir, to compile distinct memories of the war via debates and ceremonies of commemoration, such as the selection of the date 13th of April as a symbol of unity – the day of the bus massacre.⁸² Amal Makarem also criticised selective “state-sponsored amnesia” and the absence of an epistemic framework to reconstruct public memories and make sense of the civil war, in order to educate future generations and enable reconciliation as a forthcoming reality for Lebanon; by repudiating divisive narratives which highlighted violence amongst difference sectarian groups over power struggle, the *Colloquium* created a space for the plurality of war narratives that reflected the political grievances and the socio-economic realities of ordinary citizens who were victims of the bloodshed.⁸³ The creation of an intellectual discussion led to the establishment of the *Association Mémoire pour l’Avenir*. This united a myriad of academics, journalists, and writers, and endorsed a national campaign to raise public awareness about the need to publicise war memories to a larger national audience,⁸⁴ thus illustrating the ability of civil society to generate peaceful methods of conflict resolution and harmonious social relations. Notwithstanding, the Association’s initiative failed to challenge the official “no victor, no vanquished” doctrine of the state and to generate any meaningful change to the way in which the state imposed its narrative of the war, due to the entrenched hierarchy of national production of war memories on the basis of the “no victor, no vanquished” and the “war of the Others” maxims.

Another neglected legacy of the war was the question of the displaced. The war on the displaced was further complicated by the corporate rehabilitation project, because during the civil war, displaced families were moving into poor neighbourhoods in Beirut, notably Southern Shi’ite migrants settling in the Southern Beiruti suburb of *al-Dahiyia*, or in the annihilated, unoccupied downtown space.⁸⁵ After having escaped massacres and threats in the South of Lebanon, which became a theatre of the war against Israeli invasion, displaced families found themselves to be refugees in their own country, even in their own living space. Although state institutions,

⁸² Elsa Abou Assi, “Collective Memory and Management of the Past: The Entrepreneurs of Civil War Memory in Post-war Lebanon,” *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 61 No. 202 (December 2010), 400.

⁸³ Elsa Abou Assi, “Collective Memory and Management of the Past,” 401.

⁸⁴ Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 198.

⁸⁵ Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut*, 109.

such as the Ministry for the Displaced and the Central Fund for the Displaced, were erected by the post-war regime to attend to the issue, Solidère continued to pay displaced families inadequate compensation to clear them out of the soon-to-be demolished downtown area. Instead of accommodating the displaced with responsible urban planning, the company introduced a form of cleansing and showed no consideration for post-war social realities, and simultaneously exacerbated post-war chaos and social relations.⁸⁶

Since the displaced lacked the resources, power, and information to decide their fate and had to confront an uncertain present over which they had no control, informal groups and networks, such as Hizbullah's *Jihad al-Bina'*, emerged even before Solidère to challenge state neglect and the state's favourable attitude towards free-market economy, whilst developing an autonomous, sophisticated system of charity organisations offering healthcare services and basic amenities to the displaced fleeing Southern Lebanon.⁸⁷ Hizbullah's ideology of resistance expanded even to the resistance to state weakness and neglect to form a "society of resistance,"⁸⁸ in addition to its resistance through the form of armed struggle against Israeli invasion; Hizbullah's activities challenge the mandatory secular component that is rigidly tied to the Western understanding of civil society, because if "civil" is the antonym of "religious," then Hizbullah would fall short of the hegemonic Western interpretation of "civil society," thus discrediting its charity work in the public sphere. Yet, Hizbullah's experience demonstrates that organisations in the public sphere do not have to remain secular to be capable of "self-management," or to autonomously operate in the absence of a strong state, and to palliate the institutional void generated by state neglect. Imposing a Western reading of "civil society" upon a network, which joined the political arena after the 1992 elections, represents not only the application of Western model of modernity upon Hizbullah, but also denies Hizbullah of its status as a fully operational civil society actor besides its armed wing. Not only did artists in the fields of performing arts and public art succeed in evoking suppressed war memories, but public intellectuals and religious organisations also actively challenged the official state-sanctioned narrative and created a space for discussion and action. Therefore, as I have demonstrated, different groups, whether religious,

⁸⁶ Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut*, 111.

⁸⁷ Rula Jurdi Abisaab and Malek Abisaab, *The Shi'ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 163.

⁸⁸ Rula Jurdi Abisaab and Malek Abisaab, *The Shi'ites of Lebanon*, 156.

intellectual, or artistic, actively participated in the process of contestation of the state's official amnesia, with varying degrees of success, in order to shed light on the presence of and mobilisation from within the vibrant Lebanese civil society.

Conclusion

In brief, I have demonstrated that the politics of remembrance and amnesty of the Lebanese political elite forged a debatable version of authenticity, which granted immunity to former warlords involved in war crimes and massacres, yet who continued to occupy key positions in state institutions. The elite's trope of a "war of the Others" also refrained from holding any actor ravaging the country accountable, which made the processes of reconciliation and reconstruction of war memories difficult. Furthermore, the post-war reconstruction project, monopolised by Rafiq al-Hariri and Solidère, remodelled the Beirut urban landscape along a progressive direction of history towards capitalist development and erased historical landmarks of the city that had once existed in the public memory, thus transforming public spaces into commodities in order to attract foreign capital into the country. Due to the lack of state consultation with intellectuals, experts, and society in the rehabilitation of downtown Beirut, elite level debates attract reaction from civil society; as a response to the state's decisions, numerous intellectual and artistic circles criticise the reconstruction programme, through various means of communication in the public sphere, from the media, public art installations, charity activities, or even cyberspace, to address the lack of public commemoration and to deal with the legacies of the civil war which had not received adequate state's attention.

Notwithstanding, the fruitless deconstruction of the mythologisation of the war based on the catch-all adages of "no victor, no vanquished" and "the war of the Others" rendered the road to full reconciliation rocky. Such a challenge was the 2005 Syrian-sponsored assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri by a car bomb, a popular killing method during the civil war,⁸⁹ which triggered a new crisis in Lebanon and made Hariri the "Martyr Prime Minister."⁹⁰ He was inhumed in Martyrs' Square, and the site of his burial became the scene of protest of the March 14 coalition against Syrian penetration into Lebanese politics.⁹¹ Whilst the March 14 movement, composed of Maronites, Sunni, and Druze groups, claimed to be the true heir of the Lebanonist ideology of the National Pact, the March 08 coalition, uniting

⁸⁹ Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 161.

⁹⁰ Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 170.

⁹¹ Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut*, 136.

Hizbullah and sympathisers of Syria and Iran, grounds its politics of memory on the basis of resistance to Zionism, hence reviving the deep-rooted dynamics of power struggle mirroring the years of the civil war.⁹² The July 2006 war between Hizbullah and the Israel Defense Forces in the South of Lebanon and the 2007 take-over of West Beirut by Hizbullah⁹³ also actualised memories of the civil war, thus raising the question of whether the war fully ended or not.

Lastly, after examining the research puzzles which I have outlined above, it is crucial to acknowledge the lack of diverse scholarly perspectives on the study of the Lebanese civil war and its aftermath. There is also a shortage of secondary sources ranging from the anti-Syrian understanding of Lebanese nationalism to the pro-Syrian side which challenges the anti-Syrian coalition's representation of the Lebanese "nation," in addition to other viewpoints emanating from class-based, sectarian, and social cleavages that characterise the Lebanese context. This epistemic obstacle has indeed hindered my partial examination of the processes of the politics of memory from 1990 to 2005, for a large number of amassed secondary sources displayed a fierce nationalist and anti-Syrian stance and generally endorsed Rafiq al-Hariri's policies of "economic revival" throughout the 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s until his assassination in 2005, namely Farid El-Khazen's, Rola El-Husseini's, Samir Kassir's, Ghassan Tueni's, or Samir Khalaf's works, and many others. And finally, coupled with the anti-Syrian nationalist bias which traverses a large part of the secondary sources, is the perpetual trope of Lebanese domestic actors being instrumentalised by external actors (notably by Israel and Syria) to cause further bloodshed. Keeping these constraints revolving around the study of the Lebanese civil war into consideration, I hope that further research on the subject emerging from a multitude of perspectives will help palliate this epistemic void in the future

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⁹² Lucia Volk, *Memorials and Martyrs*, 163.

⁹³ Joseph Alagha, "A Tug of War: Hizbullah, Participation, and Contestation in the Lebanese Public Sphere," in Ketaney Khalid Shami, ed., *Publics, Politics and Participation: Locating the Public Sphere in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2009), 473.

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Inhabitants and Citizens

The American Social Contract of Citizenship

Gabriela Romero

I. Introduction

"Friends and Citizens," George Washington declared in his 1796 Farewell Address, "Citizens, by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections... With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles."⁹⁴ Inherent in Washington's speech were three key assumptions: namely, that 1) the United States was composed of citizens, 2) citizenship could be attained either by birth or by naturalization, and 3) all citizens shared a common American identity. However, Washington, like the American Constitution, left the meaning of citizenship undefined. Standards of citizenship have the power to determine political and social membership, establish national identity, and delineate rights. Conversely, they have also historically worked to exclude groups and draw restrictive boundaries of national identity. Thus, within the Constitution's ambiguity, whom did the Founders deem worthy of American citizenship? Additionally, what rights and responsibilities did citizenship confer? Understanding the Founders' conceptions of citizenship in the early years of the American Republic is essential to understanding their vision for American national identity.

The debates of the Constitutional Convention and the 1790 and 1795 Naturalization Acts, as well as the Constitution and the Acts themselves, suggest that the Founders defined citizenship according to a distinctly American social contract. By defining citizenship as a contractual and consensual political status, the Founders distinguished between those who had entered into the contract and those who were passive observers to its terms. The categories of citizens and inhabitants were thus established – while both were legally considered Americans, only the former were endowed with the right to a legitimate political voice by virtue of entering into this social contract. In the Constitution, this distinction manifested itself in the census clause of Article I, Section 2, as well as in the reach and makeup of the

⁹⁴ George Washington, "Farewell Address," (speech, September 19, 1796), The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65539>.

branches of government. The Naturalization Acts of 1790 and 1795 in turn established that the bounds of the social contract rested in republicanism, virtue, and equality. Thus, only those immigrants who proved themselves to be fit parties to the contract's standards could progress from inhabitancy to citizenship. By defining citizenship as a consensual social contract in the Constitution and the Constitutional Convention, and in using the Naturalization Acts to establish the bounds of that contract, the Founders and the initial Congressmen were able to selectively apply the equal rights of citizenship to only those whom they deemed worthy of political membership.

II. Citizenship versus Subjecthood

American citizenship, with its inherently consensual nature, was both a social compact and a rejection of the rigid hierarchies of British subjecthood. British subjecthood, in the words of historian Douglas Bradburn, depended on the idea of one's "perpetual natural allegiance" to the state, in which political status was a permanent trait inherited upon birth.⁹⁵ At the head of the society was a sovereign, who, given the divine right of power, protected his subjects and demanded obedience in return. This relationship between sovereign and subject was mirrored in all other relations, with subjects obeying kings, children obeying fathers, and servants obeying masters. Thus, "each person was inevitably born under, and was bound to obey, the dominion of some superior who in turn owed reciprocal duties to his subjects inferiors."⁹⁶ Importantly, as these hierarchies were "sanctioned by God," they could not be broken without violating the laws of nature.⁹⁷

American citizenship, on the other hand, depended on the consent of the governed. In the words of Thomas Jefferson in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, "Civil government being the sole object of forming societies, its administration must be conducted by common consent."⁹⁸ Importantly, consent dissolved social hierarchies, for, in a truly consensual society, each individual was his own master. Thus, for historian David Ramsey, a contemporary of the American founding, subjecthood and citizenship were fundamentally incompatible states of being: "'Subject is derived from the latin words, *sub* and *jacio*, and means one who is under the power of another; but a citizen is a unit of

⁹⁵ Douglas Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 105.

⁹⁶ Peter H. Shuck and Rogers M. Smith, *Citizenship Without Consent: Illegal Aliens in the American Polity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 16.

⁹⁷ Shuck and Smith, *Citizenship Without Consent: Illegal Aliens in the American Polity*, 16.

⁹⁸ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 91.

a mass of free people, who, collectively, possess sovereignty. Subjects look up to a master, but citizens are so far equal, that none have hereditary rights superior to others."⁹⁹ In other words, citizens, by virtue of their consent, were given a political voice that subjects, with their perpetual allegiances, lacked.

The consensual nature of American citizenship is not explicitly stated in the Constitution – in fact, the Constitution fails to define citizenship itself. Before the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868, the mention of citizenship in the Constitution was confined to defining the reach and makeup of the three branches of government and declaring that “the Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.”¹⁰⁰ The Constitution provides no further definition of “Citizens,” nor does it elaborate on the meaning of “Privileges and Immunities.” Taken literally, the constitutional interpretation of “citizen” hinges on the idea that those who are members of the separate states within the United States are also members of the United States as a whole and are thus guaranteed basic rights, although the full extent of those rights is left unclear.

III. Inhabitants and Citizens

In the absence of constitutional clarity, the greatest hint as to the Founders’ conception of national citizenship is Article I, Section 2, a clause in the Constitution that, when read in the context of the debates of the Constitutional Convention, illuminates the Founders’ vital distinction between citizens -- as active political beings -- and inhabitants -- as enumerated Americans without voting rights. Establishing a uniform method of enumerating the United States population for purposes of representation and taxation, Article I, Section 2 instructs that each state’s population “shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to the Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.”¹⁰¹ In its sweeping use of “free Persons,” Article I, Section Two has broad implications: all “free Persons” residing in the United States are, by virtue of being counted in the census, considered Americans.

The debates of the Constitutional Convention contextualize the clause’s broad language, clarifying that the category of “free Persons” incorporated assumed distinctions between citizens and inhabitants.

⁹⁹ Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 169.

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Const., art. IV, §2, cl. 1.

¹⁰¹ U.S. Const., art. I, §2, cl. 3.

