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STEWART, ELLIOT BROWN. Baptists and Religious Liberty in the U.S.S.R. (1971). Directed by Dr. David MacKenzie. Pp. 101.

Living under a hostile government and suffering persecution, Russian Baptists, nevertheless, face life with manifest joy. This spirit has so intrigued me, that I have been led to make this study.

Until 1956, very little was known concerning the status of religious groups in the Soviet Union. Over the past fifty years this status has fluctuated in relation to long-range and short-range goals of the Communist Party, in relation to changing Party leadership, and in relation to the changing world scene.

Only since 1956, under Khrushchev's announced policy of de-Stalinization, liberalization, and "peaceful co-existence" with the Western world, has it been possible to learn much concerning the state of religious affairs in the Soviet Union. The result of my research indicates that forty-four of the sixty-two sources used in this work are dated subsequent to 1960, and almost half of these have appeared since 1965.

To add to the mystery, differing viewpoints have been, and continue to be expressed by the Communist Party, by religious leaders within the Soviet Union, and by visitors to the Soviet Union. There are also differing opinions within each of these groups. It will be the author's purpose, therefore, through an historical and comparative study of Church and State relations in the U.S.S.R., to try to determine the extent of religious liberty and to evaluate future prospects for these churches. The situation of the Baptists will be emphasized to illustrate the plight of believers in Russia.

The author has had the opportunity to interview one recent American traveller to the Soviet Union (1970), and has had the opportunity of reading

several other reports concerning recent visits to Russia. The most extensive work in English on the subject, noted by Sergius Yakobson, Reference Department Chief of the Slavic and Central European Division of the Library of Congress, is that of Michael Bordeaux: Religious Ferment in Russia.

Primary English language sources include Religion in Communist Dominated Areas published by the National Council of Churches in New York, and Underground Evangelism published in Los Angeles, and sponsored by a group seeking to give aid to the "Underground Churches" in Russia. The point of view of the Communist Party has been obtained, for the most part, from Soviet Periodical Abstracts and the Current Digest of the Soviet Press.

The conclusions of this study indicate that what the Communists consider liberty, in keeping with their announced goals, many Russian "believers" consider persecution and an infringement of their personal rights to freedom of conscience. Many Russian church leaders outwardly agree with the Communists that there is religious freedom in Russia today. Other believers are not in agreement with this. We shall, therefore, seek to understand the reasons underlying these differing opinions and to look for signs of change in Soviet society that may alter the picture in the future.

BAPTISTS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

IN THE U.S.S.R.

by

Elliot B. Stewart

A Thesis Submitted to
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Approved by

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Michael Bordeaux has written several recent books, the most helpful being Religious Ferment in Russia. The Baptist World magazine, published in Washington, documented articles published by the National Council of Churches in New York under the title Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, and Underground Evangelism, published in Los Angeles have all been very helpful.

Acknowledgement is given also to the History Department of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro; including Dr. Richard Bardolph, head of the department; Dr. David MacKenzie, my advisor; and Dr. Roy N. Schantz, my first teacher in Russian History.

BAPTISTS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN THE U.S.S.R.

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CHAPTER I
AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS
IN THE U.S.S.R.

Until the post-Stalin era, which began in 1953, little was known concerning religious freedom in the Soviet Union. Most of the resources available have appeared during the past ten years. Our lack of knowledge in this area lies also in the fluctuating changes through the years relative to Communist leadership, long-range and short-range goals of the Party, and the changing world situation. In 1967 the Communist Party celebrated its first fifty years of "Socialism" in the U.S.S.R. Much has been written concerning this. In 1967, also, the Baptist Union of Russia celebrated the centennial of its origins. At this watershed in Russian history, it seems most desirable, therefore, to ascertain the present status and future prospects of religious life in the U.S.S.R., especially as it pertains to the Baptists.

It is impossible to understand the situation of Baptists and other religious groups in Russia if we see it only in isolation from the thousand years that precede it. One must know history in order to understand the indomitable spirit of Baptists in Russia and to appreciate the mutually contradictory characteristics of the Russian people.

The story begins with the migrant Slavs, Vikings, Huns and others, who swept across the open expanse of Russia's nine million square miles. The Slav pagans brought with them a pantheon of deities. There was also some infiltration of Christian ideas into the pagan society of Kiev in the

ninth century, but the task of officially instituting Christianity as the religion of the land fell to Vladimir, prince of Kiev, in the tenth century. Vladimir adopted the Greek Church as the State Church for its aesthetic attraction, and for political advantage.¹ He removed the "old beliefs" on behalf of his subjects, enforced a general baptism and then married the sister of the Byzantine emperor. From the very beginning, the Orthodox Church was the instrument by which Byzantine secular doctrine pervaded the land--the doctrine that proclaimed the divine right of the sovereign ruler.

This came about with the fall of the Byzantine empire in the sixteenth century, which brought to the Muscovite state the "messianic" idea that Muscovy (Moscow) must be representative of true orthodoxy to the world. As the successor to fallen Rome and fallen Constantinople, Moscow became "the third Rome." So it was said, "The 'Romes' have fallen; a fourth shall not be." One can still see this spirit of messianism in the ecumenism of the churches as well as in Soviet Russia's concern for an ultimately communistic world.

In the 15th century, Ivan the Great was thinking of himself as "Czar of all the Russians." By the 18th Century, the Russian Orthodox Church had become an instrument of the State sanctioning the autocracy of the monarch as the appointed of God to be the sovereign ruler, "Emperor and Czar of all the Russians."² Under Peter the Great, the Church was administered as a

¹ Michael Bordeaux, Opium of the People, (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1966), p. 17.

² R. D. Charques, A Short History of Russia, (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1956), pp. 15, 27, 28.

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department of State. The Patriarch, as head of the Church, was replaced by a Holy Synod, presided over by the Procurator General, a layman appointed by the Czar. The Russian people have hardly known a time when they were not under an autocratic ruler, and the churches have experienced very few years without interference from the State. Such history inevitably creates a long-suffering people.

For several reasons, the Orthodox Church remained the only Church in Russia for several centuries. One important reason for this was the translation of the Scriptures by the Greek brothers, Cyril and Methodius. This translation work evolved a native literature, both sacred and secular, of its own. At the same time this work closed the door in Russia upon Greek Classical culture and the perpetuation of Greek as a literary language in Russia. As Russia became self-sufficient and isolated from the outside world, intellectual horizons were narrowed.

The division of the Roman and Greek Churches in 1054 also precipitated a breach between Russia and the West--a division which was completed by the Mongol conquest during the 13th century. Later, a determined effort of the Romanov rulers in the 17th century to bring in Greek liturgy caused a schism in the Church and a new group of the Orthodox emerged known as "Old Believers." These were years of terrible persecution, by Church and State, of the schismatics.

It was not until the 18th century that the situation changed. The change occurred with Peter the Great, who opened a "window" to the West. This began a controversy between the Westernizers and the Slavophiles. The latter opposed

3
Leopold Braun, Religion in Russia, (New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1959), p. 4.

western ideas for Slavic tradition. It was the Westernizers, however, who opened the door eventually for Baptists.

The appearance and growth of Baptists is also related to the decline of the Russian Orthodox Church. Beyond the monastery walls, the pomp and formalism of orthodoxy left little room for spiritual fervor, and often sheltered gross corruption. The accumulation of vast landed wealth by the monasteries had produced a crop of familiar evils and much spiritual grossness in monastic life.⁴

The Church was also identified with "serfdom," which bound the peasantry to the land. The fetters of serfdom and the burden of taxation became heavier under Peter the Great, and the costliness of building St. Petersburg made even heavier demands upon the peasantry. Tied so closely to the state and dominated by it, the Russian Orthodox Church was crippled and could develop no modern message. In such a society, seekers of truth were driven underground into persecuted sects, revolutionary atheism, or they survived as a sterile solace for personal comfort of believers, but were unrelated to the great issues of the day. In the West, by contrast, religion remained more vital, more evangelistic, and had given rise to a social Christianity. From the West, to help fill this spiritual vacuum came religious influences from which the Baptists mushroomed.⁵

⁴ Henlee Barnette, Baptist Training Union Magazine, "Three Million Baptists Behind the Iron Curtain," (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, November, 1962), pp. 59,63.

⁵ Theodore H. Von Laue, Why Lenin? Why Stalin?, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott Co., 1964), pp. 46, 47.

Russian Baptists appeared in three areas just after the midpoint of the nineteenth century: in the Caucasus as the Stundist Movement; in the Ukraine from German Pietists, mostly Mennonites, and later from German Baptists; and in Petrograd from English Pietists led by Lord Radstock of the Plymouth Brethren.

Baptists in the U.S.S.R. mark their beginning with the baptism of Voronia, a prosperous Russian merchant, in the Kura River on August 20, 1867. A humble German worker, Martin Malweit, who had become a Baptist before arriving in Tiflis (capitol of Georgia), administered the baptism. By the next year (1868), there was a small Baptist Church under Voronia's leadership in Tiflis.

From the 17th century, all evangelicals who resisted Russian Orthodoxy were suppressed and many put to death, beginning with the schism of the "Old Believers" who separated from the Orthodox Church in 1666. However, from the time of the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 until 1884 when persecution became intense, the Russian people, as a whole, enjoyed a great measure of freedom. Under this new freedom a group of Bible believers, called "Stundists," soon became numerous. The term "Stundist" refers to "Bible Hours" which the believers conducted in their homes and to which others were invited. By 1878, they numbered approximately 300,000. One of the factors contributing to the rapid growth of the Stundists was the translation of the Bible from the Church Slavonic into the Russian language, completed in 1860. About this time and soon after the emancipation of the

serfs (1861), many thousands of peasants wandered across Russia supplied with Scriptures in the vernacular. This widespread Bible distribution gave great impetus to the Stundist movement. In 1884, the first union of Baptists was formed in the Ukraine. It was at this time that persecution was renewed.

The Stundists were described by their neighbors as compassionate, forgiving, industrious, honest, sober and generous people. They were termed heretics, however, by both Church and State, because of their criticism of a "corrupt" Orthodoxy with its ikons, creeds, and ceremonialism. From 1884-1905 they were imprisoned by the State, beaten, and put to death by the hundreds. The laws of July 4, 1894, published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, declared that the evangelicals were dangerous to Church and State activities and therefore the right to assemble for services was prohibited. The terrible persecution that descended upon the Baptists was so overwhelming as to diminish their number from 300,000 to approximately 20,000.

In 1905, a new era of freedom began for Baptists. The "October Manifesto," which accompanied the 1905 revolution, and the setting up of a Parliament called the "Duma," granted basic civil liberties to all, regardless of religion or nationality. It made religious affiliation a matter of free

⁷ Steve Durasoff, The Russian Protestants, (New Jersey: Associated University Press, Inc., 1969), p. 35.

⁸ Michael Bordeaux, Opium of the People, p. 152.

⁹ Charles Lowe, Alexander III of Russia, (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1895), pp. 203-246.

choice for every Russian citizen and gave "Old Believers" and sectarians a legal status, while still retaining the privileged position of the Greek Orthodox Church. With this new freedom, the Baptist churches again grew by leaps and bounds. According to Dr. F. Townley Lord of England, the Russian brethren, who attended the Baptist World Alliance in 1913, announced that they were proudly representing 100,000 Baptists.¹⁰

This rapid growth of Baptists is seen in the light of a corrupt Orthodox Church, evangelical zeal, and the new freedom. There was much truth, indeed, in Tolstoy's criticism of the Orthodox Church's lack of concern for the social issues of the day. From the time of Constantine, the Church had not so much mastered the Kingdom of Caesar as having been subjected to it. "It is incontestable," according to Nicolas Berdyaev, a leading Russian theologian and ideologist, "that in the Revolution, the Orthodox Church had to pay for the sins of the past and the innocent must suffer with the guilty."¹¹

It was for much the same reason, based on injustices of the past, incriminating both State and Church, that Lenin took up the banner of the nihilists and anarchists of the nineteenth century including Michael Bakunin, and Peter Kropotkin. Nicolas Berdyaev felt that the revolution was richly deserved and that the fault lay with Christians who failed to fulfill their duty. Christians ought to have embodied the truth of communism. Had they done so Berdyaev felt that history might have been different. He did not

¹⁰

Henlee Barnette, Baptist Training Magazine, p. 16.

¹¹

Nicolas Berdyaev, The Origin of Russian Communism, (The University of Michigan Press, 1966), pp. 46, 47, Ann Arbor.

approve of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," but he saw Christianity and Communism as being compatible on a voluntary basis, as practiced by the early New Testament Christians.

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Dostoevsky foresaw the Revolution. He understood that socialism was a religious matter, a question of atheism, and that the real concern of the pre-revolutionary intellectuals was not politics, but the salvation of mankind without the help of God. The revolutionaries failed to realize that the failure of the Orthodox Church was a human failure and not a failure of Christianity. Nevertheless, believing with the Slavophiles that "the historic destiny of Russia was to create a social order more just and more human than that of the West," the Bolsheviks promised to achieve, without God and without Christ, what the Church had not accomplished--the brotherhood of man, justice in social life, peace, and the kingdom of God on earth. They could not reconcile the idea of God with the fact of so evil a world, full of injustice and suffering.

13

12
Nicolas Berdyaev, Towards a New Epoch, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949), p. 67.

13
Nicolas Berdyaev, The Russian Idea, (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1948), p. 109.

CHAPTER II

CHANGING CHURCH AND STATE RELATIONS--FIFTY
YEARS IN REVIEW

Having looked into the historical background, we now take a look at Baptists and religious liberty in the U.S.S.R. under the Communist state. Led by Lenin, a follower of Karl Marx, the Bolsheviks capitalized on the fall of the Czar and the desire for freedom on the part of the people. For a brief while, it appeared that the Communists would be tolerant of religion. Baptists were already enjoying legal status. The provisional government had re-established the Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church on October 28, 1917, causing the Orthodox to begin to hope that they might regain their full status, lost under Peter the Great two hundred years before.¹⁴

These expectations were short-lived, however, for on January 23, 1918, the Bolsheviks issued their first decree aimed primarily at Orthodoxy, but calculated to cripple all faiths. Marx and Lenin both had long hated the churches for their irrelevance in the social causes brought on by the industrial revolution. Karl Marx had described religion as the "opiate of the people." Now with great ruthlessness, the attack against the churches began. For six hours every day the Soviet Council of the People's Commissars met under Lenin's chairmanship and a fantastic stream of decrees began to pour out, uprooting every institution and tradition of public life. The new laws stated that there would be "separation of Church from State and

¹⁴Leopold Braun, Religion in Russia, p. 16.

State from Church." This meant that the churches would be permitted to exist, but all church property would become the property of the state, that religious teaching would no longer be permitted in the schools, and that religious activities would be greatly limited.

Patriarch Tikhon refused, at first, to recognize the Soviet regime and called upon the people to resist. Therefore, Orthodoxy came in for greater persecution by the communists than any other group. During and after 1922, the communists imprisoned and shot many bishops and priests. They closed down Church schools, seminaries, hospitals, and most churches or "Houses of Prayer," as Baptists refer to them. By 1925, one thousand and eighty-eight churches were already closed, and their bells were seized for industrial use. In this same year, the League of the Militant Godless was organized to propagate atheism. Churches and monasteries were confiscated to become dance halls, cinemas, and anti-God museums.

Another move to control the Orthodox Church was the organization of a new "Living Church." However, Patriarch Tikhon had been imprisoned, and the laity refused to follow the leadership of the new "Living Church." When these efforts failed, Patriarch Tikhon was given a chance to reconsider his position. Imprisoned since June, 1923, he then renounced his hostility to the Soviet government as an attempt to save the Church.

Sergius succeeded Tikhon as Patriarch in 1926 and made additional concessions to the government, as a necessary evil, hoping that there might be as a result, a Church Council summoned, schools of theology re-opened, a review published, and martyrs released from prison.

15

Matthew Spinka, The Church in Soviet Russia, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. ix.

16

Nikita Struve, Christians in Contemporary Russia, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 39.

During this period, while the Orthodox people were suffering so much, evangelical groups, such as the Baptists, were having their greatest period of freedom; that is, with the exception of the Mennonites who were accused of aiding the Czar and the Monarchy during the Civil War.¹⁷ Having been persecuted heretofore by the Orthodox Church, and having been critical of Orthodox failures, Baptists, for a time, found themselves enjoying considerable freedom. In fact, some writers are of the opinion that the growth of the Evangelical and Baptist faith was being encouraged to break the power of the dominant Orthodox Church.¹⁸ In accordance with the policy of divide and ruin, the Soviets handed over to the Evangelicals and Baptists a number of Orthodox Church buildings, and permitted their ministers to preach in market places and on the steps of cathedrals. An immediate aim of Lenin was to break up the unity of religious bodies and to make each congregation strictly local in character. This struck directly at the hierarchy of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. Religious associations of more than one congregation were prohibited. This policy of liberty for the evangelicals was continued until Stalin came to power in 1929.

Until then, religious as well as anti-religious propaganda was permitted, and the evangelicals grasped every opportunity to spread the Gospel across the Soviet Union for more than a decade. Benefited by the unsettled state of affairs in the countryside, they preached freely in the streets and in the cinemas.¹⁹ By 1928, there were 600 Evangelical and Baptist

¹⁷ Steve Durasoff, The Russian Protestants, p. 82.

¹⁸ Michael Bordeaux, Opium of the People, p. 152.

