

ORGANIZED RELIGION AND THE STATE RELATIONS
IN THE SOVIET UNION

by

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Introduction

The Church and State Relationship in the Soviet Union

The following Masters Report will deal with religion and state relationship in the Soviet Union. This relationship is a most unique relationship today as well as in historical perspective. The relationship is one that technically should no longer exist today. Both Marx and Lenin believed that as the state grew into its ultimate perfected state socialistically, religion would literally "wither away." The ultimate state of Communism is at its most advanced stage today. The Soviets admit that the final stage of man, Communism, has not been totally perfected and implemented within their society, but that they are in a most advanced stage of development and that the highest level of Communism is only but a few decades away. If that is true, then religion, i.e. the Christian faith and the Judaistic faith, should be on its last breath as far as organized religions are concerned. The Soviet citizens must at this stage no longer feel they need nor desire "religion," or that institution, the church, where such religion is practiced. In fact, though, religion does still exist within the Soviet system. The church is maintaining

a status quo level of attendance and some denominations, the Baptists and Evangelicals in particular, are even showing signs of rapid constant growth. Why is this true within the Soviet system? How can religion survive under such an anti-religious climate? The following Report will deal with religion and state relations in the Soviet Union.

The Report is divided up into four major chapters. Chapter 1, "Marxist-Leninist Philosophy," will deal with Marxist-Leninist philosophy, concerning Communism, and the church-state relationship. This chapter will try and give the reader a solid background of the philosophy, as well as see how such a philosophy has been utilized within the Soviet Union today.

Chapter 2 deals with Religion Part 1. It is the main concern of this chapter to give the reader an in-depth look at the Christian churches in the Soviet Union. The chapter gives an overall historical view of the church from the Russian Revolution period to the present, and an in-depth look at the church (the Christian church) and the state, and how such a relationship exists today. This chapter deals with such subjects as the church and state and educational organization, and the law and how such laws affect and/or control the church institution. The chapter mainly deals with recognized organized churches. The deviant churches, i.e. the underground non-recognized churches, will be dealt with only on a nominal level. It is extremely

hard to find factual reliable information concerning such underground churches. The state usually deals with underground churches in a totally different manner than they deal with the organized recognized churches.

The third chapter deals with Judaism in the Soviet Union. Because Judaism has been treated differently as a religion within both Tsarist Russia and Soviet Russia, this chapter will give first a historical look at Judaism under Tsarist Russia and then Judaism in the Soviet Union since the Revolution up to and including today. Jews in Russia have always been a unique religious group, thus the state has always treated them in a unique way. This chapter will likewise answer the question, "Is there a future for the Jew in the Soviet Union, or is Soviet Jewry a dying institution?"

Finally, Chapter 4 will deal with the future of the church within the Soviet Union. Does the church have a future in the Soviet Society, or will it finally "wither away" as the state becomes continually perfected? The church has survived through nightmarish times already, but will it face even more devilish days ahead or will the state re-evaluate its past and present doctrines and ease up on the church, and allow it to become a more integrated part of the whole entire society? The fourth chapter likewise deals with perhaps the churches most feared enemy -- propaganda. The state, down through the decades, has used

propaganda as its main weapon against religion. This chapter will discuss how propaganda is used today in the Soviet Union. Also, the various successes and failures of the Soviet propaganda programs will be discussed.

The Report has merely looked at a most complex relationship -- religion and state relations in the Soviet Union -- and has answered all of the basic questions surrounding such a relationship. There are many other religious groups in the Soviet Union that have not been dealt with within the confines of this work. It was felt that dealing with other religious sects or denominations other than the Jews and Christians, would not allow proper time or effort to be used effectively in such a project; thus only the two major Western religions, i.e. faiths, were investigated and dealt with in this Report.