On June 11, 1787, James Wilson proposed that each state's representation and taxation should be determined according "to the whole number of white and other free Citizens and inhabitants of every age, sex, and condition, including those bound to servitude for a term of years and three fifths of all other persons not comprehended in the foregoing description, except Indians not paying taxes."¹⁰² Implied within Wilson and Pinckney's proposed wording for the census clause was the idea that one did not have to be a citizen to be considered an American; free inhabitants, as well as citizens, were counted for purposes of political representation and thus had a role in shaping American governance by virtue of living in the country. While the language of the clause was later simplified, its choice of "free Persons" as a synonym for free Americans comprehensively included both inhabitants and citizens. As Senator Samuel Mitchell remarked in 1804 on the significance of counting both citizens and inhabitants in the census, women specifically were "numbered in the census of inhabitants... Though, therefore, women do not vote, they are nevertheless represented in the national government to their full amount."¹⁰³ While the census counted both inhabitants and citizens as Americans, Mitchell's description of women as "inhabitants" – and thus nonvoting beings – suggests that the two categories of Americans did not share common political rights; inhabitants, according to Mitchell, were American in that they were "part of the enumerated population," but they could not vote.¹⁰⁴

As historian Rosemarie Zagarri notes, women and, more broadly, free inhabitants, were thus represented "in much the same way that the North American British colonists were represented in Parliament" – as "members of the body politic" who nonetheless did not have legitimate political voices.¹⁰⁵ Wilson and Pinckney's

¹⁰² James Madison, "Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention," in *The Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787, which framed the Constitution of the United States of America, reported by James Madison, a delegate from the state of Virginia*, ed. Gaillard Hunt and James Brown Scott (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920), 84-91. June 11

¹⁰³ Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 38.

¹⁰⁴ Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*, 38.

¹⁰⁵ Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*, 38. "Body politic" has traditionally been defined as a collection of individuals who, as a unified group, are members of a single state and are thus subject to its laws. As Zagarri suggests, however, membership in the body politic does not necessarily legitimate the political voices of all those who can claim membership; rather, it serves to distinguish those who enjoy equal political representation and thereby have political identities from those who do not. While women could not vote, their physical presence in the United States ensured that they, like white men, received

distinction between inhabitants and citizens further emphasized that Americans, while united in nationality, nonetheless did not possess shared political statuses. Inhabitants and citizens were distinct categories that divided American identity into two forms of political beings: those without political voice, and those who could directly participate in politics.

IV. Citizens' Inherently Political Role

The Constitution's explicit restriction of political offices to citizens emphasizes that the distinction between inhabitants and citizens rested on discrepancies in their respective political capacities. In Article I, Section 2, the Constitution states, "No Person shall be a representative who shall not have...been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen."¹⁰⁶ Constitutional requirements for senators in Article I, Section 3 are almost identical to those for representatives.¹⁰⁷ Not only does the Constitution restrict political offices to citizens, but its assertion that representatives and senators have to be both citizens of the United States *and* inhabitants of their respective states suggests that inhabitancy and citizenship were separate conditions of political existence. The restriction of the office of the presidency to "a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution" also exemplifies the Constitution's restriction of specific political rights to citizens.¹⁰⁸ That the Founders made election to political offices the exclusive right of citizens demonstrates that citizenship during the early American Republic was an inherently political role, constituting political rights not enjoyed by other classes of Americans.

Federalist Charles Pinckney appealed to the inherently political nature of citizenship in a speech to his fellow delegates in the Constitutional Convention. Speaking in support of a popular mode of government in which the state and federal governments coexisted as outgrowths of the people's will, Pinckney discussed the intended ends of government and the composition of the nation's citizens. According to him, all citizens were either "Professional men," "Commercial men," or "the landed interest, the owners and cultivators of the soil."¹⁰⁹

political representation proportional to their numerical population.

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Const., art. I, §2, cl. 2.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Const., art. I, §3, cl. 3.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Const., art. II, §1, cl. 5.

¹⁰⁹ James Madison, *Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention*, in *The Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787, which framed the Constitution of the United States of America*, reported by James Madison, a delegate from the state of Virginia, ed. Gaillard Hunt and

Each class of citizens thus importantly had private interests in either business or property, and yet the interconnectedness and unity of citizens' common interests ensured that "there is one, but one great and equal body of citizens composing the inhabitants of this Country among whom there are no distinctions of rank, and very few or none of fortune."¹¹⁰ Pinckney envisioned a society committed to the maintenance of the common good, in which no individual deemed his interests to be greater in importance than those of his fellow citizens. However, by restricting citizenship to the three classes of individuals listed above, all of which had private interests in land or business, Pinckney advanced a vision of political participation in which only property owners could access his concept of unified interests and equality in political status. Rather than an exclusionary standard, property, he assured his fellow delegates, was increasingly accessible to the American public. Furthermore, "a very moderate share of [it]," Pinckney claimed, "entitles [a freeman] to the possession of all the honors and privileges the public can bestow."¹¹¹ However, no matter the supposed availability of property, the universal political and social equality Pinckney envisioned depended on limiting citizenship to landed classes. That Pinckney envisioned an exclusionary understanding of citizenship was further illustrated in his subsequent discussion of political rights.

Elaborating further on the three classes of citizens, Pinckney stated that, "however distinct in their pursuits," members of each class of citizenry were nonetheless "individually equal in the political scale."¹¹² In other words, all citizens had equal political rights. As to what those rights were, Pinckney explained that no "member of society... will be excluded by birth, and few by fortune, from voting for proper persons to fill the offices of Government" or from "arriving at the public offices."¹¹³ Pinckney's assumption that citizenship necessitated opportunities for political rights – and that those rights were based on property ownership rather than birth status – is essential to understanding early American conceptions of the equal rights of citizenship. According to him, all men – and, given common law restrictions on female property rights, the use of the male pronoun is important in this instance – had the potential to acquire interests in property or business and therefore become worthy of American citizenship. Pinckney's vision of a citizenship based on property rights

James Brown Scott (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920), 155-166.

¹¹⁰ Madison, *Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention*, 155-166.

¹¹¹ Madison, *Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention*, 156.

¹¹² Madison, *Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention*, 156.

¹¹³ Madison, *Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention*, 156.

did not make the final version of the Constitution. Nonetheless, Pinckney's idea that only certain classes of individuals could earn equal rights of citizenship suggests that citizenship was understood as an exclusive political identity of merit rather than of birth status.

V. Citizenship as a Social Contract

The notion that citizens had qualities – or, in Pinckney's case, property – that distinguished them from inhabitants stemmed from the conceptualization of citizenship as a social contract. In defining citizenship as a fundamentally political role that could only be attained by entering into a social contract, the Founders differentiated between parties to the contract and passive observers to the contract's terms. More specifically, the American social contract was based on the classical republican ideal that government, with its power derived from the consent of the people, had a fundamental duty to promote the common good. In other words, as "Brutus, No. 2" stated, "The common good, therefore, is the end of civil government, and common consent, the foundation on which it is established."¹¹⁴ In consenting to be active members of a government, citizens agreed to support the common good and to prevent "the possessions or enjoyments of one" from being "sacrificed to the views and designs of another."¹¹⁵ The resulting society would "protect and defend everyone who composed it," for, above all, the idea of the common good emphasized that no private interest was superior to another.¹¹⁶ Thus, the promotion of the common good through political means was the fundamental requirement of the American social contract, with the result being that citizens would live in a society in which all interests were weighted equally.

Citizens, as the parties to this social contract, were perceived as those who were best able to protect the common good. As historian Gordon S. Wood writes, "the secret of good government and the protection of popular liberty lay in ensuring that good men – men of character and disinterestedness – wielded power."¹¹⁷ Citizens needed to display characteristics that would allow them to use their inherently political role to promote the common good over their private interests. According to classical republican thought, "disinterestedness" – that is, selfless virtue – was the quality most vital to the maintenance of the common good. *Federalist Paper No. 57* exemplified this republican ideal

¹¹⁴ Brutus, "Brutus No. 2," in *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, ed. Herbert J. Storing (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 372.

¹¹⁵ Brutus, 372.

¹¹⁶ Brutus, 372.

¹¹⁷ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 105.

of "disinterestedness": "The aim of every political constitution is, or ought to be, first to obtain for rulers men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of the society."¹¹⁸ To those like Pinckney and Jefferson, property was an indicator of the disinterestedness necessary for republican citizenship. Without property, one was dependent on others for survival – and, in Jefferson's words, "dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition."¹¹⁹ While neither the Constitution or the Naturalization Acts of the 1790s restricted citizenship to property holders, the fundamental understanding of the purpose of the American social contract remained consistent: to institute a consensual government dependent on virtuous republican citizens. In return, citizens would protect themselves and American inhabitants from the tyranny of private interests. However, without a constitutional definition as to who was best able to carry out this fundamentally political duty, the standards of republican citizenship remained open to interpretation.

Importantly, Americans' conception of citizenship as a social contract must be placed in the context of contemporaneous social contract theories. More specifically, the Founders' belief in the common good can be traced to John Locke's *Second Treatise*. According to Locke, "The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on the bonds of civil society, is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another."¹²⁰ In other words, individuals with "natural liberty" exist in the state of nature and are accountable only to their self-interest. "Civil society," on the other hand, places consenting individuals into "one body politic" governed by common laws.¹²¹ Thus, Locke's social contract, like that of the Founders, was based on individuals consenting to maintain the common good above private interests.

Unlike the Founders, however, Locke did not distinguish between inhabitants and citizens, writing that "every man, that hath any possessions, or enjoyment, of any part of the dominions of any government, doth thereby give his tacit consent" and is thus "obliged

¹¹⁸ Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, *The Federalist Papers: No. 57*, 1788. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed57.asp.

¹¹⁹ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 179.

¹²⁰ John Locke, "Second Treatise of Government," in *Modern Political Thought: Readings from Machiavelli to Nietzsche*, ed. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2008), 312.

¹²¹ Locke, "Second Treatise of Government," 312.

to the obedience to the laws of that government."¹²² While, by virtue of being enumerated Americans, inhabitants were certainly "obligated to the obedience" of American laws, Locke's broad understanding of societal membership did not encompass the Founders' distinctions between inhabitants and citizens. In this regard, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who also theorized government as a social contract, provided a more accurate expression of the Founders' understanding of the exclusive membership of the American social contract. More specifically, Rousseau allowed for the existence of a class of beings who were members of a society but who did not have a political voice. He wrote, "As to the associates [of a republic], they collectively take the name *people*; individually they are called *citizens*, insofar as participants in the sovereign authority, and *subjects*, insofar as they are subjected to the laws of the state."¹²³ Thus, understood under Rousseau's logic, American inhabitants were still subject to the laws of the United States, but they lacked the political voice of citizens.

VI. 1790 and 1795 Naturalization Acts as Clarifying the Bounds of Citizenship

In the absence of constitutional guidelines as to how individuals gained that exclusive political voice, Congress used legislation to outline the bounds of American citizenship. More specifically, the Naturalization Acts of 1790 and 1795 defined the standards of American citizenship – and thus the terms by which one could be a party to the American social contract. Granted with the constitutional prerogative to "establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization," Congress passed the Naturalization Acts of 1790 and 1795 in order to quell foreigners' influence on the perceived homogeneity of American political and social norms.¹²⁴ Lessening the danger of foreign subversion received bipartisan support immediately preceding the ratification of the Constitution and into the early years of the American Republic. As Thomas Jefferson warned in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, foreign immigrants "will infuse into [the nation] their spirit, warp and bias its direction, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass."¹²⁵ Limiting immigration would therefore produce a "more homogeneous, more peaceable, more durable"

¹²² Locke, "Second Treatise of Government," 312.

¹²³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "On the Social Contract," in *Modern Political Thought: Readings from Machiavelli to Nietzsche*, ed. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2008), 433.

¹²⁴ U.S. Const., art. I, §8, cl. 4; Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804*, 129.

¹²⁵ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 91.

government."¹²⁶ John Jay, author of *The Federalist Papers: No. 2*, agreed: "Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country one united people – a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs."¹²⁷ Importantly, both Jefferson and Jay assumed that, in Bradburn's words, "the character of the American nation could not be separated from the character of American citizens."¹²⁸ For them, the naturalization of foreigners – with their foreign notions of government – could fundamentally and irrevocably alter the political, racial, and social composition of American society. The Naturalization Acts stemmed from this widespread aversion to American diversity and intent to ensure American cultural unity by enforcing strict standards of naturalized citizenship. However, while the promotion of American cultural unity retained bipartisan congressional support, the House of Representatives' debates of the acts demonstrated that the very composition of American identity was in contention.

The first naturalization legislation after the ratification of the Constitution, the Naturalization Act of 1790 established racial, residential, and moral qualifications for obtaining citizenship: "any alien, being a free white person, who shall have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States for the term of two years, may be admitted to become a citizen thereof," the act stated.¹²⁹ Before being admitted to citizenship, an alien had to prove "that he [was] a person of good character" and swear under oath "to support the constitution of the United States."¹³⁰ In defining these bounds of naturalized citizenship, Congress asserted its vision of the ideal American citizen: white, moral, and loyal to the United States.

The gendered language of the act also suggests that the first Congress wished to limit American citizenship to males. For example, the act states that an alien must "[make] proof...that he is a person of good character."¹³¹ The use of the male pronoun in the act is especially significant when compared with the gender-neutral language of the U.S. Constitution, which subsequently allowed women to be enumerated Americans.¹³² The act's bias in favor of male citizenship is

¹²⁶ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 91.

¹²⁷ John Jay, *The Federalist Papers: No. 2*, 1787, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed02.asp.

¹²⁸ Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804*, 137.

¹²⁹ 1 Stat. 103

¹³⁰ 1 Stat. 103.

¹³¹ 1 Stat. 103.

¹³² Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*, 38.

further evidenced in its provisions relating to the naturalization of children. While not explicitly excluding women from naturalized citizenship, the act did prevent naturalized women from passing their citizenship to their offspring: "the right of citizenship shall not descend to persons whose fathers have never been resident in the United States."¹³³ Thus, the act was implicitly catered toward male immigrants, suggesting that citizenship was a male ideal.