¹⁹ Constantin Grunwald, The Churches in the Soviet Union, (New York: MacMillan Co., 1962), p. 167.

missionaries ministering all over the Soviet Union, including Siberia, and evangelical strength was numbered at 500,000. Baptists had headquarters in Moscow and Evangelicals in Leningrad. Efforts to merge forces failed at this time. By 1923 at the Baptist World Congress, Russian Baptist representatives reported that 5000 Baptist Sunday Schools were attended by 300,000 boys and girls. They further stated: "We are free to preach the gospel in overflowing halls. We baptize openly in rivers before great crowds of people."²⁰

From 1929 on, however, Baptists suffered as badly as had other Christians in the Soviet Union. Lenin had warned that the religious question must not be pushed into the foreground. He preferred letting the churches "wither away" along with the state as the economic "foundation of society" was transformed. Direct combat with the Church, he realized, could defeat the entire program and prevent success.²¹

However, Stalin did the very thing Lenin had warned against. Believing that religion was already undermined, he amended the constitution, instituting a continuous work week (ending the regular Sunday holidays) and proceeded to set new limitations on the churches in an effort to stamp out religion. In the year 1929, the Constitution of 1924 was amended omitting a previous guarantee of the right of religious propaganda, and leaving the right of "professing a religion" and of "anti-religious propoganda." It deprived the churches of the right to teach religion to groups under eighteen years of age or any private religious instruction of children in groups numbering more than three. It also deprived the churches of the right to organize new parishes, to organize for children, young people, and women, special prayer

²⁰ Steve Durasoff, The Russian Protestants, p. 79.

²¹ Donald W. Treadgold, Twentieth Century Russia, (Chicago: Rand McMillan and Co., 1959), p. 249.

and other meetings; or generally, meetings or literary study, sewing classes
 22
 or teaching of religion. Religious groups were not permitted to maintain
 libraries or reading rooms for the public nor to offer any form of medical
 or charitable aid. Although the implementation of these laws and decrees
 have fluctuated from time to time and place to place, it is significant
 that they have never been revoked. The communist state attacked the Church
 on three levels by depriving them of material means and legal existence, by
 reducing priests and ministers to a status of social inferiority, and by
 attacking religious education. Services of divine worship were barely
 tolerated. The directives of 1929 were aimed primarily at the evangelical
 churches whereas earlier ones had been against the Orthodox churches. Many
 evangelical churches were declared a surplus and closed. By 1939 of
 23
 54,174 evangelical churches, only a few hundred were still open.

Some hope was given by the new Constitution of 1936 which abolished
 the disenfranchisement of priests and all other "non-workers" or "parasites,"
 as the clergy was often called. The decree also abolished discrimination
 against the children of "non-workers" thus allowing the sons and daughters
 24
 of the clergy to enroll in all grades. In the new 1936 Constitution,
 Article 124 reads as follows:

22

Steve Durasoff, The Russian Protestants, p. 79.

23

John S. Curtiss, The Russian Church and The Soviet State, (Boston:
 Little, Brown and Co., 1953), p. 282.

24

N. S. Timasheff, Religion in Soviet Russia, (New York: Sheed and
 Ward, 1942), pp. 48, 49.

In order to insure the citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the U.S.S.R. is separated from the State and the School from the Church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens.²⁵

Appearing to give greater religious freedom to the citizen, it had the effect of putting teeth into the law and further restricting the activities of the churches, because it actually failed to provide for freedom of religious propaganda.

In addition to its efforts to destroy the churches, anti-religious propaganda and the propagation of atheistic communism were increased. In 1930, the League of Militant Godless, an atheist organization sponsored by the regime, claimed 2,000,000 members. In 1931, there were 3,200 "Godless Shock Brigades" claiming 5,000,000 members. An anti-religious newspaper entitled "The Godless" was circulated. However, that their efforts apparently failed to achieve results expected is evident in the remark of Yaroslavsky, in 1937, when he lamented the fact that half the population still remained believers. The 1937 census (that the Communist Party tried to keep secret) revealed that 70% of the people still claimed to be "believers" in God. The Communists were astounded.

A third attack came on all the churches from 1937-1940. There were drastic purges under Stalin who personified the "Iron Rule" of the Tartars, of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, with all of their draconian statutes.²⁶

25

Leopold Braun, Religion in Russia, p. 44.

26

Frederick C. Conybeare, Russian Dissenters, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), p. 26; Svetlana Alliluyeva, Only One Year, (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969), p. 182.

Every effort was made to harrass the churches. For example, electric current rates were quadrupled when applied to the churches. Unnecessary repairs were ordered by "technical commissions." Fuel was sold at exorbitant prices. Taxes were levied out of proportion. Persecution was most severe for all church groups in 1939, but more severe on evangelical groups than on the Orthodox. Many of the clergy were arrested on charges of espionage. The Soviets claim that Baptists decreased from 250,000 in the mid-thirties to 40,000 by 1942. Many Baptists were worshipping secretly.

This rampage of militant atheism continued until the Nazi invasion of the U.S.S.R. in World War II when expediency led Stalin to relax many of these measures. In fact, a dramatic reversal toward religion was noted by some observers during the year 1943. A part of this reversal was due to the fact that when Hitler invaded Russia in 1941, the people from the churches responded to the call to come to the aid of their country. Many evangelicals served with distinction including 300 members of the Moscow Baptist Church who were killed in action.

The other side of the picture was Stalin's fear of a counter-revolution when the word filtered through that wherever Hitler came, he liberated the churches, restored their property, and permitted freedom in the teaching and propagation of the gospel. Reacting to Hitler's crusade, Stalin brought the churches back to life. Hastily, Patriarch Sergius was reinstated. Many churches were restored and given limited use of the media of mass appeal--including radio talks and trips outside the Soviet Union--everything to impress the world of freedom of religion in the U.S.S.R.

Reporters from the outside world began to praise the Communists for their liberal attitudes, and denounced Hitler's talk of Soviet persecution.²⁸ Churches were again crowded. The people literally thronged to worship. There were tears of joy everywhere. The league of the "Militant Godless" was dissolved, and religious liberty was used as propaganda for international Communism.²⁹

While the Russian people were enjoying new religious liberty, there was a similar religious revival among the Soviet soldiers facing danger and death. At such a time, faith in a Supreme Being is most spontaneous and necessary. Thus, it was due to the War and its manifold results that the institutional Church recovered her life and regained her position within the social system that excluded her.³⁰

On July 1, 1944, the Soviet Union organized a Commission for Affairs of Religious Cults. This, in theory, made all religions equal. The Communist Party had begun to see that it was easier to keep religion within limits when under the jurisdiction of a well-organized Church. In October, 1944, the Evangelical Church and the Baptists were encouraged to unite. The merger was called the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB). Such a union was not unwelcome to the churches because many had hoped for this since 1920, and it had been proposed as early as

28

Leopold Braun, Religion in Russia, p. 75.

29

David L. Edwards, Religion and Change, (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 67.

30

Nikita Struve, Christians in Contemporary Russia, p. 77.

1884. One writer states that when the union was completed, many delegates wept for joy as they embraced one another. The Pentecostals joined the Union in 1945. The merger, prompted by the Soviet Commission on Religious Affairs, accomplished a religious feat unparalleled anywhere else in the world--a union of Baptists and Pentecostals. Preceding the merger, Moscow had maintained regular correspondence with both the Baptists and Evangelicals. The headquarters building for the new council, erected following World War II, is a handsome building with office space and prayer hall, located in the city of Moscow.

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The evangelical churches soon realized that the merger was another strategy of the State to enslave the churches and to shackle their progress. From 1948 until the death of Stalin, restrictions increased on the churches, but the State did not resort to direct persecution. Following the death of Stalin in 1953, the churches enjoyed a period of relative freedom, beginning in 1954, reaching a peak in 1957, but ending abruptly in 1958. In 1945, the League of Militant Atheists, dissolved since World War II, took on a "new look." It began to operate more subtly under the new name of the "All-Union Society for the Diffusion of Political and Scientific Knowledge." Under this pompous title, it continued its attack on religion.

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However, after Khrushchev signed the Central Committee decree of November 10, 1954, in which the attitude of the State towards religious

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Steve Durasoff, The Russian Protestants, p. 105.

32

Leopold Braun, Religion in Russia, p. 73.

activities was relaxed, a brief but effective "thaw" began for the churches. The Soviet authorities decided it was time to promote the image of the Soviet regime as tolerant and especially interested in building world peace. The secret police ceased to spread terror and Khrushchev announced a policy of "peaceful co-existence." Khrushchev made his famous de-Stalinization speech in February, 1956, attempting to place the blame for the horrors of the past on Stalin, thus freeing the present leadership of blame.

Regardless of motivation, freedom of worship, theoretically guaranteed by the Constitution in 1936, became, to some extent, a practical reality between 1954-58. In 1956, the Orthodox Church was allowed to publish its first edition of the Bible since the Revolution. Many of those 50,000 copies, however, never got to the churches. Even this number would have meant only two Bible per parish. Of course, the Soviet government proudly announced to the public that they had no need for western Bibles. In exchange for this publication privilege, the Orthodox Church was expected to contribute to the new world image of the Soviet Union by magnifying the position of the new Patriarch, Alexis, and to establish communication with Orthodox groups outside of Russia.

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In 1955, Khrushchev was to modify his statement on "peaceful co-existence" saying that this does not mean that communism had modified its fundamental attitude towards religion. Thus, we see again, that the long

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33 William C. Fletcher and Anthony Stover, Religion and the Search for New Ideals, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), p. 37.

34

Michael Bordeaux, Opium of the People, p. 63.

35

O. K. Armstrong, Religion Can Conquer Communism, (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), p. 127.

range goal of communism is to destroy religion, but the short range goals, because of expediency, may bring about moderation and toleration from time to time. In 1959, the government began to put into operation a concerted plan for the final liquidation of the Church. The Concordat of 1943 was, therefore, broken, although outwardly it was still observed. So, in spite of Khrushchev's attempt to repudiate the horrors of the past, the years following 1959 saw a partial rehabilitation of Stalin himself.

Let us now look at some of the reasons for this change. The new resurgence of religion among youth had become a threat to the Party's attempt to indoctrinate the oncoming generation. This was the reason behind the decision in 1958 to close down theological colleges and to renew attacks in the press on young believers. It was thought that the Church would die with the older generation. This was not proving to be the case. Nine per cent of the bishops were aged 30-49 in 1949 compared with 15% between the ages of 30-49 in 1959. This indicated that religion was not dying. Another factor was the jealousy on the part of the Communist youth in that the average parish priest received from 3000-4000 rubles annually, as much as the income of the average skilled engineer. This came about because the churches were forbidden to engage in any kind of educational programs, hospital ministries or mission endeavors, leaving them with only minimum operational bills. Therefore, some of the clergy were highly paid.

36
Nikita Struve, Christians in Contemporary Russia, p. 94.

37
Fred Schwarz, Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, "After Stalin," (Long Beach, California, Dec. 1, 1970), p. 5.

38
William C. Fletcher, Religion and the Search for New Ideals, p. 43.

More than this, the Communist Party was putting the finishing touches to their new twenty year plan (Third Programme of 1961) for the complete establishment of communism and could not tolerate such a contradiction between that goal and the revival of "religious superstitions."

Making the Church a scapegoat could have been intended, also, as a reply to the Chinese Maoists who have accused the Russians of "revisionism." Whatever the reasons, the first onslaught of 1959 was most brutal. It included all religious groups: Old Believers, the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Moslem, Buddhist, Baptist and other evangelical sects.

In 1960, following the Congress of the Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge, Khrushchev ordered all regional Party organizations to strictly enforce all existing laws affecting religious organizations. They were to determine whether there were any unregistered groups in the community, to study the activities of the church and methods used to expand its sphere of influence, to seek to unmask the most active church members, to expose ministers who unlawfully execute religious rites in private homes of believers or who receive gifts without proper receipts, or conceal income from taxation offices; and to expose unregistered ministers of religion who appear illegally in a community to perform religious rites. They endeavored to close in record time the greatest number of churches. Churches close to school buildings were closed as "likely to influence impressionable minds." Agreements for leasing churches were annulled. Some

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George L. Kline, Religious and Anti-religious Thought in Russia, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 156.

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Michael Bordeaux, Religious Ferment in Russia, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), p. 15.

churches were closed on the pretence that modern travel facilities allow one church site to serve as large an area as two or three sites served earlier. If the membership of a church dropped below twenty, it could be closed.⁴¹ In September, 1961, a Baptist congregation gathered in its building to worship for the last time. It tearfully sang "Blest Be the Tie that Binds." The next day the steeple was removed, and the building was converted into a T-V station and dance hall.⁴² On some pretext, the priest's registration could be canceled. Then, if the church was not being used (for lack of leadership), the keys of the church must be given up. Others were closed when clergy were forbidden to serve more than one parish, thus depriving many groups of leadership. Only eight out of twenty-five remained in Kiev.⁴³ Twenty years afterward, ministers were accused of collaborating with the Germans in World War II. Others were charged with trying to "lure" children to church services or attempting to open new churches.

Repressive measures began to be taken. Taxation became a burden, so that many clergy lived in poverty. After 1960 the levy on the clergy was increased to as much as 83% of their salary compared with 13% for the average citizen. Parish incomes also came under attack. They were told to sell candles at cost price--thus losing 75% of their profits. After three years of persecution, the clergy had diminished by half. The seminaries were closed legally by drafting most of the seminarians into military service before they could be ordained.⁴³

⁴¹ George Kline, Religious and Anti-religious Thought in Russia, p. 149.

⁴² W. A. Criswell, In Defense of the Faith, (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 46.

⁴³ Nikita Struve, Christians in Contemporary Russia, p. 300.

Everything was done to keep people from attending services of the churches. In 1961, it was decided that Easter Sunday should be a working day, and processions around the Church were forbidden. A law was passed in 1962 forbidding minors to enter a church. Greater efforts were made to isolate children as completely as possible from the influence of religion, and to combat religious upbringing by the formation of numerous state-run boarding schools to which children of parents with "fanatical religious beliefs" were sent. There were many legal proceedings against parents who brought up their children as Christians to the exclusion of Socialist activities, i.e. Pioneers, Komsomols, clubs, theatres, etc. This applied also where one parent wished the child brought up as a Christian and the other as a Communist. Competitive entertainment such as noisy dances near the churches and "spontaneous" vandalism were permitted to hamper the churches.

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During the era of Khrushchev, as well as at the present time, the Party was concerned with projecting two images. To the outside world, the Soviet Union wishes to be known as a progressive country. Inside Russia, however, Christianity is represented as being everything bourgeois and decadent, the enemy of Communist goals. The outstanding example of Communist hypocrisy is that they take visitors to the Moscow Baptist Church, which is usually crowded, with 700 seated and many others standing around

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Nikita Struve, Christians in Contemporary Russia, pp. 21, 296.

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Michael Bordeaux, Opium of the People, p. 202.

the walls. What they do not tell their guests is that this is the only Baptist Church permitted in Moscow. If Baptists had the freedom to do so, there would most likely be hundreds of such churches packed in this great city of 6,500,000 people.⁴⁶

Since the fall of Khrushchev in 1964, there seems to be a trend toward greater objectivity. Everything is done legally, if possible. It is clear that the authorities are anxious not to create new martyrs. The trend toward outward religious freedom continues under the leadership of Aleksei Kosygin (Premier) and Leonid Brezhnev (First Party Secretary), but the laws are very stringent and are supervised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Some arrests, of unregistered groups, continue to be made. Under Stalin, especially after 1936, anyone suspected of the slightest evidence of disaffection, was executed or consigned to the living death of a slave labor concentration camp. Under Brezhnev and Kosygin protesters are more apt to be given trials on charge of having violated this or that clause of the penal code.⁴⁷

The famous Yugoslav author, Milovan Djilas, observed recently in the New York Times: "It appears that the military is in ascendance over the party apparatus and that its leaders are more able than civilian functionaries." This means that the Communist bureaucracy has obtained a certain stability--free from the fear of purge, and of the secret police.⁴⁸

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O. K. Armstrong, Religion Can Conquer Communism, p. 127.

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W. H. Chamberlain, The Russian Review, "The Voice of Silent Russia," Vol. 28, No. 2, April 1969, p. 152.

48

Milovan Djilas, "Growing Dissent in Russia," New York Times, Jan. 5, 1971, p. 3.

V. Kuroyedov, a spokesman of the governmental Council on Religious Affairs in the U.S.S.R., seeks to prove that several changes in the Soviet laws regarding religious cults (adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. in 1966) did not limit religious freedom, as imperialist propaganda is insinuating, but were to discourage the "growing religious dissent" in Russia. Mr. Kuroyedov makes special reference here to Baptist dissenters (Initsiativniki) and to other unregistered evangelical sects who fall in this category. ⁴⁹

In the changing scene since 1917, we have noted under Lenin, Orthodox persecution and Baptist freedom. This was followed by severe persecution of all religions, under Stalin until World War II which made greater freedom a necessity for Soviet survival. After Stalin's death, there was a period of greater liberty, only to be followed, under Khrushchev, by another effort to weaken the churches. This latter policy continues in varying degrees, but with greater emphasis on legality and containment of the churches.

CHAPTER III
 CONFLICTING OPINIONS ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
 IN THE U.S.S.R.

A recent delegation of Negro ministers visited in Russia in August, 1970. They expressed surprise and were quite pleased to find freedom of worship, and respect for the individual. "It means," said Reverend Bernard Holliday, "that the Church in Russia has a future." The delegation was permitted to meet the U.S.S.R. Ministers' Council for Religious Cults and the acting Patriarch, Metropolitan Pimen.

Joseph Nordenhaug, former executive secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, reported following his visit to Russia in 1966 that most of the services of the Moscow Baptist Church lasted two hours and a half. Participating in ten services, he found the Church packed to overflowing with an estimated 2000 worshippers at every service. This is the only building available for the use of Baptists in the great city of Moscow, a city of six and a half million people. However, the Church in Moscow has 20 ministers. At St. Olaf's in Tallinn, [Estonia], he reported that 3,500 persons attended each of the two services.

Dr. Hampton Chiles of High Point, North Carolina was privileged to go with a group of twenty-five heart specialists to visit Russia in June, 1970. He reported that the only church buildings he saw on his three week

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Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. IX, Nos. 21, 22, Nov., 1970., p. 186.