Chapter 1

Marxist-Leninist Philosophy: Communism and Religion and State

In order to fully understand the current relationship that exists today in the Soviet Union between religion and state, an in-depth look at Marxist-Leninist philosophy must be viewed. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyze the basic Marxist-Leninist doctrines concerning religion. The concern is with doctrines, with theory only, while the practice, the actual religious policy will be dealt with at a later time. This chapter is not concerned with Marxism in general, but exclusively with Marxist-Leninism, Soviet, i.e. Russian Marxist-Leninism. Thus Marxist-Leninism should in no way be identified with the doctrines of Marx himself. It should be stated at the onset that religious doctrines are not marginal to Marxist-Leninism -- they belong to its very core.

Marxist-Leninism is formulated as a living and forceful faith. The true adherents of the Marxist-Leninism philosophy do believe something -- they believe in propositions which are accepted as absolute truths.

Marxist-Leninism, though not primarily a social doctrine, is a metaphysical world-view. Its social doctrines are to

be found in "historical materialism."¹ It is said to be an application of the more general laws of dialectical materialism to society and history.

Marx held that religion is a historically conditioned and transitional phenomenon. Religion is inextricably bound up with the socio-economic system of capitalist (and pre-capitalist) exploitation, and thus religion was doomed to "wither away" with the approach to a non-exploitative, classless socio-economic system.²

Marx saw man as the maker of religion, and did not believe that religion in itself made the man. Religion was the self-consciousness and self-regard of man who had either not yet found himself or had already lost himself. Religious consciousness, according to Marx, was an inverted or preverted consciousness that had been produced by the inverted or preverted social world of feudalism and capitalism.³ In essence Marx viewed religion as the sign of the oppressed creature, "the opium of the people." Thus Marx said:

"The abolition of religion as peoples' illusory happiness...The criticism of religion is thus in embryo a criticism of the vale of tears whose halo is religion."⁴

Religion is viewed as an aspect of man's lack of freedom. It is viewed as one of the unfortunate consequences of a corrupt economic order which binds men in chains. Marx in Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, said that religion is to be seen as a symptom, rather than as a cause of a deep disorder in society and within human consciousness.⁵ He

went on to state that:

"Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people."⁶

Religion was thus viewed by Marx as a drug, which people invented and accepted in order to dull their pain and alleviate their misery. Thus in light of the above mentioned Marxian view, Marx, at the first Congress of the First International in 1865 successfully agreed that effort should be concentrated not on attacking religion but on bringing to an end the economic exploitation of man which in turn led man to the ultimate creation of religion.⁷

History was seen simply as a prolonged series of class struggles, and within this prolonged struggle man had little room for belief in God or indeed for anything else outside of man's immediate material needs and surroundings.

Lenin saw religion in the 20th century as capitalist "opium." He believed that a man's effectiveness as a struggler for Communism cannot be reconciled with the existence of God.⁸ Lenin felt that religion was generated by human insecurity and fear of unanticipated and uncontrollable socio-economic change, due in the last analysis to the fluctuations of the so-called free-market system. Religion was thus viewed as having invariably the functions of a tool of the exploiting classes. Lenin likewise viewed

religion as an "opium" that dulls and lulls the exploited masses into a resigned acceptance of their bondage, thus forestalling revolt from such system now due to the promise of an other-worldly reward for virtuous obedience to the secular rulers.⁹ Lenin said:

"The importance of the exploited classes in their struggle with the exploiters generates faith in a better life beyond the grave just as inevitably as the importance of the savage in the struggle with nature generated faith in gods, devils, miracles, etc. Religion teaches the man who labors and is in want his whole life long to have forbearance and patience in this earthly life, consoled by the hope of a heavenly reward. Religion teaches those who live by the labor of others to give charity in this earthly life, offering them a very cheap justification for their whole exploitative existence, selling them tickets to heavenly bliss at a reasonable price. Religion is the opium of the people. Religion is a kind of spiritual booze or schnapps in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demands for a life in some degree worthy of men."¹⁰

Lenin believed that religion was to be seen as both a symptom and a cause of disorder within man and society in-as-much as the ruling class used religion as an instrument of oppression.¹¹ This difference was in itself sufficient to provide an impetus for an all-out assault on religious bodies. Such an assault was viewed as being possibly very counter-productive, thus Lenin usually thrived on persecution,¹² thus in assaulting it in a manner suggested might only make it that much stronger in the long run.

