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RELIGION AND THE SOVIET STATE

**A Report on Religious Repression in the
U.S.S.R. on the Occasion of the
Christian Millennium**

May 1988

PUEBLA
I N S T I T U T E

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The Puebla Institute

The Puebla Institute is a lay Roman Catholic human rights group. Our principal focus is freedom of religion as defined in the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. The Institute is nonpolitical and privately funded.

Membership in the Institute is available for individuals and organizations. Members receive our newsletter. For more information, call or write the Institute.

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PREFACE

The Puebla Institute is a lay Roman Catholic human rights group, principally concerned with freedom of religion for all groups worldwide. It is non-political and privately funded.

In examining a particular government's human rights record toward religious groups, Puebla applies a single, internationally accepted standard, the 1981 U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. These provisions include the right to the non-violent exercise of the freedom to:

- worship or assemble in connection with religion and establish and maintain places for these purposes;

- establish and maintain charitable and humanitarian institutions;

- make and use necessary articles related to religious rites or customs;

- write, issue and disseminate relevant publications;

- teach religion;

- solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contribution from individuals and institutions;

- train, appoint, elect or designate by succession appropriate leaders;

- observe days of rest and celebrate religious holidays and ceremonies;

- establish and maintain communications with individuals and communities in matters of religion at the national and international levels.

It is these standards of the U.N. religion declaration that we apply in the following assessment of the Soviet Union.

The information contained in this report was largely

provided by the England-based Keston College. Supplemental material was acquired from the Ukrainian Catholic Church in exile, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, the Lithuanian Information Center, the Ukrainian Press Service, the James Madison Foundation, the Institute on Religion and Democracy, and the Committee to Free Soviet Hare Krishnas. The examples are intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive. They span three decades but in nearly every case relate to problems which exist today. The report was edited by Anna Tapay, Program Director of the Puebla Institute.

Our purpose in writing this report is to promote religious freedom. It is our hope that it will prompt the Soviet government to implement the needed reforms.

This report is dedicated to the approximately 200 individuals imprisoned today in the Soviet Union for their religious beliefs and activities.

INTRODUCTION

The observance of the Millennium of Christianity in the Soviet Union this year invites a look at the status of religious freedom in that country. The fundamental question to consider is whether ordinary Soviet citizens of all faiths are allowed to worship and practice their religion without undue State interference. The answer remains unequivocally no.

The Ukrainian Catholic Church, Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the Jehovah's Witnesses, Hare Krishnas and other religions are banned. Worship by "legal" religions is prohibited unless it is done in a State-approved building by a State-approved congregation. Organized religious instruction and Hebrew training for young persons, and religious and Bible discussion groups for adults remain prohibited. Over 200 religious believers continue serving sentences for religious reasons in prisons, labor camps, psychiatric institutions and places of internal exile. Prison conditions are harsh, causing the death of one religious prisoner of conscience as recently as December 1987. Strict state controls continue to result in acute shortages of religious literature, places of worship and artifacts. The State routinely interferes in the designation of religious leaders and in church administration. Professed religious believers are barred from top jobs, and are discriminated against and harassed in schools and the work place. In short, the Soviet regime retains its role as supervisor of the daily life of religious communities -- a role that is marked by militant atheism and overt hostility toward religion.

Like other areas of Soviet life, religion has benefitted from General Secretary Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika. Recent months have witnessed the renovation of the Russian Orthodox Danilov monastery, the opening of a Jewish kosher restaurant in Moscow, Gorbachev's meeting with Russian Orthodox leaders, increases in the availability of religious literature and Jewish emigration visas, Soviet press reporting

on religious harassment for the first time, and the announcement of State plans to celebrate in Moscow the Christian Millennium.

Such reforms have not been sufficient to alter the fundamental condition of religious repression in the Soviet Union. Religious liberalization has been sporadic and uneven, more symbolic than substantive. The State-favored Russian Orthodox Church has profitted more than other religions from these changes, but it too can claim scores of prisoners of conscience, thousands of closed churches and seminaries, and continued State administration of its affairs. Other religious groups, particularly those outside Moscow and the Russian republic, have gained little from glasnost.

Believers in and out of the Soviet Union, mindful of the wholesale slaughter of believers during Stalin's reign of terror and the anti-religious crusades of Khrushchev, are hopeful that these changes herald a new age of religious tolerance in the Soviet Union. Time will tell if these hopes are justified. In and of themselves, recent Soviet changes regarding religion, taken in the context of ongoing widespread repression, are pitifully inadequate.

Puebla's specific findings on current restrictions of religious liberty in the Soviet Union follow:

I. Religious Prisoners of Conscience: Over 200 Soviet citizens are currently confined to prisons, labor camps, places of internal exile and psychiatric institutions for religious reasons. The large majority of religious prisoners of conscience are Baptists, though believers of many faiths, including Catholics, Muslims, Pentecostals, other Protestants, and Russian Orthodox are represented. Their crimes range from possessing or printing religious literature, to worshipping in a church or with a congregation that is not State approved, to manufacturing religious articles, to protesting government interference in the church.

The total number of known religious prisoners fell from 400 in late 1986 to 216 in May 1988, and since early 1987 religious arrests have been at a virtual standstill. However, the 216 religious prisoners who remain continue to serve out sentences of up to 12 years, often under harsh conditions and with strict restrictions on religious practice.

Many imprisoned believers have been arrested three, four and five times for religious activities. Some, like Baptist Nicolai Boiko who was arrested in 1968 for leading an unregistered Baptist church, have not only suffered multiple arrests but have been re-

sentenced to longer prison terms while still serving the original sentence. As a result, some have been confined for prolonged periods, some for nearly two decades and longer.

The longest term religious prisoner, Orthodox Vasili Shipilov, was arrested in 1939 for studying and preaching the Bible and, with the exception of one year of freedom, has been forcibly committed to labor camps, psychiatric hospitals and Siberian houses for the mentally ill ever since -- a total of 48 years' imprisonment so far.

Religious prisoners of conscience, like other Soviet prisoners, suffer harsh treatment in detention. Unsanitary, damp, cold and cramped living conditions, meager food rations and inadequate, or at times non-existent medical care, combined with forced regimes of heavy labor -- all take their toll on the health of prisoners. Many suffer from tuberculosis, pneumonia and various infectious diseases, while others have developed ulcers, malnutrition, poor eyesight, gastrointestinal illnesses and nervous disorders. Some die from the severe prison conditions. Between May 1984 and January 1987 four prominent Ukrainians who defended believers died in Camp No. 36 near Kuchino: Ukrainian Helsinki Monitors Vasyl Stus, Oleska Tykhy, Yuriy Lytvyn and journalist Valeriy Marchenko. Most recently, in December 1987, 23-year old Armenian Hare Krishna follower Sarkis Ogadzhanian died in labor camp YV-25/"B" in the Orenburg Territory on December 26, 1987, one month before his expected release. In the early 1980s an infant, jailed with her mother a Hare Krishna follower, died from conditions in a labor camp.

II. Freedom of Worship: There are indications that the 1929 law requiring the registration of churches and limiting the activities of religious groups will be amended during 1988. How substantial this change will be remains to be seen. In the meantime, religious worship is prohibited unless it takes place in a State-approved building by a State-approved religious organization.

Registration is granted sparingly, and can be withdrawn arbitrarily at any time. Approved religions -- the Russian Orthodox Church, the Baptists, Lutherans, Jews, Muslims, Lithuanian Catholics and others -- continue to be denied permission for establishing new congregations and churches. As recently as February 3, 1988, it was reported that a Russian Orthodox community in Berezniki was refused State recognition. Some believers are hundreds of miles from the nearest church, and thus barred from worship services. In Azerbaijan, not one church exists for the 100,000 Armenians living in the area dissidents want annexed to the Armenian Republic. In many other areas, the number of worship places are grossly inadequate. In Klapeida, for example, 8,000 parishioners are forced to crowd into the services of one small Catholic church, while two other churches in the area were closed by authorities.

The State does not recognize some religions, and their followers must worship in secret. These include, most notably, the four million strong Ukrainian Catholic Church, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church and the Hare Krishnas.

The Soviet government forcibly merged the Ukrainian Catholic Church into the Russian Orthodox Church in 1946 and refuses to this day to recognize it as a separate entity, despite repeated petitions presented at great personal risk by Ukrainian Catholics. After 40 years of persecution, the Ukrainian Catholic community maintains an extensive underground network of priests, nuns, and believers so that there were reportedly as many as 150 illegal parishes in Western Ukraine. According to some exile reports many of these underground Catholic churches were shut down by the State in 1987. Last year Soviet authorities appear to have taken new coercive measures against a defiant Ukrainian priest. In punishment for religious activities, underground Ukrainian

Catholic priest Myhailo Havryliv was drafted into the military, where from October to December 1987, he was forced to clean up radioactive waste at Chernobyl.

Ironically, it was in Kiev, in the Ukraine, where the baptism of Prince Valdimir took place in 988 -- the event which marked the beginning of Christianity in the Soviet Union and whose Millennium is being celebrated by the Soviet government in June 1988. The Ukrainian Catholic Church has not only been denied legalization and the opportunity to participate in the celebrations in Moscow, but has also been warned not to openly celebrate the occasion in the Ukraine. The Soviet government refused Pope John Paul II permission to visit the Ukraine during a proposed Millennium visit to the USSR.

III. Religious Education: Soviet law prohibits all organized religious instruction for young people, as well as adult Bible and other religious discussion groups. Organizers of banned religion classes or meetings may be criminally punished. Among those jailed for such transgressions have been the well-known, former Jewish refusenik Joseph Begun, who was arrested in 1982 for teaching Hebrew, and underground Ukrainian Catholic priests Father Vasily Kavatsiv and Father Roman Eryp, arrested in 1981 and sentenced to eight years' punishment each on charges that included teaching children catechism in private homes. In the 1960s and 1970s, there were numerous cases of Baptist children being taken away from parents who raised them in their own faith. Secret religious schools, such as a Baptist Bible class in the Tadzhik republic discovered in early 1987, continue to be searched and shut down by authorities.

Additionally, believers must contend with the Soviet educational system, which propagates atheism. Students are tested on atheistic philosophy and parents cannot teach alternative religious points of view through private instruction.

Prospects for change are dim. In an April 19, 1988, interview with the Italian daily Messaggero Soviet Religious Affairs Minister Konstantin Kharchev stated that even if some religious restrictions are relaxed, it is unlikely that the laws on religious instruction would change.

IV. Religious Literature: Soviet policy continues to tightly restrict access to Bibles, prayer books, Korans and other religious literature. In recent years, Soviet authorities have approved the publication and importation of Bibles and prayer books by some religious groups. Nevertheless, religious literature for all religious groups is in extremely short supply.

Some religious believers illegally produce religious publications within the USSR. If caught, they are dealt with harshly. Many of the 216 Soviet religious prisoners still serving sentences are being punished for having written, printed or distributed religious literature. Some, such as Orthodox mother and journalist Zoyo Krakhmalnikova, who since 1982 has been serving a six-year sentence for producing a collection of religious writings, are charged under the criminal code with "anti-Soviet propaganda." Others, such as Lithuanian Catholic Stanislovas Muraukas who was arrested in 1985 and is serving a three-year prison sentence for printing religious postcards, are charged under the criminal code with "engaging in prohibited trade."