51
 Josef Nordenhaug, Official Report of the Eleventh Congress of the Baptist World Alliance, "The Truth that Makes Men Free," (Nashville: The Broadman Press, 1966), p. 5.

trip, including a guided tour from Moscow to Leningrad were Russian Orthodox Church buildings converted into museums (five of them within the Kremlin walls), or boarded up and unused. He asked his guide if there were not some active churches in Russia. The guide informed him that there were many, but did not offer to include them on the tour.⁵² Dr. Chiles admitted that he did not seek to find any of the active churches.

According to "TASS," the Soviet government News Agency, "Russian Christians have no reason for anxiety, as the right to profess any religion, or none at all, is guaranteed in Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution."⁵³

Of course, freedom of worship is guaranteed by the Constitution. G. Z. Anashkin, Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Court's collegium for criminal cases writes that

Freedom of conscience means the citizen's right to profess any religion or none, and freedom to engage in religious worship, insofar as this does not violate public order and is not accompanied by infringement of the personal rights, honor and dignity of citizens; and in freedom of anti-religious propaganda, without tolerating offenses to the religious feelings of believers.⁵⁴

This does not mean that one can use religious views as an excuse to avoid fulfilling civic duties. And, by the same token, it is not permissible to impose additional obligations upon anyone because of his religious beliefs.⁵⁵

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Dr. Hampton Chiles's report to the Trinity Ruritan Club in Trinity, North Carolina on Jan. 26, 1971.

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O. K. Armstrong, Religion Can Conquer Communism, p. 125.

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Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XVII, No. 11, pp. 16, 17.

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Soviet Society, Vol. VII, No. 3, Dec. 1967, (From Kom Sou Lat, No. 4, April, 1967, pp. 71-74, Latvia).

While legislation does not permit the teaching of children in groups, it does not deny the parents the right to raise their children in a religious spirit inasmuch as the January 23, 1918 decree of the Council of People's Commissars proclaimed that citizens can teach and children can be taught privately. Anashkin comments further that some judges have an incorrect understanding of the provisions of Article 227 of the Russian Penal Code, and that in some cases where citizens have been wrongly penalized for religious practices, the courts mistakes in question have been corrected immediately and the convicted persons rehabilitated.

The decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R., 1969 lists the following as infringements of the Law: --failing to register any religious group with the government, conducting children's meetings or offering courses of instruction, levying of taxes by any Church group, distribution of leaflets that encourage infringement of Soviet laws, conducting of religious meetings that prejudice worshippers against the Communist Social Order, or depriving any citizen of his rights to work or to attend an educational institution because of his religious faith. This recognizes the fact that while the government expects the loyalty of its citizens to the Communist social order, it also insists that the citizen not be discriminated against because of his religious faith. However, as we shall see, what is proposed is not always that which is carried out in actual practice. The changes in the Law of 1966 gave a first offense a lighter penalty and a second offense a stiffer penalty.

According to the Communist government's interpretation, the Soviet law which guarantees freedom of conscience does not recognize freedom for "religious fanaticism" and other anti-social actions. If religion is intermingled with political activity that works against the Communist Party, this also is a violation.⁵⁷ The Soviets consider Jehovah Witnesses with headquarters in New York, not a religious sect, but a political one. Working underground, they encourage citizens not to attend the theatre, or read fiction; they refuse to serve in the Soviet Army and instill hatred for the Soviet Union in their underground printing of literature.⁵⁸

The Soviets consider the Baptist groups who have withdrawn from the Baptist Union, and are therefore unregistered groups, as lawbreakers. After breaking away from the officially registered sect of the All-Union Council of Evangelicals--Baptists, they set up their own secret organization that ignores Soviet state laws on religion. They forbid their children to join Communist youth groups, to read 'worldly books,' to sing and dance, to watch television or to attend a movie. To the Communists, their desire to isolate the believers from Soviet Society is to indoctrinate them with a hostile attitude to life.

These conservative Baptists began to organize Sunday schools and other illegal activities. The Soviets insist that they wish to have as fair a chance at the children as religion has. Therefore, dissident Baptists are punished for their law-breaking, and not for their beliefs.

⁵⁷ Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XIV, No. 25, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XV, No. 2, p. 29.

Registration may be refused to such a religious society if its aims, methods, teachings and rites entail violation of the laws or encroachment upon the personal rights of citizens.

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Braznik, a Communist official, criticized Michael Bordeaux, former visiting student in Moscow, for blaming the Soviets for shifts in policy on the religious question, as if the Communists were responsible for the shifts in doctrine within the Baptist groups. Braznik feels that Bordeaux has overlooked the widening gap between liberal and conservative Baptists. Most of the Baptists according to Braznik, are becoming more liberal in regard to the Soviet State requirements in order to keep the young people, while the conservatives call this 'worldly.' In Braznik's viewpoint freedom of conscience does not mean, "as some clergymen would like," that the activities of religious organizations should be completely unrestricted; that they may do whatsoever they wish without regard for the laws and customs of the country. The chief requirement, he explains, is that they confine their activities to satisfying the religious needs of believers, without disturbing public order and without infringing upon the person and rights of citizens. Braznik further explains that the Council of Ministers on Religious Affairs has warned the people concerning these illegalities, but nevertheless, they persist in their violations.

In speaking of the "Initiators" (the secessionist Baptists), he says, "one should, of course, make a distinction between the dissenting leaders

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Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XXI, No. 43, p. 13. (From Izvestia, Oct. 18, 1969).

and the rank and file Baptists, the great majority of whom are honest citizens." He reports that many of the Baptists who first followed the "Initiators," have realized their error and have broken with them. 60

On this basis, representatives of Soviet authority and many church leaders consistently deny any violations of religious freedom in the U.S.S.R. At the Lutheran World Federation in France, July, 1970, archpriest P. Sokolovsky, fraternal delegate of the Moscow Patriarchate, emphatically declared that all statements alleging that there is religious oppression and anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union represent Cold War propaganda and are not true. 61

The main body of Soviet believers is the ancient Orthodox Church, which in 1967 claimed 45 million adherents and 22 million regular churchgoers. Moslems are the second largest religious group in the Soviet Union. Other groups include Roman Catholics, Armenian Catholics, Old Believers, Buddhists, Jews, Lutherans, Evangelical Christians-Baptists, and a variety of unregistered sects. Church leaders contend, for the most part, except for the unregistered sects, that they have freedom of worship. 62

60
Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XVIII, No. 35, pp. 4,5.
 (Statement by Kuroyedov, Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Ministers' Council on Religious Affairs, Izvestia, Aug. 30, 1966.)

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op. cit., Vol. IX, Nos., 17,18, Sept. 1970, p. 135, (from Izvestia, "Religious Freedom on Soviet Terms").

62
World Book Encyclopedia, Yearbook, 1967. p. 567.

The Patriarch of the Orthodox Church has deliberately made his church a tool of the government. Accordingly there is little conflict between the Russian Orthodox Church and the State. Present Church and State relations reminded Matthew Spinks of the Tsarist period when a similar relation existed, with the exception that at the present time these two bodies are constitutionally separated and the government is officially non-religious and anti-religious. Thus the present state of the Orthodox Church, because of subservience to the State, is more restricted than ever before.⁶³

In recognition of this spirit of cooperation, the award of the Order of the Red Banner of Labor was presented to "Alexei, Patriarch of Moscow and all the Russians," on his 80th birthday for his great patriotic activity in the fight for peace. At his death, at age ninety-two, on April 17, 1970, the obituary read, "For his tireless efforts in defense of peace, the Patriarch was awarded many Soviet and foreign orders."⁶⁴ To impress the world concerning religious freedom, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical-Christians-Baptists and other groups were permitted to join the World Council of Churches in 1961.

The Orthodox graduated 451 priests from their seminaries from 1943-1969. Also, in response to orders placed by the Moscow Patriarchate and the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, large editions of the Bible

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Matthew Spinka, The Church in Soviet Russia, p. xi.

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Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XIV, No. 45, p. 25.

were issued during 1968 (20,000 volumes) as well as the Koran and other books. Religious magazines of these groups are also published periodically.⁶⁵ It is quite evident that the registered groups who cooperate with the government do enjoy some degree of freedom.

Baptists became quite prominent in Russia following their merger with other evangelical Christians in October, 1944, thus forming the largest Protestant group in Russia.⁶⁶ With the merger of the Pentecostals and Mennonites a year later (1945), the total membership of this Union was estimated at 5,400 congregations with 512,000 members. Including all regular worshippers, the number is estimated to be as high as 3,000,000. They are a very spiritual people and imbued with a deep patriotism. The All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCEB) consists of twenty-five members, experienced ministers of the ECB churches. It elects a working Presidium from among its members. Located in Moscow, the Presidium consists of nine people including a chairman, a general secretary, and a treasurer. It appoints senior presbyters (pastors) for each district, region and republic. The presbyters are to observe and see that discipline is maintained in the communities in accordance with the AUCEB and the Soviet Laws on religious cults. The AUCEB is responsible to the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults attached to the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. In preparation for the All Union Congress of Evangelicals-Baptists, October 4-6, 1966, no less than 64 regional conferences were held for electing delegates to the Congress. A total of

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Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XXI, No. 43, p. 13.

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Adolph Klaupiks, "Baptists in the U.S.S.R.--as They Begin their Second Century," The Baptist World, Vol. 15, No. 3, Mar. 1968, Washington D. C., p. 8.

1,026 representatives attended. This group included Baptists, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Mennonites and representatives of the dissenting unregistered group of Baptists called "Initiativniki," a splinter group of the Baptist Union since 1961. The Congress meets every three years. The Council of twenty-five meets each year.

The spirit of the Congress participants was one of optimism concerning future prospects for the churches in the Soviet Union. Sunday, October 30, 1966, was observed as a day of fasting for Christian unity. The tensions in relation to the unaffiliated and unregistered groups of Baptists was a primary concern. The number of "dissenters" was estimated at 15,000 while the Baptist Union had an estimated 550,000.⁶⁷ A Committee on Reconciliation was elected, and a former member of the dissenting group was appointed to be a full-time worker for healing the wounds inflicted by the rift. This committee held several consultations with the dissident Baptist groups during the following year. The result, according to Timchenko, a Baptist pastor, is that the leaders of the Council and of the dissenting group have come to an understanding, and now face the crucial test of reconciling the churches in the process of reuniting. Russian Baptists celebrated their centenary (1867-1967) in August, 1967. "This was a time of genuine thanksgiving and jubilation in all the Churches."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Josef Nordenhaug, Official Report of the Eleventh Congress of the Baptist World Alliance, pp. 7-9.

⁶⁸ Adolph Klaupiks, The Baptist World, p. 9.

Michael Zhidkov, 41, chief pastor of the 5000 member congregation of the Moscow Baptist Church reported recently to the European Baptist Confederation meeting in Vienna, Austria, that

Last year, 114 persons were baptized into the Moscow Baptist Church above the age of 18. Sometimes, something is said about persecution of believers in our country. It is not so. Religion as such is not persecuted in Russia. There are believers who are held in prison who think they are suffering for their faith. It is not so. It must be said to our great sorrow that some brothers have differed with us in regard to methods of work and decided on a course of open infringement of the laws on religious cults. It is well known that, in any state, guilty people are made responsible for breaking the law. Some of the Baptist dissenters are deliberately inviting arrest by openly violating the laws.

Zhidkov further reported that 30,000 hymnals and 20,000 Bibles had been recently printed (1969).⁶⁹

The All Union Council of Evangelical Christian-Baptists in Moscow, December 6, 1969 reported that they enjoy the right to freely profess their faith, to hold public divine services, including the preaching of the gospel, and to found new groups. During the past three years, 13,000 new members were received by baptism. Many local churches have been registered and reopened. Their magazine, The Fraternal Herald, (Bratskii Vestnik), a 70-page review, appears regularly. Two-year courses on Bible are conducted at the AUCECB headquarters in Moscow, and in 1970, there were 100 in the first graduating class. The school is primarily a correspondence school, but scholars are called in for consultation and testing. The strongest churches are in the Ukraine, numbering from 1000-5000 in membership. Other smaller churches are scattered; many in the Baltic countries and in the Far East.

"It would be difficult in this day," said Rev. Timchenko, one of the Baptist pastors, "to find a city or town in Russia without a Baptist Church." Based on statements of the unregistered Baptist groups, one cannot help questioning this statement. Russian Baptists are permitted to be active in the Baptist World Alliance, the World Council of Churches and the Christian Peace Conference.

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Not all the voices coming from the Soviet Union agree, however, that the churches enjoy religious liberty. Most of the official statements from the churches are often presented in such a way as to avoid criticism of the Communist Party and to protect the freedom they have. It is more significant, what their publications do not tell. For example, the Fraternal Messenger, published since 1946, has a circulation of only 5000 copies. This is not even enough for each of the 5,400 churches to receive one copy. Nor do they mention that the 20,000 Bibles and 30,000 hymnals permitted during the past ten years do not begin to meet the needs of the people. We must remember also, that when a pastor declares that Baptists enjoy real freedom of worship that he is making the assertion against the background of the state of affairs prior to the Revolution of 1917. He remembers that before the coming of the Communists to power, the Baptists were severely persecuted by the Russian Orthodox Church.

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The editor of the special publication of the National Council of Churches, Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, does not deny that there

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Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. IX, Nos. 9, 10, May, 1970, p. 66. Steve Durasoff, The Russian Protestants, p. 274.

71

Paul Geren, Christians Confront Communism, p. 29.

are thousands of churches open in the Soviet Union, but expresses his concern that the Soviet authorities, the Council and the deputies, and others in the bureaucracy have not permitted the opening of more churches when formal requests have been submitted in accordance with existing legal procedures. He feels that they themselves have helped to develop disloyal attitudes by delays or rejections of such requests.

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Another scarcely known fact about Soviet religious life is that there are in existence over forty sects and schismatic groups. Among these are the "Pure Baptists" and the "Initiativniki." When the Initiativniki staged a mass exodus from the AUCECB, they boldly demanded the Soviet Union's permission to organize their own independent union. They were flatly refused, and immediately they became illegal, unregistered groups, subject to persecution under Soviet laws.

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Some evangelicals refused to join the AUCECB judging it subservient to the Soviet government, an evil dishonoring God. They objected also to the strict regulations against evangelism, Christian education, and social ministries. These elements, many believe, are indispensable to a virile Church. Because of these restrictions, many became a part of the "underground."

The dissension seems to have gained momentum in 1960, when the AUCECB was pressured by the Ministry of Cults into publishing "New Statutes"

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David E. Kucharsky, "Russian Revolution Yields Bitter Fruit," Christianity Today, April 24, 1970, p. 42.

73

Steve Durasoff, The Russian Protestants, p. 18.

and "Letters of Instruction" which said that proselytizing of people in a community must stop, that children are not permitted to attend services, that baptism of those 18-30 is to be kept at a minimum, that each church must appoint new "councils of twenty" consisting of literate people, capable of ruling a community and who would honestly carry out the Soviet laws, suggestions and requests, that Senior Presbyters were no longer to preach, and that the churches were no longer to seek new converts. Later a compromise was reached permitting Senior Presbyters to preach under stricter supervision and the baptismal age of "not under thirty years of age" changed to "full adulthood." The old councils according to the Communists, were deemed untrustworthy and made up almost entirely of the elderly, illiterate or fanatical people, not worthy of entrustment of state property.⁷⁴

The dissident Baptists on February 25, 1962 condemned these two principal documents of the AUCECB as being contrary to the New Testament. They sought to persuade the Council to change their attitude by quoting Scriptures. Failing in these efforts, the Organizing Committee of dissenters sought to take over the leadership of the ECB Churches and in the name of the ECB excommunicated the executive council of the AUCECB (then composed of only ten members), as no longer being a part of the Church of Christ. An appeal followed for the repentance of the Council and a request was made to the Soviet government asking for a free Congress of the ECB churches to resolve their differences. The government denied this request in that it was a Church matter of which the AUCECB was still in charge. The All-Union Council of Evangelicals-Baptists refused to call a congress to consider these matters.

⁷⁴ William C. Fletcher, Religion and the Search for New Ideals, pp. 68-70; Religious Ferment in Russia, p. 16.

The Organizing Committee of dissenters then appealed to all the churches of the Baptist Union to renounce the AUCECB. Examples of unchristian behaviour among these ministers was cited to discredit their leadership. They were described as untrustworthy spies and agents of the Soviet government. "It is evident," they wrote, "that the Council on Religious Affairs is bent on destroying the churches." They felt that the time had come to challenge the strict rules under which religion is barely permitted to exist in Russia.

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To their own people the organizing committee wrote:

We know that by refusing to accept this worldly, central religious leadership we may suffer many storms, bearing tribulation with them, but the Lord will be with us. And we know that if we faint along the way He will bear us up in His arms. (Ps. 91:12; Isa. 40; 29, 31). So beloved in the Lord, cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward. (Heb. 10:35).⁷⁶

In a letter to the Commission on the Constitution, addressed to Comrade L. I. Brezhnev, they wrote in 1966:

Now that a new constitution is being drafted, what moment could be more opportune for bringing an end to injustice and illegality towards Christian citizens. In the name of ECB Christians we beg you to give maximum clarity to the article on freedom of conscience in the Constitution now being worked out by you, so that the clause contains a guarantee of true freedom of conscience, i.e., to include freedom of religious propaganda, without which there can be no true freedom of conscience.

When no satisfactory answer to this letter was received, the Organizing Committee set up its own organization called "The Council of Churches of the Evangelical Christians and Baptists" (CCECB). In December, 1965

75

Michael Bordeaux, Religious Ferment in Russia, p. 27; Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. VII, No. 4, p. 24.

76

Ibid., p. 104.

the CCECB began to circulate its own statutes--all illegally. Assaulted and arrested for meeting in a wooded area, one group was informed that such persecution would continue until they either (1) stopped believing in God, (2) went over to congregations which acknowledge the AUCECB, or, (3) became Orthodox converts. Instead, the ECB believers identified themselves with the New Testament Christians, expressing their willingness, if need be, to die for their faith in Christ.⁷⁷

With their rejection of the AUCECB, the Baptist dissenters began an enlarged evangelistic effort including secret Bible classes with children and youth, baptism of children, the circulation of a mimeographed "Fraternal leaflet" and other writings printed on their underground printing devices. Many churches took the liberty of conducting choir practices and celebrated birthday parties as evangelistic opportunities.⁷⁸

The dissidents claimed immunity from the Soviet laws on the grounds of Constitutional separation of Church and State in the U.S.S.R. They reminded their prosecutors that the Soviet government had endorsed the "Human Rights" clause of the United Nations. However, their basic defense as Christians, for which they were willing to die, was that of the New Testament Christians--⁷⁹ "we must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29).

