

**Church  
and  
Religion  
in the USSR**

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"Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess or not to profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or atheistic propaganda. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds is prohibited.

"In the USSR, the church is separated from the state, and the school from the church."

USSR Constitution,  
Article 52

How is freedom of conscience ensured in the USSR? What relations exist between the state and the church? How did they develop? What is the relevant legislation? Soviet citizens travelling abroad are often asked these questions.

Freedom of conscience is an inalienable part of the democratic rights and freedoms of citizens. Marxism-Leninism regards freedom of conscience as the right of citizens freely to profess any faith, to change faith and to be a member of a religious body, as well as the right to profess no religion and freely to conduct anti-religious propaganda, without, however, offending the religious feelings of believers. It maintains that all religions should be equal before the law, that the state should not interfere in the affairs of the church and that the church should not interfere in the affairs of the state.

Far from preventing the church or believers from meeting their religious needs, Soviet legislation stipulates that any violation of the law protecting the rights of believers should be strictly punished and can even be regarded a criminal

offence. The law guarantees the implementation of the principle of freedom of conscience.

This pamphlet describes the practical steps that have been taken since the inception of Soviet power to guarantee freedom of conscience in the USSR and explains the democratic principles of Soviet legislation concerning church-state relations.

## LOOKING BACK: FAITH WAS OBLIGATORY

In Russia before 1917, the Russian Orthodox Church was the officially established faith. The code of laws of the Russian Empire included special statutes and regulations establishing the structure and restricting the activities of religious associations. Thus, government interference in the internal affairs of the church was official. Inequality of the different religions in the eyes of the law was also officially acknowledged. The Orthodox Church was proclaimed the pre-eminent and dominant state church with the tsar himself as its "sovereign guardian and protector". Anyone who denied the verity of Orthodoxy was, in the light of imperial law, against the tsar and his sovereignty.

The church-state alliance was based on a solid economic foundation. The Russian Orthodox Church possessed enormous wealth including land, forests, commercial enterprises, etc. Besides, it received large subsidies from the state. In 1907, for instance, the government allocated 31 million roubles for the maintenance of the church apparatus—almost as much as it gave to the Ministry of Public Education.

The Russian Orthodox Church enjoyed more extensive privileges than other religions. It had the

exclusive right to propagate its doctrine and alone had the right of autonomy, being governed by the Holy Governing Synod headed by the chief procurator appointed by the tsar. The religious affairs of other faiths were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior, all other churches being only "tolerated" in Russia.

Only persons belonging to the Orthodox Church could hold government posts. People of "heterodox" religions were barred from government service, and only a few were enrolled at educational institutions. Some of them were not allowed to live in certain towns and cities (for example, Jews could not live beyond the Jewish Pale). Followers of certain religions were persecuted for their beliefs. People who refused to convert to the Orthodox Church or who wished to abandon it were often dismissed from work. Tsarist law encouraged national-religious strife and forbade mixed marriages. Those born of such "illegal" marriages had their civil rights restricted.

The discrimination against those of other faiths did not prevent the government from using all the religions practised in the country for its own ends. Islam, for example, enjoyed the status of a "tolerated" church. The heads of Muslim governing boards were not elected by representatives of the clergy and believers, but were "appointed by His Majesty on the recommendation of the Minister for the Interior". Those "heads" were quite comfortable under the tsarist regime. They were paid handsomely for their cooperation and completely disregarded the needs of their poverty-stricken and disfranchised flock. They even supported tsarist authorities in their suppression of the masses (believers included) who demanded a better life.

The church's control of education was guarded by tsarism with special zeal. Almost half of the schools were directly in the hands of the Synod and their principal task was "to instil in children the fear of God, love for the Church and devotion to the Tsar and the Fatherland". Religion was a compulsory subject in all educational establishments and the principal one in primary and parish schools.

Religion was also forced on the students in higher schools. The "Instruction to the Director of Kazan University" stated, for example: "It shall be the paramount duty and strict personal responsibility of the director to see to it through the use of all the powers vested in him, that reverence and love for the holy Evangelical doctrine are inculcated in the students of the University."

All subjects of the Russian Empire were obliged to profess a religion. "Nonreligiousness" was legally impermissible. As stated in a Foreign Ministry document of 1907, "subjects without religion... are the most undesirable elements in the state". The law strictly prohibited any kind of atheist organization and stipulated that it was the duty of the police to see to it that "the faith is treated with due respect".

## **THE RIGHT TO BELIEVE IN GOD**

The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP)<sup>1</sup> had elaborated and begun to implement the scientific principles of state-church relations

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<sup>1</sup> RSDLP was set up in 1898 as a party adhering to Marxism. At its 2nd Congress in 1903 it split into a revolutionary wing which was headed by Lenin and which began to be referred to as Bolsheviks (from the Russian "bolshinstvo",



which would ensure genuine freedom of conscience for the citizens of Russia, long before the 1917 socialist revolution.

It was stated in the Party Programme adopted at the 2nd Party Congress (July-August 1903): "The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party sets as its immediate political task the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy and its replacement with a democratic republic whose Constitution would ensure: ... 5. Unrestricted freedom of conscience, speech, the press, assembly, strikes and associations. ... 7. Abolition of estates and full equality of all citizens irrespective of sex, religion, race or nationality. ... 13. Separation of the church from the state and of the school from the church."

In their political work before 1917, that is, under tsarism, the Bolsheviks attached considerable importance to the struggle for the working people's spiritual rights: the right to follow any religion, the abolition of a "pre-eminent" religion, and the equality of all religions in the eyes of the law. In their speeches and articles the Bolsheviks concentrated on the principles of separation of the school from the church, of the impermissibility of any interference of the church in the education of the young and of prohibiting forced conversion of children to religion.

In his article *Socialism and Religion* (1905) Lenin wrote that religion must be no concern of the state; that religious societies must have no connection with government authority; that the mere mention of a citizen's religion in official do-

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majority) and an opportunist wing, the Mensheviks (from the Russian "menshinstvo", minority). Subsequently the RSDLP was renamed CPSU, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

cuments should be eliminated; that no subsidies should be granted to the established church, nor state allowances made to ecclesiastical and religious societies, in short, that the church should be completely separated from the state.

These demands began to acquire the force of law from the very first days of the Soviet state.

The Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia, adopted in November 1917, abolished all national and religious privileges and restrictions, putting an end to the unequal position of different faiths in the state. The policy of dividing nations into "superior" and "inferior" and fomenting strife between people on religious or national grounds was forever excluded from the life of society.

On December 3, 1917, V. I. Lenin, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (the Soviet government), signed the appeal "To All the Working Muslims of Russia and the East", which read, in part: "Muslims of Russia, Tatars of the Volga area and the Crimea, Kirghiz and Sarts of Siberia and Turkestan, Turks and Tatars of Transcaucasia, Chechens and mountaineers of the Caucasus, all those whose mosques and meeting-places were destroyed and whose beliefs and customs were trampled upon by the tsars and oppressors of Russia!

"Henceforth your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions are declared free and inviolable."

Soviet power abolished infringement and restriction of rights of the peoples inhabiting outlying national areas once and for all; specifically, it put an end to attempts to force the Orthodox faith on them. The Soviet government's attitude to religious worship was exemplified by the handing over to the Muslims of a priceless ancient manuscript, the

Othman Koran, which had been removed by a tsarist general from a mosque in Central Asia. After the overthrow of the tsarist government and the victory of the February bourgeois revolution in Russia in 1917 Muslim soldiers attempted to retrieve the Koran, which was then kept in Petrograd, but were severely punished by the Provisional government. After the establishment of Soviet power the government adopted a special decision, signed by Lenin: "Meeting the aspirations of all the Muslims of Russia, the government has decided to hand over immediately the Sacred Koran of Othman to them." Today this relic is kept in a special repository in Tashkent.

In December 1917 a number of government documents concerning the separation of the school from the church and the church from the state were adopted, including the decision of the People's Commissariat (Ministry) for Education "On Transferring Management of the Affairs of Education from the Department of Religion to the People's Commissariat for Education"; the decision "On the Abolition of the Posts of Teachers of Religion of All Denominations in Educational Establishments"; and the decrees "On the Dissolution of Marriage" and "On Civil Marriage, Children and Civil Registration". The latter, without prohibiting marriages performed in church, proclaimed that "henceforth the Russian Republic recognizes only civil marriages". Legal relations between spouses and between parents and children became independent of the church. Legislation was enacted abolishing the state institutions in charge of the affairs of the clergy. In January 1918, for instance, the department of the court clergy and the army board of the department of religion were abolished.

These documents were summed up in and supplemented by the decree of the Council of People's Commissars of January 23, 1918, "On the Separation of the Church from the State and of the School from the Church", which clearly defined the attitude of the Soviet state to religion and the church. The decree stated that henceforth every citizen could profess any religion or none at all. All restrictions on the rights of citizens because of professing or not professing any religion were abolished.

The decree abolished religious vows and oaths, and religious rites and ceremonies in state and public organizations. All civic registration functions were transferred to the civil authorities. The religious rite or ceremony lost all legal force. For example, a church marriage no longer ensured protection by the laws of the state of the rights of the spouses, property rights and the interests of the children. However, the state made an exception for church marriages contracted prior to the promulgation of the civil laws on marriage and the family in the Union Republics making up the Soviet state (December 20, 1917 in the Russian Federation; May 1, 1920 in Byelorussia; April 28, 1921 in Georgia, etc.). These marriages were made fully equal to civil marriages.

While granting citizens the right freely to determine their attitude to religion, the decree forbade the church to punish parishioners for apostasy or to convert people by force. The decree established the democratic concept of equality of all religions before the law. Any reference to the religion or lack of religion of citizens in official documents was categorically prohibited. All ecclesiastical and religious associations were required to

submit to the general rules concerning public societies and associations. They ceased to enjoy any privileges granted by the state.

The establishment of equality of religions was a humane act which responded to the aspirations of the peoples of the outlying national areas of Russia. While the decree was being drafted Lenin called repeatedly for an especially circumspect and thoughtful approach to religious matters which concerned the national minorities. The decree prohibited the issuance of any local laws or ordinances which would hinder or restrict the equal enjoyment of freedom of conscience by all citizens.

The separation of schools from the church meant that the church would not be permitted to interfere in the education of the younger generation and pupils would not be forced to study religion. The teaching of religion in all state, public and private educational establishments which were under the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat for Education was discontinued and the posts of instructors in religion and the performance of all religious rites in schools were abolished.