In December, 1905, Lenin asserted that the Russian revolutionary movement must work for the complete separation of church and state. "Everyone should be completely free

to profess any religion at all, or not accept any religion, i.e. to be an atheist, which is what every socialist will usually be."¹³ The goal of the Communist state has been to separate church from state and school from church. It is a continual goal, a goal that will not be met until religion is no longer a functioning entity within the Soviet society.

For more than half a century the Christian churches and other religious bodies in the Soviet Union have been confronted with hostile governments. Since the death of Stalin in 1953 there have been significant changes, many for the better but none of the basic fundamental ideological differences or conflicts between those in power and religious believers have been in any way resolved. Communists have a conviction that goes back to their basic Marxist-Leninism philosophy. That basic belief is that religious belief is detrimental to the building of a new society in which man finds justice and freedom. It is felt by such believers that only when religion is done away with is man free.

Marxist-Leninism Theory, with its philosophical and ideological basis, was and still is offered as a substitute for the old religious beliefs which have provided society with a necessary mystique and played a powerful part in cementing social relationships.

There are many political questions that have not been finally resolved, likewise neither have the religious questions been resolved. The struggle for power continues. It is never completely clear whether there has been a change of policy or simply a change of tactics to reach the ultimate goal of a religionless society.

The West is basically ignorant of the condition of religion in the Soviet Union. It is widely supposed, by the general public, that religion has been effectively suppressed and that what remains is marginal. The propagandists within the Soviet Union are still genuinely disturbed at the continuing vitality of religious practice and beliefs -- beliefs which are totally incompatible with Marxist-Leninism. The almost universal disappointment with Marxist-Leninism as a pseudo-religion, is that it has left a vacuum which tends to be filled with elements from each peoples' past inheritance.¹⁴ Religion is an important element in that inheritance.

The following chapter will look at the state of the church in the Soviet Union today, as well as the church from a more historical vantage point.

Chapter 2 Religion, Part I: Christian Churches and the Soviet State

The Soviet regime has for more than half a century sought to mold the preceptions, attitudes and behavior of its citizens. The government adheres to Aristotles dictum, "the citizen should be molded to suit the form of government under which he lives." The following chapter will deal with the Christian churches in the Soviet Union and tell how the state has dealt with such churches and intends to deal with them in the future, given the evidence at hand.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has chosen to re-fashion, in the Party's own image, the values of an entire people. They have sought to achieve in a systematic effort the suppression of dissent, the reorientation of the educable, and the indoctrination of the younger generation with approved messages and symbols.

Political socialization has been the Party's main goal. The Party has made a deliberate effort to break down traditional beliefs and systems, such as the church, and then replacing them with a set of beliefs which the regime considers more suitable for the present and the future. In essence the Party wants to replace individualism with collectivism, bourgeois nationalism with proletarian internationalism, chauvinism with socialist patriotism, indolence

with labor, and most of all religion with militant atheism.¹⁵ The object of political socialization in the Soviet Union then is to produce a new order, and to do away with the old order.

Religion is seen as an embarrassing vestige of the past. It remains a disruptive factor in its current social, political, and economic life of the society.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adapted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, 1948, states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."¹⁶

The Soviet Union is a member of the United Nations and thus should by all rights adhere to this Declaration, but unfortunately as it appears based on the evidence, such adherence is not in existence within the Soviet Union today. The Soviet Constitution (Supreme law technically) guarantees certain individual rights, as will be pointed out later on in the chapter, but in practice, many of these laws are not enforced.

I. The Law and the Church

The current Soviet law is a law that declares church and state to be separated, and thus makes it quite clear that discrimination against any individual of the society

for reasons of his religious adherence is a punishable offense. The first Constitution (July 1918) proclaimed that it was illegal "to restrain or limit freedom of conscience," and that "every citizen may profess any religion or none at all." Also it stated that, "the right to religious and anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens." The principle or right to religious propaganda or anti-religious propaganda is a most significant principle. It supposedly enables the individual the right and freedom to work for or against religion by way of propaganda. Through this principle every area of Soviet public life was under personal observation or direct control by the secret police. The government has the right and obligation to monitor both pro and anti-religious propaganda.