77

Michael Bordeaux, Religious Ferment in Russia, pp. 113, 122.

78

Steve Durasoff, The Russian Protestants, p. 16; L. J. Bass, "Struggle for Youth," Underground Evangelism, July, 1970, p. 9.

79

Religion in Communist Dominated Areas (RCDA), Vol. VIII, No. 5, March, 1969, p. 41.

Underground Baptist churches were criticized by Lenin's Banner in Moscow for illegal activities including public prayer in unauthorized places and the giving instructions to children. The newspaper reported that a number of secret congregations in the Moscow area are affiliated with the Initiativniki. The Party newspaper also charged that, besides refusing to cooperate with officials, the dissident Baptists "undermine the state by encouraging people to devote themselves to God rather than to secular concerns, and that they slander the state by complaining of religious persecution. They recognized, however, that the leaders of this movement were to be distinguished from ordinary Baptists, the majority of whom being Soviet citizens of integrity. The overwhelming majority of the ECB believers, not only do not condone all these anti-social and illegal doings of the "Action Group," but on the contrary, censure them.

The Soviet government called for suppression of the new organizational Committee and, thereafter, cruel persecutions fell on the adherents of this movement, especially on the leadership. Thus, the Presbyterian of the Moscow congregation of E.C.B., S. I. Tobachkov, was arrested on May 17, 1966 and sentenced to two years deprivation of freedom for a prayer meeting conducted in a private home, in spite of testimony by neighbors that this meeting did not disturb the social order. There were other cases in which many healthy believers were committed to mental hospitals. Other religious

80
L. J. Bass, "Inside Russia Today," Underground Evangelism, April, 1969, p. 8; Michael Bordeaux, Religious Ferment in Russia, p. 5.

81
RCDA, "Court Verdict," Vol. VII, No. 5, pp. 26, 32, 45.

leaders were accused of anti-patriotism, refusal to serve in the military, a negative attitude toward society and the world around them, and deceptive teaching leading to emotional illness even in children.

T. K. Ferdak and Vladimir Vilchinsky, leaders of an unregistered sect in Brest were officially indicted for conducting an illegal meeting. (A photograph was taken as evidence.) They refused to comply with a police order to disperse their meeting. Children were called upon to testify at the trial that from early years they were taught religion. They were accused of possessing illegal literature for distribution, and for discouraging children from attending meetings of the Pioneers and Komsomol.

The court stated:

On the basis of the above counts, and guided by Articles 304,316,317 and 319 of the Criminal Code BSSR, the Court has sentenced Vilchinsky and Ferdak as being recognized guilty of organizing activity and of leading a group aimed at breaking the laws on separation of Church and State and School from Church. Ferdak and Vilchinsky are sentenced to loss of freedom for five years without confiscation of property to be carried out in correctional labor camp of general type for each to begin April 17, 1968. This verdict can be appealed to the Brest Oblast Court through the People's Court of the City of Brest within seven days from the date of the delivery of copy of this verdict to the convicted parties.

People's Judge: Schukin
 People's Assessors: Donilchuk and Tsimbakst

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Michael Bordeaux, Religious Ferment in Russia, p. 145.

83

Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, "Court Verdict," Vol. VII, No. 5, pp. 26, 32, 45.

84

Ibid., p. 46.

Some of the parents of the children involved did appeal. They stated that it was a result of the state taking their registration away from the community in Brest and the consequent destruction of their House of Prayer that the group was made illegal. Therefore, it became necessary for the parents to take upon themselves the responsibility for divine services and for their children being taught their religious faith. They reminded the Public Prosecutor that the action taken was in violation of the "Human Rights" clause of the United Nations which the Soviet Union had endorsed. They further indicated that the meeting for which they were arrested was a special event in celebration of the 100th year Jubilee of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist movement in Russia. (1867-1967). This was respectfully submitted by "The Five Hundred Member Community of Evangelical Christians of Brest."⁸⁵

A detailed document sent to the West in the fall of 1969 from dissident Protestants estimated that tens of thousands of believers died in prison or in exile between 1929 and 1961, and that more than 500 brethren have been arrested and imprisoned since 1961, chiefly ministers and presbyters of the churches. Among those listed are "our dear young sisters with clean hearts forced in prisons and camps in the depths of sin and depravity among fallen women." The full document, typed and single-spaced, stretched across eight pages. With it were sixty-two signatures and dates concerning 174 Christians most recently arrested, their place of imprisonment, the next of kin, and the number of dependents.⁸⁶

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Ibid., p. 92.

86

David E. Kucharsky, Christianity Today, April 24, 1970, p. 42.

In a letter to U Thant and the United Nations, the Council on Relatives of Prisoners, elected by the ECB Churches, tells of new arrests, trials and intensified persecution during 1970 of ECB Church leaders including the sentencing of the Secretary of the CCECB, Gregory Vins, to one year of hard labor despite the testimony of the Church to his spiritual service in accordance with his election by the Society in Kiev. On January 4, 1970, in the city of Krivoi Rog, the ECB Church submitted documents for registration and the believers consider the police raid, at a subsequent time, the answer to the question of registration. The government refused to register them. ⁸⁷

In Joshkar, V. Kozlov, father of six small children was condemned for "the word of God" and deprived of six years of freedom. His family was left without income and yet his wife was fined 75 rubles for letting her house be used for a worship meeting. Believers' homes are often searched and children experience indescribable harassment. They are subjected to interrogations everywhere with the aim of incriminating relatives and other believers. The daughter of Kureibenge was kidnapped and forcibly placed in a children's home. The parents were even deprived of the freedom to visit the child. In other cases, in violation of Soviet law, parents do not know where their children are, and are not even permitted to correspond with them. ⁸⁸

The situation has become more severe since 1969. The Communist Party shows no mercy regardless of health conditions or the age of a

⁸⁷ Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. IX, Nos. 21, 22, Nov., 1970, p. 177.

⁸⁸ Ibid., Vol. VII, No. 9, p. 38.

prisoner. The periods between visitation times and the distribution of foods have lengthened. Some sentences are for as long as nine and ten years. There have been many appeals to higher courts, but they have all been met with silence. In one appeal the followers of two Baptist leaders complained that the court was drawing upon witnesses who were hostile to religion--professional atheists, while bullying witnesses for the defense. 89

The Baptist Times of London, England, in an interview with Mrs. Claudia Pillipuk, on tour from Moscow, May 14, 1970, and a member of the AUCECB and the Moscow Baptist Church, quoted her as saying:

The Initiativniki were given official permission to have a conference in December, 1969. Two days later, they advised their members to register their Churches. Until then, they had refused to register their churches on the ground that it was a breach of the principle of separation of Church and State. Now they are confused. They say, 'If we can now register, why did we break away from the Union?'

Commenting on this in a letter to The Baptist Times, the Rev. Michael Bordeaux wrote that the Soviet State has, right up to the present, consistently refused to register reform Baptist congregations, and so forcing them to be illegal. Then they imprison them or fine their leaders for holding services of worship.

The ECB Churches continue to appeal to the fact that on November 25, 1960, the draft of the Charter of the Rights of Man was approved officially by the United Nations, by the U.S.S.R. and all its satellites. Included in it are these significant words:

89.

RCDA, "Appeal," Vol. VIII, Nos. 9-12, May-June, 1969, p. 86.
(From: Unpublished documents, Brest-Litovsk, Byelorussia, May 5, 1968).

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change one's religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and in public or private to manifest his belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.⁹⁰

Present pastors are licensed by the Communist State every year...and are only licensed again if they have placed obedience to the state before obedience to God. But even if the official church was not Communist-controlled, many of the people are simply too far from a "licensed" church to ever attend. Therefore, many of the people must hear the word of God "underground" or not at all.⁹¹

Stephen Bankov, who escaped from Russia, tells of serving as "Underground Pastor" of 56 unregistered churches until 1964, when the Communists began to close in on him. He and his wife spent much time organizing secret Sunday schools in homes for children, and providing Bible literature. After being interrogated by lengthy periods on two occasions, he decided on an escape plan with his family to avoid further persecution, imprisonment or death.

For the unregistered, illegal congregations, weddings and funerals are opportunities for worship. In a Russian village of Kozhasta, word

⁹⁰
op. cit., Vol. IX, No. 4, pp. 83, 84, June 1970; O. K. Armstrong: Religion Can Conquer Communism, p. 238.

⁹¹
Underground Evangelism, September, 1969, p. 8.

has come of a wedding sermon that lasted three hours. The Christian couple were happy to provide the people with this opportunity. ⁹² Dr. W. A. Criswell writes of his visit, that he found evidences again and again of an underground Church. "Sadness, sorrow, and frustration, I ⁹³ found everywhere."

Christian congregations in the Soviet Union badly need more space for worship services. The Moscow Baptist Church with a membership of 5000 cannot accommodate one-half of its members. This city of 6,500,000 inhabitants once had 1000 churches. Today there are only thirty of all denominations. The situation is even worse in Tbilisi where three congregations must share an inadequate hall for all their meetings. The same is true of many other areas where Christians must meet for worship in very small dilapidated buildings. Then, there is a serious lack of printed materials--hymn books, collections of music for choirs, devotional literature, and Bibles. Permission was granted to print 20,000 Bibles, but with 4,500 congregations, this is just a drop in the bucket. Besides, there are nationalities in Russia who cannot read the Russian Bible. ⁹⁴ These, too, wait and hope to see their needs fulfilled.

Michael Bordeaux met Andrei, a member of the Baptist Church in Leningrad. His primary concern was to get Bibles and Christian literature

⁹² Ibid., January, 1970, p. 1; October, 1970, p. 14.

⁹³ W. A. Criswell, In Defense of the Faith, p. 49.

⁹⁴ Adolph Klaupiks, The Baptist World, p. 13.

for the people to read. Bordeaux was asked to help smuggle in New Testaments. Andrei also expressed a fear of conspiracy among Baptist pastors to keep quiet about restrictions on Christian liberty imposed by the Soviet Union and on the need for Bibles. Christians who are considered lawless for propagating the gospel consider the system itself to be lawless. They have been robbed of their churches, and then punished for meeting in fellowship with one another without permission.

95

According to George Bissonette, author of Moscow Was My Parish, there is freedom of religious practice, as guaranteed by the Constitution of 1936, but the restrictions imposed on the Church makes this a "Soviet freedom." There are more closed churches than there are that still operate. The anti-religious campaigns continually change tactics because they run into the resistance of the people who strike back by means of a work slowdown. He says that it is evident that the high echelons of the hierarchy are the willing instruments of the government's foreign and domestic policy, but that it is possible that many of them are sincere clergymen.

96

The Soviet government is careful to keep open at least one Church in each of the great cities that they may take the visitors to see it and claim that the people have freedom of worship when in reality it is denied in so many ways. A British minister, having completed a "showroom tour" of some

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Michael Bordeaux, Opium of the People, p. 157.

96

George Bissonette, Moscow Was My Parish, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1958), p. 257.

97

W. A. Criswell, In Defense of the Faith, p. 43.

of the churches, found the following note in his pocket. The message read:

Dear Brother, you have been shown what you were supposed to see; you have been told what we were instructed to tell you. The truth is that ours is a very cruel and harsh way. We do not enjoy the freedoms we have told you about. Do not be deceived by what you have seen, for our situation is completely different.

A second way in which the Communists seek to impress the West is by instructing pastors to write such letters as this one:

Don't send us Bibles at all. There are enough in our country and we do not need this kind of help. Don't try to send help. We do not need it. In general, things are not too bad here.

A third method is to send delegates abroad instructed in what to say concerning religious freedom. Their families are held as hostages in case they fail to cooperate or should try to defect.

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Knowing this situation, Underground Evangelism, a Bible Society of Los Angeles, California, since 1963, has been smuggling in Bibles and Gospel newsletters to the Christians of Russia. The Gospel newsletters contain an introduction to God's word written especially for atheists and a Gospel of John including a chapter on "How to Find Christ as Your Saviour." Their goal is to send thousands of these into every province of Russia. These Gospels cannot be easily stopped by Russian censorship requirements on bulk mailings. The letters are each different from one another and mailed at different times of the month. They do not fall under suspicion because they do not appear to be "organized mailings." They know that most of these letters arrive safely because they have a postal return address to a neutral or friendly country.

Underground Evangelism is preparing to invest more than \$400,000 during 1971 for Bibles, Scripture portions, hymnals, and for monetary relief of families of men imprisoned for their faith. Dr. W. A. Criswell's book entitled How We Know the Bible Is True is also being translated into Russian, and will be published for distribution behind the Iron Curtain. ⁹⁹

Two Swedish Baptists were recently denied entry into Russia after customs officials found 50 Bibles in their suitcases. The incident took place at the border near Leningrad. A border guard told the two men that Russia had no shortages of Bibles. A Slavic Mission in Stockholm claims to have sent 40,000 Bibles to Russia last year. With this kind of encouragement, the underground groups continue to thrive. ¹⁰⁰

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Underground Evangelism, "Our Goal for 1971," January, 1971,
p. 3

100

Michael Zhidkov, Charity and Children, Sept. 21, 1969, p. 1.

CHAPTER IV
COMMUNIST STRATEGY FOR THE CONQUEST OF
"RELIGIOUS SUPERSTITIONS"

Unfortunately, after years of pitting atheism against the believers in the U.S.S.R., the Communist Party has refused to heed the wisdom of the Soviet educator, Lunacharski, who declared that "religion is like a nail: the harder it is driven into the wood, the deeper it goes." There continues to be disagreement among Communists in theory and practice. Some Communists are more prejudiced toward believers than others. Some of the people want the Party to go further than they have in prohibitive measures against religion.

To the Neanderthal cruelty of the Stalin period, the present Soviet regime has added an interesting refinement. It now frequently happens that dissidents, instead of being sent to Siberia, are committed to mental institutions. Persecution continues also through Communist infiltration of the Churches in the four following ways: first, through the direct placement of trained agents of the secret police masquerading as churchmen; second, they seek to find weak churchmen and through blackmail, threat or reward, reduce them to subservience to the Party; third, by working out compromises with churchmen who are willing to be compromised;

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Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XVII, No. 51, p. 35.

and fourth, by removing from positions of leadership those who will not bend. There are also penalties for "cultural" activities, such as sponsoring concerts, plays or art.

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In addition to imprisonment and fining of those who engage in illegal activities, believers are often embarrassed and harassed. Because Luiba Makhovitskaia, an eleven-year-old girl, did not wish to wear a red Pioneer neckerchief, she was so constantly terrorized that her nervous system was disturbed and as a result, her eyes affected. Nelia Krenova, a first grade pupil at School No. 10 in Lutsk, in December, 1966, was intimidated by her teacher, Nadzhda Trofinovna, when the pupils were given injections. The teacher said to the nurse, "Give her ten shots, because she believes in God."

In 1964, at School No. 20, in Zhitomir, an eighth grade student was stationed at the entrance to the school, so as not to allow anyone to pass without a Pioneer neckerchief. The entire school knew that Volodia Danbysh, a fifth grade pupil, was not a Pioneer, and when he wanted to enter school, the monitoring student standing at the entrance kicked him.

103

As a part of the negative emphasis, in addition to the restrictive measures exercised against religious groups, the harmfulness of "religious superstitions" are continually emphasized. If a murder is committed, it is

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U. S. Senate Document No. 106, 90th Congress, Subcommittee Report at the request of T. J. Dodd: "Aspects of Intellectual Ferment and Dissent in the Soviet Union," William C. Fletcher, "Freedom's Allies in Russia," Christian Economics, Los Angeles California, Nov. 12, 1968, p. 1.

103

Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. VII, No. 7, p. 36.

sometimes stressed that the murderer was a Baptist, although most Baptists are exemplary in their moral conduct. Such isolated cases of evil related to religions are often magnified. An Orthodox woman refused to take her child to "godless physicians" and the child died. Or, a man tried to cure himself of an ailment in a baptismal "ice hole" and died three days later. These are extreme cases, of course. The majority of the Baptist believers are cooperative according to Soviet standards.

M. Vortynova wrote in Pravda, August 18, 1967, "By poisoning the children's minds and souls with religious venom, they are rearing them in a spirit of disobedience to Soviet laws. Apart from robbing them of the joy of learning and the joys of childhood, fanatical parents are depriving them, as it were, of the rights of full-fledged citizens of our country. R. Malozenov writes in the same vein: "Children are torn between loyalty to their school friends in the Pioneers and the restrictions of strongly religious parents who wish them to join nothing and to read only the Bible." Thus, Soviet Communists worry that fanatical parents may cripple the children morally and physically. The teachers in School No. 68 in Gorlovka, Ukraine, made observations of children from seven families of believers, particularly Baptists, and came to the "sad conclusion" that hypocrisy is a characteristic trait of these children. This is understandable. From an early age the child has two educators: the teacher and the parent.

104

Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. 22, No. 16, p. 13,
(From: Pravda, July 6, 1969, p. 3).

The teacher gives a materialistic explanation of the world while at home the child learns that God is the Creator and ruler of the universe. Thus, the child faces the dilemma, say the communists, of a dual loyalty based on contradictions.¹⁰⁵

Comrade Tinokhins, Chairman of the Viesite City Executive Committee, told the court when the Osma parents were brought to trial, that they were using fanatical methods in bringing up their children. He indicated that they were forced to go to Church services, where they heard the heart-rending howls of the sect members in a frenzy of religious fanaticism. The children were also forbidden to read fiction, to go to movies, to attend concerts and evening programs at the school or to watch television. It was not surprising, therefore, in the opinion of Tinokhins, that the Osma children were poor students in school and kept to themselves. He observed also that they were poorly developed mentally and physically. On the basis of this testimony, the court proceeded to place the children in custody of the State. The parents were advised that they must continue to pay for the support of their children. The people's judge, V. Kanpores, said: "In our country there is freedom of religion. However, believers are obliged to observe the laws, particularly those that concern the upbringing of the rising generation." When they flout these laws, the Communists feel that they deserve to be deprived of their parental rights.¹⁰⁶

105

Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XVII, No. 35, p. 38.