These measures were fully applied to the schools of the national minorities. A unified labour-oriented school system was established in the country. Educational establishments which had been in the hands of the clergy, except ecclesiastical ones, became secular.

Soviet legislation permits religious education of children on a private basis, i.e., in the family. The law on religious worship does not prevent children, accompanied by their parents, from attending churches and services, and from performing religious rites. Thus, the law does not prohibit the teaching of religion to children, subject to certain rules.

All Union Republics now have codes of laws on marriage, the family and guardianship, stipulating parents' rights and duties in bringing up their children until they are of age. The codes state that father and mother have equal rights and obligations in matters concerning the upbringing of their children. This means that for any religious rite in respect of minors to be performed only the consent of both parents or the guardian is required.

Soviet legislation on religious matters prohibits any charitable activity by the church, above all, because such activity is not directly related to religious rites. Nor is there any practical need for such activity. Poverty, famine and unemployment have long been done away with in the Soviet Union. The socialist state undertakes all responsibility for social security, for providing leisure and recreational facilities and for the cultural development of the people. One of the principal tasks of the state is to improve the well-being of the Soviet people and their living and working conditions, and to promote rapid progress in the field of public health and in the educational and cultural spheres.

The decree "On the Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church" formalized the principles of relations between the Soviet state and the church.

## **THE SHEPHERDS VERSUS THE FLOCK**

The Soviet government scrupulously observed its legislation on religion. Meanwhile the church, especially its ruling hierarchy, and a considerable part of the clergy, resisted Soviet power, making



use of every means available—from pronouncing curses and appealing for the overthrow of the new government, to open armed action.

Three days after the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies took power a session of the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church (October 1917) adopted an appeal to the clergy and all believers declaring the socialist revolution to be the "coming of Antichrist and rampant atheism". The session also restored (after 200 years) the Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church which had been abolished by the church reform of Peter the Great in 1721. Prior to 1917 a government-appointed chief procurator was in charge of church administration. The restoration of the Patriarchate had been made possible by the Bolshevik Party's policy concerning freedom of conscience, in particular, the separation of the church from the state. The restoration meant that from then on all the questions of the Orthodox faith and the internal affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church would be settled by its episcopate headed by the Patriarch. Such autonomy in administering church affairs was granted to the followers of all faiths on the territory of Soviet Russia. However, the clergy did not find it necessary to conceal that they regarded the Patriarch as a spiritual leader of the counter-revolution.

Metropolitan Tikhon of Moscow (V. Belavin) was elected Patriarch. He began to perform his duties by embarking on an open counter-revolutionary campaign. In his message to the Orthodox clergy and all believers of January 19, 1918 Tikhon anathematized Soviet power, "adjured" "all the loyal children of the Orthodox Church of Christ" not to enter into "any fellowship" with Communists,

urged "believers and loyal children of the church" to rise in defence of the "humiliated and oppressed" Orthodox Church, "to suffer for the cause of Christ", and directed all prelates and priests "not to waste a single hour" in organizing spiritual alliances and calling parishioners to join "the ranks of spiritual fighters who will counter the external force with the forces of their holy inspiration". He sent his blessing and holy bread to the overthrown tsar.

An extremely reactionary role was played by the church in the years of the civil war (1918-1920) and the intervention of 14 foreign states against Soviet Russia. Clergymen of almost all faiths joined the forces of internal and external reaction in actively opposing the power of the working people. The church press urged the believers to volunteer for the White armies without waiting for the mobilization order. Vast numbers of counter-revolutionary proclamations were issued by the Patriarch, the Synod and diocesan boards.

In 1918 the clergy of the Siberian city of Tomsk issued an appeal, "To All the Children of the Orthodox Church", urging them to support the White Guard<sup>1</sup> government in its struggle against the Soviet government. The Trans-Baikal diocese sent an appeal to Japan in April 1920, declaring that the servants of the Orthodox Church and its loyal sons hailed Japan's invasion against Soviet Russia as a step aimed at protecting and guarding the essence of the life of the Russian people—the faith of their fathers—against persecution and oppression.

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<sup>1</sup> The White Guard, armed detachments of counter-revolutionaries who fought against Soviet power.

Not a single anti-Soviet uprising was organized or carried out by the counter-revolutionaries without the assistance or direct participation of members of the clergy. Church officials were in close touch with representatives of the largest counter-revolutionary organizations which were preparing an insurrection in the autumn of 1919 and nurturing plans for seizing Moscow and Petrograd and assassinating Lenin and other government and Party leaders.

Monasteries often served as bases of support for the counter-revolutionaries. Former tsarist officers found asylum in them. Weapons and ammunition were often stored on their grounds. The enemies of the Soviet government at home and the foreign interventionists thus had every reason to regard the clergy as their own force legally existing on the territory of Soviet Russia.

Thousands of clergymen (Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim) operated in the White Guard armies. There were about 1,000 priests in General Denikin's army, more than 500 in Baron Wrangel's and several thousand in Admiral Kolchak's. In addition to their religious duties regimental priests were required to organize counter-revolutionary agitation and spy on soldiers. Priests received detailed instructions from their superiors and acted together with counter-revolutionary officers.

"Regiments of Jesus" and "of the Holy Virgin" were formed in Siberia under the supervision of Bishop Silvestr of Omsk and of British General Alfred Knox. Muslim clergy organized detachments of the "green banner of the Prophet" in the south of Russia. During hostilities Soviet forces often captured armed members of the clergy.

A disgraceful page was added to the history of the Russian Orthodox Church by Patriarch Tikhon and his associates by their actions during the great national disaster, the famine in the Volga area (1922), when the lives of millions had to be saved and all the country's resources mobilized to provide starving people with bread. Groups of believers appealed to the church to help the famine-stricken regions. In January 1922 a parish meeting in the village of Davydovka of Melitopol District resolved to donate the gold and silver plate of the local church to the relief fund. In February a similar decision was taken by a meeting of the parishioners of churches in Nizhni Novgorod (now Gorky). "Awake, servants of the church," they declared. "Let it be known to you that the Faith is perishing, not through the Bolsheviks' fault, but because of your hypocrisy. Remember that if you do not launch a crusade against tsar-hunger, you will cover yourselves forever with indelible shame."

However, Patriarch Tikhon and his clergy paid no heed to such appeals. On February 28, 1922 the Patriarch addressed a message to the Orthodox clergy and believers urging them to hide church treasures and threatening them with dismissal or excommunication if they disobeyed. In his secret instructions to the clergy he frankly stated that "the important thing is not what you give but to whom you give". Churchmen regarded the Patriarch's appeal as a call for vigorous anti-Soviet action.

These are just a few historical examples illustrating the clergy's opposition to the revolution. But why should a young state which had legally granted freedom of conscience to its citizens and

self-administration and an equal status to all the faiths in the country inspire such fierce opposition?

The fact was that to a large proportion of the clergy, which wholeheartedly supported tsarism, Orthodoxy and tsarist autocracy were synonymous. The abolition of the privileges and the status of official ideology of the Orthodox Church gave rise to an angry opposition. After the October 1917 revolution not a single faith in Russia, not even Orthodox Church, could *force* its creed on anyone.

The clergy demagogically declared freedom of conscience, the right of citizens to profess any religion or atheism to be an "offence to and oppression of the church". Not only religious, but purely selfish interests were involved in that struggle. The separation of the church from the state deprived the highest clergy of an important source of personal income and other advantages given to them by the tsarist government "for participation in the affairs of state".

Since the church was closely linked with the most conservative, reactionary forces of monarchism, the majority of the clergy vehemently defended the outdated social order. This is what Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod wrote in 1958 about the stand taken by the clergy: "The idea fixed in the minds of churchmen was that the existence of the privileged sections of society, of the propertied class, was perfectly normal; hence they regarded any protest against the existing evil as a violation of God's will, even though that state of affairs and that law were unjust..."

The development of events in Russia after 1917 presented the clergy with a choice: to share the lot of the counter-revolutionaries and utterly to lose the confidence of the mass of believers or to change their attitudes and adapt to the new conditions of life, since the overwhelming majority of Russia's population had taken the side of the revolution, and the Soviet government's policy, protecting the interests of believers, was winning the people's trust.

The struggle of the church against the revolution meant not only hostile interference in the affairs of state, but a struggle against the interests of its own flock, a struggle against freedom of conscience.

### **THE PATRIARCH REPENTS**

After the civil war the popular masses demanded that active participants and organizers of counter-revolutionary activities be put on trial. Among them were prelates, ordinary clergymen and heads of parishes. They were tried not for religious, but for political, anti-government and anti-popular activity. Members of the clergy admitted this. In 1942 Metropolitan Sergius Stragorodsky, who subsequently became the Patriarch, declared: "After the October Revolution, the trials of many churchmen took place in Russia. Why were these members of the clergy put on trial? Solely because they used their cassocks and church banner to hide behind while carrying on anti-Soviet work. Those were political trials, having nothing in common with the purely ecclesiastical life of religious organizations and the purely ecclesiastical activity of individual priests."



Many churchmen realized that the counter-revolutionary policy of the church leadership was undermining the authority of the Orthodox Church and its influence among the masses. The delegates of an influential religious trend called *Obnovlenchestvo* (Renovation) with Archpriest Vvedensky at the head demanded Patriarch Tikhon's resignation. The Renovators condemned the church's hostile attitude to the Soviet state. In their appeal to the clergy and believers printed in the newspaper *Izvestia* of May 14, 1922, they called for an end to the "civil war of the church against the state" led by the church hierarchs, and an immediate convocation of the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church "to judge those responsible for the disintegration of the church", decide the question of church administration and establish normal relations between the church and Soviet power.

In May 1922, after his anti-popular activities had been exposed, Patriarch Tikhon was brought to trial. He was tried for his numerous acts against Soviet power, including his counter-revolutionary appeals which have caused unrest, bloodshed and loss of life.

After lengthy consideration, Patriarch Tikhon wrote a letter to the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, published in *Izvestia* on June 27, 1923, declaring his repentance and his decision to cease his anti-Soviet activities. "Having been brought up in a monarchic society, and being influenced, until my arrest, by anti-Soviet-minded persons," he wrote, "I was truly hostile to Soviet power... I declare to the Supreme Court that from now on I am not an enemy of Soviet power. I renounce, irrevocably and finally, both the foreign

and internal monarchic, White Guard counter-revolution.”