Final legislation in the 1960's revised old laws, such as Article 142 of the Penal Code. The revised law changed the maximum sentence of one year's corrective labor or a fine of 50 roubles for infringing the laws governing the separation of church and state, to much harsher laws and penalties. Article 227, passed on June 27, 1961, stated that leaders of groups proven to have encouraged religious activities "harmful to the health of citizens or encroaching upon the person or the rights of individuals, or of inciting people to refuse to participate in social activities or fulfill their civic obligations, or enticing minors to participate in such activities, are now liable to a maximum

sentence of five years imprisonment or exile, with or without confiscation of all their property."¹⁷ It is obvious that laws have become much harsher for the religious citizen, and that various rights have been overlooked, and under-enforced in the process of eliminating or crippling religion in the Soviet Union.

In approaching Soviet practice towards religion from a purely legal standpoint, we find ourselves forced with many various types of discriminations which have been practiced toward religious believers in the Soviet Union. The following list will attempt to give some indication, though far from a complete list, of the Christian groups most adversely affected by each law.

The Soviet government outlawed various whole denominations, such as the Eastern-Rite Catholics, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses and other sectorian offshoots of such groups; this would seem to contradict the before-mentioned religious freedoms guaranteed in the Soviet Constitution but the government states that such groups were never legally recognized groups and thus to outlaw such groups does not infringe upon the basic freedom of religion.

The Soviet government likewise enforced the merging of various denominations with other like denominations, thus many denominations lost their individual traditions. Such groups as the Uniates after 1946, could only continue to worship by becoming Orthodox, the Pentecostals could only

worship after 1945, by merging with Baptists, and likewise the Evangelical Christians from 1944 on and the Mennonites from 1963¹⁸ on could only worship legally by merging with the Baptists. Thus the government was breaking down various religious freedoms that all Soviet citizens had by removing alternative choices to religious practices.

The government enforced closure of legally existing places of worship after the passing of the 1929 law. Very few congregations could in fact register, but many did and were allowed to register during and after World War II. In 1960-64, the government forced massive closure of places of worship throughout the Soviet Union, and the state then took over ownership of all such religious buildings. The closure was based on the 1918 Decree, Article 13, and a 1929 Law, Article 27-30.¹⁹ It should be noted that only a very few of these previously mentioned closed churches have since been reopened.

The state controls all legally-existing places of worship. This has been achieved by the registration regulations as stated in the 1929 Law, Articles 2, 5 and 6, which are enforced by the supplying of lists of church members to Communist authorities (Article 8 of the 1929 Law), and the right of veto by those authorities over the membership of the church executive body (Article 14, 1929 Law). These laws apply to every religious congregation in the U.S.S.R. except those which manage illegally to exist unregistered. Many

of the churches are refused registration by the authorities. Two such denominations that have continually been refused additional churches are the Baptists and the Orthodox church. The authorities are not legally obliged to state reasons for refusing registration, but must simply give the denomination a "yes" or "no" within a month of receiving the application as stated in Article 7, 1929 Law. Often they do not even send a reply. There likewise seems to be no legal basis for the registering of clergy, and here likewise there is known to be illegal state interference in church appointments; a violation of the separation of church and state.