106

Ibid., p. 33.

Such extreme cases cause the Communist Party to show greater prejudice toward all religious groups. To the Communists this is the crux of the matter. They maintain that a child is a "moral cripple" unless he is growing up to be a "new Communist man." The Party line knows nothing of a little child's wondering trust in a heavenly Father, or a child's instinct of adoration. To a Communist, a small boy or girl will be religious only by parental influence. The child, they say, is merely the product of his environment.

107

Whenever there is disagreement between parents as to how to bring up their children and the matter ends up in a divorce court, the State steps in to remove the child from the religiously inclined parent.

Another aspect of the harmfulness of religion from the Communist point of view is found in a review of F. S. Fazylov's new book on Religion and Nationalities (1969). The author is quoted as saying,

Religion separates people into classes, spawning racism and internationality hatreds. Those professing religion have their own world. Both Islam, Christianity and Judaism forbid entering into marriage and kinship with those of a different faith or with unbelievers. Social interchange among nationalities professing different religions is impeded by many regulations laid down because of religious beliefs and traditions. Thus, the spiritual leaders of the Pentecostals infuse into the flock hostile attitudes toward the world of unbelievers. Mennonites of German background preach national exclusiveness and resort to flagrant racist announcements. Neither do the Jehovah Witnesses conceal their reactionary convictions on the nationality question.¹⁰⁸

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J. C. Pollock, The Faith of the Russian Evangelicals, pp. 4,5.

108

Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Sept., 1970, p. 147.
(From: Partynaya Zhizu Kazakhotama).

Another effort of the Communists to discourage religious practices is their attempt, since the 1920s, to replace religious holidays with civil holidays, and church weddings with civil ceremonies. They also discourage the Christening of babies as well as the use of Christian names. All of these efforts have met with little success. The failure of new customs to catch on, in many instances, is due to the fact that efforts are being taken to "enforce" them on the population, causing Soviet citizens to become suspicious of State rites. Also, ceremonies devoid of all religious content have little meaning for the Soviet citizen. A ceremonial observance links man with his ancestors as "a thread that unwinds into the present from the depth of time." Realizing the tremendous part that religious ceremonies and holidays play in strengthening the "religious superstitions" of the people, the Communists continue to strive to replace the religiously-oriented celebrations with new ones.

New non-religious ceremonies, customs and rituals are being introduced more and more, including Komsomol weddings, birthdays, "The Day of the First Plowing," "Flower Day," celebrations for the "coming of age" (a Komsomol at age 15), the joining of the Red Army, consecration of workers, the New Year, Hammer and Sickle holiday, (celebrating the friendship between the working class and the peasantry, introduced in 1965) and other celebrations concerning the Communist Party and its leaders. During the

joyous holiday of Hammer and Sickle, workers visit the villages, and peasants come to the distant centers. There is much singing and dancing as outstanding workers of city and country are honored. On this occasion, young workers and collective farmers are presented their Y.C.L. (Young Communist League) cards in a solemn ceremony.

As a further measure to break the ties of the Church, since October 1, 1968, only civil marriages have been recognized. Those who would have a church wedding must also have a civil ceremony. To encourage the youth to have only a civil ceremony, Komsomol weddings are cheap and are provided in romantic surroundings with decorations and festivities.

New holidays called "First Furrow" and "Seeing Out the Russian Winter" are gaining in popularity throughout the country. Skillful use has been made of old traditions, changing them from religious to socialist. Another ceremony is the "Day to Honor Veterans of War and Labor." According to A. Vlasov, Vice-chairman of the Penza Province Soviet Executive Committee, in an article that appeared September 6, 1970, "Ten to fifteen years ago some people still refused to work on religious holidays, but such occurrences have been completely eliminated." No doubt, the fact that the Soviet television audience has grown to 83,000,000 persons contributes some of this success, as well as the fact that many are a part of the new Communist third generation.

110

Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XX, No. 16, p. 3.

111

Ibid., Vol. XXII, No. 47, p. 20.

On the other hand, all special religious days are down-graded and unless on Sunday are usually considered regular working days. According to the Greensboro Daily News, January 8, 1970 (AP), Christmas in this atheistic nation is not recognized as an official holiday. However, after the working day, Christians who can afford it go home for the traditional Russian dinner with twelve courses, commemorative of the twelve apostles of Christ. ¹¹² Christmas is traditionally celebrated on January 7 (December 25 by the old calendar). The Communists are now seeking to replace the Christmas emphasis with the New Year's celebration. Grandfather Frost takes the place of Santa Claus, and distributes gifts. Through Soviet planning, the whole Christmas season in the U.S.S.R. has been turned into a gay holiday period completely devoid of any religious meaning.

There are six paid holidays a year: The Revolution (November 7 and 8), May Day, New Year's, Constitution Day, December 5, and Woman's Day, March 8. None of these is religious. Concerning religious holidays, research has shown that elementary school children know all about Easter and that most families celebrate it in some way. In one school in Moscow, the origin of the Easter holiday was "explained," and it was stressed that only old people still believe in it.

With such propaganda, the battle against "religious superstition" is seeking to take on a more "positive" look. The Soviet Union now boasts

¹¹²
Greensboro Daily News, "Christmas in Russia," Jan. 8, 1970,
p. 10.

of 400,000 libraries, more than in any other country. Communist leaders also seek to utilize their 900 museums (most of which are converted Church buildings) to emphasize Russian history, atheism, and scientific advance. In 1967, there were twenty radios and three television sets to every hundred people. These are used to promote Communist propaganda.

Two world-famous cathedrals in Leningrad are now museums. The Kazan Cathedral houses a public display that ridicules the idea of God. Where the high altar once stood is a statue of Lenin. Every part of the vast building is filled with "demonstrations" and "proofs" of the non-existence of God. A heavy, heavy cross is shown crushing a poor mother and child beneath its tremendous weight. The cross is thus pictured as an instrument of oppression. In St. Isaac's Cathedral of Leningrad, the cosmonauts, Titov and Gagarin, are pictured above the high altar. On the wall above are written these words in Russian, German, French and English: "We have searched the heavens and there is no god." School children are taken on regular visits to the museums.

The heavy hand of Communism is never lifted from the people from the cradle to the grave. From birth they are taught to be atheists. When they enter school at age seven they become "Little Octobrists" and are privileged to wear a red star. From ages ten to fourteen they are "Young Pioneers" and wear a red neckerchief. Beyond fourteen years and

113

Frederick C. Conybeare, Russian Dissenters, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921); World Book Encyclopedia, (Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1967), p. 573.

through age twenty-eight many are "Komsomols" (Young Communist). They are taught that faith in God is empty superstition. The 23,000,000 young Leninists, called "Pioneers," are supervised by the Komsomol organizations during after-school hours, on Saturdays, days off, vacations, etc. Its purpose is to teach pride in one's nation, in the Socialist Revolution, in cultural improvement, and in unity among the one hundred nationalities within Russia.

114

Membership is not compulsory in theory, but there are instances where a child is enrolled against the parent's wish or his own wish. A child who is not a Pioneer misses much of the fun of camps, games, and social activities, and is likely to be damaged in his school career. Many evangelical parents permit their children to become members of the youth communist groups, being conscious of the fact that isolation may be more hurtful than indoctrination.

Membership in the Komsomol, although more selective than in the other groups, is an almost essential requirement for the making of a successful career, even in sports. Few, if any, of the Soviet athletes at the Olympic games, would not be members. Many of the meetings are held on Sunday ("Voskresenie," meaning "Day of resurrection"), at the traditional time of religious services so as to discourage the attendance of youth in religious worship.

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To teach the children atheism, hungry children are told by their teachers to pray and ask God for bread. When no bread appears, it becomes

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Josef Nordenhaug, Official Report of the Eleventh Congress of the Baptist World Alliance, p. 5; W. A. Criswell: In Defense of the Faith, p. 42.

115

Ibid.

obvious that there is no God. Next, they are told to pray for bread in the name of Lenin. Immediately, the Communist teacher brings forth bread, cheese, and fruit for the children. "You see now," they are told, "it is not God who provides bread, but Lenin." The usual answer to how religion got started is ¹¹⁶ "because savages feared nature." Geography, biology and history are used for atheistic propaganda. A lesson in astronomy may refer to Galileo's persecution by the Church Inquisition. Teachers work systematically also with the parents. An atheist agitation brigade, organized by pupils, lectures in clubs and in theatres throughout the surrounding countryside.

State influences begin very early through a network of day care centers and boarding schools. The good features of Communism are emphasized. This includes free health clinics, free hospitalization, and maternity leave of absence for women from their jobs. "Life teaches us," according to the editor of Sovetskaya Rossia, March 21, 1969, "that the old can be replaced ¹¹⁷ only by something good or better being offered in its place." The Party, therefore, seeks to provide for the whole needs of people so that churches will no longer be necessary. Iu. Sharov, in a recent issue of The Soviet Review, urges the teachers to meet the 'spiritual' needs of children. By 'spiritual,' he means the "whole person." The instructor, according to Sharov, must motivate the child through complex activities to develop his ¹¹⁸ potential personality.

¹¹⁶ Greensboro Daily News, Dec. 16, 1968, p. 7.

¹¹⁷ Soviet Society, Vol. V., No. 3, Dec. 1965, p. 14; CDSP, Vol. XXI, No. 12, p. 1.

¹¹⁸ The Soviet Review, Vol. VIII, 1967, p. 11.

A current issue of Soviet Life is devoted to cultural life, sports, advances in science, space travel, philosophy and advertisements. Religion is not mentioned. However, four pages are devoted to Dionysius, one of the greatest of the Old Russian icon painters of the 15th century. Here again, as Lenin advocated, art is substituted for religion, and every effort is made to fill up the life of the individual so that religion is considered unnecessary.

The Communist Party refers to this task as "upbringing work." "It can be successful," says M. Morozov in Pravda, January 12, 1967, "only if it does not limit itself to the criticism of the religious world view but is of a positive nature, promoting the formation of a scientific world view, Communist morality, new holidays and new rituals." Sagoriuiko adds, "Individuals must be considered individuals and dealt with on an individual basis." He feels also that more work should be done with the older people who exert an appreciable influence on the religious upbringing of young people and that reasons for religious belief must be studied. Morality of the Socialist system must be contrasted with the amorality of priests and their ties with capitalism. The harm religion does must be unmasked. He believes also that a traditional fatalism must give way to a belief that life can be mastered.

Komsomol Pravda, late in 1963, called on the entire school system in the U.S.S.R. to "use the Bible" in the war on religion to demonstrate its superstitions, illusions and reactionary nature.

The religious concept of the individual's limitedness and insignificance, and his consolation through the idea of the immorality of the soul must be combatted by pointing to every individual's usefulness in society, and the religious person's striving for 'internal' personal happiness must be turned outward into society and the building of communism which will bring about the true individual happiness and which is not illusory. All anti-religious propaganda must be based on science and aimed primarily at youth.¹²⁰

Seeking to project an "affirmative image," the Soviets appeal to the "great atheists" of Russian History, such as Chernyshevsky, Herzen, Pavlov and others. The Communist Party continues to stress that it is necessary to carefully avoid every kind of insult against the sentiments of worshippers because this would lead only to an intensification of religious fanaticism. This is not always practiced.

Beginning in 1964, a course in atheism became compulsory in all universities of the U.S.S.R. and in higher Party schools. They recommend that scientific atheism may also be offered as a course in the eight-year school.

In their study of religion, the Communists consider the following as factors in the persistence of "religious superstitions" and urge that all means be used to overcome these hindrances to Communism's victory. These include the suffering brought on by World War II, family troubles, participation of the Churches in the struggle for peace, tradition, customs, religious rites, holidays, fear of death, fear of punishment for one's sins, incorrect methods of atheist propaganda giving rise to resentments and feelings of persecution, weak and ineffective atheistic propaganda, and boring

¹²⁰
Soviet Society, Vol. II, No. 3, Dec., 1962, p. 15; Vol. VI, No. 1, May, 1966, pp. 58-64. Cyril E. Black, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 667.

meetings of the Komsomol, clubs, and other special groups. Comrade N. Umanets in Pravda, tells of the bored looks on the people's faces in one of Moscow's biggest factories. "Most of them were indifferent. Lectures are not enough. There must be testimonies, conversations, films, and other interesting features, or we cannot begin to compete with the play on emotions by the churches." He suggests also that atheist propaganda be appropriate to age, sex, education and background of the people. 121

Another strategy is the training of Komsomol members to serve as future pastors. The goal is a totally subverted Church system. Such a communist-controlled church system is useful in supervising and controlling Christians. Such a system also has the effect of deceiving foreign tourists who visit Russia, see the open churches, and conclude that all Russian people have freedom of worship. After fifty years of trying to physically destroy churches from without, the Communist recognize that they have failed and have changed to a policy of subverting and controlling the churches from within. 122

In view of the Communist goal of a 30-35 hour work week Pravda suggested that some good uses of free time should include Party functions, self-education and recreation. No mention was made of religion. It was merely ignored.

There is an increasing amount of literature being published to encourage Communist ideology. A pocket edition of Answer to Believers was published in 1963. Science and Religion, a Communist Party monthly magazine,

121

Soviet Society, Vol. II, No. 3, Dec., 1962, p. 16.

122

L. J. Bass, Underground Evangelism, Dec., 1970, p. 10.

announced that the Institute of Scientific Atheism, of the Academies of the Social sciences, carries out unique social research concerning religious attitudes of people and ways of overcoming them. It has also set up dozens of branches all over the country and publishes collections of papers several times a year.

Another admonition of the Communists to their adherents reveals their ineffectiveness to date: "The new Communist ceremonies must be colorful, meaningful, and developed locally rather than imposed from above. Ethnographers must help in this."

The Communists point to their few cases of juvenile delinquency, although they are increasing, as an achievement of school, Komsomol and Pioneer activities. At the same time, they stress the need for a continuing increase in youth activities. Their schools are of the "lengthened-day" type, providing supervised recreation, or home-work after class, until time to go home for the evening meal.

These are just a few indications of the increase in propaganda against the churches, and that the battle for the youth of Russia is continuing. As Fletcher says, "If the Party cannot make people into convinced

123
Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. VIII, Nos. 3, 4, Feb., 1969, p. 32.

124
Soviet Society, Vol. III, No. 4, Feb., 1964, p. 17.

125
William Mandell, Russia Re-Examined, p. 159.

Communists, it, at least, does its utmost to keep them in a state of uncertainty as to whether any truer values exist, and if so, which?"¹²⁶ These activities affect all religious groups in Russia, but Baptists in particular, because of their tendency to win converts.

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William C. Fletcher, The Search for New Ideals, p. 84.

CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN RUSSIA'S FUTURE

The violent action of the Warsaw Pact forces in invading Czechoslovakia in August of 1968 was, in reality, a pathetic admission on the part of the Communists that they stand in mortal fear of the contagion of freedom. This is one of the factors in the continuing Communist stance concerning religious liberty. And, not only are they concerned about the contagion of freedom among their subjects, but the stepped-up campaign against "religious superstitions," since 1959, betrays the fear that religion may be gaining in the struggle despite all efforts of the Party at extermination. They are determined, therefore, to move forward in a double-pronged campaign--one part of which is to make religion harder to profess and practice, and the other to step up the positive program of teaching scientific atheism as a substitute for religious faith. There are five categories involved in this campaign: (1) forthright persecution where it can be done legally, (2) severe harassments, such as closing Churches whenever legally possible, (3) hampering restrictions on all religious activities imposed through the Ministry of Cults, (4) temporary toleration to project an image of freedom of worship for the benefit of the Western world, and (5) tenuous co-existence, understanding and peace, if religious leaders silence the opposition and become the tool of the regime for propaganda purposes.

It is true that the 1966 Code of Laws made the first offense merely a warning or a fine, but for further offenses the penalties have been

severely increased. There is no evidence apparent that the Soviet Union has changed its ultimate objective of eradicating religious beliefs from its ultimate victory. The means for achieving this goal are subject to change, and adaptable to circumstances, but Soviet philosophers and scientists have rightly concluded that the Christian faith and dialectical materialism are incompatible. The objective of Communist leaders continue to be the development of a Soviet culture with emphasis on the arts and sciences; and while aware of the tremendous interest of other nations in the way they deal with religious affairs, they continue to restrain those of religious persuasions to the narrow limits of permissive exercise of religious worship.

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The situation, then, is marked by ambiguity and paradox. For while the Communist government facilitates international contacts between religious bodies of their counterparts in non-communist countries, invites religious leaders to state receptions, bestows high orders upon them, calls for cooperation with Christians for peace and social justice, and shows interest in better relations with the Vatican, the announced intent to eventually liquidate religion on the homefront remains in effect. Toleration exists only because intolerance would fail to destroy religion.

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The First Programme of the Communist Party was inaugurated in 1903, the Second Programme in 1919, and the Third Programme in 1961. The new target date for a Communistic State is 1984. All religious beliefs

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Josef Nordenhaug, Official Report of the Eleventh Congress of the Baptist World Alliance, 1964, pp. 9-11.