The Soviet government showed its humanity and magnanimity when it released Patriarch Tikhon before he had served his sentence. Subsequently Tikhon made repeated statements of his loyalty to the Soviet state.

On April 7, 1925, Tikhon died, leaving a testament in which he admitted that from the very outset Soviet power had ensured complete freedom of conscience. He called on Orthodox believers “to be sincere in their attitude to Soviet power and work for the common weal ... and bring before the court of the Orthodox Council those who persist in their delusions and refuse to repent of them before Soviet power”.

Although one must not forget that by his counter-revolutionary activities Patriarch Tikhon had brought great harm to the Soviet state during the first years of its existence, it must also be noted that in his last days he made a contribution to normalizing relations between the Orthodox Church and the state.

## **LOYALTY OF THE CHURCH**

The young Soviet Republic had stood its ground in the fierce clash with the enemies of the revolution at home and abroad. Even the complete sceptics could not deny the indisputable fact that the new social order had emerged victorious. Heeding the sentiments of believers, the church could no longer ignore the real state of affairs. The leading clergy of most of the faiths declared their loyalty to the Soviet state.

The Soviet state's and Communist Party's consistent policy in relation to religion played an important role in causing the church to adopt this position. In the most trying years of the civil war and foreign military intervention the principles of freedom of conscience were undeviatingly implemented in the country. The 8th Party Congress (1919) stressed in a resolution that "persons encroaching upon freedom of faith and worship for citizens of all religious beliefs must be strictly punished". It was pointed out in the resolution of the 13th Party Congress (1924) "On Work in the Countryside": "It is necessary resolutely to cut short all attempts to combat religious prejudices by administrative means such as the closure of churches, mosques, synagogues, prayer-houses, etc. ... Special care must be taken not to offend the religious feelings of the believer. . ."

This process was furthered under Metropolitan Sergius, *locum tenens* of the Patriarch. On July 29, 1927, Metropolitan Sergius and six members of the Synod issued a declaration in which they wrote: "We church officials are not on the side of the enemies of our Soviet state and the senseless instruments of their intrigues, but on the side of our people and our government... We regard any blow directed against the Soviet Union, be it war, boycott or any public disaster or secret murder... as a blow directed against us. To put an end to this we have demanded that the clergy abroad give a written pledge of complete loyalty to the Soviet government in all their public activity. Those who fail to give such a pledge or violate it shall be expelled from the clergy under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate." Metropolitan Sergius not only declared his support of loyalty to the

Soviet state, but also carried out a number of practical measures to that end. That was why he was supported by the masses of believers that had long been demanding that their "spiritual shepherds" fulfil their civic duty to the state not only in words, but also in deeds. The majority of the priesthood also displayed readiness to support the domestic and foreign policy of the Soviet government. This led to an improvement in relations between the church and the state.

### A SACRED DUTY

The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 was a grave trial for the Soviet people. The first days, when the Red Army was forced to retreat under the pressure of the enemy's superior forces, were particularly tragic.

Both at the front and deep in the interior, and in the temporarily occupied territories, Soviet people demonstrated their indomitable will for victory.

The church did not remain on the sidelines. On the first day of the war Metropolitan Sergius, *locum tenens* of the Patriarch, issued a message to the clergy and believers reflecting the sentiments of the nationwide patriotic upsurge: "The fascist brigands have attacked our Motherland. Trampling upon all treaties and promises, they have suddenly come down upon us, and, look, the blood of our citizens is already flowing on our soil... But it is not the first time that the Russian people have had to withstand such trials. This time, too, with God's help they will reduce the fascist enemy to dust. Our forefathers did not quail under even worse

circumstances, because they remembered, not their personal danger or benefits, but their sacred duty to the Motherland and the faith, and emerged victorious."

On July 26, 1941, another prominent dignitary of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Alexius of Leningrad (the future Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia), who remained in beleaguered Leningrad throughout the siege, addressed believers among the soldiers with the following appeal: "War is a sacred cause for those who undertake it from necessity, in defence of truth and the Motherland. In this case those who take up arms perform an exploit of righteousness and, in accepting wounds and suffering, and laying down their lives for their kinsmen and their country, follow in the footsteps of the martyrs."

The Central Muslim Board of the USSR addressed all Soviet Muslims over the radio: "The fascists have drenched our peaceful fields with blood. They are killing innocent children, women and old people. Hitler intends to destroy science and culture, to establish a kingdom of barbarity and to exterminate the Muslim faith. The Central Muslim Board of the USSR calls upon all the faithful to defend their native land."

Joining the nationwide patriotic movement, the Russian Orthodox Church organized collections for the needs of the front. An air squadron and a tank unit were built with funds contributed by the clergy and believers. In September 1942, a council of bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church adopted an appeal calling on the Christians of all the world to unite their efforts in the struggle against the Nazi invaders.

These patriotic acts were greatly appreciated by the Soviet government. Many church leaders received government decorations.

Then came the years of peaceful construction. The country healed the wounds of war and reconstructed its ravaged economy. Together with all the progressive forces of the world, the Soviet people launched a far-reaching movement against attempts to provoke a new war. The church supported this movement. Patriarch Alexius who was elected by the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in January 1945 after the death of Patriarch Sergius devoted much time to the activity of such international organizations as the Christian Movement for Peace, the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches and others. In recognition of his activity in defence of peace the Soviet government awarded him several orders and medals.

In the postwar period all the major faiths and denominations (with the exception of some sectarian organizations) began to show, as the Orthodox Church had done, greater loyalty to the Soviet state. The Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Georgian, Armenian, Roman-Catholic, Old-Believers', Evangelical-Lutheran, Evangelical Christian-Baptist and other churches and religions came out actively in support of the socialist system and the home and foreign policy of the Soviet government.

This tendency was evidenced during major ecclesiastical activities such as the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, the All-Union Congress of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the Council of the Old-Believers' Church, the Council of the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Congress of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus.



The Soviet government's message of greetings to the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in May 1971 said: "The Russian Orthodox Church and its clergy have in the course of many years displayed political loyalty to the Soviet state, supported the internal and foreign policy of the government and actively worked against the threat of a new war. The relations between the state and the church are quite normal."

The Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate wrote in a letter to the Council for Religious Affairs: "The Local Council of our Church has unanimously reaffirmed its love for and the devotion to our Motherland and to its Government, which pursues a policy of peace conforming to the vital interests of all the citizens of our country and is also in the interests of our Church, its hierarchy, clergy and believers."

"We can testify that the Local Council of our Church was marked by a high level of patriotism and that the members of the Council, citizens of our State, have demonstrated a high civic spirit, love for our Motherland and a striving tirelessly to serve the ideals of peace, progress and friendship among peoples."

## **20,000 HOUSES OF WORSHIP**

The activities of religious organizations in the Soviet Union convincingly demonstrate that freedom of conscience has been concretely implemented and disprove the claim of bourgeois propaganda that there is no religious freedom in our country but just "compulsory atheism".

In the USSR there are more than 20,000 functioning Russian Orthodox, Old-Believers', Georgian, Armenian, Roman-Catholic and Lutheran churches, synagogues, Buddhist lamaseries, prayer-houses of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists, etc., and 19 monasteries and convents of the Russian Orthodox Church.

To meet the needs of believers the Soviet state has turned over to them rent-free church buildings and articles of worship. Among the many thousands of such buildings are hundreds of priceless architectural monuments that are maintained in an excellent state of repair. To preserve the outstanding works of architecture the state takes them under its protection and allocates considerable funds for restoration.

State agencies provide religious organizations with printing facilities, paper and everything necessary for printing religious publications such as the Bible, the Koran, theological works, prayer-books, journals and church calendars.

The Russian Orthodox Church issues ten periodicals and regularly puts out theological literature. In recent years the Bible has been printed four times in mass editions. In addition, a jubilee edition of the Bible was put out to mark the centenary of the first Bible printed in Russian. The New Testament has been published three times and the Service Book and Psalm Book, twice. The works of the late Patriarch Alexius in four volumes have also been published along with *Addresses and Speeches* by Patriarch Pimen, a *Priest's Handbook* and a series of jubilee publications of the Moscow Patriarchy.

The Koran has been published four times. The Muslim lunar calendar and the journal *Muslims*

of the Soviet East (in Arabic, English, French and Uzbek) are issued regularly. The jubilee of the famous Muslim theologian and scholar, al-Bakhari, was marked by the publication of his book *Kitab al-Jami' al-Sahih* in two volumes. Among the recent publications are *Islam and Muslims in the Land of Soviets* by the Chairman of the Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Mufti Ziyautdin Khan ibn Ishan Babakhan, and a book of pronouncements by the Prophet Mohammed.

The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists publishes the bi-monthly journal *Bratsky Vestnik* (Brotherly Herald) and calendars, prayer-books, hymnals and an album about the life of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR. Theological literature is put out in Russian, Estonian, Lettish and German.

Other faiths in the USSR, and in particular, the Georgian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Church, the Moscow Old Believers' Archiepiscopate, the Presbyters' Council of the Seventh Day Adventists, Judaists and other believers also have their own publications.

Dozens of films describing the activities of major faiths have appeared since the end of the war.

The churches have a total of 39 enterprises for making church plate and other articles of worship, candles, matzoh, etc., with the necessary raw materials and other supplies provided by the state on a planned basis.

