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Imperial and anti-liberal themes in the discussion of Orthodoxy in perestroika-era samizdat

Current political social and economic instability in Russia is in many ways reminiscent of the perestroika period which generated renewed interest in religion and discussion on the nature of the Russian national character. This dispute was marked by the anti-liberal and imperial tendencies and evolved around the political and social role of the ROC. The present attitude of the Moscow Patriarchate towards the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the renewed anti-Semitic dialogue following the release of the movie "Matilda" is just one example which underlines the similarity of the ideological debate in both periods.

The most revealing and profound discussion on the role of Russian Orthodoxy in political and ideological dispute during Gorbachev years was found in the alternative media which touched upon some key issues, ignored by the official press, such as Russian national self-identification and the need for perestroika within the Moscow Patriarchate. This ideological discussion was identified by imperial and anti-liberal tendencies, aiming to punish those who were responsible for the distraction of Russian national identity thus reinforcing radical-nationalistic tendencies within the Moscow Patriarchate.

Although Russian Orthodoxy was regarded as an inseparable component of Russian national identity, the Moscow Patriarchate was portrayed as an institution unable to lead the nation out of a spiritual and moral crisis following its total submission to state authorities and alienation from believers, a tendency which continues to this day.