V. Objects Necessary to Religious Practice: Soviet authorities tightly control the availability of religious artifacts through ownership and production. A 1918 decree transferred all property of religious societies to the State. If a religious group acquires State registration, these articles are loaned back. Authorities have permitted the Russian Orthodox to manufacture their own religious articles, and the Lithuanians are allowed to produce some religious pictures. Ukrainian Catholics, Jews and other

groups, however, must illegally produce or smuggle in the objects they need, such as candles, rosaries, crucifixes, vestments, prayers shawls, Torah scrolls, and mezuzahs.

VI. Observance of Religious Holidays and Rest Days: Believers and the State conflict over the desire to worship on Saturday -- a working day for many Soviet citizens. Seventh Day Adventists and Jews are often fined for keeping their children from school or refusing to work on Saturdays. The Russian Orthodox Church has experienced problems with Saturday worship on Holy Saturday during the Easter season when their members are sometimes forced to work in violation of their beliefs.

State tolerance of religious feast and holy day celebration varies according to region and religious group. The Russian Orthodox Church has been subject to some police harassment on its most important feast day -- Easter. It is not uncommon for temporary police barriers to be erected around churches and believers to be taunted or obstructed as they try to enter. With respect to the banned Ukrainian Catholics, authorities simply do not tolerate religious holiday observances. On January 6, 1988, an underground congregation of Ukrainian Catholics in the Lvov Province gathered for a Christmas celebration was broken up by local militia. A more violent incident took place a month earlier in Buchach in the home of an 84 year-old underground Catholic nun. In that instance, the elderly worshippers were kicked, forcibly taken to the militia office, and then forced to make their way home on foot. Ukrainian Catholics are prohibited from celebrating in 1988 the Millennium of Christianity in the Ukraine, either with State-sponsored festivities in Moscow or at home.

VII. Discrimination Against Believers: Religious believers cannot attain high positions of authority and responsibility in society and are often subject to official discrimination in education, the army, and the work place.

Higher education is effectively barred to known believers and their children. Maryte Gudaityte, a Lithuanian Catholic and student at Pranas Mazyulis Medical School, was expelled in 1985 for her religious beliefs and for sending Christmas greetings to two imprisoned Catholic priests. When she attempted to transfer to another school, she was informed that religion and medicine are incompatible and that she would have to find another specialty. The children of Petro Zeleniuch, an underground Ukrainian Catholic priest, have been totally denied the opportunity for higher education. Soviet Jews are common targets for this type of harassment and are systematically discriminated against in their attempts to enter a university. Though reports of religious discrimination have appeared in the Soviet press during glasnost, little has changed in practice.

VIII. Restrictions on the Formation of Religious Leaders: To date, Soviet authorities have not relinquished their role in appointing and supervising religious leaders. The government continues to severely restrict and manipulate theological training by limiting the number of seminaries and by screening out some of the most qualified candidates. New seminarians are frequently pressured by the KGB to be informants.

Seminary applicants refused permission by the state to prepare for the priesthood in legally operating seminaries are forced to study clandestinely. Underground priests who are caught are liable for arrest and trial as imposters. In September 1984, Lithuanian priest Jonas Matulionis was sentenced to three years in a labor camp for such an offense. Others who hope to escape Soviet restrictions by seeking religious training abroad also open themselves up to arrest. In 1982 Nicolae Shaburov, a convert to Russian Orthodoxy, was forcibly committed to an indefinite term in a psychiatric hospital after he applied to leave to study in a foreign seminary.

The only substantive reform in this area has been the decision to permit the Adventists to open a seminary, something still denied to the more numerous Baptists.

IX. Collection and Use of Money: The authorities do not interfere on a large scale with the collection and use of money by religious associations for State-approved causes even though charitable activities are illegal. In fact, they seem to tacitly approve of the Russian Orthodox donations to the Soviet Peace Fund. There are indications that the 1929 law that bars religious groups from charitable activities will be soon rescinded to conform to the de facto situation.

Charity for causes unacceptable to the authorities, however, is not permitted and is sometimes punished by imprisonment. Since the State refuses to aid families of political prisoners, several Protestant relief organizations have helped them meet their basic needs. These relief activities have been closely monitored and some of their leaders persecuted, imprisoned, and, in the case of Gederts Melngailis, committed to a psychiatric institution.

X. Contacts with Co-Religionists Abroad: There are no formal restrictions on legally recognized religious groups meeting with foreign co-religionists either in the USSR or abroad for official meetings. Banned religious groups such as the Ukrainian Catholics or Jehovah's Witnesses can meet with foreign co-religionists at great personal risk of being charged with having links with foreign powers. All Soviets leaving the Soviet Union and foreigners entering, however, are subject to frequent delays and denials of visas by Soviet authorities, which makes meetings for religious or any other purposes difficult.

By ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Soviet government agreed to observe and enforce basic human rights, including religious freedom. In comparing the laws, policies and practices of the Soviet Union with the standards of the U.N. Covenants and the Declaration on Religious Intolerance, Puebla concludes that the Soviet government routinely violates the right to religious liberty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Puebla Institute appeals to the Soviet government to uphold its human rights commitments in the U.N. agreements, and in the spirit of glasnost to use the occasion of the Millennium of Christianity in the Kievan Rus' to take the following minimum measures to ensure religious freedom:

- Release all remaining religious prisoners and cease further arrests for religious reasons;
- Repeal or substantially amend the 1929 Law on Religious Associations, which limits places of worship and restricts religious practice;
- Allow all religious groups to worship freely, including banned groups such as the Ukrainian Catholics, Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Hare Krishnas;
- Return to the Ukrainian Catholic Church the Kiev Monastery of the Caves, a vital symbol of Kievan Christianity in this millennial year;
- Allow believers to freely produce or import copies of the scriptures and religious literature and artifacts;
- Permit religious groups to freely organize and conduct educational activities, and to freely open theological institutes to train clergy and other religious leaders;
- Allow religious believers to have opportunities equal to other Soviet citizens in the areas of employment, education, housing and other state benefits; and abolish discrimination and harassment of believers by local officials;
- Permit Soviet and foreign believers to engage freely in unofficial and informal contacts, and allow free emigration.

PART 1: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: RELIGION AND THE SOVIET STATE
FROM LENIN TO GORBACHEV

Marx and Engels probably would not recognize the Soviet system as the legitimate product of their ideas, even though it is their writings, as adapted to Russian conditions by Lenin, which underpin official ideology in the Soviet Union. For all three writers God was a creation of man and religion was an instrument used by the ruling classes to keep the workers in their place. Prior to the 1917 revolution Lenin had argued that under socialism the State would remain neutral in matters of religious belief but the Party would conduct educational campaigns aimed at "liberating" believers from religious influence. In practice this distinction quickly evaporated, and it became apparent that the new rulers were not going to wait for "objective conditions" to bring about the "withering away" of religion. Instead, Soviet religious policy since 1917 has employed four main tools to hasten the demise of religion in society: coercion, regulation, prohibition, and atheistic education.

. Tools of Repression

1. Coercion

The Russian Orthodox Church, tainted by its association with the Tsarist regime, bore the brunt of the initial wave of coercion. Its property was nationalized and many of its educational and charitable foundations were closed. Over 50,000 bishops, priests, monks and nuns were slaughtered or imprisoned.

The number of laity who perished for their faith is incalculable.

The other religious groups were repressed more consistently beginning in the late 1920s. During the mass terror of the 1930s, bishops, priests, pastors, rabbis and mullahs disappeared by the thousands into camps and execution cellars. Places of worship were closed and destroyed. On the eve of the German invasion in June 1941 it appeared that institutional religion was well on its way to extinction. After the invasion, however, overt repression suddenly subsided as Stalin sought to win popular support for the sacrifices necessary to repel the Nazis. Surviving church leaders were released from the camps and some began vigorously supporting the war effort. Subsequently a number of concessions were made to religious believers, with the State permitting the re-opening of some places of worship and allowing the publication of a limited amount of religious literature.

Ironically it was Nikita Khrushchev, the leader responsible for a degree of liberalization in other areas of Soviet life, who launched the next major assault on religion. Keen to convince skeptical colleagues of his ideological orthodoxy, Khrushchev closed roughly half the legally sanctioned places of worship between 1959 and 1964. His fall in October 1964 ended blatant repression, but for most believers brutality and harassment continued. For some groups--notably the Ukrainian Catholics, who were forced to merge with the Orthodox in 1946--physical violence, sometimes murder, remained the norm. Much of this was not formally instigated by the central government, but no effort was made by the government to prevent local authorities from carrying out such persecution or to redress its effects. Moreover, in

March 1966 the arrest and imprisonment of religious believers began again, primarily as a response to the religious activism of the Baptists, and only after February 1987 has the arrest of religious believers for religious reasons come to a virtual standstill. Since then, there have been scattered, unconfirmed reports of religious conscientious objectors being arrested. Also in February 1987, about 100 believers were released from prison. However, over two hundred religious believers, arrested and sentenced before 1987, remain in jail at the time of this writing.

2. Regulation

Though on occasion the Soviet State has seemed committed to the forcible elimination of religion, for most of its 70 years it has recognized that religion is likely to persist and must be strictly regulated by the State.

The principal law regulating the life of religious organizations is the Law on Religious Associations (as amended in 1975), imposed on the churches by Stalin in 1929. In practice this law makes it extremely difficult to open new churches legally and facilitates the shutdown of existing places of worship. Together with a number of unpublished or oral instructions, it effectively limits religious freedom to the right to worship in buildings specially designated by the government. Many of the educational and charitable functions traditionally performed by religious bodies are expressly forbidden.

The chief governmental body used for State regulation of religious life has been the Council of Religious Affairs (CRA) of the USSR Council of Ministers. The CRA makes the final decision

on whether churches should be opened or closed, oversees the appointment of church leaders, and seeks to ensure that church bodies do not transgress the laws relating to religion.

3. Co-option

During the 1920s the State promoted "reformist" movements within the Orthodox Church and the Muslim establishment in an effort to undermine the traditionally conservative religious leadership. In 1927 the acting head of the Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Sergei, issued a declaration of political loyalty to the Soviet State and since then the State has refrained from attempting to create alternative churches, preferring to rely on the support of relatively docile religious leaders. Since the war, the regime has encouraged Christian church leaders to become involved in the international arena. In some bodies, Soviet religious leaders have been active in promoting Soviet foreign policy initiatives and in defending the USSR against allegations of religious persecution.

4. Atheistic Education

The Soviets have sought to develop a "scientific world-view" among the population. In the years immediately following the revolution, atheistic propaganda was essentially anti-clerical in nature and, because of the low education level of much of the populace, extremely crude in content. Journals such as Bezbozhnik (The Godless) attributed mercenary motives to priests and pastors, and contrasted religion with the scientific understanding of life. This approach continued into the early 1960s, the most famous

example being the cartoon which appeared during the Khrushchev period showing an astronaut looking for God.

Since the late 1960s a less emotive approach has been favored, which recognizes that religious believers are often well educated people who will not be convinced by the old arguments. Soviet scholars have sought to develop a more sophisticated critique of religion, though the extent to which this approach has filtered through to the average propagandist is open to question. There have also been attempts to create secular rituals capable of competing with religious rites of passage, which have had only limited acceptance among believers.