All religious activities have been banned except for worship within registered churches, as stated in the Constitution Article 124. For worship anywhere else, permission must be received two weeks in advance for each individual event, as stated in 1929 Law, Article 59, and 61, and permission is often not granted, especially for Baptists, who enjoy home Bible study meeting. Clergy activity is restricted to their own areas, as this is required by 1929 Law Article 19. The church may not become involved in any form of relief work, as stated in the 1929 Law, Article 17, no parish societies or discussion groups may be organized (1966 Decree). It should be noted that the law technically does not ban the production of religious literature, provided all literature does not call for "infringement of the laws,"²⁰

(1966 Decree) but ultimately such production is treated as being an "infringement of the law." Baptists, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic groups have been the three groups most often caught producing such literature. The few exceptions seem to be central periodicals, occasional editions of calendars, the Bible, and prayer and hymn books; all of which are produced by some denominations. All Sunday schools are banned as it is considered informal religious instruction for minors (1966 Decree). In fact restrictions are even placed on that schooling given by parents to their own children at home, as a result of the 1968 Marriage and Family Law. Permission must be given for any special theological courses taught for the training of clergy (1929 Law, Article 18). The existence of permanent theological seminaries is not recognized in law and thus their existence could end at once if the special permission from the state to remain open was withdrawn. There are currently three Orthodox seminaries, two Roman Catholics, one Armenian, one Georgian, and one Moslem formal religious institution open today in the Soviet Union. Lutherans and Baptists are allowed to have correspondence courses, and the Russian Orthodox Church has also been able to increase theological education by likewise instituting a correspondence course for its clergy. No other religious institutions, however, are recognized in law, though the Orthodox and Armenian churches still retain a few monasteries. Most existing monasteries were closed in the

early 1960's.

Probably two of the most important laws on the books today in the Soviet Union are the 1918 Decree, Article 12, and the 1929 Law, Article 4. Both of these specific articles deal with the church as a person at law. Both articles state that no religious association or parish is a person at law. This is an important law because if no parish or church can be a person at law, then they can never contest their rights of law, nor can they formally apply for redress.

The state does not allow central representative church bodies. No provisions for such bodies are recognized by law. The law states that such bodies are not recognized by law, but discrimination exists in that Orthodox, Old Believers, Baptists, Moslems and Buddhists are all allowed representative bodies, while Jews and Roman Catholics are denied them. Government does, however, place restrictions on local and national Congresses. Such Congresses may only be held with special governmental permission as stated in Article 20 of the 1929 law. Baptists alone have met in Congress since 1965; they met in 1963, 1966, and 1969.

All religions may be deformed in the press with no right to reply. This tactic has been frequently practiced against all denominations. There also seems to be religious discrimination at places of work (which is strictly illegal, though still practiced), discrimination in housing, and discrimination in education and public life. There are even

some known instances where believers have been expelled from the Communist Party, managerial positions, or even from teaching posts due solely to their religious beliefs. It is a nationwide feature of Soviet life, however, that believers are almost always prevented from reaching such positions in the first place -- even from entering higher education.²¹ This phenomenon is difficult to document, though it is made explicit in Party pronouncements on religion and is well known to all observers on the Soviet scene.

II. The Church and the State: A Historical View

In a Communist ruled state, according to pure Communistic doctrine, religious communities should not exist, especially in the Soviet Union, where the state has been boasting about its 'achievements' for half a century already.

The Soviet Union tried in the latter half of the 1930's to become the first totally atheistic state in the world, but today there are still churches. The churches are subject to the most severe repression, and are tolerated as a fringe phenomenon in the society. They seem to be the only institutions that are able to express publicly their rejection of large parts of Marxist-Leninism.

Due to persecution and atheist education among the people, churches have only been able to retain a fraction of their size and influence. The government puts the number of religious believers (not only Christians) in a conservative estimate, in the Soviet Union at 30 million; which is about

12 per cent of the population.²²

There seems to be no equality in the Soviet Union for believers. Believers have the right to believe and the right to worship, but they are denied the right to instruct others and the right to persuade others to share their beliefs. In contrast, non-believers have not only the right to disbelieve, but also opportunity and systematic encouragement by the Party and the state to attempt to persuade others to share their atheism.²³