129

Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. VII, p. 22.

must be eliminated in the course of these twenty years in preparation for the transition from Socialism to ultimate Communism. By 1984, the citizens are to be living under conditions of Communism. At present, only Socialism prevails. Other countries are expected inevitably to follow suit. Therefore, the Programme adopted by the 22nd Congress in Moscow in October, 1961, is of utmost significance, according to the Communists, "for the bright future of the whole human race."¹³⁰

Above all, the Communist Party is determined to gain the younger generation. Hence the growing drive to indoctrinate the youth with a materialistic, godless outlook; and hence the continuing conflict with the leaders of the unregistered churches who insist on the upbringing of the children and youth in their communities, and refuse to comply with government restrictions. The Party continues to hope, that as the older generations die, the churches will die also.¹³¹

Religion, to the Communists, is an illusory consciousness of the world and, therefore, an expression of an unhealthy socio-economic existence. Some who would reconcile Marxism with the Christian philosophy have suggested that the Marxist-Leninist principle would appear to offer the possibility of peaceful co-existence between these two philosophies of life. This is based on the proposition that religion is a private affair. Lenin, however, interpreted this as applying to the State rather

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J. C. Pollock, The Faith of the Russian Evangelicals, pp. 23, 41.

131

John S. Curtis, The Russian Church and the Soviet State, p. 325.

rather than to the Communist Party. "The State," said he, "should be neutral in religious affairs while the Communist Party is required to combat religion as an unscientific philosophy of life." We have seen, and are seeing, therefore, this dualistic concept in action in the U.S.S.R.

The failure of religion to "wither away" more than half a century after the October Revolution is often "explained today as being a result of new insecurity and fear generated by the threat of thermonuclear war. There are also other reasons as to why the Churches are tolerated. These include the fact that the Soviet Constitution guarantees religious liberty, that the country is a member of the United Nations and thus has ratified the Declaration of Human Rights, which advocates freedom of religion for citizens of all member states. Also, in order to impress the free world, there must be some evidence of religious liberty. They recognize, further, that the Church cannot be destroyed all at once. To attempt this would only create martyrs, fertile soil for the extension of Christianity. A final important reason that the Church is tolerated, is that by doing so, the churches may be brought under state control. The Communists recognize the continuing influence of the churches and desire to employ church leaders increasingly as instruments of policy at home and abroad.

Soviet severity with religious groups, on the other hand, may reflect the sharp rebuke received from Maoist Communists. The Hsinhua News Agency,

132

William C. Fletcher, Religion and the Search for New Ideals, p. 9.

133

L. J. Bass, Underground Evangelism, p. 5; George L. Kline, Religious and Anti-religious Thought in Russia, p. 162.

(Peking, February 27, 1969) carried an article entitled, "Soviet Clique Fosters Religious Activities." Maoist propagandists accused the "Revisionist Russians" of fostering religion.

- 1) Izvestiya has gone so far as to trumpet that religion, an opiate, is beneficial and can calm people down and mitigate their suffering.
- 2) On New Year's Day, Christmas and Easter, TASS Radio broadcast to the whole nation messages from Alexei, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia.
- 3) To train successors to the Church, the Soviet revisionist, renegade clique sets up theological seminaries in many places.
- 4) To maintain its counter-revolutionary, revisionist rule, the Soviet renegade clique has sunk so low as to seek assistance from the reactionary religious forces.¹³⁴

The Maoists may have had in mind the special Peace Conference called in July of 1969. Encouraged as a propaganda instrument by the Soviet government, representatives of various religions--Christian, Moslem and Jewish met in Zagorsk and called upon the world to come to the aid of the Arabs and the revolutionaries of South Vietnam to bring an end to world conflict. More than 120 heads of foreign churches from forty-four countries took part in the conference.

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The Communist leadership has found, also, through experience that it cannot develop a strong nationalistic, patriotic people without encouraging a firm family base, and for many, the strength of a religious faith is needed at this point. The churches, therefore, must be utilized

¹³⁴ Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. VIII, Nos. 7, 8, April, 1969, p. 79.

¹³⁵ Ibid., Nos. 19,20, Oct., 1969, pp. 1,8.

to advance the final goal of Communism, which is world conquest, and thus
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"ultimately contribute to their own destruction."

From its own point of view, however, the Church's contribution to society may be its salvation. There are several factors in church life under Communism that have increased the influence of the churches, and have, by virtue of this, brought pressure to bear for greater recognition and religious freedom. This new influence originates, first of all, in the fact that the Communist Party has insisted on stricter rules for membership in the churches. Instead of hindering the churches in their growth, as one might think, it has had the opposite effect in that new church restrictions and discipline, imposed by the Communists, actually resulted in a purified Church. The churches today, Baptist churches, in particular, are composed of a people as committed and dedicated to their beliefs as the Communists are to theirs. The Party's insistence that the Church not baptize those under eighteen years of age has made individual commitment more meaningful to those who do make a public confession of personal faith in God. Thus, by requiring stringent membership rules and insisting that religious faith and Communist Party membership are incompatible, the Communists have contributed inadvertently to healthier, purer churches. The wheat is separated from the chaff. One of the questions usually asked a candidate for membership

in a Baptist Church is whether he is willing, if necessary to die for his faith. As one Baptist leader said, "Making Christians count the cost of being a disciple of Christ is the best thing that ever happened to us."¹³⁷

There has also been an awakening of the social consciousness within the churches. Christians realize that they cannot lay the whole blame on the Communists. The churches in the past have sinned by upholding injustices of Church and State and in allowing social evils by calling for meek submission. The criticism of the churches by Communist leaders has thus stimulated the awakening of the Christian conscience and is leading to the development of a creative social Christianity; not in the sense of understanding Christianity as a social religion, but in the sense of revealing Christian truth and justice in relation to social life.¹³⁸

While addressing the Baptist World Congress in Miami, in 1965, the Reverend Michael Y. Zhidkov, pastor of the Moscow Baptist Church said:

We live in a society which has quite a deal of prejudice against the Church, and our task as believers is to break those prejudices. Our believers do this in the very effective way of witnessing about Christ through their love and compassion towards people they meet. Men who have rejected God come to have faith because of Christians who come to them and share with them in their suffering.

The pastor of the Baptist Church in Leningrad stated that their strategy is to "preach peace, social justice, love, and good will among men." They are following the admonition of Christ to "do good for evil," and to follow him

¹³⁷ J. C. Pollock, Christianity Today, p. 5.

¹³⁸ Nicolas Berdyaev, The Origin of Russian Communism, p. 188.

who taught men to live in peace saying, "Agree with thine adversary, quickly." Communism cannot conquer hate, and in that lies its chief weakness. A man gripped by hate lives in the past and cannot be concerned with the future; only love frees from the past and brings a new and better life. The Christian people believe that this positive expression of the Christian faith is the hope of Russia, and that herein also lies the hope for religious liberty in the future.

William C. Fletcher writes: "Nearly everyone I talked with on my visit in Russia, including bitterly, anti-religious Russians seemed to agree that Baptists are sober, hard-working people." The morally clean lives of Baptists may be expected to exert a powerful appeal among people who have become disillusioned by Soviet society. Michael Bordeaux has heard people talk of extreme fundamentalism in connection with Baptist leaders, but found little evidence of it. Sermons in the Baptist churches are based invariably on the Bible with illustrations from modern life. They encourage Christians to support the government. Nevertheless, a young pastor named Andrei assured Bordeaux that in the countryside among dissident groups, where secret meetings are held, that sermons are often distinctly anti-communist. For the majority of the churches, however,

139

Josef Nordenhaug, The Truth That Makes Men Free, p. 136.

140

William C. Fletcher, Religion and the Search for New Ideals, p. 80.

141

Michael Bordeaux, Opium of the People, pp. 165, 171.

no political reason can be advanced to justify persecution of the churches. The Baptists have proved their loyalty to the Soviet government and to Russia, not only in words, but also in deeds. "Dealing with the Baptists," lamented a Soviet writer in Science and Religion, "requires a very complicated treatment since they aren't killing anyone, and they usually work exceptionally well." ¹⁴² Radio Moscow has aimed its fire particularly at Baptists. "The big trouble," said the announcer, "is that every Baptist is an evangelist, seeking always to win others to his faith." The Communists consider such evangelical sects most dangerous, since they do openly practice their faith. ¹⁴³

Another hope for greater Church influence in the future is the fact that the Baptists and the Orthodox are no longer as critical of one another. Having suffered together in prison, and having now become members of the World Council of Churches, there seems to be hope for better understanding in the future and less room for criticism.

Yet, in spite of the stamina of the churches, there seems to be a difference of opinion as to who is winning the struggle for the soul of man in Russia. A Komsomol leader says that Communist successes are evident in the decreasing number of churchgoers and the increasing number of believers who attend atheist lectures and who read atheist literature. "Fewer children," he said, "are absent on religious holidays." He estimated that not more than 10% of the people are taking part in the life of the churches. ¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² C. E. Bryant, "Why Baptists are Persecuted," Upward, (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, August, 1968), p. 8.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Soviet Society, Vol. V, No. 1, May, 1965, p. 16; World Book, Year Book, 1970, p. 494.

In speaking of a decline in Church attendance, it is an evident fact that this is true throughout the western world also. Modern life with its stress on science, television, libraries, public amusements and massive sports programs have all had their influence in a declining church attendance. And, as the standard of living rises in the Soviet Union, it is likely that this decline in church attendance will continue.

Nevertheless, the Communists continue to decry the churches' successes. A Zenchenko writes in Pravda, (January 12, 1965), "The peal of the church bells are heard in the mornings over the village of Odelsk. Those who pray include children and young people because there is little to interest these youth in the activities of the Komsomol leadership at Odelsk." Communists are criticized also for having their babies christened. Instances are cited in two districts. One article states that "even Communists are sometimes believers and must be convinced."

The best evidence, however, for thriving churches in the U.S.S.R. is afforded by figures quoted by Church leaders. These indicate that, in spite of persecutions, there has been an increase in church attendance. Some estimate that as many as 50,000,000 of the Russian people are faithful to the churches, (approximately 20%) Most of the members are peasants who still make up half of the total population. However, there are believers also among the industrial workers and intelligentsia. Most of the churchgoers

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Cyril Black, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 424.

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Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XXI, No. 12, pp. 25, 30.

147

Nikita Struve, Christians in Contemporary Russia, p. 293.

have little more than a secondary school education. In part, this is due to the official denial of higher education for religiously committed Soviet citizens. And if there are more women than men in the services, which is usually the case--especially in the Orthodox churches--it is also true that there are 21,000,000 more women than men in the U.S.S.R. in the group over thirty-five years of age. Many of the men deliberately defer Church attendance until they retire and do not hold responsible positions in the society that Church affiliation would place in jeopardy. 148

Valentyn Moroz, a Ukrainian, wrote in a report to the Ukraine Supreme Soviet, January, 1966, that

After fifty years of the Soviet regime, in spite of the utmost efforts of the Communist Party, there are more people with an avowed allegiance to a religious organization than to any of the secular bodies which those in power so zealously foster.¹⁴⁹

There is also an increase in the number of youth attending services. Some of the youth continue to believe in God, but many go along with the Marxist system outwardly. Inwardly, their thoughts are different. In an interview, one youth, Golya said, "Science stops short of the ultimate questions about the purpose of the universe and the origin of life." Another admitted to have been secretly baptized. Many of the young believers startle the authorities by their readiness to make sacrifices,

148 William Mandell, Russia Re-examined, p. 72.

149 Thomas Dodd, U. S. Senate Report, p. 8.

and by showing such extraordinary perseverance in their determination to cling to their faith in spite of the fact that the church can do little to help if they get in trouble with the authorities. ¹⁵⁰

Most children break away from the Church before they are eighteen, but later on, many of them find their way back to the Church. Most of the young men are not baptized until after their tour of military duty. The fact remains, however, that the Communist minority of approximately 12,000,000 Party members has not succeeded in raising a new generation of atheists. The Soviet press is constantly complaining of the stubborn and persistent growth of faith in God in the new generation. Recent Russian newspaper articles say that the youth of Russia have a disappointing lack of interest in militant atheism. ¹⁵¹

In spite of this lack of enthusiasm for atheism, the majority of the believers are sincere patriots and play an active role in the construction of socialism. Many of the pastors are seeking to adapt Christianity to the socialist State and to discover areas of compatibility. Religious leaders often attempt to persuade their followers that there are no contradictions between communistic ideals and their own, and stress the ethical aspects of religion. Communist goals for a better world are identified with Christian goals for peace and justice for all men. Michael Bordeaux, who has examined a number of copies of the Baptist

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William Fletcher, Religion and the Search for New Ideals, p. 30.

151

Underground Evangelism, Sept., 1969, p. 8.

Union's fraternal herald magazine, (Bratskii Vestnik), says that "love for one's neighbor is the theme, and nowhere in the text are there any calls to action which are anti-Soviet, or anti-social." In a recent issue of the Fraternal Herald, Lenin was praised for Socialism that gives employment to all and liberates the people from the yoke of exploration and poverty, for his pronouncement of separation of Church and State to end religious discrimination and to equalize all religions and churches before the law in the new socialistic Russia.

It is therefore the Christian duty of all Evangelical Christians--Baptists to be honest and exemplary citizens of their country and unselfish participants in the task of building up the welfare and prosperity of its people.¹⁵²

The dream of Nicolas Berdyaev was the union of Christianity and Socialism. The attempt to reconcile Christianity and communism, to win the youth, however, is not appreciated by the Communist Party. In fact the Party greatly fears such a union. Communists complain that believers teach from the writings of famous Russian scientists, who believed in God, to show that science and faith in God are not incompatible. Science and religion cannot exist together for the Communists, even though they may often move along parallel lines. Baptist ministers are also criticized by the Communists for changing their emphasis away from renouncing "worldly goods for heavenly bliss" to an emphasis on "industry, labor, and service as unto God." Such adaptation is difficult for the Communists to overcome. The much discussed question, therefore, in the Soviet Union today is the attempt of the pastors to reconcile Christianity and Communism.¹⁵³

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Michael Bordeaux, Religious Ferment in Russia, p. 149; RCDA, Vol. IX, No. 17, Sept., 1970, p. 133.

¹⁵³
Current Digest of the Soviet Press, No. 32, July 29, 1964, p. 34.

Young people find that conversion from Communism to the Baptist faith is all the easier because the Komsomol proclaims many of the same virtues, but with less appreciation of what they imply. The statutes of the Komsomol decree that every member's duty is to combat drunkenness, debauchery, and unwholesome relationships with women. ¹⁵⁴ In rebuttal, Soviet anti-religionists attack religious morality by saying that the "obsolete" Christian virtues of forbearance, humility and brotherly love must be replaced by the "up-to-date" socialist virtues of devotion to the collective, pride in one's Soviet motherhood, and implacable hatred toward her enemies. ¹⁵⁵ While Christians seek to adapt to Socialism as much as possible without compromise, they recognize the truth in the statement of a young girl converted from Communism to the Christian faith. She said, "No, I don't think the class struggle and revolution can go hand in hand with love. I don't believe they can be joined together." In so committing herself, she is in line with many Slavophiles who while extremely patriotic, never accepted the inhuman nationalism so often evident in Russia's history. ¹⁵⁶

In addition to its efforts at adaptation, the Baptist Union is also hopeful that the dissenting Baptist groups will come back into the fold. Some have returned and are already serving as leaders in the churches. Many are praying daily for Christian unity. Whether or not the attempt

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Nikita Struve, Christians in Contemporary Russia, p. 273.

155

George L. Kline, Religious and Anti-religious Thought in Russia, p. 160.

156

Nicolas Berdyaev, Towards a New Epoch, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949), p. 59.

to purify and revitalize the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists by a few leaders is successful, it may have triggered off an urge for reform which will sweep through all the Christian churches of the Soviet Union. If this should happen everywhere with such determination as has been shown in the ECB dissenting group, Christianity may yet prove itself to be one of the most dynamic forces in the future evolution of Soviet society. The fact remains that the dynamics of the Baptist movement parallel the dynamics of the Party and the Baptists thus represent a potential competition to Communism.

Despite the heavy penalties, the demand for freedom and for the truth grows with every passing year in the Soviet Union. To the surprise of the KGB (secret police), for the first time in the last decade, public opinion has been more assertive, and, for the first time, the KGB have felt powerless to stifle all of this. After fifty years of the Soviet regime, there is a new ferment among the intellectuals that is essentially religious. Many of the intelligentsia have been engaged in a search for identity roots in a soil somewhat deeper than that of the Communist line, and have in the process, rediscovered something of the role of religion in the artistic history of their country. In the spirit of search for a national past the cry of many Russian people continues to be, "Save our relics," and "Save the ancient buildings."

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William C. Fletcher, Religion and the Search for New Ideals, p. 82.

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Thomas J. Dodd, U. S. Senate Report, Document No. 106, pp. 507.

159

Ibid., p. 56.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, noted Russian author and Nobel Prize winner, is an outspoken critic of the regime. He is in sympathy with a growing number of scientists who have joined the artistic dissenters in open protest against Soviet repression of individuality and creativity. Despite their prominence, the dissident scientists and their allies in the arts have no monopoly on protest in Russia. There is, indeed, a whole spectrum of Ukrainian and Baltic separatists--Jews, Baptists and Christian Socialists--
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arrayed against the government.

Ivan Iakhinvorich, a collective farm chairman in Latvia writes:

I believe that the persecution of young dissenters, in a country where more than 50% of the population is under 30 years of age, is an extremely dangerous line. Protests against the frightening revival of Stalinism are obviously the most embarrassing expression of youthful dissent.