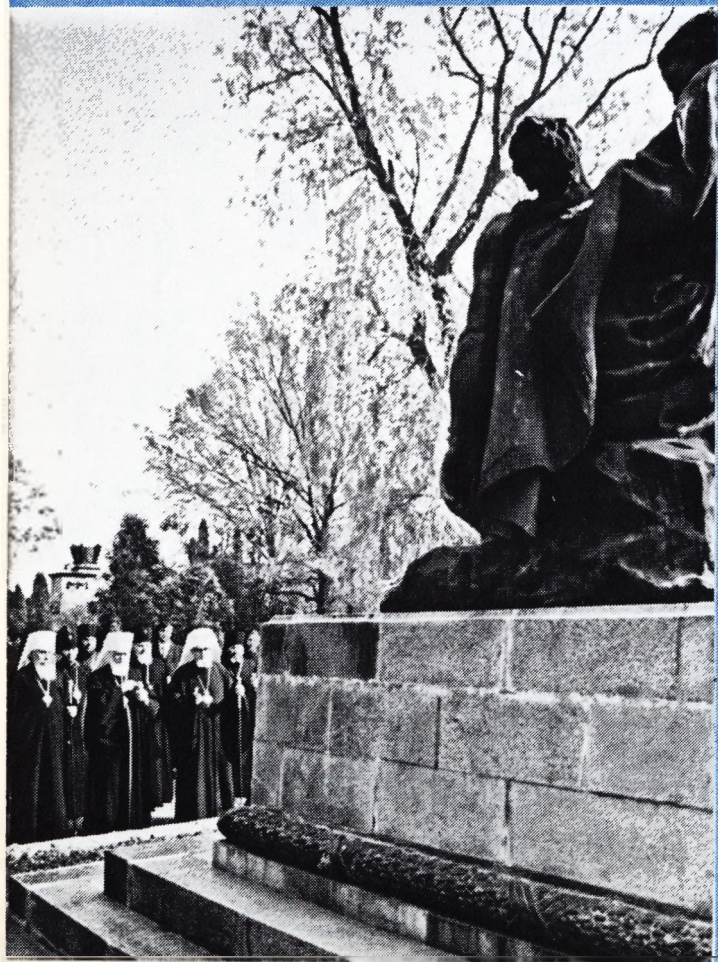
There are 18 theological schools in the country, among them six Orthodox academies and seminaries, two Roman-Catholic seminaries, a Muslim academy and madrasahs, a Jewish yeshiva, an academy of the Armenian Church and a seminary of the Georgian Church. Those who cannot study

In the summer of 1981 the 35th anniversary was celebrated of the Lvov Council where decision was made on the return of the Greco-Catholics in Galicia (Western Ukraine) to the fold of the Russian Orthodox Church. A ceremonial service was held at the Lvov Cathedral to mark the occasion.

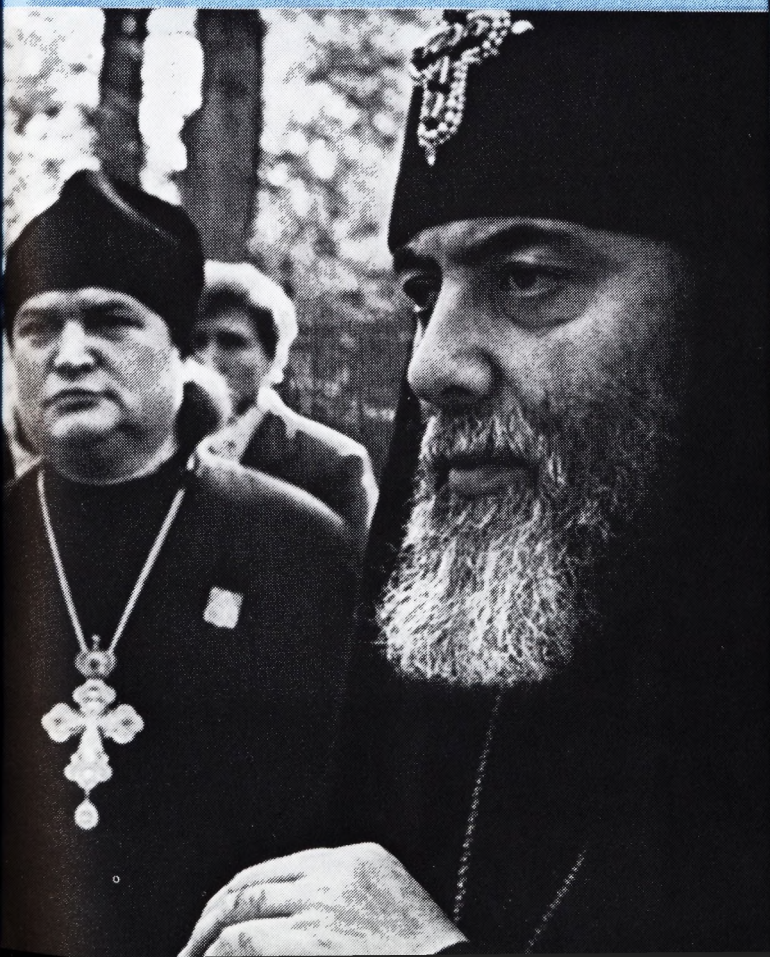




The participants in the celebrations in Lvov laid wreaths at the Hill of Glory to Soviet soldiers fallen in the war against Nazism.



Catholicos-Patriarch Iliya II of the Georgian Church was among those present at the 60th anniversary of the restoration of Patriarchy and the title of Patriarch in Russia celebrated at the Trinity-Sergius Monastery in Zagorsk near Moscow.





Supreme Catholicos of All Armenians, Vazgen I, at prayer











Sermon of St. Mary's Day in St. Teresa's Cathedral in Vilnius, capital of the Lithuanian Republic.





Procession on the Day of Exaltation of the Cross in Yerusalimka, a suburb of Vilnius.

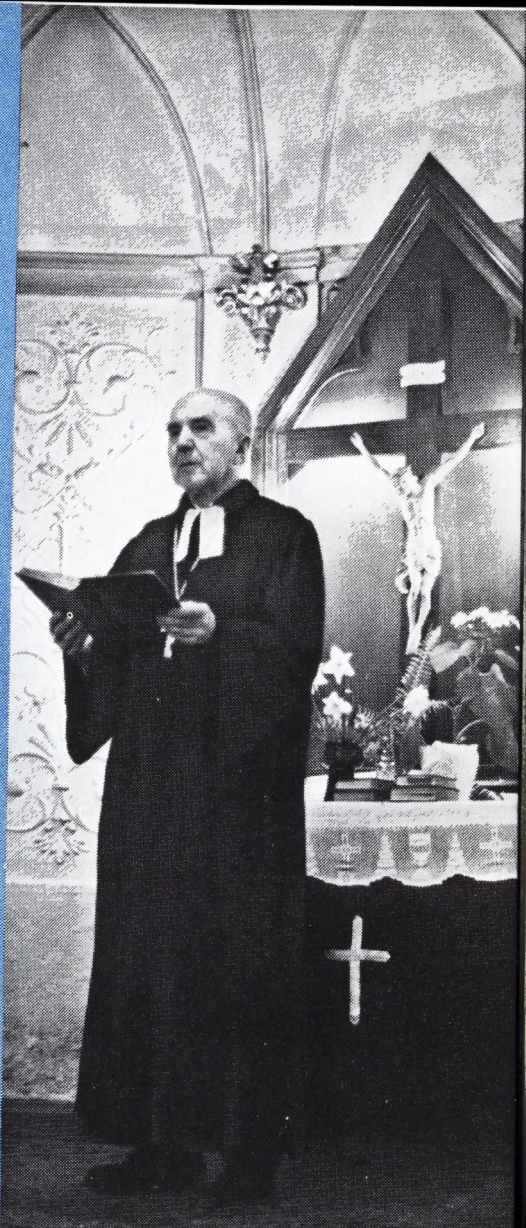
Father Boleslav Gavrikhovskiy with parishioners of a Roman-Catholic church in the village of Gozha in Byelorussia.



Bishop Valerian Zondaks, Rector and Professor of the Riga Roman-Catholic seminary with his students (Latvian Republic).



Janis Janeseltis is  
Latvia's oldest  
Lutheran pastor.











This ordination ceremony at the Riga Cathedral was attended by Archbishop Sven Sundby of Sweden and his wife. The ordainment is conducted by Dr. Janis Matulis, Primate of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia.





Service in a prayer-house of the Darnitsa community of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Kiev, capital of the Ukrainian Republic.



In the Choral Synagogue in Moscow. Reading the Tora is the principal rite of Passover.







Ceremonial service at Ivolginsky Lamasery, the Buddhist centre of the Soviet Union, near Ulan-Ude, Buryat Autonomous Republic.



ISLAMIC CONFERENCE  
المؤتمن الإسلامي  
ИСЛАМСКАЯ КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯ  
ТАШКЕНТ-1980

الخامس عشر

الهجري قرن السلام

والصداقة بين



Mufti Ziyautdin Khan ibn Ishan Babakhan, Chairman of the Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, spoke at the opening session of the conference "XV Century of the Hegira Must Become a Century of Peace and Friendship Among Nations" held in September 1980 in Tashkent, capital of the Uzbek Republic.

The Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan has its Fundamental Library in Tashkent.

One of the library's treasures is a copy of the Othman Koran.



Leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church receive a delegation of Danish church workers at Novodevichy Convent in Moscow.

The session of the Working Committee of the Christian Peace Conference held in the spring of 1981 in Kiev was attended by activists of the Christian peace movement from all continents.





at regular theological schools can add to their theological knowledge at correspondence courses and at the correspondence departments of theological schools. The organization of the teaching process and internal regimen in the theological schools is the prerogative of the religious bodies themselves.

The Russian Orthodox Church has trained more than a thousand Candidates, Magisters and Doctors of Theology in the last twenty years. The postgraduate students at Orthodox educational establishments include clergymen of the Antioch, Serbian, Bulgarian and other churches. There is an Afro-Asian department at the Leningrad Theological Academy which trains young people from Ethiopia, Kenya, India and other countries. People from nearly twenty countries in all are studying at the educational establishments of the Moscow Patriarchy.

The theological schools have all the facilities necessary for the normal process of instruction. The Leningrad Orthodox Theological Academy has about 200,000 volumes of theological literature in many languages. Moscow theological schools subscribe to more than 80 newspapers and journals.

Muslim clergymen in the Soviet Union are trained in madrasahs and can further their education at the Islamic academy. The term of training at a madrasah is seven years. Islamic clergymen may also continue their theological studies abroad. In the last few years many Muslims from the Soviet Union have attended courses at Al Azhar University in Cairo and at Al Quarawiyyin University in Morocco.

A Higher Buddhist Institute was opened in 1970 by Soviet and Mongolian Buddhists. It is attended by young people from Buddhist families

of the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic. They study subjects concerned with Buddhist doctrine and philosophy, learn sacred texts and master the Tibetan language and several modern languages. Some of the students show a particular interest in Tibetan medicine.

Evangelical-Christian and Baptist ministers are trained at courses for Bible study. Some of them attend foreign colleges.

### ✓ THE MAIN FAITHS AND DENOMINATIONS

Soviet law grants believers the right to unite in religious associations in order to practise their religion.

Voluntary membership is the basic principle of a religious association. Every citizen may join or leave a religious association of his or her own free will.