* * * * *

The Soviet regime's attitude toward religion over the last seventy years has been essentially hostile. At no time has there been any serious questioning of the ideological commitment to an eschatological goal, that is, to the building of Communism which entailed the "withering away" of religion. Since the Second World War the Soviet regime has, with certain important exceptions, generally preferred to rely on attrition rather than a full scale assault on religious bodies. For many religious groups there has been a degree of toleration that ensures their institutional survival, at least in the short and medium term. Other groups, such as the Ukrainian Catholic Church, have been banned completely and subject to vicious persecution. Nearly all have had to face some restriction on their activities.

Over the last 25 years a number of new trends have emerged in Soviet religious life which have strengthened religious feeling

among the Soviet populace despite prolonged harassment and restrictions by the State. The three most important trends are religious dissent, growth in ethnic nationalism, and a rebirth in popular interest in religion.

B. New Trends in Religious Life

1. Dissent

Religious dissent has appeared in large part as a reaction to the Khrushchev campaign. Leading the way were the "reform Baptists" who split away from the officially recognized Baptist Union in the early 1960s because of its willingness to accept State interference in internal church life. Throughout the USSR, Baptist communities began to function without seeking registration from the State authorities. They openly taught religion to their children and evangelized. When their members were harassed and imprisoned, they bombarded government agencies with appeals and complaints. Their activism drew the wrath of the State and in 1966 nearly 200 of the most active Baptists were arrested and imprisoned. Since then they have constituted the largest single category of known religious prisoners.

By the time Gorbachev came to power in March 1985 virtually all religious groups had dissenting elements. Vast quantities of samizdat (self-published) literature reaches the West, documenting the struggle of believers to open new churches or prevent excessive State interference in the life of their communities. Others report on the trials of religious activists for a wide range of "crimes"--from "hooliganism," to "violation of the laws

on the separation of church from state," to "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda." Samizdat publications also print prayers, poems, meditations and philosophical commentaries.

2. Ethnic Nationalism

Recent events in Armenia and other Soviet republics illustrated to the Western world the continuing strength of nationalist feeling in the USSR. In many cases there is a close link between religion and national identity. For example, the Baltic republic of Lithuania is staunchly Catholic and, as in Poland, the Church has often provided an institutional focus for anti-Russian sentiments. Over the last two decades thousands of Lithuanian believers signed documents appealing for greater religious liberty. In the latest petition, over 78,000 demanded that Gorbachev allow Bishop Stepanovicus to return from a 27-year exile.

In Soviet Central Asia religion and national identity are inextricably intertwined. Forty-five million Muslims (16 percent of the total Soviet population) are concentrated in six republics in Central Asia. Their birth rate--two to three times the Slavic and European populations of the Soviet Union--and their geographical proximity to the revolutionary fervor of the Iranian Shi'ite Muslims have long made Kremlin leaders nervous about the stability of their southern borders. Nationalist sentiment in the "Muslim belt" tends to be anti-Russian and anti-Soviet, rather than against neighboring or competing ethnic groups. Moscow has therefore worked hard to secularize the area and to wean younger Muslims away from their faith and their culture.

3. Religious Reawakening

In recent years there has been what might be called a religious reawakening in the USSR. On one level this has involved an intellectual turn of the tide, a rediscovery by the intelligentsia of the country's religious heritage and the importance of spiritual values to a nation's well-being. A number of novelists have explored the way in which over-rapid industrialization and technological modernization have destroyed the old rhythms and patterns of a culture closely bound up with religious beliefs. Today very few apartments of intellectuals are without their icons, and in some circles religion has become almost fashionable.

In a population no longer able to subscribe to the official ideology, this re-assessment of religion or of wider spiritual values has led some to faith. No longer is it rare to see young people in churches, despite the career disadvantages attendant upon active involvement in religious practice. Though the term "revival" would be too strong an expression, throughout the USSR there are signs of a steady expansion in the number of active believers.

These trends evidence that religion flourishes in the Soviet Union today despite all attempts by the Soviet State to eradicate it. Ongoing religious repression by the Soviet government is described in the following section.

PART 2: RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION

A. WORSHIP

The 1929 Law on Religious Associations requires religious communities to register with appropriate government authorities. Though it permitted two forms of association--religious "societies" made up of 20 or more believers and "groups" where there were less than 20--in practice only the former apparently was recognized. As amended in 1975, the law requires 20 founding members to submit an application for registration to the local authorities. Within a month this request has to be passed to higher government authorities and to the government's Council for Religious Affairs with a recommendation as to whether registration should be granted. The final decision, however, rests with the Council for Religious Affairs.

In theory registration was a formality to be refused only to groups whose activities were illegal or anti-social and to be rescinded only if associations violated existing laws or encroached upon the rights of other citizens. In practice during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev period, registration was used to regulate and reduce the number of officially sanctioned places of worship. During Khrushchev's militant anti-religious campaign the number of churches is estimated to have been halved, and from 1964 to 1986 the number of registered religious associations fell from about 20,000 to just over 15,000. Some of these may have closed for non-political reasons, such as the decline of the congregation, but the numerous samizdat reports reaching the West

suggest that the vast majority were closed against the will their parishioners.

1. Russian Orthodox

The largest Christian group active in the USSR today is the Russian Orthodox Church. Though initially brutally persecuted, its Russian ethnic character has earned it a favored place among the officially recognized religious groups. No reliable figures exist, but experts estimate that 50 million Russians consider themselves Orthodox. At the present time there are thought to be about 7,000 legally recognized Orthodox churches servicing their needs, compared to the 80,000 churches and chapels operating in 1917 and approximately 22,000 before the Khrushchev campaign. A few examples over the last two decades illustrate some of the difficulties faced by Orthodox congregations seeking to worship.

In 1968 there were only three extremely small Orthodox churches for some 100,000 believers in the town of Gorky. Numerous appeals to the authorities requesting permission to open new churches met with no response. In accordance with the law, believers had formed groups of 20 and sought registration, but were refused for a variety of reasons. They were told, for example, that the proposed site was "too near a school," or that "repairs would cost 1 million rubles." Furthermore, those actively involved in petitioning for the opening of churches were threatened and harassed by local authorities.

In 1973 the authorities in the Ukrainian town of Zhitomir closed down the Cathedral of the Epiphany on the ground that it was too close to a school. Over a two-year period the local

believers waged a campaign to re-open the church, to no avail. In August 1975 it was demolished.

Examples of the Soviet government refusing to grant permission for believers to open new places of worship continue to be reported on the very eve of the State celebration of the Christian millennium. On February 3, 1988, the paper Sovetskaya Rossiya (Soviet Russia) reported:

A conflict has arisen in the town of Berezniki in Perm province. Orthodox believers are petitioning for registration of a religious community. The local authorities are refusing on the grounds that there is an active church 40 kilometers from the town.

2. Catholics

In the Baltic republics, western Ukraine and Byelorussia, and scattered across Siberia and Central Asia are over 1,000 legally sanctioned Roman Catholic churches of the Latin rite. The vast majority are in the Soviet republic of Lithuania. Since the late 1960s a strong Catholic dissident movement has existed in this region, and the election of a Polish Pope in 1978 has greatly strengthened Catholic morale throughout the USSR.

There are also a large number of Eastern Rite Catholics or Uniates in the Western Ukraine. This group, Orthodox in ritual but owing allegiance to the Pope, was forcibly merged with the Russian Orthodox Church in 1946. The vast majority of Uniates have resisted this development and have created an extensive underground network of priests, training seminaries and monastic orders.

Despite over 40 years of particularly brutal repression, these Ukrainian Catholics persist in pressing for legalization of their church. Spurred on by the spirit of glasnost, they

presented to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet over the past nine months nearly 8,000 signatures on petitions demanding the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Their efforts have been met with indifference and sarcasm at the Kremlin. Official policy apparently remains one of suppression and continued attempted extinction of the Ukrainian Catholic Church as an entity separate from the Russian Orthodox Church. Gorbachev has applied tactics which resemble more Stalin's than that of glasnost in dealing with the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

The harsh treatment of Ukrainian Catholics continues at this time. The Catholic community in the village of Bratkivki had been holding liturgies for several months in the officially closed church. In early February 1988 over 200 armed militia men stormed the village and forced the people to remain at home while a group of armed police broke into the church, destroyed the iconostasis and the altar and confiscated everything movable.

The disaster at Chernobyl has provided the authorities with a particularly diabolical method of punishing defiant Ukrainian Catholic priests. Reliable Church and human rights sources report that Mykhaylo Havryliv, a 38-year-old Basilian priest, was punished for his activity in the Catholic underground with three months of army service, where his duties consisted of cleaning up radioactive waste in Chernobyl.

Other underground priests have suffered less drastic, but persistent harassment. Fr. Petro Zeleniuch was secretly ordained in September 1961 after studying in an underground Ukrainian Catholic seminary. Since then he has been summoned by the authorities dozens of times for interrogation. By 1987 he had

been fined thirteen times--the last time for the substantial sum of almost 300 rubles for having signed an appeal to the Pope and for openly celebrating the Mass.

In 1954 the Lithuanian Catholics of the town of Klaipeda were given permission to build a new church. The entire community donated the funds and labor for the construction and completed the church in 1960. By that time the Khrushchev campaign was in full swing and the believers were forbidden to open the church. The building was converted into a concert hall, and the pastor, his assistant and five parishioners were tried and sentenced to prison terms of from three to eight years. Believers from all over Lithuania actively campaigned for the return of the church and sent numerous appeals and protests to government bodies, culminating in a letter of 1979 with over 148,000 signatures. Finally in 1987 the believers were told that the building would be returned to them by July 1, 1988. This has not yet occurred. Moreover, in the intervening 28 years the congregation has grown so that current church membership is estimated at well over 8,000. The Catholics of Klaipeda fear that even after the return and remodeling of their original building, the church will not be able to hold all the faithful, and that during the reconstruction they will be left for several years without a house of prayer. They have requested that they be allowed to retain their present building in addition to the original church, but have not received permission from the authorities to do so.

The strength of the Catholic Church in Lithuania and its status as a legally sanctioned religious group has not insulated it from State-sanctioned discrimination and persecution. In order

to document and speak out against such discrimination, a 63-year-old Catholic priest, Fr. Alfensas Svarinskas, and four other priests founded in 1978 the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights. The group was forced to go underground in 1983 when Fr. Svarinskas was arrested and charged with anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. Fr. Svarinskas' leadership in the Catholic temperance movement, his protests against government harassment of clergy and his activities connected with the Catholic Committee led to a sentence of seven years' labor camp and three years' exile. In February 1987 he was transferred briefly to the KGB investigation prison in Vilnius but returned to prison camp after refusing to sign a statement admitting guilt for his religious activities.

Fr. Sigitas Tamkkzvicius, 49, a co-founder of the Catholic Committee, was arrested at the trial of Fr. Svarinskas. Among the charges lodged against him were organizing of a Christmas party for parish youth, compiling and distributing abroad documents of the Catholic Committee, and printing and distributing an underground religious publication, the Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. He was sentenced to five years' strict regime camp and two years' exile. He maintains that he was arrested and convicted for engaging in legitimate religious activities and has also refused to sign a confession of guilt in order to be released early.