Since 1968, an underground newspaper entitled a Chronicle of Current Events has been secretly printed and circulated. The year 1970 will undoubtedly be remembered as the year of promising upsurge of the movement against the violation of human rights and freedom of expression. A recent letter to Pope Paul VI by A. Levitin-Krasnov is one of the significant documents coming out of the Soviet Union. Deprived of his rights as a school teacher because of his writings, Levitin represents an important link between the members of the literary, scientific, and religious communities of dissenters in the U.S.S.R. Levitin says that the youth of Russia want one thing and it is the only possible reality of the next century--socialist democracy. The Russian people, according to

Krasnov, do not want capitalism, but at the same time, they hate Stalinism and Maoism in all their aspects and variants. They want freedom of opinion, free scientific research, and freedom of philosophical and religious convictions. More and more people in the Soviet Union are coming to feel that they have rights as citizens, and that the Soviet Union should honor the provisions of freedom in the Soviet Constitution. There are many silent voices in Russia today working to bring the day, however distant, when Pushkin's eloquent tribute to the exiled Decembrists may be realized:

The heavy hanging chains shall fall;
The walls shall crumble at the word,
And freedom greet you in the light,
And brothers give you back the sword.¹⁶¹

In the light of so much ferment in Russia today, what can we expect in the future? There are many prophetic voices. Some are negative. Andrei Amalrik, thirty-two year old Russian historian, recently imprisoned for his dissent, feels that nothing will happen to change the country for the better in his lifetime because

the lower classes have their vodka, the ruling classes will do anything to hold on to their power, and in this latter group, the younger bureaucrats are the worst of all. At least, the Old Bolsheviks had ideals.¹⁶²

In fact, in his book Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?, he predicts that his country will disintegrate into total chaos after war with China.

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Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. IX, Nos. 19,20, (From A Letter from Anatoly Levitin-Krasnov sent from Moscow to Pope Paul VI in the Vatican); Soviet Society, Vol. III, No. 1, p. 16.

¹⁶² Newsweek, Feb. 1, 1971, p. 31, 33. C. L. Sulzberger, "Hungarian Defector Fears re-Stalinization," Greensboro Daily News, March 5, 1971, p. A7.

In early 1971, Jozsef Szoll, senior ambassador in the Hungarian diplomatic service, defected to the United States because he fears a new hard line emerging from the U.S.S.R. and that Stalin's ghost is again stalking in the person of Leonid I. Brezhnev.¹⁶³

Nikita Khrushchev interpreted any concessions to the churches as a matter of expediency for the Communist movement. For example, his seventeen references to God and the Bible while visiting in America (such as, 'God be with you') are just "a manner of speaking." Again, he said, "Anyone who thinks we have forsake Marxism-Leninism deceives himself. That won't happen till shrimp learn to whistle."¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, many Soviet citizens will agree that although this may be true, many of the people would like to see an enlightened socialistic system.

Other prophetic voices are more positive and optimistic. Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, was an unlikely prospect for conversion. This indicates that Russian Communists, although atheists, may respond sooner than some Church-oriented people if they could behold Christians loving one-another, loving the unlovely, and translating Christ's promise of hope to a needy world. Svetlana writes:

Since my childhood, I have been taught communism and I believed it as we all did. In recent years, however, we in Russia have begun to think, to discuss, to argue,

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Ibid.

164

Paul Geren, Christians Confront Communism, p. 95.

and we are not so automatically devoted any more to the ideas we were taught. Also, religion has done a lot to change me. I was brought up in a family where there was never any talk about God. But when I became a grown person, I found that it was impossible to exist without God in one's heart.¹⁶⁵

In a recent article in the New York Times, (January 7, 1971), Milovan Djilas, Yugoslav author, writes: "Regardless of relations among ruling classes, the heresies of freedom are spreading. Political groups are sprouting and political trials are multiplying." Sooner or later the sterile emptiness of communism's false promises become apparent, a great disillusionment sets in, and there is a spiritual backlash. "Nothing prepares the soil for the seed of God's word like living under the stern, daily reality of spiritually sterile communism," writes a former underground pastor.¹⁶⁶ This could mean that the land is ripe for a spiritual awakening. With Stalin's daughter as a witness, it could indeed be argued that religion takes on new life when secularization occurs. By this we mean that when religion becomes private, optional and problematic, it also becomes more self-conscious, articulate, and militant. When the tradition is challenged, it comes alive.¹⁶⁷

165 Svetlana Alliluyeva, Twenty Letters to a Friend, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), p. 235.

166 High Point Enterprise (AP), "Growing Dissent Seen in Russia," January 7, 1971, High Point, N. C., p. 1.

167 Underground Evangelism, Jan., 1970, p. 3.

168 David Edwards, Religion and Change, p. 17.

Levitin-Krasnov supports this idea in his letter to Pope Paul VI:

The movement for socialist democracy becomes each year more powerful, broader, well-organized and respected. The process of inner renewal of the Russian people goes on with seven-leagued boots and the time is near when Russia will become 'the world's brightest democracy' as was prophesied by Gorky.

The third generation since the October Revolution is already here. They did not experience the pre-revolutionary negative aspects of the Church. Among them, one does not find the anti-religious fanaticism and animosity of their grandfathers. They are seeking an approach to religion with mixed feelings of incredulity and interest. More and more frequently there are cases in Moscow where the sons of Communists are baptized. Much of the missionary work is done by the laity including youth of the Church.¹⁶⁹

L. J. Bass, editor of Underground Evangelism, reveals something of the ingenuity of the youth of Russia in the following story.

There had been a long-felt need of a meeting of the Christian youth in Russia, but such gatherings were forbidden by the State. A number of youth decided to pray about it. The answer came. Someone thought of the annual gala day in Moscow when thousands would assemble from all parts of the Soviet Union to view the glorious achievements of Communism. Tens of thousands would be milling in Red Square before the tomb of Lenin and jostling one another in the city parks. What better opportunity, they thought, for a Youth Conference. The word went out: "We will meet at the Fair." And so they did. From many parts of the U.S.S.R., Christian youth of Russia came for their first national conference in the shadow of the Kremlin and without molestation of any kind. The police were pre-occupied with their multiple duties, leaving the youth to meet in small groups for conversation, fellowship and worship.

This is another evidence of the vitality of the faith of Christian youth
170
in Russia.

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Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. III, No. 1, p. 16.

170

Underground Evangelism, Jan., 1970, p. 6.

Leopold S. Braun, an American who served in Moscow as Chaplain to American Catholics and pastor of the Church of St. Louis des Français during World War II prophetically says, "This writer can tell Khrushchev and the entire world that atheistic communism is dead and bankrupt though not yet buried. In time, it will go the way of previous socio-religious errors of contemporary times."¹⁷¹

Many hopeful voices seem to agree with Dante Germino that Marxist-Leninist ideology will "inevitably fall into unflattering relief when seen in the light of the new liberalism." The closed society advocated by Marxist-Leninist ideology is emphatically not the inevitable wave of the future, according to Germino.

There is every reason to hope, indeed to expect, in view of recent changes within the communist world itself, that the age of closed ideologies will come to and end in good time, including the third of the world now officially committed to it.¹⁷²

Communism, like cancer, grows at the edges while it decays at the center.

¹⁷³

Change is inevitable.

171

Leopold Braun, Religion in Russia, p. 87.

172

Dante Germino, Beyond Ideology, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), p. 236.

173

Fred Schwarz, Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, p. 3.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summarizing the first fifty years of Communism in Russia, Svetlana Alliluyeva, daughter of Stalin, writes:

I do not think historians will call our era a 'progressive one,' or that they'll say it was all for the 'good of Russia.' But I hope they won't forget that what is good never dies--that it lived on in the hearts of man even in the darkest times, and that it lives on in the name of Truth and Good.¹⁷⁴

There are some evidences that her faith is well-grounded. In our conclusion, we will look for these.

We have observed that Russia has had a long history of autocracy and very little experience with representative government. However, during the past fifteen years, there has been a more relaxed atmosphere in the Soviet Union with greater emphasis being placed on the people's involvement in the local Soviets and greater dependence on the legal system. We have observed also that a half-century of Communism has not eliminated the great concern of the majority of the people with religion. We have seen the reaction of conservative Baptist groups in Russia to the increasing pressure of stringent religious laws. Many of these dissenters have separated from the organized Baptist Church (AUCECB) of which they are suspicious, as though it were an arm of the Soviet State. Many unregistered groups worship secretly underground,

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Svetlana Alliluyeva, Twenty Letters to a Friend, p. 235.

while dissent continues to grow. As the underground spreads, Russia's leaders find that they have a bear by the tail.¹⁷⁵ They dare not tolerate real freedom, but they dare not quit talking about it. This fear may cause the Communists to strike out furiously, even frantically at times, at any manifestation of the free spirit. The great obstacle to any new liberalization in the Soviet Union lies in the hands of the members of the Central Committee who presumably seek to preserve the present system. This position is substantiated by the fact that during 1970, religious liberty has lessened in Czechoslovakia with an order that all Church Sunday schools be closed.¹⁷⁶ The communists continue their strong stand against all unregistered and dissident groups. In the words of Kuroyedov, spokesman for the governmental Council on Religious Affairs in the U.S.S.R.:

If the dissident members will condemn their illegal actions and meet the requirements of the legislation on religious cults, they will have every possibility for the normal functioning of their groups. But if this does not happen, the Soviet agencies will continue to wage their struggle against the law breakers with all determination, sharply cutting off their anti-social activities.¹⁷⁷

We have seen how the communists have sought to keep pressure on the churches, engaging in direct violence, interfering in the life of the churches, discriminating against believers, limiting Church activities, and engaging in anti-religious propaganda. And yet, many communists have known for a long

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U. S. News and World Report, Jan. 22, 1968, p. 98; A. E. Lunev, "Further Developments of Democracy in the Soviet State Administration," The Soviet Review, (New York) Summer, 1963, p. 42.

176

Underground Evangelism, Jan., 1971, p. 3.

177

Religion in Communist Dominated Areas, Vol. VIII, Nos. 7, 8, p. 6, 14, (From Science and Religion, No. 6, Moscow, June, 1968).

time that any sort of persecution of the churches is a faulty method for struggling against religious ideology, and that atheist convictions cannot be imposed by force or by decree.

Therefore, in recent years, we have seen the Party's attempt to be more positive in its approach, and to shield children and youth from religion as much as possible while seeking to indoctrinate them in dialectical materialism.

The conclusions of this study indicate that what the Communists consider liberty, in keeping with their announced goals, many Baptists consider persecution and an infringement of their personal rights to freedom of conscience. The majority of the Baptists, numbering more than 500,000, outwardly agree with the Communists that there is religious freedom in Russia today, but within strict limits. Others referred to as dissident Baptists, estimated to number not more than 15,000, many of whom have loved ones in the labor camps of Siberia, do not agree with this. Persecution and suffering for them and their imprisoned relatives seem to be increasing. Although there has been much agitation for improvement of conditions in these camps by literary critics, the new regulations for corrective labor camps endorsed by the Supreme Soviet on July 11, 1969, is too vague to determine whether they will improve conditions in the camps or protect prisoners from oppressive camp authorities.

There continues to be great dissatisfaction among many of the Baptists that they are not permitted greater freedom in managing the internal affairs

of the Church, to provide Church schools, to open new churches as needed, to have seminaries, or to engage in mission work in needed areas of the Soviet Union. They lament the fact that many of their brethren are forced to meet illegally because of a lack of church buildings, church leaders, or because dissident Baptists are being refused registration.

On the other hand, Baptist leaders are hopeful that the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, (AUCECB), will continue to thrive. They do continue to gain in numbers, and Baptist leaders are confident that more of the dissident groups will again unite with the AUCECB and function legally.

Supporting their government and providing extraordinary examples of good citizenship and moral behavior, the majority of the Baptist brethren continue to attract many unhappy and unsatisfied Soviet citizens. They have made gains also in the publication of Bibles and hymnals, in the publication of the Fraternal Herald, and in permission to train leaders in the newly organized correspondence school. As another furtherance to the cause, many Baptist leaders believe that the improved quality of Christianity and church life, resulting from the sacrifices endured as a result of living in a Communist society may be an asset rather than a liability. Believing this, they teach their people to rejoice in tribulations.

It is possible for a Communist regime to be quite lenient with religious groups. Yugoslavia is an example of this. The Communist League of Yugoslavia has amended its statutes so that membership in the Party and membership of a religion are not mutually exclusive. The differences between the policies of Stalin and Khrushchev also provide evidence of the

range of choices inherent in the Soviet system. However, we cannot expect much liberalization in policy from the present Communist leadership. Religion is still tolerated only for tactical reasons when pushing too hard would produce the opposite effect of that which the Communists desire.

The chief grounds for optimism in the future lies rather in the growing revolt of intellectuals, artists, scientists and religious leaders, and the continuing failures of communism to achieve its announced goals. Here-in lies the best hope for the peaceful evolution of the communist society into a more open society which will be more responsive to popular needs and popular will. The changing of Soviet laws regarding religion may not occur for decades; not until the new generation of young people, disgusted with the doctrinaire position of the Party directed against all believers, assume key positions of leadership. Indeed, the new generation promises to be more lenient towards religion as the youth of Russia continue to agitate for social democracy.

Michael Bordeaux feels that America can and should do much to encourage greater freedom in Russia because of the possibility of war between Russia and China and other potential conflict in the world, and that we should make the most of this fact. The greatest support for freedom of religion in Russia, he contends, is a fearless publicizing of this

179

Cyril E. Black, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 669.

180

Thomas Dodd, U. S. Senate Report, p. 8.

181

Steve Durasoff, The Russian Protestants, p. 287.

persecution, denouncing it before the world. Only in this way, he thinks, will the Russian Communists be ready to make concessions to the churches within Russia.

The Communists face three insoluble problems in their campaign to eradicate religion, problems that we have discussed. They are the rising demands of the people for freedoms enjoyed in non-communist lands, an actual spirit of religious revival which now prevails among all faiths in Russia, and the revolt against the denial of religious liberty on the part of the new generation--the very group the Communists hoped to win in order to create a godless generation.

In spite of these revolutionizing factors, O. K. Armstrong, author of Religion Can Conquer Communism, argues that it will take the dedicated efforts of all believers in the free world to encourage and strengthen resistance to atheistic Marxism in the Communist areas of the world and to win the battle for freedom. "This generation," he concludes, "will decide whether truth, honor, decency and love inherent in religion, will triumph over tyranny, materialism, degradation and hatred that are the ugly brood of Marxism."

Finally, it seems that the world is not yet convinced that Communism is the inevitable state of Utopia of which the Communists dream. Many Communist sympathizers have been disillusioned. In his life story, André

182

Michael Bordeaux, Opium of the People, p. 232.

183

O. K. Armstrong, Religion Can Conquer Communism, p. 6.

Gide tells of his great admiration for communism, and how that admiration began to wane when he finally left Europe to make a visit to Russia. He was completely disillusioned by what he saw.

Except in the Soviet showcase, the same gulf separated the privileged and the underprivileged, and I saw the same enslavement of the mind against which I had protested elsewhere in Europe.

Communism did not measure up in the eyes of Gide. Richard Crossman, in concluding his book, The god that Failed, said

Not one of the men about whom I wrote--Initiates, Fellow-travellers, or worshippers from afar--would have hesitated to return to Communism if the Party had shown a gleam of understanding of the individual's belief in human freedom and human dignity." 184

So far, the goals of Karl Marx have not been fulfilled. The fact that countless people continue to try to escape the tyranny of Communism is proof enough of its failure to meet the needs of the people.

Regardless of the future, the Russian people have the fortitude to wait patiently for the freedom they desire. The fate of the Russian people in history has been an unhappy one and full of suffering. Past experience has given them the ability to endure suffering and to sacrifice for the sake of their faith. Theirs is a faith to live by and to share, regardless of consequences. 185

In the very warp and woof of reality there seems to be an irrepressible "thrust for freedom." To speak thus is to involve one in a philosophy of history. Here-in, lies the fundamental meaning of

184

Richard Crossman, The god That Failed, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1949), p. 9, 155.

185

Nicolas Berdyaev, The Origin of Russian Communism, pp. 9, 16.

the ferment of our time--the deep-rooted and far-reaching struggle of the human person for freedom. The history of this thrust for freedom is the history of God's creativity, for the yearning to be free is an integral part of the nature of reality, and is an expression of the power of God at work in human affairs. Despite numerous major reversals, history has been a continuing thrust toward this universal imperative. ¹⁸⁶

But finally, it is the spirit of people like the Baptists of Russia that will prevail in the struggle for freedom. Russian Baptists have characteristics and love under conditions similar to those of the Christians of the first century. With the Bible as their sole guide of faith and practice, they share a closely knit and disciplined fellowship. They live under a hostile government and suffer persecutions, but with a manifest sense of joy. Their endurance teaches us to believe that this positive expression of the Christian faith is the hope of Russia, and that in this enduring faith lies their hope for religious liberty in the future. ¹⁸⁷

186

Richard M. Bender, "History as Liberation," The Baptist Student, (Nashville: The Baptist Sunday School Board), pp. 18-21.

187

Henlee H. Barnette, "Three Million Baptists Behind the Iron Curtain," Baptist Training Union Magazine, (Nashville: Baptist Sunday School Board, November, 1962), p. 16.

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Religion
in Communist
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Areas

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The purpose of this service is to make available authentic information on the attitudes and practices of Communist parties with respect to the life, work and vital concerns of Christians and peoples of other religions in Communist dominated countries.

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USSR

1160

From: Council of Relatives of Prisoners, Members of the Church of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists, Condemned for the Word of God in the USSR, June 5, 1967

[RCDA comment: HUMAN RIGHTS AND BAPTIST DISSENTERS IN SOVIET UNION

The United Nations has announced that 1968 should be the "International Year of Human Rights." Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 reads:

USSR

1161

From: V Mire Koshmara (In the World of the Nightmare), Moscow, State Political Publishing House



["Illegal" Worship in the Forest]

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." It is in light of this declaration that RCDA will devote its attention in this current volume (VII) to the problem of religious freedom in Communist countries as one of the basic human rights. This we have already done in our previous six volumes where we have tried to present a balanced picture of religious life under Communism. During this "International Year of Human Rights" we plan to pay even more attention to this urgent concern.

Communism continues to de-

in Religion
Communist
Dominated
Areas

II

Documentation from original sources, selected and translated under the direction of Paul B. Anderson, Editor, Blahoslav S. Hrubý, Managing Editor. Published semi-monthly.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, 475 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10027 U.S.A.

The purpose of this service is to make available authentic information on the attitudes and practices of Communist parties with respect to the life, work and vital concerns of Christians and peoples of other religions in Communist dominated countries.

