

## ON PENTECOST SUNDAY:

# “SOUL of RUSSIA” WAS HERE!

by JOHN M. HAFFERT

**A**n historic event occurred this past June 7, Pentecost Sunday, at the Blue Army's National Shrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

**The “soul” of Russia was present at special Byzantine liturgical celebrations.**

Two Bishops, one of the Byzantine Rite and one of the Latin Rite, carried the sacred and original image of Our Lady of Kazan, “Liberatrix and Protectrix of Russia.” They touched it to a copy which will remain at the National Blue Army Center long after the original Icon has been restored to the Russian nation. Hundreds of attending pilgrims, most of whom were of the Byzantine Rite, participated in the Byzantine Pentecost Sunday Mass and then filed in long lines to venerate the sacred Russian Icon which can truly be said to represent “the soul of Russia.”

The Bishops who participated in the 1981 Pentecost Sunday ceremony were the Most Rev. Thomas V. Dolinay, Auxiliary Bishop of the Eparchy (Diocese) of Passaic, N.J.,

and the Most Rev. Constantino Luna, of the Apostolate of the Suffering, at the Blue Army National Shrine.

*Came in 1950*

During the 1950 Holy Year, the Pilgrim Virgin statue blessed by the Bishop of Fatima in 1947 was taken to Moscow and “enshrined” in the chapel serving Catholics attached to the various foreign embassies. The statue had been kept in secret on the very property in Washington, N.J. where the Shrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary now lifts its great tower into the sky, showing Our Lady, with Her Immaculate Heart, extending the Rosary and the Scapular to the world.

In that same year an English millionaire acquired the Icon of Kazan as a precious art object, not knowing that it was indeed the **original** Icon.

A Russian Countess visiting his castle identified it, and a wave of excitement swept through the entire Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Leonty, then in exile in Paris,

came to England to identify the Icon, and subsequently the Orthodox Church in the western world (especially in the United States), began to raise funds to purchase the Icon—with the intention of building a special church to enshrine it in San Francisco.

Twice, when the Orthodox Christians had succeeded in raising hundreds of thousands of dollars, the money was stolen. Then, in 1972 the Blue Army signed a contract to redeem the Icon. This was done with the intention of having it returned to Russia when the promise of Our Lady of Fatima concerning that historic nation is fulfilled.

During the past few years the Icon has been in the United States because there has not been a Byzantine Chaplain at Fatima at our International Center. However, in the near future the Icon will return to Fatima, and from there will eventually go to Russia. So the special service held on Pentecost Sunday at the Blue Army Shrine of the Immaculate Heart, from the very spot where the Pilgrim Virgin statue went to Russia in 1950, possessed special significance.

“Soul of Russia”

Many of us think of Russia as a very old nation. However, it did not begin to unify as a nation until after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. It was only in 1462 that the first “autocrat” was recognized in Moscow, and in 1547 that Russia had its first Czar.



**Left: Bishop Dolinay of the Eparchy of Passaic and Bishop Constantino Luna touch original Icon of Kazan to copy painting by Mrs. John Moran of Cedar Grove, N.J.**

The royal family then ruling in Russia lasted only fifty years. Without an immediate successor to the throne, three "pretenders," one after the other, were assassinated and the new nation of Russia was plunged into the worst and darkest period of its history. For eight years bands of robbers roamed the country, armies from Poland and Sweden fought for control, as well as the Musselman Tartars, each with the intention of putting their own kings on the throne of Moscow.

At this time, in the city of Kazan, which until recently had been the capital of the Mongolian Empire, Our Lady appeared to an eight year old girl and told her of a sacred picture which had been hidden and lost during the time of Mongolian and Mohammedan rule in Kazan.

No one believed the little girl until after two more apparitions of Our Lady. Then, to the amazement of everyone, the Icon was found beneath the ruins of a burned out building, in perfect preservation.

There was an obvious "presence" to the sacred image, and miracles occurred—including the giving of sight to two men who had been born blind.

The Icon was taken to the church of Blessed Ermogen, who became the Patriarch of Moscow. He had an apparition of one of the greatest saints in the history of Russia, St. Sergei. The saint told Blessed Ermogen that this sacred image of Our Lady of Kazan would be the rallying point of the people, and that it would be the means of saving and establishing the Russian nation.

#### Savior of the Russians

This is indeed what happened—in just a few years!

The Swedish king agreed to withdraw in return for receiving the Gulf of Finland, and the Polish king withdrew upon receiving firm boundaries, including a section which in the previous fifty years had been considered part of Russia.

From that time on the miraculous image of Our Lady of Kazan was known as the "Liberatrix and Pro-



In photo above, left to right, Bishop Constantino Luna, O.F.M.; Bishop Thomas V. Dolinay, Auxiliary of Eparchy of Passaic (N.J.); and Rev. Msgr. Paul Firczak, V.F., during a moment in the special Byzantine Day services held at the Shrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary this past June 7, Pentecost Sunday.

tectrix of Holy Mother Russia." The Icon was used in all the crises of Russian history up to and including the invasion of Napoleon—whose defeat was directly attributed by the Russian people to Our Lady of Kazan.

It can be said that as the sacred image of Our Lady emerged from beneath the ruins of a burned out building in Kazan, **the soul of Russia emerged with it;** the Russian nation was "born."

One of the most bitter and long-remembered "crises" in the subsequent history of Russia was the war with Poland in 1667. During this war, the Poles invoked **Our Lady of Czestochowa**, and the Russians invoked **Our Lady of Kazan!** How the motherly heart of Our Lady must have been truly pierced with thorns on this sad occasion!