Debates over the 1790 act centered on the commonly held fear that foreigners retained foreign understandings of the world upon immigrating to the United States. The two-year residency requirement was thus implemented as an attempt to enforce immigrants' assimilation into American culture and, more specifically, republicanism.¹³⁴ To Federalist William L. Smith, of South Carolina, immigrants' "sensations, impregnated with prejudices of education, acquired under monarchical and aristocratic Governments, may deprive them of that zest for pure republicanism...Some kind of probation...is absolutely requisite, to enable them to feel and be sensible of the blessing [of republicanism]."¹³⁵ Only by living in America for a number of years without the privileges of citizenship could an immigrant shed his foreign characteristics and appreciate the duties of republican citizenship. Maryland Republican Michael J. Stone agreed, stating that he "should have no objection to [an immigrant owning property] from the first moment he sets his foot on shore in America; but it appears to me, that we ought to be cautious how we admit emigrants to the other privileges of citizenship."¹³⁶ In other words, citizens could own land without becoming citizens, but they had to become assimilated Americans in order to attain exclusive rights of citizenship. As Representative George Clymer, a Pennsylvanian Federalist, clarified, those "other privileges of citizenship" were fundamentally political in nature: "the higher privileges of citizens, such as electing, or being elected into office, should require a longer term" of residency, he stated.¹³⁷ Thus, in requiring that all immigrants reside in the United States for two years prior to obtaining citizenship, Congress ensured that all citizens

¹³³ Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*, 38.

¹³⁴ Republicanism, as it was understood in the era of the nation's founding, was a political philosophy that emphasized the consent of the governed, concern for the public good, and equality among citizens. It was a rejection of the forced hierarchy of monarchical governments, and it depended on its citizens to, in the words of Gordon S. Wood in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, "suppress their private wants and interests and develop disinterestedness" (104).

¹³⁵ *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., 1156.

¹³⁶ *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., 1157.

¹³⁷ *Annals of Congress*, 1st Cong., 2nd sess., 1160.

adhered to the republican ideals of disinterestedness and consensual governance. Adherence to these ideals would subsequently ensure proper execution of citizens' inherently political role within the American social contract.

The debates of the Naturalization Act of 1795, as well as the act itself, established morality and equality as similarly essential traits to American citizenship. A more restrictive take on naturalization, the Naturalization Act of 1795 retained its predecessor's oath of loyalty and morality provision but increased the residency requirement to five years and added a mandatory renunciation of "all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty."¹³⁸ Congress thus ensured that citizens naturalized through the 1795 act had fully and permanently assimilated into American norms and would remain loyal American citizens. Most notably the act also required that immigrants relinquish their noble titles before becoming citizens.¹³⁹

The House of Representatives exhaustively debated the two major components of the Act – stricter standards of morality and a mandatory renunciation of noble titles – before passing the Naturalization Act of 1795. Regarding morality, Representative John Page, a Virginian Republican, voiced the commonly held opinion that he "thought nothing more desirable than to see good order, public virtue, and true morality, constituting the character of citizens of the United States."¹⁴⁰ To the representatives, a moral citizenry defended against political corruption, for only a virtuous public had, according to Federalist Representative Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts, "the patriotism to pursue the general good."¹⁴¹ Morality presupposed the selfless willingness of the disinterested to honor the public interest over their own ambitions. Representatives debating the 1795 Naturalization Act viewed morality as essential to selfless political integrity.

Importantly, morality, as it was understood in the founding era, encompassed both political disinterestedness – or republican virtue – and principled distinctions between right and wrong. It was thus both a political and a social category that distinguished disinterested citizens and virtuous individuals from those who sought to advance their private interests over the public good and engage in morally repugnant behavior. As George Washington stated in his 1796 Farewell Address, "'Tis substantially true, that virtue or morality is a

¹³⁸ 1 Stat. 414.

¹³⁹ 1 Stat. 414.

¹⁴⁰ *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1004.

¹⁴¹ *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1005.

necessary spring of popular government."¹⁴² Thus, political virtue and social decency were frequently considered synonymous, with a nation's political and social character only as virtuous and moral as its citizenry. More simply, as Wood writes, morality depended on "public virtue" – that is, qualities that would allow individuals to be "willing to sacrifice their private interests for the sake of the community."¹⁴³ Thus, the representatives who advocated for morality as a requirement for naturalized citizenship intended that the Naturalization Act of 1795 grant citizenship only to those who exhibited qualities that would allow them to make such a sacrifice.

While all representatives agreed that a demonstrated commitment to morality should remain a prerequisite for citizenship, they disagreed over the method for ensuring proof of good character. Federalist Representative Samuel Dexter, of Massachusetts, proposed requiring immigrants to procure "the oath of two credible witnesses" testifying to the applicant's strength of character.¹⁴⁴ Sedgwick supported Dexter's proposal: "Shall we hold the benefits of American citizenship so cheap as to invite, nay, almost bribe, the discontented, the ambitious, and the avaricious of every country to accept them?" he asked.¹⁴⁵ Requiring immigrants to supply recommenders would limit citizenship to the truly virtuous. One of the few Republicans to consider voting for Dexter's proposal, Virginian Representative William Giles proposed that the recommenders be "attached to the principles of the Government of the United States," emphasizing that morality was a political quality best evaluated by supporters of American republicanism.¹⁴⁶ However, besides Giles, Republicans largely disagreed with Dexter's proposal, arguing that, while morality remained a vital qualification, recommenders would be difficult to obtain for those of meager means who did not know credible persons.¹⁴⁷ While Dexter's proposal ultimately failed to pass the Republican majority in the House, the retention of republican virtue in the Naturalization Act of 1795 demonstrates that Congress still deemed it essential to citizens' political roles; without morality, selfish citizens would overrun the common good.

The 1795 act introduced equality as another quality necessary for one to be a party to the American social contract. According to Giles, Congress should require immigrants wishing to become citizens

¹⁴² George Washington, "Farewell Address"

¹⁴³ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 104.

¹⁴⁴ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1005.

¹⁴⁵ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1006.

¹⁴⁶ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1022.

¹⁴⁷ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1022.

to renounce inherited titles of nobility in accordance with Article I, Section 9 of the Constitution, which prohibits the United States from granting titles of nobility and officeholders from receiving titles from foreign governments.¹⁴⁸ Giles considered restrictions on noble citizenship a matter of urgency, for "as the law now stands, there is nothing to hinder a foreigner with a title to become an American citizen, and obtain a seat in this House, and hold both his office and his title."¹⁴⁹ Giles' proposal thus stemmed from a fear that titled nobility would, with the obtainment of citizenship, use public offices to serve their monarchical interests and ignore those of the common public. Page supported Giles' proposal, arguing that, "Equality is the basis of good order and society, whereas titles turn everything wrong."¹⁵⁰ Federalists largely opposed the measure, with some arguing that Congress could not constitutionally strip nobles of foreign titles, and others claiming that the American public could be trusted to guard against the potential influence of nobility.¹⁵¹ Conversely, Federalist Representative James Hillhouse believed that Giles' proposal should be made even more restrictive, suggesting that it be modified "as wholly to exclude that class of foreigners...from ever becoming citizens, so far as to elect or be elected to any office."¹⁵² Ultimately, Giles' proposed amendment was included in the final version of the act, which passed the House with overwhelming Republican support. Thus, while most Federalists did not agree with the premise of the amendment, the 1795 Naturalization Act's requirement that all immigrants renounce noble titles in order to become citizens engrained equality in political status as an essential trait to the political nature of citizenship.

Finally, in interpreting the vision of citizenship Congress wished to implement, it is important to view the 1795 Naturalization Act, like its predecessor, as advancing gender and race-specific standards of citizenship. While both Naturalization Acts of the 1790s used gendered language, the male pronoun appeared in the act of 1795 ten times, eight more times than in its 1790 precursor. Most notably, the 1795 act changed its predecessor's requirement for an immigrant to be "a person of good character" to "a man of good moral character,"

¹⁴⁸ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1030; Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1052.

¹⁴⁹ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1052.

¹⁵⁰ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1035.

¹⁵¹ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1035.; Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1031.

¹⁵² Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Constitution*, 1045.

making the preference for male citizenship more explicit.¹⁵³ It also retained the stipulation that mothers could not pass their citizenship status to their children. Finally, as in the case of the 1790 act, the 1795 act restricted naturalized citizenship to "free white person[s]," barring nonwhites from citizenship.¹⁵⁴ Thus, as defined by the Naturalization Acts, citizenship largely remained the exclusive right of white males.

Ultimately, whether debating morality, equality, or republicanism, the House of Representatives' demonstrated understanding of citizenship as seen through the Naturalization Acts depended on immigrants' ability to *gradually*, rather than instantly, earn citizenship. As Sedgwick argued, a lack of sufficient prerequisites for naturalized citizenship would imply that all immigrants, "as soon as they set foot on American ground, [were] qualified to participate in administering the sovereignty of our country."¹⁵⁵ Citizenship had to be earned, and immigrants could only earn it by developing the traits deemed necessary to membership in the American social contract as defined according to Locke and Rousseau's philosophies. Thus, only the moral, republican, and untitled could progress from inhabitants to citizens, for only they could be entrusted with the political rights of citizenship. Importantly, however, the acts also enacted requirements for citizenship based on the innate qualities of gender and race. The Naturalization Acts of 1790 and 1795 ultimately established that, aside from non-whites and women, American citizenship was open to all who could prove their worth within the framework of the distinctly political nature of the American social contract.

VII. Conclusion

The Naturalization Acts of 1790 and 1795 attempted to define what the Constitution left ambiguous: the ideological and practical bounds of American citizenship. Within the acts' requirements of republicanism, morality, and equality, Congress – and, by extension, the Constitution – granted citizens equal political rights. However, to those who did not possess the necessary qualities, citizenship was an unattainable status. Free, non-enslaved American identity was thus segregated into inhabitants and citizens, with only the latter entrusted with active political roles. The former, on the other hand, were American in a numerical sense but had no legitimate political voice – they were, in essence, the subjects of American governance. Ultimately, by conceptualizing citizenship as a social contract, the Founders justified this discrepancy in political rights – for while all

¹⁵³ 1 Stat. 103.; 1 Stat. 414.

¹⁵⁴ 1 Stat. 414.

¹⁵⁵ *Annals of Congress*, 3rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1006.

men were created equal, not all could enter into the American social contract. Not all men – and, more applicably, not all women or non-white persons – were considered worthy of shaping American governance or of laying claim to the label of “American” outside of the context of enumeration; their national identity would have to stem from their physical presence rather than their political agency. To those who could be parties to the social contract, however, citizenship offered a political identity that was earned rather than inherited, consented to rather than forcefully imposed. In the transaction of American citizenship, worthy classes of individuals, in exchange for their adherence to predetermined norms of identity, were granted political power and, ultimately, the ability to shape the trajectory of American governance.

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Grandfather Frost Meets Comrade Stalin

The New Year Holiday as Stalinist Ritual

Anton Ermakov

Introduction

As the Soviet Union was preparing to say farewell to the year 1935 and inaugurate 1936 with a countrywide celebration, newspapers enthusiastically reported on the New Year's festivities. Even the year's final issue of *Pravda*, the Communist Party's official newspaper, dedicated some print space to the winter holidays. In addition to the usual optimistic coverage of the Soviet Union's achievements, the issue featured winter balls, holiday-themed film screenings, and decorated trees that would grace both public spaces and private households.¹⁵⁶ While *Pravda's* stories about collective farm workers going out to the local woods to look for trees and about government-run stores receiving extra shipments of tree decorations bear a stamp of Soviet reality, these preparations would comfortably fit into a Western European or American Christmas tradition. The problem here, of course, is that there was not a single mention of Christmas to be found in the press, since all things religious had long been banished from the Soviet public sphere. Even more surprising then was the fact that the "New Year's tree" that featured so prominently in the press at the end of 1935 was nonexistent just a year before. In fact, to most Soviet citizens, the practice of decorating trees was an attribute of the long banished pre-revolutionary Christmas tradition. The Soviet state's official stance on the "tree question" was made clear in annual anti-Christmas campaigns that became an essential part of a broader project of atheist propaganda and bombarded both adults and children with messages like "only he who is a friend of the priest is willing to decorate a tree."¹⁵⁷

How, then, did the decorated tree come to be reimagined as an essential part of the New Year holiday? And how did New Year become a staple of the Soviet and post-Soviet holiday calendar? What were the reasons behind the Soviet government's decision to rehabilitate Christmas symbols in a secular guise? Previous scholarly work on the Soviet New Year tradition has largely focused on

¹⁵⁶ "Torgovlia elochnymi ukrasheniiami" and "V les za elkami," *Pravda* (Moscow), Dec. 31, 1935.

¹⁵⁷ A. Vvedenskiĭ, "Ne pozvolim," *Chizh*, Dec. 1931, p. 6.

describing it in the context of a larger history of winter holidays in Russia, neglecting the possible political motivations behind the creation of this new holiday. The Russian literary scholar Elena Dushechkina, an expert on the Russian Christmas tradition, touched on this subject by examining the Soviet New Year celebrations as part of an emerging Stalinist cult of happiness.¹⁵⁸ Regrettably, Dushechkina only mentions this in passing and moves on to other issues. In this work, I will expand on the ideas put forth by Dushechkina and other Russian scholars and show that the New Year holiday was not just another bit of pre-revolutionary Russian culture restored to prominence under Stalin but a distinctively Soviet ritual that used familiar symbols in new ways and supported the claims made by Stalinist propaganda. While the cult of happiness was an essential component of New Year festivities, this invented tradition came to embody many other currents in Soviet culture under Stalin, including the growing acceptance of material wealth and a developing personality cult that attempted to establish personal connections both between Stalin and Lenin and between Stalin and individual Soviet citizens.