During the late 1970s the 15,000 Catholics of the Moldavian republic had only one church, in the capital city of Kishinev. In 1975 the authorities attempted to conscript the only recognized priest into the army. In a number of Moldavian towns believers

sought to register their congregations or build their own churches, but their appeals were rejected and in at least one case their church was destroyed.

3. Protestants

A wide variety of Protestant groups are represented in the USSR, including Baptists, Lutherans, Mennonites, Methodists, Pentecostals, Reformed and Seventh Day Adventists. In 1944 the State encouraged the creation of the All Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists, comprising Baptists, Mennonites and Pentecostals. A number of congregations refused to join this body, and soon afterward most of the Pentecostal congregations left the All Union Council. In the early 1960s there was a major split within the Baptist community with a large number of communities breaking away from the official organization in reaction to what they saw as excessive compliance with State interference in church life.

Over the years, these unregistered groups have been treated harshly by the authorities. Recently the State has granted registration requests to some of these independent congregations. The continued existence of the unregistered Baptists, however, is reported in a Soviet journal article published earlier this year, which noted that of 35 Baptist communities in the Voronezh region only 12 were registered. Some of those are unregistered by choice as a protest against excessive State interference in church life that registration entails.

On August 29, 1977, a Baptist church in the town of Byransk was confiscated by the authorities. Prior to that about 600

believers had been given permission to register as a religious association and had spent 50,000 rubles on building a church. On August 29 some 100 policemen surrounded the building, beat those who refused to leave and forcibly ejected them from the church.

In the summer of 1981 a group of Pentecostals moved from Central Asia to the Far Eastern town of Chuguyevka where they hoped they would be able to practice their faith without harassment. Because the law prohibits organizing religious education for their children, the Chuguyevka Pentecostals refused to seek registration and consequently were subjected to continuing harassment. Believers were fined, their meetings were broken up by force, and their children victimized at school. In desperation they renounced Soviet citizenship and applied to emigrate. Seven members of this congregation, including its pastor Viktor Walter, have been sentenced to three to five years' labor camp for activities related to the practice of their religion and their desire to emigrate. Five are still serving their sentences.

The February 3, 1988, edition of Sovetskaya Rossia reported that the State continues to this time to deny requests of Baptist congregations to register:

In Krasnodar the Evangelical Christian Baptist community has been petitioning the town executive committee for the modernization of its prayer house since 1982. The fact is that current premises cannot hold all the believers--there are over a thousand. Yet the town executive committee stubbornly declines their request.

Since the late 1960s the State has adopted a more flexible attitude toward the registration of Baptist communities, and from 1974 to 1984 some 471 communities were granted registration. Nevertheless, hundreds of congregations remain which the

authorities have been unwilling to register, or who have decided not to seek registration because of undue State interference in the church.

4. Muslims

The USSR has one of the largest Muslim populations in the world, with over 45 million people belonging to traditionally Islamic ethnic groups. The vast majority of these live in Soviet Central Asia, to the north of Iran and Afghanistan. Before the 1917 revolution there were over 25,000 functioning mosques. In the contemporary USSR there are only about 500 officially recognized mosques.

Alongside the officially recognized Islamic establishment is what some authors have described as "parallel Islam," or unofficial Islamic activity that is often associated with Sufi brotherhoods. Consequently, though few villages and towns have registered mosques, there are few without underground religious institutions. In this respect, an article which appeared in literaturnaya gazeta (Literary Gazette) in May 1987 noted:

Today in Central Asia and Azerbaidzhan, parts of the Volga region and the Urals, and certain other places where Islam is traditionally widespread, so called "parallel" mosques operate. There are more than 1,800 of them! What sermons are read in them and who reads them is known only to Allah. Here it should be said that it is not difficult to organize a small mosque, even in a block of flats

When authorities uncover such mosques, they break them up and fine or imprison those involved.

Recently there have been signs of a resurgence of Islam in the Soviet Union. This can be attributed to a number of factors including the high birth rate of the Muslims; a growing awareness

of the region's Islamic cultural and religious heritage; and the influence of fundamentalism in the wider Muslim world. In response to this the Soviet authorities have stepped up anti-religious propaganda in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The State has over the last decade made a few concessions such as permitting about 100 of the 25,000 mosques originally closed to reopen.

5. Jews

Jews settled in the Caucasian regions long before the birth of Christ, and in the eighth and ninth centuries the leaders of Khazar kingdom which ruled much of southern Russia were practicing Jews. Under both the Tsars and the Soviets, the Jewish community has been subject to recurrent waves of State sponsored anti-Semitism, as well as suffering under the general anti-religious campaign inaugurated by the Soviet State. Like other religious groups the Jews must register religious associations before their synagogue worship will be considered legal. Also like other groups, official policies have led to a massive reduction in the number of places of worship, with the total falling from around 5,000 at the time of the revolution to about 100 at the present time. As recently as the mid-1980s the authorities in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi decided to close the Ashkenazi synagogue on the grounds that "it was not used much" and that many of the original 20 who had applied for its registration had since died. Only a timely campaign organized by the city's Jews saved the synagogue from demolition.

On occasion Jewish activists have been accused of running

illegal places of worship. In May 1986 Jewish Muscovite Peter Polonsky was warned by the State Procurator's office that he might be liable for criminal charges for organizing an unregistered religious association in his home. Officials cited as evidence the fact that those discovered in the house had their heads covered. In fact, Polonsky was a member of the registered Moscow synagogue and was able to argue successfully that the wearing of the yarmulke was an independent act which could not be taken as evidence of a religious meeting.

6. Hare Krishna

The Hare Krishna Movement came to the USSR in 1971. By 1981 it had gained some visibility but never official recognition. Between 1984 and 1986, 49 followers were sent to labor camps and psychiatric hospitals. Three died in prison between 1985 and 1987. As of this writing seven Hare Krishna members are imprisoned in labor camps serving sentences up to five years for their membership in the banned group.

* * * * *

Though Soviet sources state that citizens are free to observe the major "rites of passage" at birth, marriage, and death, in practice there are many restrictions. During the Khrushchev campaign an unpublished instruction required parents wishing to baptize their children to bring their passports for registration. The aim was to discourage many people from baptizing their children because they would know that their involvement in a religious ritual could be reported back to their place of work and

might result in their being harassed or even fired. A number of Orthodox priests appear to have circumvented this regulation by performing baptisms in private homes, although this clearly violated the Law on Religious Associations. In the past year this regulation appears to have been rescinded.

Figures on participation in religious rites are hard to come by and often of questionable value, but there does seem to be a general consensus that between 30-50 percent of Slavic children are baptized. The figure for religious weddings is much lower--probably under 5 percent--because the costs of being seen to participate in such rites for young people in the middle of their education or just starting their careers can be high. (See chapter on Discrimination.) Some young couples, however, have a priest bless their marriage after the civil wedding.

In contrast, the percentage of people who have religious funerals is much higher as the State can no longer affect the deceased, and the relatives can appeal to the wishes of the departed. Nevertheless, the authorities try to discourage relatives from attending the funerals of their loved ones by fining them heavily. In late 1987 in the village of Yimstychevo in the Irshavsk region, five pensioners were fined between 25 and 50 rubles (25 to 50 percent of their monthly income) for participating in the funeral of their friend and brother.

The authorities' interference in religious worship can extend to the slightest manifestations of an individual's faith. Orthodox priest Fr. Vladimir A. Solavev was originally arrested and detained in a special psychiatric hospital, where he was beaten daily merely for crossing himself before meals. He has

since been transferred to a home in Siberia for mentally ill old people, where he remains today.

Lithuanian Catholics have experienced numerous problems with the authorities over the administration of last rites and over the holding of religious processions. In 1974 Fr. Petras Budriunas wrote to the local authorities complaining about what he saw as an effective ban on the performance of the last rites in the city hospital. The 1929 law provided that such rituals could be performed if done in an isolated room and if the patient so requested. Yet Fr. Budriunas knew of many cases where the requests of relatives to call a priest had been unjustly refused. For example, on October 7, 1973, the mother of Valentinas Kovas requested the hospital registrar to allow a priest to visit the dying patient. The request was refused and a few hours later he was died. On occasions when the priest attempted to visit dying patients he was often turned away by the hospital authorities.

Jews experience many of the same problems relating to rites of passage that are faced by other believers. Circumcision is made difficult by the fact that there remain very few people qualified to carry out the ritual in the prescribed fashion. Religious burial is rendered impossible in many areas by the lack of Jewish burial plots, and the authorities have forced some Jews to cremate loved ones despite the fact that this violates Jewish tradition. On April 13, 1988, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry reported that observant Jews in Kiev formed a new committee, "The Public Council on Jewish Religious Affairs" to take up the issue of Jewish cemeteries. In a recent appeal to Soviet authorities in Moscow, they protested the Soviet policy of causing

"thousands of Jews to commit a grave violation of religious law by not being buried in an approved Jewish tradition."

B. SELECTION OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Officially recognized religious groups in the USSR are ostensibly permitted to train and select their leaders from the level of priest to Patriarch, but in reality there are numerous restrictions on this right. Most religious groups lack adequate training facilities and some have no educational institutes; the legal status and rights of the parish religious leader are unclear; the appointment of such persons is closely supervised by the State; and in some cases authorities reportedly "plant" individuals whose loyalty to the religious organization is questioned by the laity.

1. Russian Orthodox

Many of the problems noted above are clearly evident in the case of the Orthodox Church, despite the fact that it is better supplied than other religious groups in terms of training facilities and quantity of clergy. At the present time there are three functioning Russian Orthodox seminaries (Zagorsk, Leningrad and Odessa) and two theological academies (Zagorsk and Leningrad). According to some analysts there are approximately 2,000 students studying in these at any one time, though around 40 percent of these are in correspondence courses.

Despite the apparent health of these institutions, many problems remain. It is not easy to gain entry to such establishments as there are four or five applicants for every place. The State plays no formal role in the selection process, but it is well known from both official and unofficial sources

that the names of applicants are forwarded to the local authorities in their home town and to the Council for Religious Affairs. These bodies try to weed out those they perceive to be "fanatics and extremists," and often encourage State bodies to apply strong pressure on young men not to enter the seminary.

Those who do succeed in gaining admission are sometimes approached by the government to act as informers. A Dutch student who studied at the Leningrad seminary reported that after entering the seminary students were occasionally sent to a room where a "nice, friendly, fatherly person" would chat with them about their hopes and fears for the future and then, having gained their confidence, would ask them to help their country by reporting on those students who "are against the Soviet State."

Those who do not succeed in entering a Soviet seminary may be punished for attempting to obtain a theological education elsewhere. Nikolai Shaburov, an Orthodox convert, was sentenced in January 1982 to indefinite treatment in a psychiatric hospital for seeking permission to emigrate and enter a seminary abroad.

Once situated in a parish, an Orthodox priest can face many difficulties if he is too active in promoting religious life. In 1961, under pressure from State authorities, a Synod of Bishops amended the Church Statute in such a way as to make the priest a hired functionary of the local parish's executive committee. No longer could he play a part in the financial and administrative aspects of parish work. Moreover, the law limits the priest to his own parish, so that even if a neighboring area has no priest it is impossible for him to administer rites there without official permission. It is not difficult for the local

authorities to remove a priest they do not like, or to keep in place one who discredits the church.