The conflict was deeply embittered because by now the schism between the Western (Latin) Church and the Eastern (Byzantine or "Russian") Church had deepened to the point of bitter hatred. In this war, Russia gained Smolensk, Kiev and the Eastern Ukraine. **And it was only thirty years later, under Peter the Great, that the great Russian empire began to form.** (We often forget how recent this is...when compared to the history of countries such as England, France, or China.)

From the time of the peace with Poland and Sweden in 1613, the Icon of Kazan was taken to Moscow and enshrined in a special Basilica opposite the Kremlin, in what is now known throughout the world as "Red Square."

When Peter the Great built a new capital to the north, on the sea, he decided to build one of the most magnificent churches in the world (modeled in style after St. Peter's Basilica in Rome) for the Icon of Our Lady of Kazan.

The new capital of Petrograd was called "the Venice of the North." It was truly a glorious city, and its Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan was indeed a fitting setting for the "Liberatrix and Protectrix of Russia."

There was, however, a national reaction against the Icon being moved from its old cathedral in Moscow, so the Czar had a beautiful copy made for the new capital and left the Icon in its original church on Kremlin Square.

#### The Atheists Attack

When the Communists took over Russia, they almost immediately focused their attention on the Icon of Kazan as the "soul" of the Russian people.

The great Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan in Petrograd (name now

changed to Leningrad) was made into an atheist museum, and was declared **the official center of militant atheism in the world.**

### On Red Square

The Basilica of Our Lady of Kazan on Red Square was destroyed by battering rams while the Reds announced that **they would thus prove God did not exist!** Their destruction of the Church of the "Liberatrix and Protectrix of Holy Mother Russia," the atheists "proved" that there was no God, and no "Protectrix," to prevent the blows of their battering rams.

But on the other side of Europe, **at the very time that the atheists were seizing control in Russia,** Our Lady was appearing to three little shepherds. And the only country She mentioned besides the country in which She was appearing was **Russia!**

She foretold the spread of militant atheism from Russia throughout the entire world fomenting further wars, and even the annihilation of nations, due to the sins of men. But She said that, "in the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph; Russia will be converted..."

The oldest of the three children was ten years of age, and the other two children were seven and nine. The child to whom Our Lady had appeared to reveal Her sacred image in Kazan about three hundred years before was eight years old.

### "Green Miracle"

To the amazement of everyone, when the Communists tried to build another structure where they had destroyed the Church of Our Lady of Kazan in Moscow, accidents occurred over and over. This happened so much that workmen finally refused to build on that spot! It was therefore turned into a small park, simply covered with green grass. It is the only "open" spot in Red Square—and it is only a few hundred feet in a diagonal line from Lenin's tomb.

The Russian people call it "the Green Miracle on Red Square."

No one knows how the original Icon of Kazan got out of Russia. No one knows how or why it was in a sale of art objects in Poland after World War I. We only know of the extraordinary circumstances which led to the acquisition of the Icon by The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, whose only thought on receiving it was **that it be returned to the people of Russia when the promise of Our Lady is fulfilled.**

### The Icon Now

We mentioned above that in 1950 the Pilgrim Virgin statue, which had been blessed by the Bishop of Fatima to go to Russia, left from the very spot where the U.S. National Blue Army Center is located, and where the Icon was redeemed to be returned to Russia.

And in **that same year** (the year in which the Pilgrim Virgin statue went to Russia and that the Icon was bought by an English millionaire whose adopted daughter was a Catholic and who made the Icon available to the Blue Army) a co-founder of the Blue Army had the idea of building a center for the Blue Army at Fatima containing both a **Byzantine** and a Latin Chapel!

That Byzantine chapel at Fatima lifts its onion-shaped dome into the sky next to the Basilica, being the highest point at Fatima after the great Fatima Basilica itself. And in that chapel there is now a side chapel reserved exclusively for the Icon of Kazan and where it will be reserved (at the very place where Our Lady promised the conversion of Russia) until, after the promised "conversion," the Icon returns.

### "I Was Proud..."

Present at the ceremonies on Pentecost Sunday this past June 7 was Victor Banderoco, Ph.D., attached to a pharmaceutical firm not many miles from Washington, N.J. He had heard about the services at the Shrine which might possibly include the "original" Icon.

"I came here quite by accident," he told us. "I am of Russian descent, and Orthodox. As I partici-

pated in this beautiful service today, I was proud of being Russian, and proud of my faith!"

The obvious joy and pride that radiated from this Russian doctor gave us some inkling of what it would be like when the precious and miraculous Icon of Our Lady of Kazan **is restored** to "Her" people after their nightmare of more than fifty years of atheistic persecution and enslavement!

In 1976, the day before the ground was broken for our Shrine in Washington, N.J., the same original Icon of Kazan was taken to the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Doylestown, Pa. There the Most Rev. Nicholas T. Elko, former Byzantine Bishop of Pittsburgh and now Latin Rite Auxiliary Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati (and Vice President of the U.S. Blue Army), carried the Icon to be touched to the famous copy of the Icon of Czestochowa in a "reconciliation" ceremony—a ceremony which could not have taken place in Poland at the Shrine of Czestochowa under the communist government there, and could therefore only have taken place here in the United States in the "sister shrine," conducted by the same Pauline Fathers who are in Czestochowa itself.

Oh, how mysterious are the ways of Divine Providence!

It is primarily in the United States that Our Lady's children have responded to Her Fatima Message. It is here that She raised up the first regiments of Her Blue Army.

Therefore, is it not fitting that She should have entrusted Her Icon to us here, and have also had the "reconciliation ceremony" performed here as a spiritual symbol of the wiping out of the scandal of 1667, when Her Heart was pierced by the thorns of Her conflicting children in Russia and Poland?!

Is not all of this a wonderful prophecy of the fulfillment of the great promise made at Fatima in 1917: **"In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph; Russia will be converted and an era of peace will be conceded to mankind."**