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# Russia's Worship of War Comes With Its Own Idolatry

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Activists from the People's Front carrying a lantern. **People's Front**

For over a century, the authorities in Russia have been trying to create a new faith, an "opium of the people" to keep the country in line.

First, the Bolsheviks tried to create a pantheon of communist gods and heroes. Then, Stalin realized that it would be a good idea to recruit Orthodox leaders into the KGB, thereby putting the Russian Orthodox Church at his service. Later, President Vladimir Putin improved on this by making the church a mouthpiece for the Kremlin.

But a real religion through which the country could be controlled never emerged. People did not believe in communism for long. Attendence at loyalist Orthodox churches looks to be driven by peoples attachment to rituals, like being splashed with holy water at Epiphany or having their eggs and kulich cakes blessed at Easter, than actual beliefs. They have no actual faith despite continuing efforts to awaken some kind of sacred, but loyalist, feelings among

the population continue.

From May 5 to May 9 — Victory Day — activists from the pro-Putin People's Front movement transported the "Flame of Memory" across Russia and some friendly countries abroad. They lit votive lamps from the Eternal Flame at the foot of the Kremlin's walls and took them to Kazan, Volgograd, Krasnoyarsk, Novorossiysk and even New Delhi, where they were used to light local flames.

If this ritual sounds familiar, that's because it's hardly original. The Flame of Memory is cosplaying the Holy Fire ritual in which lamps lit by a sacred flame are carried through Jerusalem on the night before Easter, symbolizing the Resurrection and eternal life.

But the other dubious aspect of the People's Front's performance is that flying a sacred flame around the world is a sort of idolatry. Surely it would be better to use these jets to fly the sick and suffering to places where they can receive treatment. That would be rather more Christian instead of "making of an idol" as is explicitly forbidden in the Gospel.

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The new religion that Russia's current authorities, and in this case the People's Front, are trying to create is nothing other than the worship of war. All these parades, Immortal Regiments, prayers for victory and military churches are nothing other than a manifestation of that.

This flame is lit from the Eternal Flame at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier by the Kremlin wall. Upon this memorial stand the words: "Your name is unknown, your deed is immortal."

That is exactly how it will be. The servants of the religion of war are essentially telling people that nobody will remember them as a human being with a name. They will be sent into meat assaults not as individuals, unique and priceless, but as nameless combatants.

In general, if one thinks about it, the very idea of a tomb of the unknown soldier in the second quarter of the 21st century is a barbaric anachronism. Exhume this soldier already! Conduct a DNA test. Perhaps he has children and grandchildren — or at least great-great-nephews — who would be glad to learn that their grandfather, missing in action, has been found and is solemnly resting by the Kremlin wall. They would come, lay flowers and drink a shot in his memory. Perhaps we would finally learn what this symbolic dead man actually did in the war.

Do not worry, people of today! Your names — despite the achievements of medical genetics — will not be known. That is the bad tidings the People's Front brings into every home with its pagan "Flame of Memory" campaign. So much for memory.

Know, then, know that no one will remember your names either. Amen.

It is a good thing that, judging by the shortage of genuine volunteers for the war in Ukraine, almost no one believes in this nonsense.

*The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.*

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