Fr. Mikhailo Havryliv, an alumnus of the Russian Church's Leningrad Theological Seminary and Academy who later chose to become a priest in the underground Ukrainian Catholic Church, described in his autobiography how the State penetrates the Russian Orthodox Church from the Patriarch down to the village priest. The regional Communist Party executive committee in Fr. Havryliv's district required priests to praise the unification of Ukraine with Russia in their sermons. Priests were ordered to report to local authorities about the activities of other Christian groups, especially the outlawed Evangelicals and Ukrainian Catholics. In this way, Fr. Havryliv comments, the authorities hoped to foster enmity among Christians.

What can happen to dynamic priests is well illustrated by the case of Fr. Antoni Vorozhbit, a popular preacher who attracted many young people to the church. Because numerous Komsomol couples in Vologda were married in the church because of his influence, the authorities transferred him. During the 1970s he became an outspoken defender of believers repressed by the State and continued to preach to young people. In 1971 he was viciously beaten and spent a long period in the hospital. Four years later he was arrested and spent the next two years in a psychiatric hospital. Since then nothing more has been heard of him.

The Council for Religious Affairs plays an active role in supervising the appointment of bishops and ensuring that their activities stay within the narrow confines of the law. This is made very clear by an excerpt from a report on the Russian

Orthodox Church prepared by the Council for Religious Affairs in 1974:

Not one consecration takes place without the careful checking of the candidature by the responsible members of the Council in close contact with its commissioners and appropriate interested bodies.

The latter presumably is the KGB. The report continues:

The Council has reports on each hierarch. We systematically receive characterizations from the commissioners and a procedure has become established whereby the ruling hierarchs visiting the Patriarch with their annual report also pay the CRA a visit. We have thorough talks with them

Those who step out of line are either transferred or "retired." In 1977 Bishop Feodosii of Poltava and Kremenchug wrote a letter to Brezhnev complaining of the difficulty in ordaining priests in his area and detailing the obstructionist attitude of the local commissioner for religious affairs. Almost immediately he was transferred to the much smaller diocese of Vologda and, shortly after that, transferred again to Astrakhan.

State authorities often limit worship by restricting the appointment of priests and interfering in the daily life of the parish. In the town of Nikolaev during the early 1970s parishioners at the Orthodox church of St. Nicholas frequently complained that one of their priests had assaulted a number of female parishioners. When his contract came up for renewal they attempted to remove him, but the local commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs threatened to close their church if they did. The efforts of the local hierarch, Bishop Bogolep of Kirovograd and Nikolaevsk, to support the believers ended in the bishop being fired by the State.

Criticism of the church leadership and its close relationship

with the authorities has not been permitted. Vladimir Rusak, a deacon in the Russian Orthodox Church, is currently serving a sentence of seven years' strict regime camp and five years' exile for, among other things, complaining about State interference in the Russian Orthodox Church to the World Council of Churches. In early 1987, after serving a few months of his sentence, he was pressured to sign a statement of recantation. He refused and will not be released until 1998.

2. Catholics

There are two functioning Roman Catholic seminaries in the USSR, in the Baltic towns of Riga, Latvia and Kaunas, Lithuania. Unofficial accounts suggest that seminarians face many of the same problems already noted in the case of the Orthodox Church.

Lithuanian Catholic G. Skirelys first applied to enter the Kaunas seminary in 1970. From then until 1974 he applied each year but was refused. As a result of his faith Skirelys was dismissed from work and then told that he could not join the seminary until he had completed two years of work for the State after his education.

Fr. Jonas Materlionis was arrested in September 1984 and charged with being an imposter. Although he completed theological training by correspondence in the Lithuanian underground seminary, the authorities claim that he is not priest because he did not attend one of the two officially sanctioned seminaries. He was sentenced to three years' labor camp and, although due to have completed his sentence in November 1987, his release has not been verified.

Vytautas Skuodis, a former prisoner of conscience who spent seven years in a labor camp for writing a study entitled Spiritual Genocide in Lithuania, testified to the U.S. Congressional Helsinki Commission in October 1987 that the Soviet authorities control the training of priests at the sole theological seminary in Lithuania. He stated:

Qualified candidates are obstructed from entering the seminary. Meanwhile, unqualified candidates including unsuitable candidates for the priesthood, as future destroyers of the Church, enjoy the constant patronage and support of the atheistic government. This has forced some men to study for the priesthood illegally in the underground. But the government refuses to recognize them as legitimate and forbids them to function as priests.

He also asserted that KGB infiltration of the seminary is estimated as high as 30 to 50 percent.

In 1961 Bishop Stepanovicius was exiled to a small Lithuanian village because he would not forbid priests to hold confirmation classes or stop children from serving at the altar. A victim of the Khrushchev campaign, he has never been formally reinstated, though virtually all the priests of the republic recognize him as their bishop. In the years since then the State has sought to appoint more compliant bishops, albeit with less success than in the Orthodox case. Consequently, at the present time not every diocese has a bishop because of the problem of finding candidates equally acceptable to the State, the Vatican and the mass of believers.

3. Protestants

In general, Protestant groups are very poorly supplied with educational institutions. The Latvian and Estonian Lutheran

churches have small theological institutes. The Baptists are dependent upon a correspondence course or on sending a few students abroad. The Adventists were given permission to open a seminary only recently, in 1987. Groups such as the Pentecostals and Mennonites have no training institutes. Problems with entering these institutions are similar to those experienced by the Orthodox and Catholics.

The leaders of the Baptist church are elected by a conference of delegates who are in turn elected by local congregations. Though the State has sought to exercise close supervision over these gatherings, it has not always been successful. In 1979, for example, a number of leading figures were re-elected with less than the usual 90 percent plus of the vote. Needless to say it is proved impossible for the State to regulate effectively the activities of the leaders of the numerous unregistered congregations.

Muslims

The legally recognized Soviet Islamic establishment is divided into four directorates: Central Asia and Kazakhstan, European Russia and Siberia, Northern Caucasus and Daghestan, and the Transcaucasian. The first three are headed by Muftis and the fourth predominantly Shi'ite administration by a Sheikh ul-Islam. These are elected by regional congresses under the watchful eye of the State's Council for Religious Affairs. Very little information reaches the West concerning the day to day activities of these administrations. However, it is probably safe to assume they face similar difficulties as other religious groups.

The only training institutions available for those wishing to be mullahs are to be found within the Central Asian directorates. The institute in Bukhara is responsible for the initial training of all students and according to recent reports has about 85 students. The higher Islamic Institute in Tashkent has fewer students and tends to train those destined for positions in the Muslim administrations or in international work. Additionally some students spend some time at Islamic educational institutions outside of the USSR, usually in Egypt or Libya.

5. Jews

Though there has been a yeshivah (seminary) attached to the Moscow synagogue since 1957, it seems to have played a very minor role in the training of future rabbis. Most rabbis are very old and those appointed in recent years have generally been trained abroad. The current chief rabbi Adolf Shayevich graduated from the Budapest yeshivah in 1980.

C. RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

Soviet commentators frequently claim that the freedom to produce scriptures and other religious literature is only qualified by a paper shortage in the USSR. In fact, such literature is in extremely short supply. Moreover, the chronic limited allocation of paper to the church is clearly a deliberate official policy, given that the Soviet Union is an exporter of paper and in most cases refuses to allow the church to import paper.

. Russian Orthodox

Even the Russian Orthodox Church has had trouble acquiring religious literature. Between 1956 and 1979 the Church was permitted to publish around 300,000 Bibles and 150,000 copies of the New Testament, a number clearly inadequate to meet the needs of millions of believers. In addition they have been able to produce a small number of prayer books. Apart from this, the only literary products of the Patriarchate have been collections of esoteric theological essays beyond the grasp of most believers, service books for priests, and annual calendars.

In response to this shortage of religious literature some believers have resorted to underground remedies such as hand-copying the few works available or setting up illegal presses.

Those caught participating in such activities have been dealt with harshly by the authorities. In August 1982 Orthodox Muscovite Zoya Krakmalnikova was arrested for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. Since 1977 she had been editing a

journal of Christian readings entitled Nadezhda (Hope). Each issue included extracts from the Church Fathers, poetry, theology and works on the current state of religion in the USSR. In March 1983 Krakhmalnikova was sentenced to one year in a labor camp and five years in exile. She remains in prison at this writing.

The mere possession of religious literature can also lead to stiff penalties. Orthodox believer Alexander Mikhailovich Oros was arrested in July 1982 on charges of theft of State property and vagrancy after he refused to surrender to the State his late father's library of religious and other works. He was sentenced to seven and a half years' intensified regime camp and was later transferred to compulsory labor, where he remains today.

2. Catholics

The Lithuanian Catholic Church was not legally able to publish any religious literature until 1966, when a prayer book was printed, and 1968, when a Latin-Lithuanian edition of a missal appeared. In 1972 the Catholics and Evangelicals of Lithuania were permitted to publish 30,000 copies of the New Testament, though 20,000 of these were sent abroad by State authorities as evidence of religious freedom in Lithuania!

Lithuanian Catholics have a long tradition of illegally produced literature. In the nineteenth century Bishop Valancius organized a network of colporteurs to distribute literature in the Lithuanian language and urged the people to reject books in the Cyrillic alphabet. More recently Lithuanian Catholics have produced a wide range of samizdat (self-published) literature, ranging from complaints about religious oppression to spiritual

classics. The best known example of illegally published literature is the Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, over seventy issues of which have appeared since 1972.

Possession of a single issue of samizdat publications can have serious ramifications. One issue of the Chronicle was found in the home of Henrikas Klimasauskas when it was searched in February 1976. He was tried in September, when he was found not to be responsible for his actions, diagnosed as paranoid, and sentenced to indefinite detention in a psychiatric hospital. Keston College reports that he remains confined at this time.

In August 1985 a search was carried out in the home of Catholic soldier Juozas Kazalupskas. Authorities conducting the search stated that it was being done on suspicion of theft, but as they left they acknowledged that they were looking for a secret printing press. Though failing to find a press, they did discover a number of illegally published religious works including a copy of an underground publication called The Pensive Christ. Over the next eight months Kazalupskas was subject to frequent interrogations over this matter. Several months earlier Stanislovas Murauskas had been arrested for engaging in "prohibited trade." He was sentenced to three years' ordinary regime camp for printing religious postcards, where he remains serving out his sentence.

3. Protestants

Among the Protestants it is the Baptists, with their special attention to the Bible, who have been the most active in the production of religious literature. Though the official Baptist Union has recently been allowed to print or import some

Scriptures, the quantities have been insufficient to meet the needs of their churches, much less those of the unregistered churches. In response, the reform Baptists have developed the underground Khristianin printing press. Every few years one of these presses is discovered and those involved are imprisoned.

For example, on October 24, 1974, in the Latvian village of Ligukalns, seven Baptists were arrested, and a printing press and material confiscated. Prior to the KGB discovery of the press some 30,000 copies of the New Testament had been printed, as well as copies of Pilgrim's Progress and hymn books.

More recently, in October 1985 the authorities discovered another Khristianin printing press in the village of Staraya Obrezha, in the Moldavian republic. The Scriptures have never been officially printed in the Moldavian language, and this press was in the process of producing 10,000 copies of the New Testament in that language. Among those arrested were Baptist Andrei Borinsky, whose brother had previously produced Christian literature, and Zinaida Tarasova, one of those involved in the first Khristianin printing press discovered in 1974.