A Note on Transliteration

I generally observe the Library of Congress transliteration guidelines for Russian in citing Russian names and other words. Following the precedent established by other historians of Russia, however, I make exceptions for names that are more familiar to the readers in other spellings (e.g. Fyodor Dostoevsky instead of Fëdor Dostoevskii). Festive fashions and foreign influences: Soviet New Year’s roots in pre-revolutionary tradition

Though the earliest New Year celebrations in Russia date as far back as the 15th century, the set of traditions and rituals associated with New Year today did not begin to take shape until the reign of Peter the Great. Even after the conversion to the Julian calendar in Russia and the introduction of celebratory practices prescribed by Peter himself, the history of New Year celebrations in Russia was punctuated by periods of neglect and popular rejection. Even so, the tradition became pervasive enough to outlast the most extreme anti-religious campaigns in the Soviet Union, re-emerge during Joseph Stalin’s rule, and survive with minor modifications to the present day. One way to make sense of this mixed record of failures and successes is looking at New Year celebrations in the context of Russian and European history. This

¹⁵⁸ Elena Dushechkina, *Russkaia èlka: Istoriia, mifologiya, literatura* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2012), 238.

examination will also include a thorough discussion of the Russian Christmas tradition, as the creators of Soviet New Year borrowed many symbols and ritualistic practices from pre-revolutionary Christmas celebrations.

While New Year celebrations in Russia remained largely irregular and tied to other traditional winter holidays throughout the 19th century, Christmas traditions underwent drastic changes due to growing German cultural influences and the Russian royal court’s extensive ties with other European dynasties. The formation of new Christmas traditions in Russia during the 19th century warrants a discussion since many of these practices would eventually be incorporated into the newly resurrected New Year holiday and would inform celebratory customs to this day. The most enduring of these influences was the introduction of decorated Christmas trees into Russian households. Russian literary sources from the first decades of the 19th century depict decorated trees as a curious custom common among Germans living in St. Petersburg but largely unknown to their Russian neighbors.¹⁵⁹ This situation began to change after the royal family adopted the custom and unveiled a decorated Christmas tree at the Kremlin on December 24, 1817. This was done at the behest of Grand Princess Alexandra Fedorovna, who hailed from a Prussian noble family and grew up in Berlin. The royal example motivated prominent noble families to include decorated trees in their Christmas parties, creating a precedent that would eventually extend to a larger section of Russian society. Even so, most Russian literary descriptions of winter holidays in the first quarter of the 19th century make no mention of Christmas trees, attesting to the limited influence of this new practice.¹⁶⁰ This changed by the 1840s, when demand for trees and tree decorations rose sharply. There are several possible reasons for this sudden spike of interest. Elena Dushechkina attributes this change in culture to the growing popularity of German culture and literature in the high society of St. Petersburg. In Dushechkina’s telling, the Christmas tree became fashionable in the 1840s both because of the saturation of Russian high culture with all things German and the publication of a Russian translation of E.T.A. Hoffman’s *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* in 1840.¹⁶¹ In her history of Christmas and New Year tree decorations, Alla Sal’nikova acknowledges the influence of European culture but makes a compelling case for the tree’s place in official ideology. According to Sal’nikova, decorating a Christmas tree to bring joy to the children became a part of the cult of familial

¹⁵⁹ Dushechkina, 51-52.

¹⁶⁰ Dushechkina, 54-55.

¹⁶¹ Dushechkina, 58-59.

happiness that was crucial to Nicholas I's ideology of "official nationality."¹⁶² In this period, decorating a tree for the winter holidays began to acquire multiple meanings, simultaneously representing a fashionable custom imported from Europe and a model of the sort of family values Nicholas wanted to cultivate as a bulwark against European revolutionary ideas.

Even though the Christmas tree was initially common only in noble households, fashion and growing commercial availability soon made it a desirable commodity for Russia's growing bourgeoisie. By the late 1840s, St. Petersburg could boast of a well-developed Christmas tree trade that included pre-cut trees, toys, and edible decorations.¹⁶³ Quality trees commanded exorbitant prices, and tree decoration became both a symbol of personal success and a way to upstage social rivals. The association of Christmas trees with wealth and high social standing reflected a global trend toward the secularization and commercialization of the holiday. Just as Russian nobles and merchants were deciding which confectioner's shop could supply them with the finest decorations for their tree, their American counterparts strove to literally outshine each other with extravagant displays of candles.¹⁶⁴ Russia was a particularly fertile ground for the commercialization of Christmas since its adoption of tree decorations and other German holiday traditions had more to do with fashion and political messaging than with religion. For those Russians who had the means to participate in these fashionable activities, a decorated tree was first and foremost a symbol of belonging to high society, while the holiday's religious meaning did not extend much beyond adorning the tree with angel figurines. Both the global tendency of commodifying Christmas and the separation of religious tradition and social expectations in Russia contributed to the ease with which an ostensibly religious holiday turned secular after the October Revolution.

Not all German Christmas symbols took root in Russia. While the tree quickly became fashionable in noble households, the image of Saint Nicholas as a gift-giver proved unpopular with Russians, largely due to the fact that Nicholas had no prior association with the Christmas tradition in Russian culture.¹⁶⁵ Despite brief appearances of

¹⁶² Alla Sal'nikova, *Istoriia elochnoĭ igrushki, ili kak nariazhali sovetskuiu elku* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2012), 32.

¹⁶³ Dushechkina, *Russkaia ėlka*, 61-62.

¹⁶⁴ Penne Restad, *Christmas in America: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 113.

¹⁶⁵ Elena Dushechkina, "Ded Moroz i Snegurochka," *Zhurnal'nyĭ zal*, accessed March 20, 2018. http://magazines.russ.ru/oz/2003/1/2003_01_31.html.

Saint Nicholas and “Old Ruprecht” in 19th-century Christmas texts, the Russian Christmas tradition eventually developed its own gift-giver figure rooted in both folklore and literary canon.¹⁶⁶ This was Ded Moroz, sometimes known to English speakers as Grandfather Frost. The symbol’s early iterations developed independently of the Christmas tradition, with influences from pre-Christian tendencies to personify natural phenomena. The early Ded Moroz was not always a benevolent figure. To Nikolay Nekrasov, he was a personification of a cruel winter, who liked to “adorn corpses with frost” and “freeze the blood in their veins.”¹⁶⁷ In other literary works, he is a neither kind nor evil, but a simple symbol of winter.¹⁶⁸ At the same time, Ded Moroz was also part of an older folkloric tradition that venerated him as a nature spirit and, occasionally, as a spirit of a dead ancestor visiting his descendants on Christmas Eve.¹⁶⁹ The amalgamation of these two traditions answered the need for a relatable gift-giving figure and produced a less intimidating version of Ded Moroz that became a fixture of Russian Christmas celebrations and was eventually adopted by the Soviet New Year tradition. As Ded Moroz became associated with gifts and children’s parties, holiday organizers occasionally doctored his earlier literary appearances, omitting the character’s darker side.¹⁷⁰

After the initial boom of the 1840s, the Christmas tree tradition began to spread from urban centers, becoming commonplace first in provincial towns and, by the 1860s, in rural manors.¹⁷¹ Even as it penetrated new sections of Russian society, the custom had its detractors. One source of opposition was the Russian Orthodox Church, which condemned the decorated tree as both a foreign and a pagan symbol.¹⁷² Meanwhile, most Russian peasants paid little attention to the idea of decorating a tree for Christmas and chose to retain their traditional celebratory rituals. This is not to say that the peasants had no exposure to the new custom, since many of them took part in finding suitable trees and supplying them to the nobles.¹⁷³ Nevertheless, the prohibitive costs of purchasing decorations and the lack of social motivation deterred the Russian peasants from adopting Europeanized celebrations.

¹⁶⁶ Dushechkina.

¹⁶⁷ Nikolai Nekrasov, *Moroz, krasnyĭ nos* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia N. Neklyudova, 1870), 48.

¹⁶⁸ See Ivan Brut, *Noch na novyĭ god* (Tomsk: Tipografia Sibirskoi gazety, 1885), 2.

¹⁶⁹ Dushechkina, “Ded Moroz i Snegurochka.”

¹⁷⁰ Dushechkina.

¹⁷¹ Dushechkina, *Russkaia ělka*, 66-67.

¹⁷² Dushechkina, 105.

¹⁷³ Dushechkina, 105.

In the Russian countryside, Christmas remained a part of a larger season of winter festivities. On Christmas Eve, most Russian peasants combined Christian devotion with older rituals connected to the winter solstice, decorating their households with bunches of hay to mark the coming end of the winter cycle and symbolize fertility.¹⁷⁴ Village youth celebrated in a more disruptive fashion, going door to door and singing carols in exchange for money, sweets, and vodka.¹⁷⁵ The persistent raucousness of village Christmas celebrations caused much discomfort for educators, who often came to the countryside from urban areas and saw the local practices as a corrupting influence on the morality of peasant children. In this context, the Christmas tree became a remedy to the irreverence of traditional celebrations. As one 19th century book for parents and school teachers suggested, "one of the goals for primary schools is to distract students and other village children from those forms of entertainment that corrupt the child's soul."¹⁷⁶ According to the book's author, the process of planning Christmas parties and designing tree decorations would improve the children's aesthetic sensibilities and would "lead them away from the tavern and toward the noble area of enjoying an educated conversation, a useful book, or a work of art."¹⁷⁷ Though the holiday's didactic potential remained largely unrealized due to lack of interest on the part of the peasants, these ideas eventually resurfaced after the revolution, when Soviet teachers found new ways to use the decorated tree to educate and indoctrinate their students.

Whereas most Russian peasants remained indifferent to the latest festive fashions, decorated trees and grand Christmas balls became an important aspect of city life. Since these rituals were commonly associated with the empire's urban elites, they occasionally attracted criticism from the most socially conscious members of the intelligentsia. For instance, Fyodor Dostoevsky used Christmas imagery to expose the alienation and cruelty of urban life in a short story about a little boy who goes searching for food in St. Petersburg's frozen streets on Christmas Eve. The boy sees beautiful toys, happy children dancing around a tree, and a table overflowing with food, but all these pleasures remain out of reach. Once he finally works up the courage to enter one of the brightly lit houses and ask for food, the

¹⁷⁴ S. V. Maksimov, *Nechistaia, nevedomaia i krestnaia sila* (St. Petersburg: Tovarischestvo R. Golike i A. Vil'borg, 1903), 315-316.

¹⁷⁵ Maksimov, 316-317.

¹⁷⁶ I. P. Mordvinov, *Kak ustraiivat' v sem'ie i shkole elki, prazdniki i iubilei?: sbornik prakticheskikh ukazanii I statei dlia rolevogo ispolneniia* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie Peterburgskago Uchebnago Magazina, 1901), 1-2.

¹⁷⁷ Mordvinov, 2.

horrified hosts give him a coin and push him out of the door. Discouraged and scared, the boy freezes to death out in the street and finds himself in heaven, where Christ has a decorated tree for all children who fell victim to poverty and neglect.¹⁷⁸ By contrasting human wickedness with divine benevolence, Dostoyevsky's story highlights the tension between secular and religious elements that characterized the Russian Christmas tradition in the 19th century.

While both supporters and detractors of European Christmas practices tended to focus on its moral implications, the debate around the holiday included other concerns. Yet another group that stood in opposition to the Christmas tree was nature preservation enthusiasts, most of whom came from the social classes most often associated with lavish Christmas parties. This group of writers, journalists, and scientists emphasized the devastation wrought on forests by the constant demand for fresh trees and called for a more conscientious use of Russia's forests or even a complete ban on decorated trees.¹⁷⁹ The tradition's German roots also made it politically vulnerable, and public criticism intensified when Russia entered the First World War.¹⁸⁰ Even as the Christmas tree was criticized in the press and banned from certain official functions, it came to symbolize bittersweet memories of peace to many Russians on the front and at home, prompting a deluge of sentimental depictions of soldiers decorating trees on the frontline and their children eagerly waiting for their fathers to come home and help with the tree.¹⁸¹ The custom had clearly become accepted by many Russians and was there to stay in spite of occasional suppression by the authorities.

The two Russian revolutions of 1917 brought about a plethora of radical changes, but winter holidays were initially left untouched by the Bolsheviks' far-reaching cultural reforms. The new government took a permissive stance toward the religious symbols associated with Christmas, allowing its existence both in the private and the public spheres. Perhaps the most prominent example of this permissiveness was the publication of a collection of children's stories, *The Christmas Tree [Elka]*, in the winter of 1918. This collection was edited by Maxim Gorky and included holiday-themed short stories, fairy tales, and poems, along with lavish illustrations that featured decorated Christmas trees, angels, and the infant Jesus holding a Bethlehem

¹⁷⁸ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Mal'chik u Khrista na elke* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia A. S. Suvorina, 1885).

¹⁷⁹ Dushechkina, *Russkaia elka*, 104.

¹⁸⁰ Dushechkina, 212.

¹⁸¹ Dushechkina, 212.

star.¹⁸² There are also several documented instances of Bolshevik authorities organizing Christmas celebrations complete with decorated trees for the benefit of children whose lives were upended by war, disease, or famine.¹⁸³ At the same time, Christmas celebrations experienced some changes after 1917. The upheaval caused by the revolution and the incredibly destructive civil war that followed in its wake made trees and decorations unavailable to many Russians who could previously afford them.¹⁸⁴ Those who were able to participate in decorating trees, especially in public spaces, sometimes found that Bolshevik ideology gave the holiday a new symbolism. A teacher's diary entry from December 28, 1918 recalls a Christmas party during which her students enjoyed playing around a Christmas tree adorned with exquisite German decorations and then proceeded to ransack it, justifying their actions with the fact that the decorations were expropriated from the bourgeoisie.¹⁸⁵ This anecdote demonstrates that even in the absence of an official Bolshevik stance on Christmas, the holiday was taking on new meanings that were often antithetical to the ideas of prosperity and familial joy it was commonly associated with before the revolution. This peculiar position was complicated even further by the Bolsheviks' introduction of new public rituals, some of which criticized religion while others adopted religious imagery to celebrate Russia's rebirth in the fires of the revolution.¹⁸⁶ The distinction between Christmas and New Year, which was already blurred by the chronological proximity of the two dates, became even less clear in a cultural landscape saturated with countless new rituals promoted by an atheistic government. Russia's transition to the Gregorian calendar gave the public more cause to worry about the future of Christmas, since rumor had it that the Bolsheviks intended to abolish the holiday altogether in the process of changing the calendar.¹⁸⁷ The rumors turned out to be false, but it would not be long before the Bolsheviks abandoned their indifference toward the tree and other Christmas customs in favor of militant anti-religious activism.