Believers who have formed a religious association (community or group) in the legally recognized manner have the right to perform religious worship together and hold prayer meetings and ceremonies for the purpose of worship. They may elect or employ priests or ministers, make use of and manage houses of worship and church property, take collections in the house of worship to maintain the building and the church property, provide for the upkeep of the clergy and meet any other expenses necessary for the practice of their religion.

Church funds consisting of voluntary offerings made by church members are not taxable.

At their general meeting believers elect an executive body and an auditing commission to administer the affairs of their religious association, its

property and funds, and also to represent the community abroad. From time to time, religious associations, on their own initiative, convene all-Union congresses and conferences to settle questions of church life, elect governing centres, etc. These centres supervise church canonical affairs on the basis of the rules and regulations adopted at the congresses and conferences of believers. There are a number of religious centres and other bodies in charge of religious affairs in the USSR.

At present *the Russian Orthodox Church* is governed by Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia together with the Synod. In order to settle important ecclesiastical questions, the Patriarch convenes a Council of Bishops or a Local Council, over which he presides. On behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church the Patriarch maintains relations with the heads of other autocephalous Orthodox Churches. He instructs bishops in matters concerning the spiritual and canonical activity of religious associations, confers titles and marks of distinction on the clergy and is also in charge of theological schools.

The Holy Synod, which consists of seven members, is a consultative body under the Patriarch. It helps him in church administration and also discusses all pressing issues of church life, the church's ecumenical ties and the work of parishes abroad.

The Russian Orthodox Church is divided into 76 dioceses headed by metropolitans, archbishops and bishops. A diocese consists of deaneries led by a dean who supervises the work and conduct of the parish clergy who are the spiritual leaders of religious communities (parishes). The Moscow Patriarchate is also in charge of many Russian Orthodox parishes abroad — in France, the United Sta-

tes, the Federal Republic of Germany, Britain, Argentina, Canada and other countries. These have been placed under the supervision of exarchates, dioceses, deaneries and missions.

*Islam* is the second largest body of believers after the Russian Orthodox Church. Although most Muslims in the USSR are Sunnites, there are also some Shiites. There are four independent bodies controlling their religious affairs: the Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in Tashkent (capital of the Uzbek Republic), chaired by Mufti Ziyautdin Khan ibn Ishan Babakhan; the Muslim Board of the European USSR and Siberia in Ufa, capital of the Bashkir Autonomous Republic, chaired by Mufti Talgat Tatjuddin; the Muslim Board of the Northern Caucasus in Buinaksk in the Dagestan Autonomous Republic, chaired by Mufti Mahmud Gekkiyev; and the Muslim Board of Transcaucasia in Baku, capital of the Azerbaijan Republic, chaired by Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukür Pasha-zade. The Muslim Boards are elected by assemblies of community representatives.

Mosques are centres of the religious life of Muslim communities. There the faithful offer daily prayers and Friday prayers and hold religious celebrations.

Muslim holidays, especially Uraza Bairam and Kurban Bairam, are marked by great festivity, when hundreds and thousands of Muslims gather in mosques. Over five thousand Muslims usually gather at the Moscow Mosque for the service during Uraza Bairam and Kurban Bairam, while as many as ten thousand gather at Tillashaykh, one of the cathedral mosques in Tashkent.

Muslims in the Soviet Union perform absolutely freely all the rites of their faith, such as name-giv-

ing, circumcision, and marriage or funeral rites. It is customary for certain rites to be accompanied by festivities in the homes of the faithful. The head of a family arranges big celebrations to mark the birth of a child, name-giving, etc. Muslim weddings in believers' families are held in accordance with Islamic custom and take the form of festivals for the bride and groom, their relatives and friends.

Muslims in the USSR are also able to carry out hajj, which is one of a Muslim's chief duties, and each year groups of Muslims from the Soviet Union go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. They also visit the grave of the Prophet Mohammed in Medina and other places of historic importance to Islam.

One specific feature of the Muslim faith is the mazar cult, the worship of the graves of Muslim saints and prominent Islamic figures. Mausoleums have been erected at different times over the graves of outstanding Muslims in Central Asia, Azerbaijan, the Northern Caucasus and other places.

Governing Muslim bodies appoint sheiks as permanent keepers of the mazars. The Muslim Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, for instance, is in charge of the tomb of Kusamm ibn-Abbas (a cousin of the Prophet Mohammed) and the Pavlen-Ata mausoleum in Uzbekistan, the mausoleum of Hajji Yusuf Khamadani in Tajikistan, Sultan-baba's tomb in Karakalpakia and many other monuments of architectural importance.

*Buddhists* (Lamaists) in the USSR live chiefly in the Buryat, Kalmyk and Tuva Autonomous Republics and in some districts of the Chita and Irkutsk Regions of the Russian Federation. The Central Buddhist Board of the USSR is headed by Bandido-Khambo Lama Gamboyev.



The Buddhist Board and its chairman ordain lamas and supervise their performance of religious rules and vows. Buddhist lamaseries, which have big libraries of Buddhist literature, are headed by *shiretuys* (abbots).

A new Buddhist temple has been built in the Ivolginsky lamasery in the Buryat Autonomous Republic. Buddhists from many districts of the republic gather there on religious holidays.

"It was an impressive spectacle. Thousands of Buddhists gathered for the festivities and stayed for the day and the night..." wrote N. Jinaratana Maha Nayaka Thero, a prominent Buddhist leader of India, in the magazine *The Maha Bodhi*.

"In the lamasery we watched a giant procession, stretching for two miles, consisting of Buddhists dressed in the colourful garments of Mongolian lamas. The believers brought great quantities of different foodstuffs, fruits and vegetables."

Among the duties of the lamas living in the lamasery are the organization and conduct of Buddhist holidays and participation in daily services and regularly organized theological discussions. Lamas also visit areas far removed from the lamasery to perform religious rites at the request of believers.

*Armenian believers* living in the Soviet Union and abroad belong to the Armenian Church. Some of its communities are located in dioceses abroad where Armenians emigrated before the revolution. At present the church is headed by Vazgen I, the Supreme Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians, who resides at Echmiadzin, the ancient Armenian religious centre near Yerevan, capital of the Armenian Republic. The dioceses of the Armenian

Church abroad are headed by archbishops and bishops.

*The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists* was formed in 1944 through the merger of Baptists and Evangelists. In 1945 they were joined by some of the Pentecostalist communities and later by Mennonite communities.

Services in Baptist churches in the USSR are held three or four times a week in a total of 22 languages. The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists is headed by the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists which is elected at congresses and has its headquarters in Moscow. Current affairs are conducted by the Presidium of the All-Union Council presided over by a chairman.

Alexei Bychkov, General Secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, said at a press conference: "Evangelical Christians-Baptists are equal citizens of the USSR and ardent patriots. Many of our brothers and sisters came back from the war with decorations for their valour. One of them is a Muscovite, I. I. Shatalin, who is a Hero of the Soviet Union.

"Many of the members of our Church have been awarded high government decorations for their work. For example, Sister M. I. Mikhailenko, who worked at tea plantations in Georgia, was a Hero of Socialist Labour and was at one time elected deputy to the USSR Supreme Soviet (she died in 1975). The honoured title, 'Merited Farmer', has been conferred on Brother G.R. Yantsen, a farmer from the Kirghiz Republic and chairman of the Executive Council of the Leninopol Community."

Among the delegates of the latest All-Union Congress of Evangelical Christians-Baptists there were nearly 70 persons decorated with high government

awards, including Orders of Lenin, of the Patriotic War and of the Red Banner of Labour, and the Badge of Honour, for valour displayed on the battlefield or for outstanding work in peacetime.

The Congress sent a message to the Soviet government expressing "warm gratitude for its tireless efforts and concern for the further improvement of welfare of the peoples of our country, for strengthening peace on earth and cooperation among peoples". It stated: "As Christian believers and citizens of this country, we love our earthly homeland. We are working diligently in the fields, in factories and mines, joining in the creative labours of our multi-national people... We unanimously support your proposals aimed at bringing about peace and disarmament."

Baptism in the USSR is not an integral religious trend. There are the so-called pure Baptists outside the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, and there is a considerable number of Adventists, the biggest group being the Seventh Day Adventists. Formally this organization is not affiliated to the General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists.

The parishes of the *Roman-Catholic Church* in ten out of the fifteen Union Republics of the Soviet Union are united in separate, independent religious departments, or curias. In the Lithuanian Republic the Roman-Catholic parishes are governed by six religious centres: the Vilnius Archdiocese and the Panevežys, Telšiai, Kaunas, Kaišiadorys and Vilkaviškis dioceses. In the Latvian Republic, the Roman-Catholic parishes are under the authority of the Riga Archdiocese. In Transcarpathia, there is a Vicariate of the Roman-Catholic Church in the city of Uzhgorod of the Ukrainian Republic.

The curias conduct the religious affairs of parishes, appoint and replace priests, etc. The heads of curias, appointed by the Vatican, regularly make canonical visits to the parishes and supervise their activities.

In the Soviet Union there are three independent centres of the *Lutherans* (the Augsburg Church) which are called consistories. In Estonia and Latvia they are headed by archbishops and in Lithuania by a chairman-president. The centre leaders are elected at General Synods attended by representatives of the clergy and believers.

The religious associations of Methodists, mostly in the Estonian Republic, are controlled by the Council of the Church which elects the Superintendent of the Methodist Church.

The Lithuanian Republic and the Transcarpathian Region of the Ukrainian Republic have communities of the *Reformed Church*, which are directed by a consistory in Lithuania and the Reformed Church Department in the Transcarpathian Region.

The *Old Believers* were granted full equality under Soviet government and have been functioning on an equal footing with the Russian Orthodox Church and other churches.

The Old Believers' Church came into being in the second half of the 17th century when several religious groups separated from the official Russian Orthodox Church in protest against church reforms. The three basic divisions of the Old Believers which still exist are the Popovtsi, the Beglopopovtsi, and the Bespopovtsi.

The *Popovtsi* who are the closest to the Russian Orthodox Church, maintain a church hierarchy and uphold the leading role of the priest in the liturgy. The *Beglopopovtsi* (literally, "of fugitive priests")

were so called because they accepted priests who went over to them from the Orthodox Church. They have had their own hierarchy since 1923 and their centre is in Novozybkov in the Russian Federation. The *Bespopovtsi* (literally "priestless") were the most radical section of the Old Believers. They were also the most fanatical and the most intolerant of all who thought differently. In their teaching the Bespopovtsi went further than the other Old Believers from the Orthodox Church. They rejected priests and replaced them with elders and lay readers.