4. Muslims

Of the four Muslim Directorates in the USSR only Central Asia and Kazakhstan are involved in publishing activities. Since 1968 it has produced the quarterly journal Muslims of the Soviet East, published in Russian, Arabic, Uzbek--but in Arabic script and thus unintelligible to many Soviet Uzbeks--English, French, Persian and Dari. The Muslim Board has also published a collection of fetwas (legal opinions) by a former Mufti, a number of small editions of

the Koran, an annual calendar, and two collections of the hadith (traditions about the Prophet) of Iman al-Bukhari. In addition, the Spiritual Directorate of European Russia based in Ufa has produced an edition of the Koran and a religious calendar in Tatar and Arabic script. As in the Christian case the official supply of religious literature has proved inadequate to meet the needs of believers and in recent years there has been increasing evidence of Muslim activists turning to underground printing.

Those who publish or sell Muslim literature without State approval are dealt with severely. In 1982 the Uzbek paper Sovet Ozbekistoni (Soviet Uzbekistan) printed a report on a group of "fanatical crooks" who had printed and distributed thousands of copies of a pamphlet entitled "About Islamic Truth." For this activity, A. Saidkharikhodzhayev and Abuzakar Rakhimov have each been sentenced to seven years in prison.

Others have been arrested and tried in separate incidents for everything from printing or duplicating and binding the literature to its distribution and sale. Participants are usually charged with "speculation" and their sentences range from four to seven years in labor camps.

5. Jews

After a gap of some 30 years a Jewish prayer book was published in 1956 and then again in 1981. As in the case of religious objects, the Jews have tended to rely on pre-revolutionary editions of religious books, on works brought in by sympathetic tourists, or on material they produce themselves illegally. Here too authorities have thwarted attempts to send

Soviet Jews books or teaching manuals on subjects like Jewish religion, law or ethics, history, art, literature, the Holocaust, or belles-letters, children's books, song books, dictionaries and language books for the teaching of Hebrew. Such books are sometimes confiscated. Among the books barred from importation were those of the Nobel laureates Issac Bashevis Singer and Saul Bellow, the UNESCO publication Social Life and Social Values of the Jewish People, the Holocaust novel Le Dernier des Justes by Andre Schwarz-Bart, and studies on Jewish history by such distinguished historians as Shmuel Ettinger and Cecil Roth. The confiscation of materials and the disappearance of letters indicate interference with the privacy of mail and communication, which is guaranteed under international agreements and in the Soviet Constitution.

* * * * *

Recently the authorities have permitted a number of religious groups to import or print copies of the Scriptures: in 1987 the Russian Orthodox Church received permission to print 100,000 Bibles in Russian, and over the next few years the Baptists will be allowed to import 108,000 Bibles in Russian, 2,000 in Ukrainian and 8,000 in Moldavian. In addition the Orthodox Publishing Department will produce 3,000 German hymnals for the Lutheran congregations of Central Asia. Moreover, at the end of 1988 it was reported that the Adventists had been given permission to open a publishing house, though what this would be able to print remains unclear.

Since early 1987 there appears to have been some relaxation

in official attitudes to the importation of religious literature. On a number of occasions officials have stated that tourists could bring in such literature without restriction. Then on March 25, 1988, the chief government paper Izvestiya reported that religious literature could be sent through the mail. In practice, however, both of these changes come with qualifications, for customs officers continue to confiscate religious literature, while the Izvestiya article makes it clear that material of an "ideologically harmful" nature--and the concept is not clearly defined--will be subject to confiscation.

Moreover, it needs to be stressed that it will take more than the printing or importation of around 200,000 Bibles to meet the need of the Soviet churches for Scriptures. Additionally, religious activists--Jewish and Christian--continue to point out that not only are Scriptures and prayer books in short supply, but that there are no facilities for the production of other forms of theological and religious materials. At the time of writing, all such literature, from Maimonides to C.S. Lewis, has to be produced by hand and illegally.

Though there has been some liberalization with regard to making religious literature available, the State remains the arbiter of what literature religious bodies may produce and acquire.

D. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The 1918 decree on the Separation of Church from State and School from Church banned the teaching of religion in private schools as well as State. The 1929 Law on Religious Associations prohibited religious associations from organizing for children, young people and women special prayer or other meetings, circles, groups, departments for Biblical or literary studies or the teaching of religion. Legal interpretations published during the last two decades found this means that while parents may teach their own children religion, any organized form of instruction for young people or religious discussion groups attended by adults are illegal under penalty of criminal sanctions for the organizers. The only exception to this are theological training institutions.

1. Russian Orthodox

In this area, as in many others, Russian Orthodox religious groups have often gone beyond the limits of a law which they regard as contrary to the requirements of their faith. During the 1960s many young intellectuals came into the Orthodox Church and sought teaching that the recognized religious establishment was prohibited from providing. To meet this need seminars and discussion groups began to emerge in many Soviet cities. The best known of these was the Christian Seminar, based in Moscow but with branches in other cities. These seminars aimed at providing a theological education, deepening Christian fellowship, and carrying out missionary work--something expressly forbidden by Soviet law. Though not involved in dissent, these groups were

treated as such by the authorities and eventually their activities drew the wrath of the KGB. A number of their leaders were imprisoned and by the early 1980s their activities had come to an end.

Despite the harsh treatment meted out to the Christian Seminar, other groups continued to develop, albeit on a smaller scale, and since Gorbachev came to power more discussion groups have begun to appear. Their scope and nature vary considerably. Some take the form of teaching forums, with priests and theologians giving lectures on a variety of topics. Some discuss the application of faith in modern society. A few cross denominational boundaries, especially those between Orthodox and Catholic. At least one has devoted years to detailed analysis of the New Testament in Greek.

2. Catholics

In Lithuania numerous problems have arisen from the catechizing of Catholic children preparing for First Communion. The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church contains many reports of priests or laity being warned against organizing religion classes for young people and children. In January 1981, for example, a group of parish church committees was summoned to the republic's commissioner for religious affairs, who reminded them that it was forbidden to teach religion to groups of children and that children under 18 could not serve at Mass or sing in church choirs.

3. Protestants

Soviet Baptists and Pentecostals have matched the Catholics in their determination to raise children as believers in defiance of the legislation on religion. As a result they have suffered severe repression from the State authorities.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s there were numerous cases of children being taken away from parents who raised them as believers. In June 1973 the district council in the town of Perm deprived Zoya Radygina of parental rights over three of her four children. This Baptist woman was told that "the materials of the case have established that you, being a sectarian, also drew your underage children Tamar, Alexander and Vasili into the sect." In August 1973 two of the children were taken forcibly from their mother and placed in a children's home. Her appeals to have the decision overturned were rejected by the authorities.

In early 1987 authorities discovered a "religious school" set up by the unregistered Baptist congregation of Kuibyshevsk in the Tadzhik republic. Neighbors had suspiciously noted groups of children arriving at the home of Rudolf Maukh and reported this to the State. Officials searched the house and found a variety of literature for children, mostly published abroad. It is not known whether any were arrested in this incident.

4. Muslims

In recent years the Soviet press has carried an increasing number of reports on the activities of unrecognized Islamic activities, including the creation of Koranic schools for children and young people. In early 1985 a group of Muslims from the

Samarkand province were arrested for selling literature they had received from the Mullah Zakir Tadzhibaev. According to the brief press report one of the crimes of this mullah was to open an illegal Koranic school at his home in the town of Namangan.

On March 22, 1988, the paper Turkmenskaya iskra (Turkmen Spark) reported that in the Krasnovodsk region of Soviet Turkmenistan a series of village meetings had been held to discuss the activities of certain Muslim activists. Among the various "anti-social activities" for which they were denounced was the teaching of religion to children.

Jews

Since the late 1960s Jews have been especially active in organizing educational activities, with seminars and lecture courses springing up in many big cities. In March 1983 Yuri Snopolsky was arrested for having organized an unofficial university for young people denied places in higher education because they or their parents had applied to leave the USSR.

Of particular concern to the State in recent years has been the development of groups aimed at teaching Jewish culture and religion, and the Hebrew language, the traditional language of Jewish prayer and study. Perhaps the best known case was that of Joseph Begun who began teaching Hebrew in the 1970s and became an outspoken defender of Jewish rights. In November 1982 he was arrested and later sentenced to seven years in camp and five years of exile. Under intense international pressure on his behalf, he was released early in 1987 and allowed to emigrate.

The U.S.-based National Council on Soviet Jewry reports that

the Soviet Union's only officially sanctioned Hebrew class for Jews in Baku was closed in March 1988 due to pressure from the authorities. After a public outcry, the class was allowed to begin again in April. Though Hebrew is taught at several Soviet universities, Jews are barred from such courses.

In addition, the National Council on Soviet Jewry published a report on April 13, 1988, which stated that the authorities are preventing Torah studies from taking place in the synagogue in Rostov.

E. OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AND REST DAYS

There are no formal constitutional or legal guarantees of the right to observe religious holidays in the Soviet Union. The extent to which it is allowed in practice has varied according to region and religious group.

The main problems facing the Orthodox over the last two decades have arisen over the celebration of Easter. To celebrate Lenin's birthday the nearest Saturday is frequently declared a subbotnik, a day when people voluntarily work without pay. As this is often close to Easter believers have sometimes faced difficulties at their place of work when they refuse to attend work on Easter Saturday. Another problem at Easter has been the policy of the police and security forces of preventing young people from attending the festive service which begins on Easter eve and extends into the early hours of Easter day. A foreign correspondent reporting on a 1981 Orthodox Easter service in Moscow noted:

A crowd of young people waited expectantly by the temporary police barriers. Anyone without the necessary permit was told politely that he or she could not pass. The mood was good-humored, and some of the police chatted back to the crowd. Suddenly the barriers were opened enough for one person to pass at a time. Some started running up the middle of the traffic-free road toward the church. A police officer with a megaphone enjoined the comrades to proceed in an orderly manner. Close to the church the police suddenly became assertive, and having allowed part of the crowd in, they stopped the rest and started pushing them back down the road again.

In 1987 the authorities employed a different tactic to prevent believers from gaining access to many Orthodox churches for Easter matins and liturgy. According to Keston College, the

Patriarchal Cathedral of the Theophany in Moscow was packed with Communist Youth League activists. The militia surrounding the cathedral then turned away large numbers of genuine believers on the grounds that there was no room. Similar measures were used at other Russian Orthodox churches in Moscow and the suburbs. Further, there were also reports that members of the Communist League and the militia deliberately attempted to provoke the believers so that they could accuse them of disturbing the police. Many other cases, often more violent, have been reported.

The authorities have sought to discourage the observance of religious holidays by the Ukrainian Catholics in a much more direct manner. On the night of January 6, 1988, an underground congregation of Ukrainian Catholics gathered to hold a Christmas service in a church in the village of Kalinovka in the Lvov province. In the early hours of the morning the church was invaded by a group of officials which included the region's commissioner for religious affairs. The group demanded that the congregation disperse and attempted to prevent the priest from continuing the service. After considerable argument the officials called the local militia "to quell the disturbance caused by the churchgoers." There have since been unconfirmed reports that members of the congregation were later arrested.