The Bolsheviks' early attitudes toward religion were rooted in

¹⁸² *Sbornik "Ėlka"*, ed Aleksandr Benois and M. Gorkii (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo "Parus", 1918), <http://ruslitrev1917.ru/files/attachment/540.pdf>.

¹⁸³ Sal'nikova, *Istoriia elochnoĭ igrushki*, 76-77.

¹⁸⁴ Dushechkina, *Russkaia ėlka*, 214-215.

¹⁸⁵ Sal'nikova, *Istoriia elochnoĭ igrushki*, 77.

¹⁸⁶ See Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 43-44, and James Von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 79-80.

¹⁸⁷ Dushechkina, *Russkaia ėlka*, 218-219.

an assumption that belief in the supernatural would soon die out as long as organized religion was deprived of support from the state.¹⁸⁸ By the early 1920s it was clear that religious belief was not fading away, and the Soviet authorities began to take a more proactive approach to eradicating what they saw as dangerous superstition. This effort included the introduction of new rituals designed to challenge their religious counterparts. One such ritual was the "Communist Youth Christmas," a pageant that involved young costumed Communist activists burning religious symbols.¹⁸⁹ The early 1920s was also a period of a growing distinction between Christmas and New Year celebrations. New Year was no longer an extension of Christmas season but a holiday with an important meaning of its own. A surviving script of a children's opera staged in Vyatka on January 11, 1925 is a telling example of the new ideological significance of New Year. In the opera, the outgoing "old" year is an old man groaning under the weight of many troubles, while the new year is young, energetic, and full of hope of a brighter socialist future.¹⁹⁰ As New Year developed its own distinctive identity, it also retained its connection to Christmas. Another secular New Year celebration in Vyatka began with a lecture titled "Does the proletariat need religion," proving that the organizers of this event were concerned with the enduring popularity of the *other* winter holiday.¹⁹¹

As godless rituals became more elaborate, the Christmas tree's rich symbolism made it a convenient target for Bolshevik propagandists. The decorated tree came to stand for everything that was alien to the socialist way of life, and the Bolsheviks sometimes reimagined the symbol to create striking visual rebuttals. One documented version of a Communist Youth Christmas included its own "Christmas tree," which was a large pine decorated with figurines of Admiral Kolchak and other White Russian leaders pierced with splinters of wood and toy bayonets.¹⁹² There was also a more sustained campaign aimed at eradicating the tree from Soviet culture. Articles, poems and cartoons printed in anti-religious periodicals and children's magazines denounced the tradition as bourgeois, superstitious, and a major cause of deforestation. For instance, an issue

¹⁸⁸ Daniel Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 19.

¹⁸⁹ Dushechkina, *Russkaia ėlka*, 219.

¹⁹⁰ "Kak bol'sheviki zapreschali i razreshali 'Novyi god' v 1920-30-e gg," Peshkom po Viatke, accessed November 19, 2017. <http://vyatkawalks.ru/articles/kak-bolsheviki-zapreshchali-i-razreshali-novyy-god>.

¹⁹¹ "Kak bol'sheviki zapreschali i razreshali 'Novyi god'".

¹⁹² Sal'nikova, *Istoriia elchnoi igrushki*, 82.

of the children's magazine *The Siskin* [*Chizh*] from 1931 includes a poem that attacks Christmas as a holiday that "only a priest's friend would celebrate" and proclaims that good Soviet children would not let forests go to waste.¹⁹³ Ecologically-conscious criticisms were particularly common, harking back to pre-revolutionary activism against mass sales of Christmas trees. In one particularly heart-wrenching story, an old man absentmindedly kills an entire family of birds in the process of cutting a tree for Christmas.¹⁹⁴

In addition to discrediting the Christmas tree in the press, the Soviet government took more immediate steps toward eliminating Christmas altogether. Fears and rumors that accompanied the transition to a new calendar resurfaced as the 15th Party Congress of 1929 instituted a five-day week with every fifth day designated as a day of rest. This system erased Christmas from the official calendar and made it difficult to celebrate anything outside of officially recognized socialist holidays like November 7 and May 1. Unlike Christmas, New Year made the list of official holidays, taking another step to supplant Christmas as the main winter holiday in Russia, though this was by no means an immediate change. In fact, most rituals introduced by the Soviet authorities between the mid-1920s and the early 1930s failed miserably and were quickly forgotten. This was due to a shortage of competent local propagandists and appealing alternatives to religious festivals. The latter factor was particularly damning, since Christmas and other religious holidays often seemed more attractive to the masses than the secular alternatives simply because they included more revelry and fewer heavy-handed lectures.¹⁹⁵

New Year as it is celebrated today in Russia and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union is a product of both a lively Christmas tradition that developed in Russia in the 19th century and a complicated set of attitudes toward ritual in the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin reconciled these distinct legacies and created what was to become the most enduring secular ritual ever created in the Soviet Union. Under Stalin, the Christmas tree was rebranded as a secular symbol and became an essential part of the public sphere in the Soviet Union, appearing both in the Kremlin and in the homes of ordinary Soviet citizens. After a period of intense upheaval, New Year and the New Year tree became integral parts of Stalinist culture, after a decade of anti-religious campaigning and forced secularization.

¹⁹³ A. Vvedenskiĭ, "Ne pozvolim," *Chizh*, no. 12 (1931): 6.

¹⁹⁴ Dushechkina, *Russkaia ėlka*, 232-233.

¹⁹⁵ William B. Husband, "Soviet Atheism and Russian Orthodox Strategies of Resistance, 1917-1932," *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 1 (1998): 103.

From Communist Youth Christmas to Soviet New Year: Atheist propaganda and changing attitudes toward public ritual

The rehabilitation of the decorated tree in 1935 (albeit in the context of a new secular holiday) clearly showed that the long anti-Christmas campaign waged by militant atheists no longer reflected the goals of Soviet leadership. Many Soviet citizens were undoubtedly surprised to see a huge New Year's tree in the Kremlin after more than a decade of vicious attacks on the practice in the anti-religious press, but this turn in the government's stance on the tradition was hardly an anomaly. Rather, it was a product of fundamental changes in cultural policy that brought certain pre-revolutionary values back into favor, asserted central government control of anti-religious activities, and pushed religion out of the public sphere.

In an article on the development of Soviet anti-religious press, Aleksey Metel' refers to the period between 1923 and 1928 as "religious NEP."¹⁹⁶ This is an apt term, since the religious landscape in the Soviet Union at this time was shaped by the same relative permissiveness that the New Economic Policy introduced into many other aspects of Soviet life. This is not to suggest that religious organizations were left to their own devices, however. On the contrary, this was a period of active anti-religious propaganda conducted by burgeoning atheist organizations. A new atheist weekly paper, *The Atheist* [*Bezbozhnik*], was founded with the express aim of exposing the vice, greed and superstition that supposedly lay at the root of all religions. At the same time, a provision in the 1925 constitution guaranteed all citizens "freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda," giving religious organizations the opportunity to engage in public debate with atheist activists.¹⁹⁷ Such debates happened both in rural areas, where they tended to end with humiliating defeat for the poorly trained anti-religious propagandists, and on the national level.¹⁹⁸ One example of the latter is a debate on the portrayal of Christ in modern literature between the People's Commissar for Education, Anatoly Lunacharsky, and the popular cleric Alexander Vvedensky. The debate was subsequently transcribed

¹⁹⁶ Aleksei Metel', "Stanovlenie antireligioznoi periodicheskoi pechati v SSSR (1919-1941 gg.)," *Vestnik Omskogo universiteta*, no. 1 (2013): 43.

¹⁹⁷ "Konstitutsiia (Osnovnoi zakon) Rossiiskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Federativnoi Sovetskoi Respubliki (utverzhdena postanovleniem XII Vserossiiskogo S'ezda Sovetov ot 11 maia 1925 g.)," Sait Konstitutsii Rossiiskoi Federatsii, accessed January 18, 2018. http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1925/red_1925/5508616/chapter/1/#block_11100.

¹⁹⁸ Husband, "Soviet Atheism and Russian Orthodox Strategies of Resistance": 99.

and published by an anti-religious press to be used in training propagandists.¹⁹⁹ Such prominent publicity for religion was a result of an approach espoused by leading Soviet anti-religious activists that emphasized combating religious influences with harsh criticism and debate rather than with administrative measures. Though the emphasis was clearly on persuading the Soviet citizens to turn away from religion rather than forcing them to do so, the criticisms were often crude and outright abusive to the religious. Religious holidays were popular targets, and *Bezbozhnik* conducted yearly anti-Christmas campaigns throughout the 1920s and into the early 1930s. These campaigns included letters from the readers, who usually called for harsher restrictions against Christmas celebrations, and satirical cartoons. The cartoons tended to be especially provocative, injecting caricatures of greedy priests and drunken peasants into traditional Christmas imagery. In a particularly vicious example, Christ emerges out of an artillery shell, surrounded by capitalists and priests.²⁰⁰

If attacking Christmas was one of the largest efforts in anti-religious propaganda, denouncing the Christmas tree was by far the largest component of anti-Christmas campaigns. The practice of decorating trees for Christmas was criticized as both an unnecessary superstition and a major contributor to deforestation. Comrade Naumov, a concerned reader, wrote to *Bezbozhnik* that "Leningrad alone uses at least 10000 trees a year."²⁰¹ The campaign against Christmas trees also highlighted an exception from the practice of avoiding administrative measures. A 1929 issue of the newspaper included reprinted the laws passed by the Moscow Soviet that prohibited citizens from cutting trees in the Moscow region and bringing trees from elsewhere into Moscow.²⁰² Christmas decorations also came under fire, with another reader writing that "selling tree decorations is the same as selling religious icons."²⁰³ *Bezbozhnik* routinely exposed stores that sold decorations by publishing readers' letters, photographs of the offending establishments, and satirical poetry.

Despite the fervor and variety of anti-Christmas propaganda in the atheist press, the campaign failed. The fact that the same condemnations of superstition and stories of local authorities

¹⁹⁹ *Lichnost' Khrista v sovremennoĭ nauke i literature: (ob "Iisuse" Anri Barbiussa): stenogramma disputa A. V. Lunacharskogo s mitropolitom Al. Vvedenskim* (Moscow: Izd-vo akts o-vo "Bezbozhnik", 1928).

²⁰⁰ "Kakoĭ Khristos nuzhen burzhuazii," *Bezbozhnik* (Moscow), Dec. 23, 1928.

²⁰¹ *Bezbozhnik* (Moscow), Nov. 18, 1928.

²⁰² *Bezbozhnik* (Moscow), Dec. 15, 1929.

²⁰³ *Bezbozhnik* (Moscow), Dec. 16, 1928.

neglecting their anti-religious duties continued appearing in *Bezbozhnik* into the 1930s shows that for all its efforts, atheist propaganda failed to affect much of the Soviet population and make Christmas irrelevant. There are two important reasons for the limited reach of this campaign. First is the isolation of anti-religious press from the larger Soviet media space. This problem was apparent even to the high-ranking party functionaries in the Central Committee. In a 1929 circular letter, Lazar Kaganovich, a high-ranking party functionary, pointed out that “anti-religious press is still insignificant, and the general periodical press does not pay enough attention to the tasks of anti-religious propaganda.”²⁰⁴ The lack of communication between *Bezbozhnik* and other Soviet newspapers and magazines detracted from the clarity of the anti-religious messaging that was supposed to reflect the official stance of the Party and the government. On one occasion, just as the editors of *Bezbozhnik* were preparing for their annual anti-Christmas campaign, the main Party newspaper, *Pravda*, published an advertisement for Christmas tree decorations, complete with a picture of a tree.²⁰⁵ *Bezbozhnik* responded with an angry editorial, but this rebuttal was in all likelihood barely noticed.

The other problem that limited the effectiveness of the militant atheist press was internal fragmentation. Since 1923 *Bezbozhnik* was accompanied by an illustrated magazine, *The Atheist at the Workbench* [*Bezbozhnik u stanka*]. The magazine proved more radical than the newspaper, publishing grotesque caricatures of various sacred figures, including an image of Jesus as a moonshiner.²⁰⁶ In general, *Bezbozhnik u stanka* depicted religious figures much more frequently and in a more provocative fashion.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, the magazine’s editor criticized the state of anti-religious propaganda in the USSR, complaining of excessive reliance on administrative measures and imitations of religious rituals in *Bezbozhnik*.²⁰⁸ Four days later, Yemelyan Yaroslavsky, the editor of *Bezbozhnik*, responded with a scathing criticism of *Bezbozhnik u stanka* and its tactless treatment of religiosity.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ “Iz tsirkuliarnogo pis’ma TsK VKP(b) ‘O merakh po usileniiu antireligioznoi raboty’ (Utverzhdeno TsK VKP(b) 24 ianvaria 1929 g.),” *Al’manakh “Rossiia. XX vek,”* accessed January 20, 2018.

<http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/inside/almanah-doc/1005110>.

²⁰⁵ *Pravda* (Moscow), Oct. 27, 1928.

²⁰⁶ *Bezbozhnik u stanka* (Moscow), No. 19, 1929.

²⁰⁷ See Alekseĭ Metel’, “Stanovlenie antireligioznoi periodicheskoi pečati v SSSR (1919-1941 gg.)” for a quantitative comparison of the two.

²⁰⁸ M.M. Kostelovskaia, “Ob oshibkakh antireligioznoi propagandy,” *Pravda* (Moscow), Jan. 25, 1925.

²⁰⁹ Em. M. Iaroslavskii, “O methodakh antireligioznoi propagandy. (Vynuzhdennyĭ otvet tov. Kostelovskoi),” *Pravda* (Moscow), Jan. 29, 1925.

Bezbozhnik u stanka would eventually lose this battle and merge with the newspaper, but at the peak of its activity the Soviet anti-religious press was sharply divided.