Old Believers' churches are to be found in the central areas of Russia, in the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Moldavia and the Baltic Republics.

The Old Believers' trends in the USSR have no single ecclesiastical governing body and are run separately. Various Old Believers' churches periodically hold conferences, congresses and councils.

*Religious Jews* in the USSR practise their religion in 180 synagogues and several dozen minyans. There are synagogues in most large cities, including Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Riga, Vilnius, Tashkent, Tbilisi, Baku, Sverdlovsk, Lvov and Odessa.

The synagogues have all the necessary facilities freely to perform the prescribed rites. A yeshiva functions under the Moscow Synagogue. An annual calendar is published, as well as other religious literature.

The degree of religiousness varies among different ethnic groups of Jews, being stricter among the Georgian and Bukhara (Central Asian) Jews, and also among Jews from the mountainous regions in the Caucasus. The believers in these groups observe

the customs and rites prescribed by the Jewish faith much more strictly than other Jews.

Yakov Fishman, Rabbi of the Moscow Choral Synagogue, said at a press conference: "I can state with full responsibility that believing Jews in the Soviet Union enjoy complete freedom of religion. No one has prevented us, and no one can prevent us from praying in our synagogues and performing religious rites. Many synagogues have mikvas (baths for ritual ablutions), matzoh bakeries and other necessary facilities. The synagogue, which stands in the centre of the Soviet capital, is in excellent condition. Foreign guests have praised it very highly.

"We who profess Judaism," Yakov Fishman said, "are conscious in our daily lives that the Soviet government safeguards the rights of believers. Persons infringing the rights of believers bear strict disciplinary and criminal responsibility."

In the Birobidjan Synagogue a believer whose name was Sluch stated: "It was Soviet government that gave Jews, persecuted in tsarist Russia, full civil rights."

All religious centres are completely independent, in full conformity with the principle of the separation of the church from the state, in deciding matters of church life.

## **THE COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS**

The Council for Religious Affairs under the USSR Council of Ministers was organized in 1965, incorporating the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults. It was entrusted with control

over the observance of the law on religious worship, both by government agencies and church organizations, and with assisting religious organizations in their international relations.

The Council for Religious Affairs considers and takes decisions within its terms of reference on matters concerned with the activity of religious organizations in the USSR and acts as a liaison between the government and religious organizations on any question that may require government decision.

The Council for Religious Affairs has authorized representatives in the Union and Autonomous Republics, territories and regions, who advise the Council and also republic and local government bodies and other organizations in republics, territories or regions, on religious matters. They consider applications and complaints and settle questions, within their terms of reference, related to the activity of religious organizations.

Local government bodies have commissions, working on a voluntary basis, which help to exercise control over the observance of legislation on religious worship.

## **THE LAW AND THE CHURCH**

The legislative guarantees of freedom of conscience in the USSR are being further developed and improved. A Decree of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet of June 23, 1975, amended and supplemented the decision of the Soviet government of April 8, 1929, which promulgated the basic act "On Religious Associations". This was done to bring the basic act into conformity with legislation

passed between 1929 and 1974, and to discard obsolete provisions, concepts and terms.

Special provision was made in the 1975 decree authorizing religious centres and diocesan administrations to manufacture church plate and articles of worship and to sell them to religious associations. All religious associations, at both central and local level, were authorized to acquire vehicles for transportation and to rent, build or purchase premises for their needs.

Religious associations or groups of believers are registered by appropriate government bodies. At present questions of the registration of religious associations and the opening and closing of houses of worship are matters for decision not by local authorities, as was the case under the 1929 law, but by the all-Union agency, the Council for Religious Affairs under the USSR Council of Ministers. Registration of a religious association means that this association undertakes to abide by the relevant legislation and also that it comes under the protection of the law safeguarding freedom of conscience. Registration of religious associations is in the interests of both the believers and the state and a major guarantee of freedom of conscience.

Several articles of the new legislation enhance centralization in the control of observance of the law on religious matters. Accordingly, the Council for Religious Affairs supervises the enforcement by central and local organizations and officials of the legislation on religion and gives explanations on matters of religion and the church to government ministries, departments and other organisations.

The new legislation reaffirms the special rules which protect the legitimate rights of believers, religious associations and clergy. These rules make



it an offence to interfere with the performance of religious rites when they do not disturb public order and do not encroach on the rights of citizens. Any discrimination against believers or infringement of their freedom of conscience is strictly prohibited. Refusal to employ a person or to admit him or her to an educational establishment, dismissal from work or an educational institution, deprivation of legitimate benefits and privileges or any other limitation of citizens' rights on religious grounds are punishable by law.

In a recent case in Alma Ata a woman manager of a furniture-design office attempted to dismiss an accounting worker who had been baptized, under the pretext of staff reduction. The believer appealed to the local governing body. Her rights were upheld, while the manager lost her position and had to answer in court to a criminal charge.

Cases of illegal acts against believers are very few and are becoming fewer. They are dealt with on the basis of the law and those guilty are held criminally responsible. It must be stressed, however, that reactionary Western propaganda attempts to present such isolated occurrences as expressing the Soviet government's policy towards religion and the church. Such attempts are nothing but fact-juggling which distorts the substance of this policy. The fundamental policy of the Soviet Communist Party and government is that there must be no forcing of people's conscience.

Soviet law prohibits the closing of churches which are supported by the population. Such closings did take place in the past. At present the decision on the closing of a church or of any house of worship rests with the Council for Religious Affairs which considers the matter only on the basis of an appli-

cation by the executive committee of the local Soviet of People's Deputies and the Council of Ministers of the Union or Autonomous Republic. This procedure, where the question is examined very thoroughly at various levels and is finally settled by a government body at all-Union level, helps to avoid mistakes and guarantees observance of the law with regard to religious faiths and freedom of conscience.

The legislation on religious worship strictly defines the procedure and grounds for deregistering religious associations and closing houses of worship.

There are only three reasons for deregistering a religious association:

- 1) serious infringement by the association of the legislation on religious faiths;
- 2) non-observance by the association of the terms of agreements with the local government bodies;
- 3) disbandment of the association.

Closure of houses of worship is allowed in only two cases:

- 1) if the religious association making use of the house of worship has been deregistered;
- 2) if the building in question has to be pulled down because of reconstruction of the town or village or because of the building's dilapidated condition.

In the second case the believers may be allotted another building for purposes of worship or employ their legitimate right to rent premises which meet the necessary building requirements.

Here are some examples of the motivated and legitimate deregistration of religious associations or church closures. The religious community in the village of Dolgoye in Zolotukhinski District of Kursk Region was registered in 1946. The Execu-

tive Committee of the District Soviet of People's Deputies gave a church building to the community under an agreement. In recent years an increasing number of believers had left the church and finally only a few founding members remained. There were no new members, donations from the believers ceased and the religious community as such ceased to exist. The church property was handed over to a neighbouring church two kilometres away where the remaining small group of believers from the village of Dolgoye began to go. The disintegrated association was deregistered by decision of the Council for Religious Affairs.

Believers in the village of Stefanpol in Miorsky district near Vitebsk in Byelorussia had neglected the village church for a long time. The priest had to abandon it because the local religious association could not afford to keep him. There was no money to repair the church building either and it had fallen into a state of disrepair, after which a technical commission listed it for demolition. By then the religious association had only a small group of believers left who were attending services in another church in the neighbourhood. The association was deregistered and the decrepit church building was pulled down.

In the city of Orel the registered society of Evangelical Christians-Baptists had a house of worship which was located within the city reconstruction zone and was scheduled to be pulled down in accordance with the development plan for the city. By a ruling of the Executive Committee of the Orel City Soviet, the society was given, in place of the old house of prayer, a building of the same size within city limits, which could be reconstructed for the purposes of worship.

## THE SOVIET CONSTITUTION AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

Freedom of conscience has always been constitutionally guaranteed in the Soviet Union.

In the words of Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the Constitution of developed socialist society, adopted by the USSR Supreme Soviet on October 7, 1977, "epitomizes the whole sixty years' development of the Soviet state".

The Constitution reflects, along with the great economic and political advance of Soviet society, the historic achievements of socialist democracy and the further extension of citizens' rights and freedoms, including freedom of conscience.

The USSR Constitution emphasizes the guarantees of freedom of conscience by ensuring, in particular, non-interference of government agencies in the internal (liturgical or canonical) affairs of the church. At the same time it demands the latter's non-interference in the affairs of state.

Freedom of conscience protects citizen's personal rights. Article 34 of the Constitution reads in part: "Citizens of the USSR are equal before the law, without distinction of origin, social or property status, race or nationality, sex, education, language, attitude to religion..."

"The equal rights of citizens of the USSR are guaranteed in all fields of economic, political, social, and cultural life."

It follows that the rights of believers cannot be infringed and their religious feelings cannot be insulted, just as the feelings of atheists cannot be insulted by religious people. Article 52 of the Con-

stitution prohibits the incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds. It takes into account the interests of all citizens, both believers and atheists.

It is emphasized in the Constitution that all citizens of the USSR are obliged to abide by the Soviet law. The legislation on religion must be strictly observed. It is impermissible to use assemblies of believers for incitement to shirk civic duties, to avoid taking part in social and political life and to perform religious rites harmful to health. These rules follow directly from Article 39 which says that enjoyment by citizens of their rights and freedoms (freedom of conscience included, of course.— V. K.) must not be to the detriment of the interests of society or the state, or infringe the rights of other citizens.

### **THEY ARE NOT JUDGED FOR THEIR FAITH**

According to M. Nigrey, Vice-President of the General Confederation of Seventh Day Adventists in the USA who was interviewed by a Radio Moscow correspondent, to be really free means to abide by law and not consider oneself free to break it. But it is true that many people, including believers, argue that freedom is the right to do as one pleases. The question of freedom is more properly treated in the socialist countries and people there are more inclined to live righteously than people in the West who are too free of any obligations, Mr. Nigrey said.

Soviet law regulates relations between the church and the state and clearly defines the rights of the church and believers. Legislative acts prohibit the use of believers' meetings for staging political prov-

ocations against the Soviet state, the incitement of believers to anti-social behaviour, and the performance of cruel rites which are harmful to health. Religious bodies are not entitled to levy compulsory contributions on believers.