A similar incident took place in Buchach in December 1987 on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Twenty elderly believers were praying at the home of 84-year-old Sister Tykhoma when four militia men forced their way into the apartment. Cursing and kicking the worshipers, the militia then herded them into a bus and drove them to the militia office. The worshipers were later

released and all of the elderly women were forced to make their way home on foot.

Every year thousands of Lithuanian Catholics go to Siluva to celebrate the Nativity of the Virgin Mary. On August 29, 1982, the pilgrims set off on the pilgrimage only to find the main highway clogged with police and KGB officials. The names and addresses of many were taken by the militia, while others were charged with disturbing the peace because they said the rosary aloud. Still others were forced into militia cars, and attempts were made to take them back to their home towns. Over the next few days the license plates of those traveling by car were noted by authorities. On the day of the festival a helicopter hovered overhead menacing the gathering and making hearing difficult.

On October 8, 1972, the unregistered Baptist community in the town of Rostov-on-Don was holding a harvest festival celebration. The service was held in a private home and afterward the believers shared a meal. Just as they were starting a group of militia men burst into the building, overturning the tables, beating some of those present, and arresting others who were later sentenced to fifteen days in prison.

The Seventh Day Adventists have suffered as a consequence of their desire to worship on Saturdays. On December 7, 1978, three Adventist families on a collective farm in Soviet Kirgizia were fined 30 rubles each for keeping their children away from school on Saturdays. Two weeks later it was decided that they should pay ten rubles every week until they complied with the wishes of the authorities.

With regard to the Friday prayers of Muslims the same

difficulties are likely to arise as affect the Adventists, insofar as these overlap with working hours.

Further problems arise from the celebration of the Jewish Sabbath--a working day for many Soviet citizens--and the major religious festivals. The celebration of Hanukkah and Purim, traditionally accompanied by the performance of plays, is often subject to police harassment. It is not uncommon for police and KGB officials to break into apartments where such festivals are being observed and to note the names of those involved. During Passover in 1976 Jews attending the registered synagogue in Moscow were subject to constant harassment, with cars being driven at high speed down the street where hundreds of Jews were standing.

On April 21, 1988, KGB agents dispersed a group of more than 100 refuseniks who had gathered at the Holocaust monument in Minsk for a commemoration of the 1942 massacre of Minsk Jews by Nazis. They arrested and sentenced Mark Kagan, a religious Jew who spoke at the commemoration, to two weeks imprisonment for "hooliganism," according to reports by the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

F. OBJECTS NECESSARY TO RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

The 1918 Decree on the Separation of Church from State and School from Church declared all the "property" and "possessions" of religious societies to have passed into the hands of the State. What this meant in practice was not merely the land and buildings of religious groups, but all icons, liturgical objects, vestments, crosses, and candelabras. After a religious association is given permission to function, the necessary "cult objects" are loaned without charge back to the church.

A new provision in the 1975 amendment to this law permits religious societies to acquire religious articles and means of transportation and to lease, build and buy buildings for their own needs. These rights are effectively nullified by subsequent provisions, however, which indicate that such objects are considered nationalized once they are handed over to individual congregations and revert to the State when a religious community loses its registration.

In 1957 the Russian Orthodox Church was given permission to open a few enterprises for the production of articles necessary for religious rituals. Most of these were closed down during the Khrushchev campaign. As a result there were shortages in many parts of the USSR which could only be met by underground initiatives. In 1980, however, the Moscow Patriarchate was able to open a large plant just outside Moscow. This gave the Orthodox Church the opportunity to produce a more consistent supply of candles, incense, chalices and other necessary liturgical utensils. No other group, with the exception of the Lithuanian

Catholics, is permitted to manufacture religious artifacts.

The Catholics, both officially recognized and underground, have developed a considerable underground economy in religious artifacts. The Lithuanians are allowed to produce a few religious pictures legally, but otherwise they must rely on the illegal manufacture of rosaries, crucifixes and religious pictures. In the Western Ukraine underground nuns make candles and embroider vestments for use by the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Since the 1920s the production of Jewish prayer shawls, phylacteries, Torah scrolls and mezuzahs has not been permitted in the Soviet Union. In addition very inadequate provision has been made for the preparation or importation of food conforming to Jewish dietary requirements. Jewish activists report that supplies of matzo for the observance of Passover in 1988 were adequate in Moscow and Leningrad, but that customs officials in Odessa refused to release a shipment of the specially prepared bread from Hungary, claiming that "only a limited amount of religious objects are permitted." Ritual objects used in synagogues today are relics of the Tsarist period, illegally manufactured within the USSR or smuggled in by tourists.

G. RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

1. Russian Orthodox

Discrimination against believers is widespread in the Soviet Union. They cannot attain positions of authority within society and are frequently subject to active discrimination in education, in the army and in the work place. The one exception is some members of the Orthodox hierarchy who have been allowed a relatively high level of secular education.

Members of the Russian Orthodox Church, however, are not immune from religious discrimination. For example, in the mid-1970s Zinaida Girinkova, a young Orthodox woman from the Ukraine, wrote to Patriarch Pimen appealing for help:

The administration at my work, learning that I was a believer and attend God's church, began to mock my religious convictions and force me to renounce the faith of Christ as the price of my flat and of promotion in my job. Moreover, they accused me of having links 'abroad,' which were supposedly financing me. My home was searched

I have worked at this job for seven years and am on the waiting list for a flat, but I was faced with a choice: either work as an engineer and be given a flat, and renounce the Church, or else leave work. I chose the latter

In another case, Sergei Bogdanovsky, an Orthodox student in the Biology faculty of Moscow University, was expelled in 1978 after it was discovered he was a believer. Poems and articles of a religious nature were reportedly found among his belongings and authorities apparently feared that he might show them to other students.

2. Catholics

The unofficial Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, published by the Catholics of Lithuania since 1972, has documented numerous cases of discrimination against Catholic school children.

In 1974 the Chronicle reported the following:

During the 1972-3 school year at Jonava Middle School No. 1, form mistress Mrs. Slapkauskiene frequently scolded and made fun of pupil Leonas Rosinas because he went to church. Following the teacher's example, the class acted no better than she.

During the 1973-4 school year, Leonas's teacher Mrs. Valeraviciene, another atheist, began to "educate" him. In front of the class she ridiculed him for going to church with his mother. Upon his return home from school the boy often complained of being pushed around and beaten by his classmates.

Mrs. Valeraviciene and her husband once verbally assaulted Leonas's mother for being a backward, benighted person who believes in some imaginary God. Mrs. Rosinas calmly replied that she firmly believed in the existence of God. The form mistress then attempted to persuade her at least not to take Leonas to church.

Persecution continues also in the higher levels of education. Maryte Gudaityte, a student at Pranas Mazyliis Medical School, was expelled in 1985 for her religious beliefs and for sending Christmas greetings to two imprisoned Catholic priests. Repeated appeals to have her reinstated have been rejected. The director of the school claims she would have kept Ms. Gudaityte on if it were not against the will of the KGB. When Ms. Gudaityte attempted to transfer to another school, she was bluntly informed that religion and medicine are incompatible and that she would have to pick another specialty in which her work would not involve close interaction with other people.

The case of dismissed cultural worker Zita Vasauskiene was

reported in November 1983. In 1981 the local KGB found out that this employee of the School of Culture also played the organ in the Telsiai cathedral during her spare time. She was given a choice: work for the school or the church. Mrs. Vasauskiene refused to stop playing the organ and was consequently discharged from work because she was "not carrying out the tasks of communist work."

3. Protestants

Baptists and Pentecostals are often extremely outspoken in defense of their faith and many openly undertake evangelistic activity. Over the last two decades hundreds have been imprisoned, imposing great hardship for their often large families.

Serafima Yudintseva, an evangelical from the town of Gorky, had ten children. In May 1973 the local social security office deprived her of the financial award paid to mothers of large families in the USSR. When she sought an explanation, Yudintseva was told that it was because her husband had earlier been sentenced to three years of imprisonment for his religious activities. Three years later when she lived in another town she was again refused the assistance when she admitted to being a Baptist.

In 1978 the Balak family applied to emigrate on the grounds that they were not able to worship freely in the USSR. Thereafter they were persecuted and harassed. Their children were beaten but the militia did nothing, stating "you are no longer our citizens." During the early 1980s their oldest son served a term in detention

camp for refusing to join the army, and Mrs. Balak's sister was imprisoned on charges of "parasitism" for being without a job, though it was not her fault that she could not find employment.

A number of Baptists have died under suspicious circumstances during the course of their military service. Vasili Druk told his parents that he was being pressured to renounce his faith and in a letter spoke of a sergeant who had threatened to kill him. Within a few days of writing this letter he was murdered. According to other soldiers in the unit he was stabbed in the heart after the sergeant, while drunk, had ordered him killed. Such cases are exceptional and it is doubtful that they would be sanctioned by the central authorities, but the lack of adequate redress for the families of murdered believers does little to reassure anxious parents that their sons will be treated justly while on military service.

Viktor Walter, pastor of an unregistered Pentecostal church in Chuguyevka, stopped sending his seven children to school because they had suffered so much persecution for their religious beliefs. He was tried and sentenced in April 1985 for, among other things, "organization of actions which disrupt public order" to five years' labor camp.

4. Jews

Numerous documents from the USSR and recent emigres reveal a great degree of discrimination against Jews on religious and ethnic grounds. Although the USSR was one of the first states to recognize Israel, it quickly shifted its allegiance to the Arab cause. One of the products of this change was an increase in

anti-Zionist literature of a particularly crude and frequently anti-Semitic character. Israeli Jews, and by implication Soviet Jews, were often depicted as grasping neo-fascists in the pay of imperialism.

A 1979 report written by two Soviet Jewish mathematicians revealed that Soviet Jews were systematically discriminated against in their attempts to enroll in Moscow University. Among other things the report revealed that Jewish children who were school students were often unfairly given poor grades so that the university would not have to accept them.

The foremost human rights issue in the Soviet Union for the Jewish community is emigration. According to Western estimates, nearly 385,000 of the Soviet Union's 2.5 million Jews have taken the initial step to leave. Some of those who want to leave are being religious persecution in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union tightly restricts movement in and out of the country. Many who apply to leave are refused, others are forced to wait many years before they receive permission to emigrate. Those who apply to emigrate face great personal hardship. They are often treated no better than traitors and risk losing their jobs and housing, having their children denied education, their families deprived of medical treatment and, in some cases, they experience arrest and imprisonment.

After reaching a peak of 51,320 in 1979, the number of Soviet Jews permitted to emigrate dropped off sharply, reaching a low of fewer than 1,000 in 1986. The declining trend in Soviet Jewish emigration seemed to turn around in 1987 when 8,011 were permitted to leave. In April 1988, more than 1,000 Jews received permission

to exit the Soviet Union, the highest monthly total since 1981. Nevertheless Soviet Jewish emigration falls far short of the 1979 rate, and Jewish "refuseniks" (those who have applied for but not acquired emigration approval) continue to report official harassment and discrimination for having applied to leave. For example, on April 29, 1988, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry reported that Sergei Labuzov of Leningrad filed a complaint against the doctor in a local hospital for denying treatment to his month-old son, based on his refusenik status.