Stalin's first Five Year Plan introduced major changes to all aspects of Soviet life, and anti-religious campaigns were no exception. Rather than relying on atheist propaganda alone, the state now used a wide range of administrative measures, including church closures and arrests of members of the clergy. At the same time, the Soviet government took steps to curtail the debate around religious affairs and erase religion from all public spaces. Efforts at centralization that would soon dominate all aspects of anti-religious policy began to develop in the plan's first year, 1928, but 1929 was the watershed moment for the history of Christmas in the USSR. A revision of the 1925 constitution deleted the "religious" from "freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda," putting an end to public debates on religion and further restricting religious institutions' access to public forums.²¹⁰ 1929 was also the last year Christmas appeared as an official holiday on Soviet calendars, but most Soviet citizens would not enjoy the day off. While December 25 nominally remained a holiday, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions declared it "Industrialization Day" and called for all Soviet workers to come to work and donate their wages to the Soviet industrialization effort.²¹¹ Earlier in 1929, the country made a transition to a new calendar that instituted a five-day week and left no room for religious holidays. After this last faint attempt at celebration, the church and its holidays no longer had any official place in Soviet society.

Along with removing the church from the public eye, the Soviet government mobilized local activists to suppress most forms of organized religious activity. This push was initiated by a circular letter issued in 1929 by the Central Committee of the Communist party. In addition to calling for better anti-religious education and propaganda, the letter instructed local party leaders to organize agricultural communes, schools, and other secular institutions in former churches and monasteries.²¹² It also emphasized that "under no circumstances

²¹⁰ "Konstitutsiia (Osnovnoĭ zakon) Rossiĭskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Federativnoi Sovetskoi Respubliki (utverzhdena postanovleniem XII Vserossiĭskogo S'ezda Sovetov ot 11 maia 1925 g.) s izmeneniami i dopolneniami ot: 18 noiabria 1926 g., 15 apreliia 1927 g., 18 maia 1929g.," Saĭt Konstitutsii Rossiĭskoi Federatsii, accessed January 20, 2018. http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1925/red_1925/5508614/chapter/1/#block_11100.

²¹¹ "V mesto Rozhdestva – den' industrializatsii," *Bezbozhnik* (Moscow), Dec. 22, 1929.

²¹² "Iz tsirkuliarnogo pis'ma TsK VKP(b) 'O merakh po usileniiu antireligioznoi raboty'," accessed March 30, 2018.

<http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/inside/almanah-doc/1005110>.

should religious organizations be allowed to exist in those spaces."²¹³ This directive prompted local authorities across the USSR to order new church closures and further restrict access to churches that had been officially closed but were still being used for religious ceremonies. One prominent example of the latter tactic was the closure of the Uspensky Cathedral at the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra. The monastery itself closed its doors in 1920, and most of its churches and other buildings were confiscated by the state. Nevertheless, the cathedral remained in the hands of the faithful, who were allowed to manage it and carry out religious services. This changed on December 6, 1930, when the cathedral was closed down by order of the government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, with a complete ban on all religious activities on the former monastery's territory.²¹⁴ Though such punitive measures were meted out by the authorities, the activists justified them with rhetoric of popular mobilization. For example, the decision to close the Uspensky Cathedral was presented as a response to the demands of local workers enraged by a criminal case involving a deacon who was accused of murdering his mistress.²¹⁵ Atheist propaganda from this period reflected the narrative of popular anti-religious mobilization. An anti-religious song from 1930 expresses this sentiment from the viewpoint of all Soviet people, claiming: "It's time for us to take the bells from the churches. We don't need the chiming of the bells, the scent of incense, or the cross. The priests have fooled us long enough."²¹⁶

The act of reinventing the Christmas tree as a Soviet secular symbol was underwhelming compared to the vicious attacks on religion that preceded it. More than a decade of aggressive anti-Christmas propaganda was overshadowed by a single short article that appeared on the third page of *Pravda* on 28 December, 1935. This article was penned by Pavel Postyshev, a prominent Communist ideologue and member of Stalin's inner circle. Postyshev's article was a careful repudiation of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, condemning "left-leaning deviators" (*zagibschiki*) for depriving Soviet children of the joy of decorating a tree.²¹⁷ At the same time, it was not at all an attempt to rehabilitate Christmas or roll back anti-religious

²¹³ 'O merakh'.

²¹⁴ "Vospominaniia N. V. Linki 'Vseukrainskiï muzeïnyi gorodok,'" Al'manakh "Rossiia. XX vek," accessed March 30, 2018.

<http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/inside/almanah-doc/1021762>.

²¹⁵ Linki.

²¹⁶ *Bezbozhnye pesni: Sbornik No. 1*, eds. M. Krasev and N. Roslavets (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Bezbozhnik", 1930), 6.

²¹⁷ P. Postyshev, "Davaïte organizuem k novomu godu detiam khoroshuiu êlku," *Pravda* (Moscow), Dec. 28, 1935.

policy. In fact, Postyshev made no mention of Christmas and claimed that "in pre-revolutionary times the bourgeoisie [...] always organized a tree for their children for New Year," effectively denying the existence of a holiday the Soviet government had worked so hard to suppress.²¹⁸ As far as Soviet propagandists were concerned, Christmas was gone for good, supplanted by a new yet strangely familiar holiday. Now every Soviet child was entitled to a proper New Year's celebration, with a tree in every school, theater, and collective farm in the Soviet Union.²¹⁹ Though the announcement was presented matter-of-factly, between columns on the growth of the Soviet merchant fleet and the visit of an Armenian-American delegation to the USSR, the rehabilitation of the Christmas tree had clearly met Stalin's approval and was in the works before Postyshev's piece was published. Just three days after the article's publication, the Soviet Union witnessed its first New Year celebration in the Kremlin, complete with an enormous tree, along with smaller events across the country.²²⁰ The holiday's organizers clearly wanted to create an impression that the festivities that took place in 1935 were not organized less than a week prior to the fact but were in fact both familiar and expected. Press coverage of the holiday expressed this idea with indignant articles like the one that appeared in the same issue with Postyshev's piece, lamenting the shortages of trees and decorations at Moscow's stores due to some of the merchants "obeying some unknown rule."²²¹ This "unknown rule" was, of course, the Soviet government's own campaign against the sale of trees and other Christmas attributes.

The transition from a society where public clashes between religion and atheism produced failed secular rituals to one where the government sought to suppress or control every aspect of religious life did not make the Soviet populace significantly less religious. The failed census of 1937, among its many unflattering findings, showed that 56.7% of respondents identified as religious, and the real number was likely much higher once we account for the fears and anxieties that accompanied the census.²²² Both vigorous anti-religious propaganda and administrative repression yielded very modest gains, but the development of New Year as we know it today proved that

²¹⁸ Postyshev.

²¹⁹ Postyshev.

²²⁰ "Piat' minut istorii: Sovietskii Novogodnii Soyuz," *Istoriia Rossii v fotografiakh*, accessed January 20, 2017. <https://russianphoto.ru/exhibitions/352/#1>.

²²¹ "Prodazha elok na rynkakh Moskvyy," *Pravda* (Moscow), Dec. 28, 1935.

²²² Valentina Zhiromskaia, "Otnoshenie naseleniia k religii: po materialam perepisi 1937 goda," in *Trudy Instituta rossiiskoi istorii RAN. 1997-1998 gg. Vyp. 2*, ed. A.N. Sakharov (Moscow: IRI RAN, 2000), 330.

Soviet culture was capable of bypassing religious identities to a certain extent and creating a secular holiday that would take root throughout the entire Soviet Union and outlast the system that produced it. This was largely due to the holiday's appropriation of familiar Christmas symbols in a positive context, which contrasted sharply with older Soviet rituals that tended to make a mockery of religious symbols.

While it is tempting to see the Soviet New Year as a kind of secular "anti-Christmas," evidence points in a different direction. In addition to the fact that Postyshev's editorial completely ignored the "New Year" tree's religious roots, there is also the matter of New Year as a distinct Soviet holiday that existed without a religious context. Even in *Bezbozhnik* the pieces honoring the New Year do not mention religion. Instead, they focus on various contemporary issues of importance. For instance, an issue from 1927 contains a "New Year fairy tale" in which an old man comes to a village with a briefcase full of wire and brings electricity with him.²²³ In an issue from 1928, a poet calls for "machines, machines, and again machines" and wants to "hear the upbeat hum of new machinery in the new year."²²⁴ The apparent secular nature of the holiday distinguishes it from several attempts at an anti-religious alternative to Christmas. Many of these "Communist Youth Christmases" also feature on the pages of *Bezbozhnik*. In one case, there was even a tree decorated with anti-religious books and grotesque figures of saints instead of the usual candy and toys.²²⁵ The post-1935 iteration of Soviet New Year has surface-level similarities to such rituals, but the total absence of religious context in its conception and the celebratory practice that came to be associated with it are proof that it has much more in common with the holiday that existed outside of the anti-religious campaign. Rather than another attempt to deal a final blow to Christmas, the New Year tree was a successful appropriation of a readymade festive symbol. By stripping the tree of its religious meaning and incorporating it into an existing holiday, the Soviet government achieved two goals: it deprived the church of the publicity that inevitably followed anti-Christmas campaigns and finally succeeded in creating a secular holiday that was an appealing alternative to its religious counterparts.

Reconstructed history, invented tradition: New Year in Stalinist culture

Though the incorporation of symbols and rituals associated

²²³ Ia. Apushkin, "Novogodniaia skazka," *Bezbozhnik* (Moscow), Jan. 2, 1927.

²²⁴ Ia. Galitsky, "Novogodnee privetstvie," *Bezbozhnik* (Moscow), Jan. 1, 1928.

²²⁵ Byvalyĭ, "Po komsomol'ski," *Bezbozhnik* (Moscow), Dec. 25, 1923.

with Christmas into the Soviet New Year tradition was sudden and probably unexpected, the new holiday quickly spread throughout the USSR and took its place among the most prominent Soviet festivals. This was due in no small part to its roots in pre-revolutionary Russia. The holiday's emphasis on joy and material abundance at the expense of didactic messages resonated with the values adopted by the Soviet society in the late 1930s after a period of intense social and cultural upheaval. Old symbols like the decorated tree and Ded Moroz lent the holiday a slight tinge of nostalgia, while the practice of adorning the trees with red stars and other revolutionary symbols clearly indicated that the festivities were still ideologically sound at the core. In addition to reflecting the major tenets of Stalin's cultural reforms, New Year celebrations occupied a prominent position in the Stalin personality cult, a phenomenon that will be discussed at length a bit later.

One way to understand the New Year's appeal to both the Soviet government and the society at large is to consider the holiday as part of a cult of happiness that developed under Stalin. While promises of happiness featured prominently in the Russian revolutionary movement, the Stalinist idea of happiness was different from its predecessors in that it was often expressed in terms of tangible material wealth. The new emphasis on prosperity is evident in Stalin's oft-quoted speech at the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites, where he not only said that "life has become more joyous" but also admonished those who viewed socialism as a system where everyone is equally poor and claimed that "socialism can only win on the basis of an abundance of foodstuffs and various consumer goods, on the basis of a prosperous and cultured life for all members of society."²²⁶ Once the excesses of the Cultural Revolution had been reined in, prosperity and culture became linked. In the words of Jukka Gronow, "the Soviet citizen was meant to be and look happy, to dress better and to enjoy life - especially in the sphere of material culture."²²⁷ The new expectation of a good Soviet socialist was to forget the revolutionary ascetic ideal and showcase the achievements of the Soviet economy by living in a manner that was previously accessible only to the nobility and the bourgeoisie. In his article in defense of the New Year tree, Postyshev echoes this imperative to emulate the bourgeoisie when he tells of workers' children jealously looking through the window as rich children rejoice around a glistening tree.²²⁸

²²⁶ "Rech' tovarischa Stalina na Pervom Vsesoiuznom soveschaniï stakhanovtsev," *Pravda* (Moscow), Nov. 22, 1935.

²²⁷ Jukka Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Berg, 2003), 9.

²²⁸ Postyshev, "Davaïte organizuem k novomu godu detiam khoroshuiu ãlku," *Pravda*.

As an old bourgeois custom purged of its religious significance, the New Year's tree was a perfect symbol for the campaign to catch up to Russia's pre-revolutionary bourgeoisie in both wealth and culture.

Persistent shortages of consumer goods made the standard of living enjoyed by the bourgeoisie out of reach for most Soviet citizens, but holidays like New Year allowed the masses to experience a bit of the good life that was otherwise inaccessible. Consumer goods that would be absent from stores throughout the year became available before public holidays. The most famous example of this is Soviet champagne, one of Stalin's biggest prestige projects, but the same was true for caviar and chocolate.²²⁹ Champagne in particular became firmly associated with New Year festivities by the end of Stalin's rule. In a 1952 poster, a bottle of Soviet champagne appears alongside a decorated tree and a chocolate bar, symbolizing the new "good life" Soviet citizens were encouraged to seek.²³⁰ This appreciation for luxury and certain pre-revolutionary customs is equally apparent from the visual style of public New Year celebrations. A picture from a New Year's children's ball held in 1937 at the House of the Soviets in Moscow shows happy children clad in white dresses and sailor's suits dancing near a beautiful tree. This would seem like a scene straight out of tsarist Russia, if not for the large portrait of Stalin in the background.²³¹ This is not to say, however, that the Stalinist attitude to luxury simply copied pre-revolutionary ideas. Despite the sudden resurgence of the taste for the traditional and the luxurious among Soviet citizens, luxury still occupied a precarious position in Soviet culture. As Sheila Fitzpatrick wrote in *The Cultural Front*, "it was by no means out of bounds to attack individual officeholders for having developed 'aristocratic' pretensions and a taste for luxury."²³²

Changes in public attitudes toward material wealth were only one facet of Stalinist cultural reform. Another important feature was the rehabilitation of select traditions from imperial Russia under a new guise. The New Year holiday, with its mixture of pre-revolutionary traditions, folkloric influences, and new celebratory practices, is a prime example of this phenomenon. Even though New Year emulated many traditions and symbols associated with Christmas, the new holiday was to be entirely Soviet in nature and its creators took care to obscure its former social and religious contexts. If Soviet New Year were to be a separate holiday with its own traditions, it needed to have

²²⁹ Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 33.

