You are looking at the mausoleum in which the mummified, waxen corpse of the genocidist Vladimir Lenin is meticulously maintained at government expense in a grotesque parody of the incorrupt bodies of Catholic saints. This monstrosity is located in Red Square (or Beautiful Square in Old Russian) in Moscow, from which I have just returned after participating in The Fatima Center's historic conference in the Russian capital.

What is not evident from the photograph is the almost palpable evil that radiates from the structure as one passes it by. Nor does the photograph fully convey the sense of repulsion one feels when viewing the strange coloring of the edifice in the midst of its beautiful surroundings, an ugly brown that evokes nothing so much as the color of human waste. It is truly an unsettling thing to behold.

That there have been changes for the better in Russia over the past thirty years is beyond question. From the Fatima perspective, it appears that the "consecration" ceremonies performed by John Paul II in 1982 and 1984, from which any mention of Russia was deliberately omitted, may have had some benefits (as Sister Lucia herself said about the 1982 ceremony) but certainly not the conversion of Russia. So it was with the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary performed by Pope Pius XII in 1942 (i.e., the shortening of the World War but not, as Our Lord Himself twice explicitly told Sister Lucia, the promised conversion of Russia). These changes would also be due to the millions of Rosaries and other prayers offered for Russia's conversion.

But as Stanislaw Protasenko, one of the speakers at our conference, demonstrated amply in his speech, the conversion of Russia is far from accomplished and the epoch of Fatima is far from over. A former lecturer in history and political science at the St. Petersburg State University, Mr. Protasenko warned that the cult of Lenin and even Stalin is still very much alive throughout Russia, abortion is still rampant, as are contraception and pornography, and the vaunted recrudescence of Russian Orthodoxy has not been accompanied by any appreciable increase in the actual practice of religion by rank-and-file Russians.

Mr. Protasenko further noted that Russian Orthodoxy still exhibits, *mutatis mutandis*, "Sergian adaptation" of the Russian Orthodox Church after the Bolshevik Revolution, named after the Metropolitan Sergius. Sergius enunciated the ecclesial policy according to which the Russian Orthodox Church would observe "a false separation of all the spiritual needs of man into the purely religious and the socio-political… without touching on the socio-political, which were to be resolved and satisfied by the official ideology" of the Communist Party. The Party has since been replaced for adaptational purposes by the current officially secular Kremlin regime. Thus, Protasenko observed, the Russian Orthodox Church will not oppose the government's policy on abortion and contraception or any other element of Kremlin policy that contravenes God's law.

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Nor, Protasenko cautions, should we attribute any motive of religious conversion to the recent enactment of laws restricting "homosexual propaganda," as even during the Stalin years homosexuality was "recriminalized" — not for religious reasons, but for the purely nationalistic purpose of attempting to avoid the ill-effects of vice on the proletariat. The same is true of recent Russian restrictions on abortion in order to promote population growth, not to enforce the divine and natural law for its own sake. That abortion remains legal in any case at all in Russia ought to preclude, in and of itself, any argument that Russia has converted.

What, then, are we to make of current conditions in Russia? The most one can say is that they represent a remote preparation for the day when Russia is finally consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and "that poor nation" undergoes a true spiritual transformation that would constitute just what the Blessed Virgin promised if Her requests were heeded: a miracle of grace ushering in a period of peace for the world — true peace, not merely the absence of armed conflict.

That Russia will convert — that she will return to the fold of the one true Church — is certain. Equally certain, however, is that the day of her conversion has yet to arrive. And when that day does come, we can also be certain that the tomb of Lenin will have been bulldozed to the ground and his mummified corpse, an icon of radical evil, will have been reduced to dust. Until then, let no one speak of Russia's conversion.

The conference in Moscow is, one hopes, not only the fulfillment of one of Father Gruner's dreams for this apostolate, but also the beginning of a process by which the Message of Fatima enters the consciousness of the Russian people in preparation for the day when the Fatima prophecy will have its glorious fulfillment.

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