



Faith and Russian Military Victory

OE Watch Commentary: Coronavirus concerns have delayed the opening and dedication of the new Main Cathedral of the Russian Armed Forces located in Patriot Park, about an hour outside of Moscow. Once these concerns abate, this huge cathedral will be dedicated to the Soviet Union's victory in the "Great Fatherland War" (WW II) where it will serve as an apt metaphor for a current Russian perspective regarding faith and military power.

While the USSR was officially atheist, some Russians today credit their WW II victory to divine intercession. The accompanying excerpt, from an article in the normally agnostic military weekly, *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, describes a number of military incidents from WW II (and later) where "faith helped fighters in the most hopeless situations." The author begins by describing the challenges the Soviet military



German soldiers defending Königsberg, January, 1945.

Source: Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-R98401 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_183-R98401,_K%C3%B6nigsberg,_Volkssturm.jpg, CC-BY-SA 3.0

faced toward the end of the war, when trying to "storm Königsberg [Kaliningrad] in April 1945," emphasizing the many layers of defense which protected this stronghold. He asserts that "there are things in the story of the capture of Königsberg that are hard for a materialist to believe," relating how shortly before the Nazi capitulation, a "religious procession moving along the front line" forced the "Nazis suddenly [to] drop their weapons and...run away." Later, when the Soviets broke through, they asked a captured soldier why they had stopped shooting, and the German "replied 'the weapon refused.'"

The author goes on to describe "many other stories of miraculous salvation during the years of the great war," questioning "how do we, raised in the spirit of militant atheism, relate to them? Everyone has the right to draw conclusions." The author's answers point to divine intervention. He recounts other recent examples which he attributes to providence, for instance, recalling that during the funeral ceremony "honoring the Kursk crew, seagulls appeared in the sky (185 kilometers to the coast) and the rays of the sun broke through the cloudy horizon." The author concludes the article by asserting that even though "the buckles of the belts of Hitler's soldiers were stamped with the words 'God with us,'... the Lord, according to veterans of the Great Patriotic War, was on the side of the Red Army... [because] God is always on the side of those who serve and fight for a just cause."

Not that long ago, when describing the outcome of previous conflicts, Soviet historians would often point to Marxist-Leninist teachings for an explanation. Soviet military victories (to include WW II) reflected the veracity and inevitability of the communist cause. Since that ideology has been largely discredited, some Russian writers have adopted a new existential formula to explain their victories. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

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Continued: Faith and Russian Military Victory



Model of Russia's Main Military Cathedral.

Source: Russian Federation Defence Ministry, <http://mil.ru/et/news/more.htm?id=12206176@egNews>, CCA SA 4.0 Intl

Source: Valery Gromak, “С кем был Бог (Who was God with),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, 13 April 2020. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/56444>

Faith helped fighters in the most hopeless situations.

About the storm of Königsberg in April 1945, many bright pages were written. But few people know that our soldiers took the impregnable fortress city thanks to courage and heroism, but also with ... God's help.

The Germans began the construction of well-developed, long-term engineering structures on the territory of East Prussia in 1932 and continued to develop them before the attack on the Soviet Union. After the defeat at Stalingrad in 1943, the Nazis intensely resumed this construction.... As a result, a number of modern fortified areas were created in the Königsberg area, including engineering-friendly frontal and cut-off positions. Large defense nodes were saturated with long-term structures....

There are things in the story of the capture of Königsberg that are hard for a materialist to believe.... On April 7, at the Annunciation, they were waiting for the battle and suddenly saw a religious procession moving along the front line, Orthodox priests walking at the head of the column carry the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God with chants befitting the moment. And then something unbelievable happened. Seeing the procession, the Nazis suddenly dropped their weapons... They took Königsberg with God's help... When the captured German was asked why they had stopped shooting, he replied: 'The weapon refused.'

...There were many stories of miraculous salvation during the years of the great war.... How do we, raised in the spirit of militant atheism, relate to them? Everyone has the right to draw conclusions.... I will bring two more stories that I myself have witnessed.... Something similar happened during the laying of the Orthodox cross and wreaths at the point of death of the Kursk nuclear submarine... After honoring the Kursk crew, seagulls appeared in the sky (185 kilometers to the coast) and the rays of the sun broke through the cloudy horizon. For many non-religious people, this has become a landmark.

On the buckles of the belts of Hitler's soldiers the words "God with us" were stamped. But the Lord, according to veterans of the Great Patriotic War, was on the side of the Red Army, its soldiers and commanders. God is always on the side of those who serve a just cause and fight for a just cause.