²³⁰ Iu. Tseïrov, *S Novym godom, dorogie tovarischi!*, 1952.

²³¹ Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 35.

²³² Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 230.

a history that extended beyond Postyshev's article from 1935. Postyshev was the first to realize this, establishing an imagined pre-revolutionary past for the holiday with reference to a supposed pre-revolutionary tradition of decorating "New Year trees".²³³ Just three years after Postyshev's letter, *The Teacher's Paper* [*Uchitel'skaya gazeta*] published a short article on preparations for the New Year that mentioned the "traditional tree" twice.²³⁴ Ded Moroz returned to the holiday canon in a similar fashion, with no mention of his past association with Christmas. Soviet children's writers added to the folkloric tradition by inventing a new role for the fairy tale Snow Maiden (*Snegurochka*). Though *Snegurochka* had appeared as part of Christmas celebrations before the revolution, her first recorded appearance alongside Ded Moroz was at the Kremlin New Year celebration in 1937.²³⁵ After that appearance, *Snegurochka* was no longer a generic symbol of winter but an essential part of a distinctively Soviet New Year tradition. This intricate combination of inventions, modifications, and omissions gave the holiday a history and a set of symbols separate from its roots in the Christmas tradition.

One feature that distinguished New Year from Christmas was the Soviet government's approach to the scale of the holiday. If Christmas had an ambiguous place in imperial Russian culture, with frequent criticism from the Russian Orthodox church and an appeal limited mostly to the affluent and the educated, New Year was intended to be a mass holiday to be enjoyed by all Soviet citizens. To that end, Soviet authorities made an effort to organize New Year celebrations all over the USSR. In addition to the logistical problems inevitable in a project that intended to reach the country's farthest corners, this campaign encountered serious cultural obstacles. Party functionaries made an attempt to account for cultural differences and tailor the New Year experience to the local tastes of the USSR's many ethnicities by ordering the development of "ethnic" decorations like dolls dressed in traditional costumes.²³⁶ Nevertheless, the total lack of exposure to Christmas tradition and the influence of religious norms (particularly in the majority Muslim parts of the Soviet Union) often confined the influence of New Year to mandatory public displays.²³⁷

The ideological significance of the New Year holiday did not stop at presenting it as a socially conscious alternative to Christmas.

²³³ Postyshev, "Davaite organizuem k novomu godu detiam khoroshuiu elku," *Pravda*.

²³⁴ "Novogodniaia elka," *Uchitel'skaia gazeta*, Dec. 25, 1938.

²³⁵ Elena Dushechkina, "Ded Moroz i Snegurochka," *Zhurnal'nyi zal*, accessed Feb. 18, 2018, http://magazines.russ.ru/oz/2003/1/2003_01_31.html#ftn17.

²³⁶ Sal'nikova, *Istoriia elochnoi igrushki*, 112-113.

²³⁷ Sal'nikova, 112-113.

Though New Year lacked the heavy ideological content typical for other Soviet holidays, save for its distinctively Stalinist emphasis on childhood and happiness, the holiday's rich imagery and popular appeal made it a useful tool for Soviet propagandists. Soviet New Year celebrations and the accompanying images and written works tended to reflect the larger political concerns of the time. For instance, a "New Year drinking song" published in *Krokodil* in 1937 commented on the rising status of the intelligentsia after the Cultural Revolution by toasting philosophers and writers along with milkmaids, polar explorers, and "our dear leaders."²³⁸ The holiday's emphasis on childhood meant that this careful attention to current affairs was extended to younger audiences as well. In a particularly creative example from the children's magazine *Murzilka*, the titular character invents a collapsible New Year's tree for the Soviet polar explorers so that they can celebrate in style at the North Pole.²³⁹

Another feature that distinguished New Year from other Soviet rituals was its characteristic mixing of the ideological and the sentimental. Children featured prominently in New Year celebrations and related texts, as in the case of a poem about an aircrew bringing a New Year's tree to Nenets children in a remote town in the Far North.²⁴⁰ Though the poem references several important Stalinist projects like the exploration of the Soviet Far North and the heroism of Soviet aviators, it offers the children's perspective rather than the bombastic slogans that tended to appear in the press. The intermingling of the personal with the political in the New Year tradition is particularly visible in texts and images created during the Second World War. As the entire Soviet society mobilized for the war, New Year imagery served as both an expression of patriotism and a way for soldiers to connect with the families they left behind. There was also a didactic element to the holiday, and some of the heart-warming New Year's stories featured in magazines and children's books encouraged Soviet children to be selfless and support the war effort. In one short story, a group of children whose fathers are off at the front decide to contribute to the war by donating all their tree decorations to children orphaned by the war and decorating their own tree with handmade paper stars, one for each German tank, plane, or transport destroyed by their fathers.²⁴¹ Additionally, Ded Moroz and other characters associated with New Year were enlisted in service to

²³⁸ *Krokodil*, no. 36-37 (December 1937): 2.

²³⁹ *Murzilka*, December 1937.

²⁴⁰ Z. Aleksandrova, "Novyi god," in *Novyi god: sbornik stikhov i rasskazov*, ed. L. Kon (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo detskoj literatury, 1939), 3-5.

²⁴¹ "Obschie zvězdy," *Krokodil*, no. 47-48 (1944): 15.

the Soviet war effort. Ded Moroz in particular became essential to wartime propaganda due to his association with the proverbial "General Winter," obstructing the German advance with snowstorms and sometimes literally fighting alongside Soviet soldiers.²⁴²

In addition to its emphasis on the sentimental and its rich folkloric tradition, the New Year holiday featured a distinctive material culture that lent itself to propagandistic uses. Tree decorations became ever more elaborate in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and the Soviet state inherited a well-developed tradition of toy-making. Though imperial officials had failed to understand the propagandistic potential of these decorations, their counterparts in the USSR saw this potential soon after the New Year tree's incorporation into the Soviet cultural landscape. Tree ornaments were a canvas that could be shaped into all sorts of visually striking images, be they angels and snowflakes or heroic Red cavalymen and polar explorers. Production directives from the 1930s showcase the variety of messages that Soviet ideologues intended to convey via decorations. A 1938 production plan called for manufacturers in the Leningrad area to make tree decorations on a variety of themes, including physical culture, Red Army, life at the collective farm, ethnography, and industrialization.²⁴³ These newly Sovietized symbols could then appear in Soviet households, extending the state's cultural dominion into the private lives of its citizens and reminding them that all culture in the USSR was essentially political.

Soviet propagandists might have envisioned an industry that churned out decorations on demand to commemorate current events, but the reality was radically different. Well-established as it was, the tree decoration industry relied almost entirely on small workshops and artisans' work rather than industrial production. There were attempts to change this situation and involve large industries. The magazine *The Toy [Igrushka]* published extensive suggestions on the ways major Soviet industries could use their waste and byproducts to make decorations. For example the People's Commissariat of the Food Industry could use its resources to make candles, tree decorations made out of soap, and edible gifts.²⁴⁴ These efforts came to naught due to institutional indifference. As *Igrushka* reported in 1937, "the overwhelming majority of people's commissariats [...] stubbornly refuse to work with tree decorations, and, if they are forced to

²⁴² I. Nekhoda, "Moei dochke," in *Novyi God: sbornik skazok, rasskazov, stikhov i samodelok*, ed. E. Emden (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo detskoï lit-ry NKP RSFSR, 1943), 35.

²⁴³ A. Braun-Gerbo, "Assortiment ëlochnykh ukrasheniï (po Leningradu)," *Igrushka*, no. 7 (1938): 20.

²⁴⁴ "O proizvodstve ëlochnykh ukrasheniï," *Igrushka*, no. 7 (1936).

manufacture decorations, they see it only as an inevitable evil."²⁴⁵ Even without this lack of enthusiasm, getting resources for the production of tree decorations was a challenge due to the Soviet economy's emphasis on heavy industry at the expense of consumer goods. These problems led to chronic shortages of decorations, especially outside of large cities. These, in turn, prompted complaints from local officials who were expected to organize New Year celebrations.²⁴⁶ The failures clearly stemmed from resource shortages and a lack of trained specialists in the industry, but the blame often fell on "enemies of the people" who misused materials and kept Stakhanovites from improving production efficiency in the tree decoration industry.²⁴⁷

Since large-scale production of tree decorations never became a reality and many Soviet citizens found themselves unable to procure new items, private celebrations often included homemade decorations and store-bought decorations left over from pre-revolutionary times.²⁴⁸ This inevitable mixing of styles and of the ideologically proper with the impermissible limited the state's ability to exert control over the private aspect of the holiday. This was also an area where the authorities showed some flexibility. In the absence of factory-made options, there were many publications that showed Soviet citizens how to make their own decorations with paper, cardboard, or tinfoil. Some of these reflected the trend of injecting ideology into material culture, while others contained instructions for innocuous images like snowflakes or assorted fruit.²⁴⁹ In the end, what would appear on a family's New Year tree was a matter of personal preferences and availability. This meant that imposing cultural norms through the New Year ritual inevitably involved a certain amount of negotiation between the state and the individual. The fact that Soviet industry was often unable to supply quality goods and that ordinary citizens had other options weakened the propagandistic potential of New Year's tree decorations and ensured that what could have been a powerful instrument of cultural policy remained underutilized.

While the New Year holiday played many roles in Stalin's USSR, we can attempt to understand its overall significance by examining its role as a public ritual in a totalitarian society. In her comprehensive anthropological study of Soviet rituals, Christel Lane

²⁴⁵ "Igrushku – na obschestvennyĭ prosmotr," *Igrushka*, no. 3 (1937): 3.

²⁴⁶ See P. Lavrishev's letter to the editor in *Uchitel'skaia gazeta*, Dec. 25, 1938.

²⁴⁷ Sal'nikova, *Istoriia ělochnoi igrushki*, 110.

²⁴⁸ Sal'nikova, 96.

²⁴⁹ See O. Gur'ian, "Babushka-zabavushka," in *Novyiĭ God: sbornik skazok, rasskazov, stikhov i samodelok*, ed. E. Emden (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo detskoĭ lit-ry NKP RSFSR, 1943), 134-140.

claims that ritual in Soviet society is "regarded by political elites as one means to gain acceptance for their definitions of crucial social relations and must therefore be viewed as an instrument of cultural revolution or, to indicate less spectacular cultural changes, of cultural management."²⁵⁰ Though Lane did her fieldwork in the 1970s, this characterization applies to the 1930s just as well. The ritualistic practices and the material culture associated with the New Year holiday reflected the changes in the Soviet government's approach to cultural policy and class attitudes, endorsing values that were previously considered counter-revolutionary. Additionally, it came to embody a variety of other cultural changes brought on by industrialization, militarization, and a world war. Finally, it is an example of a successful cultural management project where the authorities gave some agency to the masses and created a holiday that both appealed to ordinary Soviet citizens and reflected the ideological objectives of the state. New Year succeeded where other attempts at creating new socialist rituals had failed, proving that the process of constructing a successful public ritual requires a dialogue between the creators of the ritual and the intended audience.

Holidays with our beloved leaders: New Year and the cults of Lenin and Stalin

The role of the leader cult in the development of the New Year holiday deserves a separate examination due to its persistence despite the challenges that derailed many other Soviet attempts at mass propaganda. The Soviet version of the leader cult began as a largely disorganized veneration of Lenin during his lifetime, grew and gained institutional support after his death, and was eventually incorporated into an elaborate cult of Stalin. By the late 1930s, there was hardly an aspect of Soviet culture left untouched by Stalin's visage or his speeches and writings. Nevertheless, the personality cult had its share of challenges. Most notably, it failed as a way to express the legitimacy of the Soviet state through the personality of one exceptional individual, or, in the words of David Brandenberger, a "mechanism for political mobilization."²⁵¹ In his study of Soviet indoctrination efforts, Brandenberger examines the failed attempt to produce an official biography of Stalin and concludes that Stalin could not

²⁵⁰ Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society: The Soviet Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 27.

²⁵¹ David Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin, 1927-1941* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 52.

"personify the monolithic nature of the party and experience personal trials and tribulations along the way."²⁵² By its nature, the personality cult proved unable to fuse the biography of the leader with the aspirations of the entire state. Despite this serious failure, the cult succeeded spectacularly at establishing an intimate connection between Stalin and millions of Soviet citizens. Amplified by relentless propaganda in the press and many other facets of Soviet culture, Stalin's personality cult elicited ecstatic responses even from his victims. In one striking example, Ol'ga Berggol'ts, a poet who lost her first husband to the purges and suffered a miscarriage after being arrested for "associating with an enemy of the people," responded to Stalin's death with a poem that extolled him as "our light-bringing banner, our glory, our soul."²⁵³

The image of Stalin as a father figure and role model was a mainstay of Soviet culture, but the New Year holiday quickly became an occasion for some of the most fervent displays of the Soviet people's personal relationship with Stalin. This had much to do with the holiday's chief participants: Soviet children. Both party officials and professional educators were in agreement that children were the embodiment of the Soviet state's future and its continued revolutionary vigor and paid careful attention to their upbringing.²⁵⁴ In this context, New Year was not just another holiday but a fusion of entertainment and lessons in ideology. As such, it was an example of the subordination of the children's enthusiasm to the state's educational agenda described in Lisa Kirschenbaum's *Small Comrades*.²⁵⁵ The didactic component of the holiday was reinforced by a plethora of instructional materials on the best ways to organize New Year celebrations published soon after the first official celebration took place in 1935. These texts provided guidance to teachers and tended to combine practical advice with ideologically charged content. In one example from 1938, fire prevention tips and recipes for chemical solutions that could be used to treat tree decorations feature next to festive songs with lyrics like: "We will stand next to the brightly lit tree: / And we will shout for all the world to hear / We send our merry greetings. / To our dear Stalin."²⁵⁶ In addition to texts and sheet

²⁵² Brandenberger, 66.

²⁵³ Ol'ga Berggol'ts, "Stalinu," *Pravda* (Moscow), Mar. 13, 1953.

²⁵⁴ Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades: Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932*. (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2001), 151.

²⁵⁵ Kirschenbaum, 154.