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Items 1404 - 1423

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USSR

1404

From: Authentic copy of Court Verdict with signatures and seal, Brest Litovsk, USSR, April 17, 1968

[RCDA comment: TRIALS OF DISSIDENT BAPTISTS (INITSIATIVNIKI) IN USSR

The trial in court at Brest Litovsk and the sentencing of two dissident Baptist leaders, in April, 1968, bring out certain specific aspects of religious life in the Soviet Union, notably (1) obligatory legal registration of a congregation or group to worship services; (2) adolescents and children cannot legally take part in public worship; (3) the dissidents claim immunity from these laws on grounds of constitutional separation of church and state in the USSR. RCDA will publish shortly the appeal signed by 230 members of the Brest dissident Baptist community.]¹

USSR

1405

From: Dein Reich Komme (Mitteilungen vom Missionsbund Licht im Osten) (Thy Kingdom Come, News from the Missionary Society Light in East), No. 6, Korntal, West Germany, Nov./Dec. 1968



Baptism in a dissident (Initsiativniki) Baptist congregation in Byelorussia (White Russia) [P. 86]

THE VERDICT

In the name of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic

On April 17, 1968, the People's Court of the city of Brest, in Brest Oblast, consisting of the Presiding Officer Schukin, Assessors Daniltschuk and Tsimbalist, Secretary Volskaya, together with Prosecutor Laskovitch, Public Prosecutor Pisovtsev, examined in open session in the Brest Club the crim-

UKRAINE (USSR) 1406

From: Lyudina i Svit
(Man and World),
No. 1, Kiev,
1969



— Bora Kozal.

[Name on the door:]
GOD

[Angel holding:] RE-
PORT

[Caption:] God is not
in!

Cartoon from "Lives of
Saints and Sinners" by
A. P. Vasilenko and S.
I. Gerasimchuk [P. 48]

inal case of the accused:

Feidak, Trofim Korneyevitch, born September 19, 1909, town of Torgovitch, Lukov Region, Wolyn Oblast, non-Party, third grade education, bachelor working as carpenter for the Electric grid, Brest Region, citizen of the USSR, Ukrainian, peasant origin, resident in Brest, Kalinin St. No. 72

Vilchinsky, Vladimir Alexandrovitch, born May 18, 1930, in Kholm, Polish People's Republic, non-Party, eight year education, married, with four dependent children aged from 2½ to 16 years, working as locomotive engineer in Brest DSR-15, citizen of USSR, Ukrainian, of worker origin, resident in Brest, Lazo St. No. 20

Both are charged under Articles 139 Part 2 and 222 Part 1 of the Criminal Code of the USSR.

Having examined the previously prepared material and the Court's investigation, and after hearing the statements of the accused and of witnesses, the Court has reached

CONCLUSIONS

At the head of the Baptist community registered in due legal order is the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB), having as its printed organ "Fraternal Herald" and the required staff. The registered community of Baptists conducts all its religious ceremonies in harmony with Soviet legislation on religious cults.

In 1961 there arose among the Baptists the so-called "Initiative Group", and from among its participants there was formed an "Orgcommittee", later a "Council of Churches" of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

The leaders of the "Council of Churches" began to conduct strong propaganda among fellow believers in the registered communities, calling on them to leave their communities and not to submit to the AUCECB, to demand of the believers that they should not recognize existing Soviet laws on religious cults, and not to recognize the Deputies of the Council on Religious Affairs in the Oblast Workers' Executive Committee.

The so-called "Orgcommittee" and later the "Council of Churches" began to issue an illegally printed and mimeographed periodical, "Messenger of Salvation", an information sheet, "Fraternal Leaflet", various communications and declarations, in which the practices of the Party and of the Soviet Government on freedom of conscience and confession were intentionally distorted, all sorts of false information disseminated regarding the activities of the administrative organs of the Soviet state concerning believer Baptists, intensive propaganda to win youth and immature children for the sect and the Baptist-community and for teaching them religion, creating a hostile attitude toward society, its laws, science and culture.

In the city of Brest, in accordance with the USSR constitution and current legislation, there is a religious community of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, registered with the Deputy of the Council on Religious Affairs in due order.

A moving letter from
inside a Russian prison:
'Not once have I regretted
my witness for Christ'

IV

PRISONER OF THE LORD

"Faith is a shining lighthouse for life, a star that indicates the way, and blessed is he who never extinguishes this light"

This letter from a young Christian brother inside a communist prison will stir a deep heart response in many of the readers of this magazine. We publish it in the earnest hope that it will inspire each believer to a personal renewal of his own dedication and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ!

*My kind of happiness
does not depend on
outward circumstances*

I greet you all in the love of Christ!

You would like to know how I feel in these conditions? First of all I must tell you that I perfectly, sincerely—and with all my heart—thank the Lord for this road. Only

Without God life loses its purpose

by this way has it been possible for me to learn many things and have very special blessings resulting from very clear experiences of the love of God—His guidance, care and defence. Often I hear from unbelieving people . . . "Look, we are free. We have no troubles in life. We are happy. But what do you have? Surely you must be tired of dressing in those clothes, living under such circumstances!" But my answer is that I am happy, and my kind of happiness is much deeper than theirs since it does not depend on outward circumstances. Of course they do not understand. They say that my years in prison are just so many years out of my life. And in some ways this is true, for the loss of one's freedom is indeed very difficult. But I must tell you that not once have I regretted my witness for Christ—that for which they have put me in prison.

I do not deny that I very much long for freedom, for home, for my friends. But I cannot let these things turn me away from the Lord who gives me a joy that cannot be compared with earthly things. Without God life loses its purpose.

At my trial I told the court how happy I was because as a child of God I could not purchase freedom at the price of turning away from Him. Now, after many months in this prison, I can still say this. His

Word is so true, "The yoke I will give you is easy, and the load that I will put on you is light" (Matthew 11:30).

One brother who was interrogated by the court repeated the words of Martin Luther: "This I believe; God helping me I cannot do less." We know that there is nothing worse on earth than life without God—especially for those who have once known the Lord. Such persons clearly will feel the emptiness of their hearts more than those who never knew Him. I would not like to have such a life.

I have been told, not once but many times: "You may believe in God, but do it in another way." In other words, believe in God but

*. . . there is nothing worse
on earth than life without
God—especially for those
who have once known Him*

don't follow His commandments! They don't say, "Turn from God." But that is all one and the same thing. If we don't follow Him, we turn from Him. Another Believer was told in court, "You may believe in God on the earth, but live according to the Bible only in heaven—not here!" His reply was, "If I don't live according to the Bible here, I will never get to heaven!"

I would like to finish my letter with the words from one of our songs:

**Our joy is complete / from Christ
and not from man / and nobody
in all the universe / can conquer it.**

Convey from me cordial greetings to all friends.

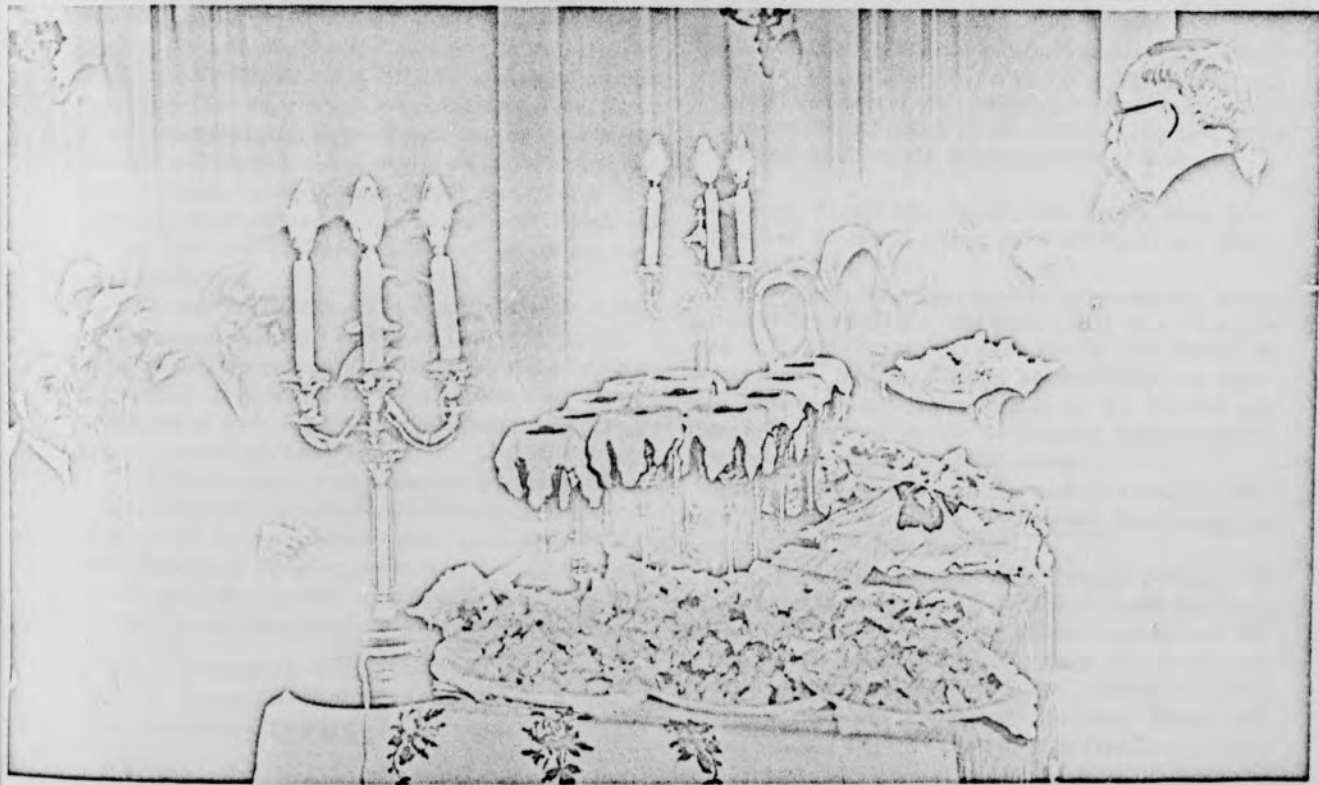
(For obvious reasons the name is withheld).



Religious News Service Photo

Dressed in white robes, believers await baptism at the Russian Baptist Church.

Dr. Jacob Zhidhov, President of the Russian Council of Evangelical Churches, administers the Lord's Supper.



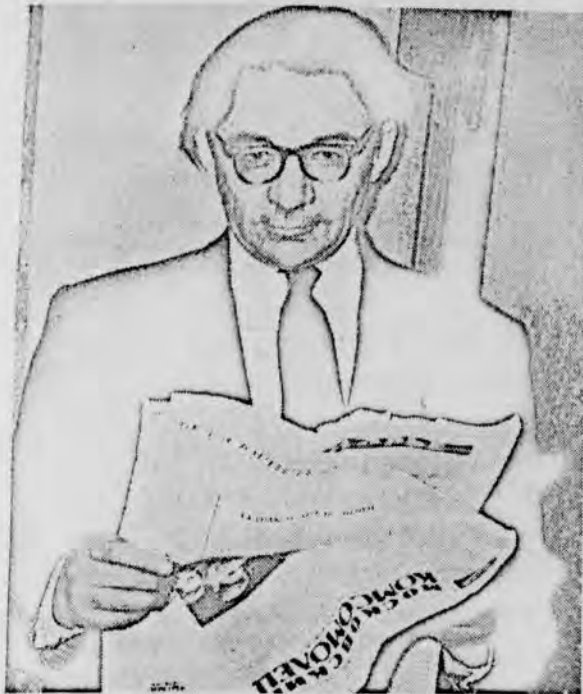
Hundred Students Complete Russian Baptist Bible Courses

Moscow, USSR

Certificates of graduation have been awarded to 100 students who completed final examinations in Bible correspondence courses sponsored by the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

The students had spent two years studying by correspondence the courses in dogmatics, bibliology, pastoral theology, homiletics, exegesis and the history of Christianity. They all came to Moscow for their final examinations, held in the newly furnished rooms of the council building.

Among the students were representatives of different nationalities: Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians,



A. Levitin-Krasnov

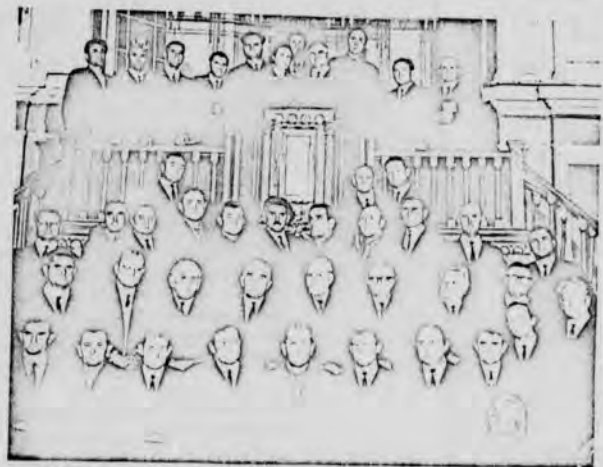
The most important thing about this letter is that it looks at the situation from the standpoint of a believing Christian layman who is, at the same time, a loyal citizen of his country. However, he feels very strongly as many of his contemporaries do that there is a need for change, for more freedom and human rights as he expresses it in the following words: "And now, in the person of youth, the Russian people audaciously undertakes socialist democracy. The movement for socialist democracy, for its complete achievement, becomes each year more powerful, broader, well recognized and respected. . .] The process of inner renewal of the Russian people goes on with seven-leagued boots, and the time is near when Russia will become 'the world's brightest democracy' as was prophesied by Gorky."

As contrasted with the customary bland or defensive statements by religious officials—Orthodox, Baptist, Jewish, Moslems and others—Levitin, while a loyal citizen of the USSR, is critical of Church and society and stands for renewal of both, for socialist democracy, more freedom and respect of human rights.

Levitin's release from prison is a gratifying answer to efforts of many Christians and other people who protested against his and other dissenters' persecution by the Soviet authorities. However, other dissenters, secular and religious, are still in prisons or mental institutions. They need prayers and protests of free men everywhere.

(RCDA comments on letter to Pope Paul from Soviet dissenter, A. Levitin-Krasnov.)

1970.



BIBLE CLASSES IN MOSCOW. The faculty and some students in the Bible correspondence courses sponsored by Baptists in the USSR are shown in this picture made in the Baptist church in Moscow.

Georgians, Moldavians, Komis and others from many districts of the Soviet Union, from the North and South, the West and Far East.

The students were examined by a commission whose members included A.I. Mitskevich and A.M. Bichkov with S.T. Timchenko, vice-president of the Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of the USSR, as chairman. The graduates' knowledge in all the subjects was thoroughly checked by the commission which awarded graduation certificates to all the students.

The majority of graduates returned for service in their local churches, but some volunteered for evangelical work in Siberia and the Far East.

Alexsei Bichkov reports: "The cordial personal intercourse between brothers in faith and friends in Christ left a lasting impression on the leading brothers and believers of the Moscow Church, where the pulpit was given during these days to the young servants of Christ.

"The parting was a touching experience. These were really cherished moments given to us by God."

(From: The Baptist World, February, 1971.)

Всех братьев и сестер, составляющих наше большое братство евангельских христиан-баптистов, к какому бы духовному течению внутри братства они ни принадлежали, мы призываем вносить, с помощью Господней, свой посильный вклад в драгоценное дело единства нашей евангельско-баптистской семьи.

А. В. Карев

ЗАРУБЕЖНЫЕ ГОСТИ О СВОЕМ ПОСЕЩЕНИИ ЦЕРКВЕЙ В НАШЕЙ СТРАНЕ

ПИСЬМО ПРЕЗИДЕНТА ВСЕМИРНОГО СОЮЗА БАПТИСТОВ УИЛЬЯМА ТОЛБЕРТА

Генеральному секретарю ВСЕХБ

А. В. Кареву

Мой дорогой брат Карев! Я очень рад сообщить Вам о своем благополучном возвращении домой. После того как я покинул Вашу страну, я посетил Болгарскую Народную Республику и оттуда вылетел на родину.

Я еще раз выражаю свою самую искреннюю благодарность и огромную признательность Вам и членам Вашего Совета за чудесное общение, воодушевление, обогатившее нас, и за благословения, которые испытали я и моя жена во время нашего визита в СССР. Мы запомним этот визит на всю жизнь. Вы и Ваши сотрудники приложили все усилия к тому, чтобы сделать наш отдых приятным и мою миссию, которая послужила во славу нашего всемогущего Господа, самой успешной.

Я заверяю Вас в своих постоянных молитвах, чтобы Господь завершил дело единства в Вашем Союзе и продолжал благословлять дело рук Ваших, и помогал бы во всех Ваших нуждах.

С братским приветом, искренне Ваш

У. Р. Толберт

МОЕ ПОСЕЩЕНИЕ ВСЕСОЮЗНОГО СОВЕТА ЕВАНГЕЛЬСКИХ ХРИСТИАН-БАПТИСТОВ В СССР

19—26 мая 1970 г.

По приглашению ВСЕХБ я вместе с миссис Толберт и мистером Джозефом Иорвати, моим личным секретарем, посетил баптистский Союз, прибыв в Москву 19 мая 1970 года. Мы остановились в этом замечательном городе до полуночи 21 мая, а затем отправились в Ленинград, где имели встречи с братьями и сестрами по вере. Там мы пробыли до полуночи 24 мая, а затем вернулись в Москву, чтобы продолжить наше общение, а также мою миссию, которая закончилась утром 26 мая.

И хотя мы пробыли в СССР очень короткий период времени, у нас осталось радостное и незабываемое впечатление от замечательных богослужений, на которых я еще раз ощутил силу любви Божией и убедился, как сильны верующие, объединенные Иисусом Христом — нашим всемогущим Богом, когда Его благословение пребывает на них. На богослужениях я был поражен горячей преданностью

15

--Bratskii Vestnik

fraternal messenger of the All-Union Council of Evangelicals-Baptists, published at Box 520, Moscow, U.S.S.R., December 17, 1970.