The clergy in the USSR for the most part honestly abide by the demands of the law. But there are occasional cases of extremism of various sorts among churchmen or their followers who have to be prosecuted for breaking the law.

"It is absurd to allege," says A. Klimenko, Chairman of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, "that in the USSR people can be brought to court for the mere fact that they are believers. There is simply no article in the Soviet law which allows for persecution of people for their faith."

Certain people try to circumvent the law pursuing aims that are usually careerist and dictated by self-interest, under the guise of religion. This generally occurs in sectarian groups (such as Jehovah's witnesses, Pentecostalists and a few others). Certain leaders of sectarian groups, seeking to maintain their hold over believers, distort the Soviet government's policy towards religion, forbid them to take part in social life and in elections to government bodies, to visit cultural and educational centres, to listen to the radio and read newspapers, to go to doctors for medical assistance, and they sometimes attempt to persuade believers to refuse to serve in the Soviet Army on grounds that they all belong to the "Christian host" and if they desert it they will bring down God's wrath. Such lawbreakers, naturally, are brought to justice.

Georgi Vins is one such "religious martyr". His case was heard at the Kiev Regional Court and it

was established that the accused had incited believers to illegal acts, to the violation of Soviet law relating to religious worship. Vins got rich on the donations of gullible believers, concealed the real size of his income and evaded taxation.

A fatal accident involving a soldier by the name of Ivan Moiseyev figured prominently in the Vins case. While bathing in the Sea of Azov in July 1972 Moiseyev drowned in full view of numerous bathers. All attempts to resuscitate him were in vain despite the efforts of doctors from a nearby holiday home and of the first-aid service. The legal investigation certified death by accidental drowning.

However, Vins produced a faked photograph showing alleged "traces of torture" and "mortal wounds" inflicted on Moiseyev, and began secretly preparing "bulletins" and "brotherly leaflets" spreading malicious slander among the members of his sect against the Soviet Army and the Soviet government. Vins alleged in his writings that Soviet Army officers, incensed by Baptist Moiseyev's "refusal to conform", "stabbed him to death" and took his body to the sea in a car on which the word "Pravda" was written, and dumped it in the water. This was allegedly done in broad daylight, in front of numerous eyewitnesses!

Semyon Moiseyev, Ivan's brother, said that shortly before his death Ivan wrote in his notebook: "The order of the state is to go out to sea and return! Christ's order is to go out to sea and not return!" Who had passed on God's order to Moiseyev? Semyon Moiseyev wrote in his letter to the Council for Religious Affairs that Ivan Moiseyev's death had been brought about by Vins and his "helpers" and that it was the culmination of a "prolonged and thorough preparation carried out by the members



of the sect". They wanted to make a great martyr out of him, to glorify him as one "slain for Christ" and to slander the Soviet socialist system.

The group known as the Baptist "initiativists" has been guilty of serious infringements of the law on religious matters. They proclaimed themselves the spiritual centre for all Evangelical Christians-Baptists and demanded the removal of the legitimately operating religious centre, the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. It was explained to the "initiativists" that, according to law, the question of the leadership of a religious organization is decided by the believers themselves and that government bodies are not entitled to interfere in this matter.

The leaders of the group then began to disseminate leaflets, letters and appeals slandering the Soviet state and its policy in religious matters.

In one of their leaflets the leaders of the group called on the believers strictly to abide by these commandments: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world", "Under no circumstances allow, even in thought, the possibility of using a television set, going to the cinema, to theatres, etc".

These actions of the Baptist "initiativists" were severely censured by public opinion. The local government bodies and public organizations patiently explained to them the inadmissibility of their activities. Most of the believers who had been drawn into the group realized that they were being misled by their fanatical leaders and broke with them. But some of the leaders were deaf to all explanations and after all persuasive measures had failed they were brought to justice. Not for their religious beliefs, but for specific violations of the law.

Recently a case came into court of a group of Baptist "initiativists" who had set up an underground printing press near Riga, where material was being printed slandering the Soviet state and making provocative appeals to believers. This sectarian group had secretly received modern printing equipment from its patrons in the United States. It was brought into the country in separate lots to different addresses. One of the "literary" productions of this printing shop was John Smith Oswald's book, *Bring Them Tidings from Christ*, which referred to the people's government as the "devil incarnate" and called on all who believed in Christ to fight it mercilessly. Another sample of their slanderous "literature" was entitled "May All Be One", which made the wild assertion that the aim of the Soviet state was the physical annihilation of all believers. Obviously, the organizers of this printing press had to be brought to justice not for their religious beliefs, but for inciting people to anti-Soviet activity.

A person by the name of Voloshin organized a sect and urged its members to defy Soviet laws. He made them refuse government pensions and allowances and avoid seeking the help of doctors when ill. One woman who was under the influence of this obscurantist died of pneumonia because she refused to see a doctor. Voloshin resorted to physical violence to command the total obedience of the sect members. In the words of his 15-year-old daughter Dina he did not allow her, her 13-year-old sister Elizaveta and 12-year-old brother Ilya to go to school and they never did. "Father beats us severely on every pretext," said Dina. "When he learned that I had trimmed my hair he took my sister and me to a prayer meeting where he beat me; he

choked me until I bled from the mouth and nose. There were about seven people there... they began to cut my hair, and I cried terribly; I thought my father was going to choke me to death. Somehow I broke loose and ran out into the street with my sister... I will never go back to my mother—or, still worse, to Voloshin—and I will not live with them. I want to go to school like other girls and I will never live with mother and the fanatic Voloshin.”

Voloshin was put on trial for his criminal acts.

In the middle of January 1980 religious fanatics subjected Maria Kuts, born in 1954, a resident of Drogobych in Lvov Region, to “baptism” in the River Tismennitsa. She was made to stand in ice-cold water for two hours one night, as a result of which her feet were frost-bitten and had to be amputated in hospital. It was found that the fanatics had worked on Maria Kuts for five years previously. A search in the home of a sect member, S. Skalych, a defendant in the case of Maria Kuts, revealed a large amount of anti-Soviet literature containing calls to fight “godless Communism.”

These are extreme, monstrous cases. It is only natural that our state has always repressed such offenders and will continue to do so. No one has the right to violate law and order under the guise of religion, to encroach on the rights, health and life of other citizens. Is it not true that in every country citizens are obliged to abide by the laws of the state, to perform their civic duties and to respect law and order and community rules?

Attempts by certain “shepherds” to conduct illegal activities under the guise of religion are vigorously condemned by Soviet people, including believers. The parishioners of St. Nikita Church in Orekhovo-Zuyevo District of Moscow Region reject-

ed the services of the priest Dmitri Dudko and expelled him from their church for his anti-social sermons.

"When they sent us this priest," said E. Kharitova, chairman of the church council, "we didn't want to accept him as we had heard that he had already been rejected by two churches. But we were assured that Dudko had repented, so we signed a contract with him. At first he carried out his duties properly. But then he began to give his sermons. As we listened we realized something was not right. He would start with religious subjects, then pass on to worldly matters. He said that flying into space was wrong because it caused believers on earth to choke. He said that atheists had become confused in life and were now trying to confuse believers, that Communists were not working conscientiously and were interested only in money and position. He tried to scare us with the end of the world. You see, young people seldom come to our church, only to a burial service for a relative, perhaps. And when they happened to hear Dudko they began telling us that there was something else on his mind besides religion. But they didn't even have to tell us, we had realized it ourselves by then. Believers or not, we are all Soviet people. Now what was Dudko leading to? We saw that he was slandering our country in a subtle, mean way."

Dudko's preachings extended far beyond his church duties. In his slanders concerning the position of the church in the USSR and the policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet state on religion and the church, Dudko sided up with foreign reactionary circles hostile to the USSR and striving to stir up anti-Soviet sentiments.

Rejected by his parish, this "shepherd" established illegal contacts with representatives of anti-Soviet organizations abroad and supplied them with slanderous information discrediting the Soviet state and social system.

When proceedings were finally started against Dudko, he pleaded guilty, repented of his anti-Soviet activities and promised not to continue them. In his statement to the press Dudko said: "My activities became anti-Soviet in nature also and mostly because they were first encouraged and then directed from abroad." He stressed in conclusion to his statement that it was necessary to "abide by the laws of one's own country" and "work for the same cause for which one's government and one's people... to whom we are responsible, are working". In his open letter to Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia, Dudko wrote: "I tried to admonish you and said you were not following the path that you should follow. But in fact you are following a correct path because that is the path that your predecessors took before you. By following this path the Church stands firmly on its feet and is doing its duty, and any other path is just a lot of noise or playing at politics, into which I was dragged and of which I now sincerely repent."

Dudko's activities were aptly assessed in statements made by clergymen and believers in connection with his letters of repentance. Bishop Iona-fan of Kishinev and Moldavia emphasized: "Dudko is a striking example of what may happen to a person who isolates himself from his own people, from the flock." Archbishop Serapion of Vladimir and Suzdal noted that by his illegal activities Dudko "deeply offended the feelings of those who

are really children of the Church". He continued: "The priest Dudko made it possible the Holy name of our Church to be abused by all foreign publications which slanderously distort our socialist reality in order to satisfy those who are displeased with the achievements of the peace-loving socialist brotherhood. By his misconceptions he provided the very same manufacturers of anti-Soviet propaganda with a pretext to broadcast to the world public allegations about the persecution of people in our country for their religious beliefs. It was painful to every Orthodox Christian to realize that on the basis of this priest's lies Western propaganda makers were able to spread even more vicious lies, thereby sowing distrust of all aspects of life of our Holy Church among believers in the world."

"How do such apostates turn up among the Christian flock?" asks Archpriest Pyotr Pnevsky, dean of a cathedral church in Rostov-on-Don. "The answer can be cited from Holy Scripture: 'They came from us but were not of us'."

A message from believers in Leningrad was like a cry of pain and anger: "It was with great sorrow that we learned that priests like Dudko are still around. He danced so well to the West's pipe (the name Dudko comes from the Russian word "dudka" meaning "pipe"—*Ed.*) that he denounced everything our Soviet government is giving us. For 35 years we have lived under peaceful skies while our great Country has been flourishing. We believers have been given every possibility of professing our fathers' faith. Suddenly this 'holy father' swoops down on us and, as we have learned, slanders us, spits at us and wounds us morally. He is a traitor to our Motherland and our people, a traitor

to our Church, who has been posing as a 'hero' and 'martyr'. He is not a Christian, nor a citizen."