H. COLLECTION AND USE OF MONEY

According to the 1929 Law on Religious Associations, religious societies may collect voluntary donations from members of the congregation "solely for purposes of maintaining the worship building and the property of the cult, for hiring ministers of the cult, and for meeting the costs of the cult's executive committee." The revolution supposedly ended the need for the charitable work carried out extensively by the church before 1917. Religious societies are expressly forbidden to use these monies for charitable and other activities not related to "the satisfaction of religious needs."

There is little evidence that the authorities interfere on a large scale with the collection of money by religious associations. Many visitors to the USSR report their surprise at the generosity of Soviet believers. Official church journals reveal that many parishes raise tens of thousands of rubles every year despite the relatively low income of most parishioners.

For several years Russian Orthodox parishes have given a portion of their income to the Soviet Peace Fund. It is not clear the extent to which this is a voluntary contribution or how it relates to the prohibition of charitable activities. This apparent inconsistency has been recognized by some Soviet authors since 1985. Regardless of the law, it is something that most Orthodox believers consider a natural part of their faith and which most practice when unobserved by the authorities.

Some charitable activity on the part of religious organizations may be on the verge of legalization. On November

15, 1987, Moscow News reported that a Russian Orthodox congregation in Murmansk was planning to build an old people's home. In February 1988 the same paper noted that the Tolgsky monastery would be returned to the Russian Orthodox Church and would be used for a convent and a home for elderly clergy.

This permissive attitude toward charitable activities, however, appears to be restricted to "safe" or officially acceptable causes such as "peace" or "Chernobyl relief." When charity or relief work does not fit within these narrow confines, such as aid to the families of prisoners, the activity is punished.

Many Baptist families are large by Soviet standards, with six or seven children being far from unusual. As a result the wives of prisoners are generally unable to work outside the home. The State has refused to aid the families of Baptist prisoners, placing some of them in a very difficult economic position. Consequently the Council for Prisoners' Relatives, a group formed in 1964 by the wives of Baptist prisoners, has sought to ensure that the needs of prisoners' families are adequately met. Their activities have been closely monitored by State authorities and the active members of the Council have been subject to considerable harassment and persecution. Some workers in similar organizations have been arrested and convicted of "organization of actions which disrupt public order." Gederts Melngailis, a Lutheran, was accused of participation in Baptist relief work in a group known as "Action of Light" in July 1983. In October 1983 he was tried and found guilty of the above charges and sentenced to compulsory psychiatric treatment.

I. CONTACTS WITH CO-RELIGIONISTS ABROAD

There are no formal restrictions on legally recognized religious groups meeting with foreign co-religionists either in the USSR or abroad. Numerous Soviet religious delegations travel throughout the world and Soviet religious bodies receive many visitors. Leading religious figures are involved in a wide variety of international bodies, notably the World Council of Churches. Yet critics within Soviet churches and abroad often complain that these contacts are highly formal in nature and often give a misleading impression of Soviet religious life.

For illegal groups such as the Ukrainian Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses the problems of keeping in touch with fellow believers abroad is more problematic, for by maintaining such contacts they lay themselves open to charges of links with foreign powers. Nevertheless these groups, and many believers within the recognized religious groups, maintain connections with individual believers from the outside world, often at great personal risk.

On a practical level, frequent visa delays and denials by Soviet authorities for all Soviet citizens leaving the USSR and foreigners entering sometimes make religious and other meetings between the two groups difficult.

RELIGION IN THE USSR

An Overview

Background

Both the Helsinki Final Act and Madrid Concluding Document contain specific language guaranteeing freedom of religion. Principle VII of the Final Act pledges the participating States to "recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practise, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience." The Madrid Concluding Document reaffirms this pledge and further pledges the participants to "favorably consider applications by religious communities of believers practicing or prepared to practice their faith with the constitutional framework of their States, to be granted the status provided for in their respective countries for religious faiths, institutions and organizations."

The Soviet regime regards religion as a hostile ideology and is committed to the creation of an atheist society. Its attitude was summed up by a Belorussian Party official who wrote (Kommunist Belorussii, No. 12, 1984) that "religion in our country is the only legal refuge alien to socialism in ideology and morals." How the regime understands freedom of conscience is revealed in Soviet constitutional provisions, legislation, administrative regulations, and extra-legal pressures applied against believers.

Soviet Law and Religion

(The USSR Constitution (Article 52) defines freedom of conscience as the right "to conduct religious worship or atheist propaganda." This formulation in effect makes illegal the conduct of "religious propaganda"; (i.e., public advocacy or defense of religious belief, or refutation of atheist propaganda) illegal.)

(The 1929 Law on Religious Associations circumscribes believers' rights still further. The regime interprets the law's requirement that primary religious associations must register with local authorities as giving it the right to grant or withhold registration.) In practice, this allows the state to limit the number of religious associations, to reduce their number gradually, and even to deny legal status to an entire religious denomination (e.g., the Ukrainian/Uniate/Catholic Church). In short, the state can and does prevent Soviet citizens from practicing the faith of their choice. Soviet

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constitutional provisions on the separation of church and state and the obligations of the Soviet Union as a signatory of international human rights covenants are in practice contradicted by the law's many Draconian restrictions on religious groups.

"Cults" have no specific legal right to maintain seminaries, publishing facilities, or other institutions such as monasteries--those that exist, exist precariously, by special permission. The law is structured to prevent the clergy or hierarchy from exercising effective control over church affairs. At the same time, it allows state officials to manipulate church activities and policies by giving them a role in determining the membership of primary religious groups and the selection of their leaders and clergy. The lengthy list of restrictions and regulations imposed on religious associations and clergy prevents them from engaging in any activity except the performance of religious rites. They cannot proselytize or provide religious instruction to children; engage in charitable, social, or "political" activities; or organize prayer or study groups, libraries, mutual aid societies, kindergartens, or cooperatives. A 1966 decree made violations of the law punishable by administrative fines imposed by local authorities; repeated violations usually involve criminal charges.

There is substantial evidence that the regime will soon announce changes to the 1929 Law on Religious Associations; specifically, that it plans to extend to religious groups the status of a juridical person at law. (This status normally includes the right to own property, enter into contractual relations, and be a party in legal and judicial actions.) Both the official Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Chairman of the USSR Council for Religious Affairs K.M. Kharchev (during his visit to the US in October of this year), have claimed that the changes are already in effect. Whether this will improve the status of believers or serve as more eyewash for foreign consumption, however, remains unclear. Kharchev has acquired a reputation for intensifying official pressures against believers since his appointment in November 1984. In the US, he sought to allay concerns and portrayed Soviet policy as one of seeking an accommodation with believers. But at a meeting with a Jewish group he squandered his credibility by alleging that all but two or three of the Soviet Union's 110 synagogues had a rabbi. (The actual number of synagogues is probably less than 50, most of them without a rabbi.)

Atheist Pressures Continue

The policy of promoting atheism while claiming observance of believers' rights was affirmed by a Pravda editorial

(September 28, 1986) and reaffirmed by Party Secretary Ligachev at an All-union social sciences forum held in early October. Ligachev called for improved atheist education, condemned the "expediency of showing tolerance toward religious ideas," and denounced attempts by bourgeois nationalists to "don the garb of religion," citing "activities of the reactionary sections of the Islamic, Uniate, and Catholic clergy." But he also denied charges by "ideological opponents" that the USSR suppresses religious freedom and persecutes believers and claimed that "in our country, both believers and nonbelievers enjoy equal, extensive constitutional rights."

The regime enforces its policy through the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the USSR Council of Ministers. The Council monitors religious activities and is responsible for the enforcement of laws pertaining to religion. Its administrative regulations thus impose an additional level of restrictions on religious liberty. According to official documents of the Council and unofficial reports reaching the West, the Council supervises religious activities and senior church officials in minute detail; censors religious publications; passes on personnel selections; and even monitors sermons and biblical passages used in religious services. Clergy cannot legally practice their calling without the Council's approval. Whenever possible, the Council places the clergy in the position of acting against their direct responsibilities by forcing them to implement policies designed to weaken and in time destroy religion: by closing churches "voluntarily," keeping silent when believers are harassed, and ignoring violations of law by the authorities. In general, the regime aims at compromising the integrity of clergy and religious institutions and at rendering organized religion and individual believers incapable of defending their interests.

Repression of Activists

Believers who refuse to register or comply with state controls become subject to a wide range of sanctions. Repeated violations of the Law on Religious Associations can lead to criminal charges. Articles of the (RSFSR) Criminal Code used against believers include those aimed specifically against religious activists as well as those used against political dissidents: Articles 142 (Violation of laws on separation of church and state and of church and school), 143 (Obstructing performance of religious rites), 227 (Infringement of person and rights of citizens under appearance of performing religious ceremonies), 190.1 (Slandering the Soviet state and system), or 70 (Anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda). In addition, articles involving general criminal violations are also used frequently, such as hooliganism, engaging in prohibited trades, parasitism, and others. Cases against believers are often fabricated.

Soviet law and penal practices single out religious activists for especially harsh treatment. Those convicted under the Criminal Code for "religious crimes" are sentenced to strict regime labor camps and designated--together with political activists--as "especially dangerous state criminals," a category that disqualifies them from amnesties or leniency. Indeed, the provisions of amnesties promulgated in recent years demonstrate that authorities regard religious activism (such as organizing religious classes for children or circulating a petition) as a more serious crime than assault, robbery, or rape. Even if convicted for lesser crimes, believers rarely qualify for early release or parole because, as "prisoners of conscience," they usually refuse to provide the required expression of remorse or admission of guilt. Believers who are incarcerated in psychiatric hospitals face an especially agonizing choice, since they are often promised immediate release if they renounce their belief in God. Others face deprivation of their parental rights under provisions of the Soviet Family Code that obligates parents to raise their children as "worthy members of a socialist society."

Social pressures against believers include public "exposure" by atheist activists, exclusion from higher education, and discrimination in professional advancement. Young people, especially, are subjected to heavy pressures and face life as second class citizens if they become known as practicing believers.

Eyewash for Foreigners

The regime, while militantly anti-religious, seeks to portray the Soviet Union to the outside world as an enlightened, humane, and democratic society. It also recognizes that Soviet religious groups can perform useful functions to advance Soviet interests: to demonstrate to foreigners the existence of religious freedom in the Soviet Union; to support Soviet interests abroad; and to bolster morale and patriotism in time of war. The pursuit of conflicting objectives generates internal contradictions and policy fluctuations; more often, it opens up a huge gap between propaganda claims and the realities of Soviet life. To make its propaganda credible, the regime must exercise tight control over religious activists (to prevent independent initiatives or public protest) as well as visiting foreigners to ensure that they receive the best possible impression of religious life. When details of its anti-religious repressions do leak out, the regime brands them as "malicious slander."

During the visit of Politburo member Shcherbitskiy to the US in March, his aide, Central Committee propagandist Stukalin, responded to Congressional critics by citing the positive impressions of Soviet religious life received by Billy Graham

and a National Council of Churches delegation during their visits to the USSR. The regime also relies on Soviet religious leaders (especially the Russian Orthodox hierarchy) to support official policies when attending religious conferences abroad or receiving foreign guests. The display of restored churches and religious services to tourists, moreover, provides a steady source of badly needed hard currency.

In spite of regime policies, popular interest in religion has increased significantly during the past decade, according to authoritative official sources, unofficial reports, and knowledgeable foreign observers.