²⁵⁶ "Sposoby propitki i obrabotki vaty, bumagi i khlopchato-bumazhnoi tkani, primeniaemye v proizvodstve elochnykh ukrasheniĭ dlia predokhraneniia ikh ot vosmplameneniia" and M. Klokoĭva, "Kak veselo! Kak veselo!," in *Elka: sbornik materialov k Novogodnei elke dlia detei doshkol'nogo vozrasta* (Moscow: Tsentral'nyi Dom

music for New Year-themed songs featuring Stalin, the guidelines often included suggested scripts for activities that ranged from costumed dances to displays of loyalty to the state. In one script, Ded Moroz reminds the children that the Soviet Union needs to be prepared for war and one of the spectators immediately suggests writing a letter to Red Army soldiers and produces his draft, which has been written beforehand by the school’s most politically conscious children under direction from their Communist Youth leader.²⁵⁷ Though indoctrination sometimes took on a solemn tone, references to Stalin were invariably cheerful. On the next page, that same script quickly moves on to the gift-giving ritual, where Ded Moroz reminds the children to “remember our dear friend, who has given us a happy childhood, our dear, beloved Stalin,” and leads them in a choral rendition of a song dedicated to him.²⁵⁸

In addition to receiving effusive praise during the holiday proceedings, Stalin’s image often made appearances through propaganda posters and portraits. In one of the many festive songs produced soon after the Soviet New Year tradition took shape, Stalin smiles from a portrait as happy Soviet children gather round a decorated tree.²⁵⁹ The image of Stalin celebrating New Year also featured prominently in posters, where he usually appeared in the company of grateful Soviet children.²⁶⁰ In one poster, his portrait takes on an almost icon-like quality as a child faces it and wishes Stalin a happy New Year.²⁶¹ This constant visual presence made an impression on the regime’s critics as well. In Lidiia Chukovskaia’s *Sof’ia Petrovna*, one of the earliest literary works about Stalin’s purges, the main character finds herself in charge of organizing a New Year celebration at her workplace and replaces the usual life-size portrait of Stalin with a more festive version where he is sitting with a little girl in his lap, all this despite the terror that unfolds in the background.²⁶²

The common thread that linked the countless textual and visual

Khudozhestvennogo Vospitaniia Detei RSFSR, 1938), 9; 23.

²⁵⁷ *Prazdnik Novogodnei elki: Sbornik materialov po organizatsii i oformleniiu prazdnika Novogodnei elki*, ed. M. Guterma (Moscow: Tsentral’nyi Dom Khudozhestvennogo Vospitaniia Detei RSFSR, 1938), 23-24.

²⁵⁸ Guterma, 25.

²⁵⁹ N. Sakonskaia, “Elochka, Elka,” in *Elka: sbornik materialov k Novogodnei elke dlia detei doskol’nogo vozrasta*, 21.

²⁶⁰ See N. Denisov and N. Vatolina, *Spasibo tovarishchu Stalinu za shchastlivoe destvo*, 1938.

²⁶¹ K. K. Ivanov, *S Novym godom, lyubimyĭ Stalin*, 1952, accessed Mar. 15, 2018, <http://www.anitapisch.com/stalin-poster-of-the-week/stalin-poster-of-the-week-24-spotw24>.

²⁶² Lidiia Chukovskaia, *Sof’ia Petrovna. Spusk pod vodu. Povesti*. (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1988), 6.

references to Stalin in the New Year canon was the intimacy of his relationship with the Soviet children. When instructions for teachers stressed that "New Year must be the festival of the carefree and happy childhood created in our country by the great care afforded to the children by the state, the party, and comrade Stalin himself," they expressed the main purpose of the holiday.²⁶³ New Year was meant to be an extravagant celebration of Stalin's personal affection for the millions of children who lived in the Soviet Union and were destined to shape its future. Propagandists cast Stalin as a father figure for all good Soviet children, regardless of their ethnic background. One poster published in 1936 expresses this sentiment in vivid detail with an image of Russian children playing around a decorated tree along with their comrades from Central Asia and Ukraine.²⁶⁴ In a poem that accompanies this idyllic image, Sergeĭ Mikhalkov attributes the children's happiness to the fact that "Stalin takes care of each of us from the Kremlin."²⁶⁵

The familial bond between Stalin and the Soviet children was not the only personal relationship expressed in New Year celebrations. The holiday's appeal to the ideals of childhood and family provided ample opportunity for exploring another core tenet of the leader cult – Stalin's connection to Lenin. This relationship was not without its problems, as the Lenin cult came to be shaped and dominated by the Stalin cult. In the words of Nina Tumarkin, "the idealized Lenin was relegated to the supporting role of Sacred Ancestors as the cult of Stalin took center stage in Soviet political ritual."²⁶⁶ Even so, the notion of following the course charted by Lenin was tremendously important to the Stalin cult. An epic poem from a 1947 collection of songs about Lenin and Stalin has Stalin take an oath to preserve his predecessor's legacy and concludes with another oath, this time uttered by the Soviet people who "recognize the great Lenin living on in Stalin."²⁶⁷

Though much of the culture associated with New Year celebrations came to be dominated by sentimental stories about the great leaders and appeals to the quintessentially Stalinist cults of happiness and childhood, there was another side to the holiday. The

²⁶³ *Elka: sbornik materialov k Novogodnej elke dlia detej doshkol'nogo vozrasta*, 5.

²⁶⁴ G. K. Shubina, *Na elke krasivye zvezdy goriat*, 1936, accessed Mar. 15, 2018, <http://redavantgarde.com/collection/show-collection/703-on-the-christmas-tree-beautiful-stars-are-shining-.html>.

²⁶⁵ Shubina.

²⁶⁶ Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 253.

²⁶⁷ Dzhambul, "Pesnia o kliatve," in *O Lenine i Staline: Stikhi i pesni* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo detskoĭ literatury ministerstva prosvetsheniia RSFSR, 1947), 6-7.

ongoing industrialization and militarization of the 1930s had a role in New Year celebrations beyond inspiring festive songs and decoration designs. While the specialized publications aimed at teachers and children focused on planning parties, *Pravda* continued the practice of welcoming each new year with reports on current affairs. Where others talked about happy childhoods and Stalin's love for children, the party's official newspaper took stock of the Soviet state's past and future, its successes and anxieties. In a society obsessed with production quotas, each new year became an opportunity to reflect on the progress of Stalin's five-year plans, with reports on the need for improvement in industrial production and the successes of the railroad industry in fulfilling its 1937 quota by the end of 1936.²⁶⁸ War scares had a place on the front pages as well. The same editorial from 1937 warns the readers that "the historic sky above the year 1937 is covered with heavy storm clouds."²⁶⁹ In this climate of uncertainty, Stalin was once again the center of attention, a "genius captain" guiding the Soviet Union through all crises.²⁷⁰ These pronouncements take a radically different tone from the cheerful child-friendly material that came to be firmly associated with the New Year tradition, but their shared tendency to look to the Stalin cult for guidance shows that they are really variations of the same message. Just as Soviet children were guarantors of a bright distant future, the adult workers and soldiers were there to ensure the state's immediate survival and success. In this context, the oft-used image of Stalin as a navigator aboard the great Soviet ship is remarkably apt. As an object of a cult, Stalin was there to guide the entire Soviet population through its triumphs and failures, with every new year as an opportunity to bring up the young and reassure the adults.

With a rich visual culture, a well-developed mythology that incorporated heroes past and present, and a plethora of instructional texts, New Year under Stalin was arguably more of a religious occasion than the Russian Christmas tradition to which it owed many of its symbols. Despite the alarmist rhetoric of the Soviet anti-Christmas campaigns of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Europeanized version of Christmas with its decorated trees and Ded Moroz largely remained an urban bourgeois custom, while the Russian village continued to indulge in rowdy celebrations with pre-Christian roots. Neither version of the holiday had much to do with spirituality, and both were regularly condemned by the Russian Orthodox church. New Year, on the other hand, pleased both

²⁶⁸ "Nas vedet velikii kormchii," *Pravda* (Moscow), Jan. 1, 1937.

²⁶⁹ *Pravda*.

²⁷⁰ *Pravda*.

authority figures and regular citizens. In the Soviet government's view, New Year celebrations reinforced the intimate nature of the leader cult and affirmed Stalin's affection for his subjects. For individual Soviet citizens, it provided an occasion to break up winter's bleakness with a celebration that adopted the essential attributes of Christmas without its bourgeois and religious connotations. In the Soviet case, there were many other rituals that served the cult of the revolutionary party and Stalin's own personality cult, but New Year celebrations provided an outlet for a crucial part of that cult. From the government's perspective, this was to be a religious experience that sacralized happiness and childhood and praised the party's leaders as architects of said happiness. This was not necessarily the case for private celebrations, however. Whereas public festivities in Soviet schools and workplaces inevitably included displays of devotion to Stalin, individuals had more agency in choosing how to celebrate. If official celebrations promoted the idea of Soviet society as one big family with Stalin as the father figure, private occasions focused on more conventional family values. Despite the apparent tension between public and private interests, Soviet government persisted in its efforts to spread the New Year tradition to the most distant corners of the Soviet Union, remaking what used to be considered an urban bourgeois tradition into a nationwide cultural phenomenon centered on public adoration of Stalin. The success of that massive publicity campaign is apparent even today, as New Year is one of the very few Soviet holidays to survive the fall of the USSR and enjoy continued popularity in the post-Soviet space. While the devotional elements that characterized New Year celebrations from their introduction in 1935 to Stalin's death are gone and largely forgotten, the strong cultural imprint it left beyond Russia's borders testifies to its success at infiltrating the private lives of Soviet citizens.

Conclusion

On December 31, 2014, two presidents delivered traditional New Year's addresses to their nations. Vladimir Putin spoke of Crimea "returning home" and urged all Russians to wish health and happiness to their relatives and friends.²⁷¹ At the same time, Petro Poroshenko addressed Ukrainians with a plea to remember those who had given their lives for Ukraine's sovereignty.²⁷² After Russia's

²⁷¹ "Novogodnee obraschenie Vladimira Putina k grazhdanam Rossii," *Russia Today*, accessed March 28, 2018. <https://russian.rt.com/article/67188>.

²⁷² "Novogodnee obraschenie Prezidenta Ukrainy Petra Poroshenko," *TSN*, accessed March 28, 2018. <https://ru.tsn.ua/politika/novogodnee-obraschenie-prezidenta-ukrainy-petra-poroshenko-video-tekst-403686.html>.

annexation of Crimea and Ukraine's decisive turn toward Europe, why would both leaders honor the same tradition, especially one so closely associated with Stalinism? The answer is surprisingly simple. For most people in the post-Soviet space, New Year has nothing to do with Stalinism. At most, the holiday conjures vague memories of a romanticized Soviet past where everybody seemed to get along. For those who are too young to have such memories, New Year is about overeating, drinking champagne, giving and receiving gifts, and spending time with family. This emphasis on familial bliss is a product of both the holiday's extraordinary success in conquering the hearts and minds of Soviet citizens and its utter failure as a tool of mass mobilization.

When Stalin and his officials set out to reimagine Soviet culture as a mixture of the old with the new, they found little use for early revolutionary rituals, with their strident rejection of all things pre-revolutionary. In mocking organized religion, bourgeois culture, and peasant superstition, these "Red rituals" left little room for reconciliation. Christmas, on the other hand, reflected many facets of the new Stalinist cultural policy. In pre-revolutionary Russia, the holiday developed a strong connection to the ideals of material comfort and family values, both of which returned to official discourse under Stalin. While these symbols and messages clearly supported the Stalinist effort to re-introduce certain aspects of pre-revolutionary culture into Soviet life, the bourgeois and religious roots of Christmas made it unsuitable for rehabilitation. The invention of a New Year tradition resolved this issue, stripping Christmas symbols of their questionable past and appropriating them as instruments of cultural policy. In this sense, New Year was a product of ritual-building on the part of the government and an answer to a shortage of rituals that reflected the goals of Stalinist cultural reform. This is not the whole story, however. In addition to serving the government's needs, this repackaging of a pre-revolutionary holiday responded to the Soviet citizens' rejection of earlier revolutionary rituals and provided an opportunity to celebrate a holiday that incorporated all the familiar components of Christmas without the associated risks. In individual households, celebrations often broke with official prescriptions as Soviet families rediscovered their pre-revolutionary decorations and drank to each other's health rather than to the leaders, defying the state's ambition to infuse all spheres of Soviet life with ideology.

By emphasizing family values and avoiding the heavy-handed moralizing that was often at the core of earlier revolutionary rituals, Soviet ideologues created what might very well be the most successful ritual in the history of Soviet political religion. While this approach

made New Year a useful tool for Stalinist cultural policy, it also spelled doom for the holiday's ideological significance in the long run. In a sense, New Year fell victim to its own popularity, as it shed its many ideological contexts just as easily as it took them on. In exploiting pre-revolutionary nostalgia and incorporating the ideals of prosperity and intimacy into the official concept of the holiday, Soviet ideologues undermined their loftier goals and made sure New Year's successes in indoctrinating the masses did not extend far beyond Stalin's time in power. In the end, the holiday that embodied all the major tenets of Stalin's cultural policies lost all association with its creators. This is perhaps the biggest paradox of the New Year tradition. While yearly celebrations in countries that have otherwise gone to great lengths to forget their Soviet heritage prove the lasting impact of the holiday, the successful erasure of all traces of Stalinism stands as a testament to the limitations of totalitarian ritual-building and, perhaps, of the concept of totalitarianism itself. Try as it might, the state failed to insinuate itself into the private lives of its citizens and had to settle for the limited reach of the public sphere.

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Clio's Scroll, the Berkeley Undergraduate History Journal, is published twice yearly by students of the Department of History at the University of California, Berkeley. The journal aims to provide undergraduates with the opportunity to publish historical works and to train staff members in the editorial process of an academic journal.

Clio's Scroll is produced by financial support from the Townsend Center for the Humanities, the Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC), and the Department of History. *Clio's Scroll* is not an official publication of the ASUC or UC Berkeley. The views expressed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the journal, the editors, the university, or sponsors.

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Front cover: Marizavarzina

Printing: Zee Zee Copy

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