Another "great martyr" lauded by bourgeois propaganda was the Orthodox priest Gleb Yakunin, who was debarred by the Patriarch from church service for unseemly activities and breach of church discipline back in 1966. "We see in Yakunin not a shepherd of God, but a felon who uses God's house as a source of material enrichment without work. Why did Yakunin become a priest? For profit and to sow discord. He was always calculating the value of icons and church plate. Knowing the story of Yakunin's life, one cannot call him a great martyr by any stretch of the imagination. He is a swindler and we ask to be protected from this character," wrote the parishioners of the Church of "The Joy Unexpected" in Moscow.

These are some of the characters whom certain propaganda agencies in the West are counting on. Self-advertisement is also prominent in the activities of the "great martyrs". In a letter they wrote to the World Council of Churches Yakunin and "a member of the Russian Orthodox Church", Lev Regelson, compare themselves, without undue modesty, with the "one who carried his cross to Golgotha, betrayed and humiliated by people".

A letter from P. Duravkin in the town of Makeyevka, who has served in the local church for 50 years, said this in connection with the activities of such "great martyrs": "The Soviet Constitution not only proclaims freedom of religion but also guarantees it. The Soviet Government awarded me several orders and medals for my part in the Second World War. We believers think that the lies about religion in the USSR are politically and not religiously motivated."



## A NATURAL PROCESS

The radical economic, political and ideological changes in the country in Soviet times, the mass participation of the population in the building of communist society, the achievements of the Soviet people in science, engineering and the conquest of space, the rising cultural level of the people—all this has brought about fundamental changes in the outlook of Soviet people.

Their move away from religion is not a process peculiar to the socialist countries. All over the world religion and the church are undergoing a deep ideological crisis.

The crisis in religion is often commented on by foreign religious leaders. The late Pope Paul VI observed in his encyclical, "Ecclesiam suam", that profound crisis phenomena were rocking the modern Roman-Catholic Church like ocean waves. In his speech at the 4th Synod of Bishops of the Roman-Catholic Church in 1974, Cardinal Joseph Cordeiro, Archbishop of Karachi, stressed that the process of secularization was a global phenomenon. He observed that atheism was penetrating everywhere and that millions of people throughout the world lived by atheist values.

Such revelations clearly reflect real facts and processes.

One of the leaders of the Institute of Ecumenical Studies in Geneva, H.-R. Weber, pointed out that the discoveries of natural sciences cast doubt on all religions, all ethics and systems of faith.

According to Professor Groner of the Central Statistical Church Bureau in Western Germany, 50.6 per cent of all Catholics in the country attended mass in 1950; the figure was 32.4 per cent in

1970, and this downward trend still persists today.

This is what the French Jesuit magazine *Etudes* wrote about the state of the Catholic faith in France in January 1979. Only 75 per cent of French Catholics believed in the existence of God. Nearly half did not believe in Christ's divinity, his resurrection and his real life. Forty-five per cent did not believe in the Holy Trinity; only 19 per cent believed in a "life beyond"; thirty-seven per cent did not believe in it, and the rest were not sure. The magazine summed up by saying that these figures showed "a fall in the number of those whom the church could consider its members".

These eloquent testimonies of the decline of religion are not exceptional. There are various reasons for this, the chief one being undoubtedly the inexorable progress of history, the immense social changes that have taken place in the last few decades.

In view of the radical social changes that have been effected in our country it is not surprising that the decline of religion has been much more marked in the USSR than in other countries. Religion is a complex social phenomenon with deep social and gnoseological roots. Admonition, prohibition and administrative pressure are worthless in the struggle against religious ideology. The founders of Marxism-Leninism repeatedly pointed out that it is impermissible to employ violent, discriminatory or other administrative means in the struggle against religion. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has always implemented the Marxist-Leninist principles with regard to religion, the church and believers.

The impermissibility of putting administrative pressure on believers and a requirement to respect

their feelings and legitimate rights are a basic principle of the policy of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet state in regard to religion and church.

### **THE TRUE POSITION**

Answering journalists' questions about the position of believers in the USSR, Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia said: "Freedom of worship is guaranteed by the Constitution of the USSR. All religious associations, including the Russian Orthodox Church, are equal in the eyes of the state and each is self-governed. No official records or statistics are kept in the USSR with regard to a person's religious beliefs. No one is questioned about his religious affiliation when applying for a job or for a passport, during census-taking, etc. Soviet legislation prescribes heavy penalties for any infringement of the civil rights of believers. All believers, including the clergy, enjoy full rights as citizens of the Soviet state and take an active part in the political, economic and social life of the country."

The statements and comments made by numerous foreign visitors to the Soviet Union who are interested in the position of the church in our country, and not necessarily clergymen, speak for themselves.

"There is no doubt that the Russian Orthodox Church is at present developing quite freely and receives great attention from the Soviet state," said Archimandrite Cyprianos, Dean of the Church of St. Nicholas in Alexandria.

"We have heard sermons in many Soviet houses of worship and have seen that they preach the Chris-

tian virtues, love of one's neighbour and a will for peace and good relations among people. We studied the training of priests in the USSR and found that it is well organized. We have met not only our brethren in Christ, but also leaders of Jewish communities. We are convinced of their well-being," said Dr. Robert Marshall, head of a delegation of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

In his interview with a Novosti Press Agency correspondent, the Right Reverend Colin O'Brien Winter, Bishop of Damaraland in Namibia, said:

"The Soviet Union can be proud of its achievements in science, technology, medicine and art, but it can take special pride in the social equality between nations and races attained by the Soviet people. When we attended a service in the St. Vladimir Cathedral and then in the church of the Convent of Intercession, and watched Soviet citizens pray, we saw no discrimination."

The World Conference: "Religious Workers for Lasting Peace, Disarmament and Just Relations Among Nations" held in Moscow in June 1977 on the initiative of Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia was a convincing demonstration of freedom of conscience in the Soviet Union. The very character of the Conference, its sense of purpose and broad representation made it an outstanding international event. Almost 660 influential figures representing international and national religious, public and political circles in 107 countries arrived in Moscow. They spoke for almost all religions of the world.

Among those attending were Dr. Sean MacBride, winner of the International Lenin Peace Prize and the Nobel Peace Prize, and Canon Raymond Goor,

winner of the International Lenin Peace Prize, heads of Christian, Muslim and Buddhist churches, leaders of major national and international religious organizations, representatives of the highest-ranking clergy, government ministers and deputy ministers, MPs, eminent theologians and owners and publishers of important religious newspapers and magazines.

The discussions at the plenary sessions and in the working groups were conducted on a free, broad, businesslike and constructive basis. The conference unanimously adopted its final documents: "Appeal to Religious Leaders and Believers of All Religions Throughout the World" and "Appeal to Governments of All Countries of the World", calling for more vigorous actions to avert the threat of a new world war, promote detente, achieve general and complete disarmament, ban the production of weapons of mass destruction and step up the struggle for freedom and independence of nations and social progress.

The conference exposed the groundlessness of the claims that the rights of believers were infringed in the socialist countries.

Professor Pundalik Tukaram Borale of India emphasized the fact that the many religions professed in the Soviet Union were acknowledged as equal and that all believers were treated with equal respect. Touching upon the question of human rights, he said that these rights were fully recognized and cherished, as stipulated by the USSR Constitution. The conference should also make its contribution to this problem, so that human rights would be recognized in the same way in other countries, say, the rights of Negroes in the United



States and the rights of the black population of South Africa.

The Rev. Robin Morrison, an Anglican priest from Great Britain, said that people should applaud the socialist achievements during the last 60 years. Full employment was the most important achievement in the sphere of human rights, a fact the West had not fully realized yet. He added that he would speak of the power of socialism in the field of human rights when he returned home.

Some of the speakers pointed out that the slanderous campaign "in defence of human rights in the USSR" had been joined by high-ranking figures of the Western world, including those in the United States.

Canon Burgess Carr of Kenya said that when Africans heard how certain quarters in the West were slandering the Soviet Union about its alleged human rights violations, they realized, upon examination of their own problems, that those same people who had taken it upon themselves to teach the Soviet Union morals were interfering in the internal affairs of African countries and helping to commit atrocities there. They saw that the weapons used to kill Africans were being supplied to the racist regimes by countries who clamoured the loudest about human rights.

Pastor Klaus Hebler of Federal Germany stated: "Allegations that the USSR is threatening us are persistently spread in our country. Another lie which is circulated is that the socialist countries violate human rights. These accusations are necessary to justify the mounting military expenditures in our country . . . That is why I'm very glad that this world meeting of representatives of different religions is taking place in the capital of the Soviet

Union. Nations and nationalities professing widely different religions live in this country. But all of them—Christians, Jews, Muslims and others—respect each other and cooperate for the good of peace.”

Many speakers emphasized that they had seen for themselves that complete freedom of conscience was a reality in the Soviet Union.

The Rt. Rev. Bishop Framento of the Philippines spoke about the Western information media, including religious media, which depicted freedom in the USSR in a false light. They published photographs of locked churches and asserted that religious people were persecuted in the Soviet Union. This was all untrue. This was his first visit to the Soviet Union and in Moscow he had been able to go wherever he wanted. He had visited churches, which were open, and there was no sign of any persecution.

In an interview with S. G. Batiyev, President of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Indian MP Mohammad Yunus Saleem expressed gratitude to the Soviet government for the great concern it showed for its people, believers and non-believers. This was an important fact to know because in the West they were spreading rumours about infringements of believers' rights in the Soviet Union. Those rumours were not based on reality. He assured the President of Tataria that he would tell people in his country about the humane attitude to believers in the Soviet Union and that it would contribute to strengthening friendship between the two countries.

Dato Haji Ismail Bin Punjag Arissa, General Secretary of the People's Council for Islamic Affairs of Malaysia, said: “We are convinced that

you have freedom of religion. The believers worship in full freedom ... We have met believers and talked to them. They express their opinion freely."

The statements made at the World Conference of Religious Workers and interviews by numerous foreign guests visiting the Soviet Union every year confirm that freedom of conscience is not a formal declaration but living reality. It is guaranteed by the USSR Constitution as one of the democratic rights and freedoms.

Владимир Алексеевич Куроедов  
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на английском языке

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The author, Vladimir Kuroyedov,  
with Patriarch of Moscow and All  
Russia Pimen

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