What has happened to the church over the past fifty years indicates what may happen to the church in the future. The Law of 1918 specified that religious worship must not interfere with either the work or the leisure of Soviet citizens -- as a result leisure-time activities of the Soviet citizens have been permitted, even deliberately organized to interfere with religious worship. For example, noisy dances were scheduled at Christmas time and Easter time in halls next to churches that remained open. Between the years 1929-1934 hundreds, if not thousands of churches, including many historic monuments, were destroyed. The 1920's and 1930's were filled with examples of Soviets protesting the practice of kissing icons, cutting of Christmas trees, and the government went so far as to urge school children to sign petitions complaining that church bells kept them awake or interfered with their studies and thus should be removed.²⁴

The great turning point for religion in the Soviet Union

came in the period 1941-1944. Within a few months after Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, Stalin's government had dissolved the Union of the Militant Godless, and by 1944 the Moscow patriarch was reinstated, several theological seminaries were reopened, and the printing of theological literature began again in government printing presses. Those concessions were seen as primarily a reward to the Russian Orthodox faithful for their support of the Soviet war effort.

Khrushchev launched an anti-religious campaign from 1959-1964. The major reason for such a campaign was because the major leaders of the Party felt that softness toward religion was inexcusable. Khrushchev's methods tended to follow the letter of the Soviet law. In 1962 priests and ministers were permitted to baptize children only upon a written application from both parents. If one parent refused to sign the application, then the child could not be baptized. Since 1959, 10,000 Orthodox churches have been closed.

Soviet citizens who attend churches today fall into the lower socio-economic strata and are mainly uneducated. Almost all church attenders are peasants, unskilled workers, minor service workers, minor clerical employees, and only a tiny fraction of the churched have more than a secondary school education; some in the countryside have only a primary education.²⁵

In terms of age and sex distribution, church goers are

mainly middle-aged and older citizens. Older citizens far outnumber the young, while women outnumber men. There are perhaps as many as three women for every two men in the adult population as a result of the great purges of the 1930's, when several million men lost their lives, but almost no women were killed due to Soviet military and civilian losses during the Second World War. Ninety per cent of all Soviet citizens with higher education are unchurched.

III. The Churches in the Soviet Union Today

The present religio-political situation is determined by the state of affairs existing since the fall of Khrushchev in October, 1964. Terrorist administrative measures have ended, especially mass closure of churches, however many of the restrictions on church life which were newly introduced at the beginning of the 1960's are still in force and place great limitations on the freedom of movement of religious communities.

The churches still have contact with international church organizations throughout the world, in fact today they are even encouraged by the state to do so due to current foreign policy. This is seen as an effort to make all news concerning repression of the church to seem merely a repression of certain grassroots churches. Churches today seem to be overly-submissive to the state. Church leaders truly go along to get along. As a result of this bending over backwards by the church leaders the state has had a softening

of state and Party protest towards the church leadership. Atheist propaganda, which reached an all-time high point at the beginning of the 1960's has subsided somewhat since then.

The Russian Orthodox Church

The Russian Orthodox church is by far the largest Christian denomination and in Russia, it is considered the most important even by the Communist Party. Absolute political loyalty to the state and Party is mandatory for all churches, and in this respect the Russian Orthodox church has set the tone. This church more than any other denomination is linked with the history of Russia and ethnically rooted in the East Slav peoples. Its Russian patriotism and nationalism are never questioned. The church has not been spared persecution though. Until the end of the 1950's there were 67 monasteries and convents in the Soviet Union, today there are only about 15; their number was drastically reduced by Khrushchev's terror measures.

The Roman Catholic Church

Major centers of Catholicism in pre-Revolutionary Russia were in the Western parts of the Ukraine and Byelorussia, Lithuania and the Southern part of Latvia. The Stalinist terror in the years after 1945 largely destroyed Catholic organizations in these areas. Catholicism, which was very closely linked with Poland, was considered a hindrance to the integration of the newly won territories into the Soviet federation of states, and thus the persecution of the Catholic

church was an integral part of the Soviet nationalities policy. Since that time the Roman Catholic church has been unable to build up any central organization again, and only in Lithuania and Latvia is there today any regular division of dioceses.

Evangelical Lutheran Church

The Evangelical-Lutheran Church is able to work legally only in Latvia and Estonia, where traditionally the population is mainly Protestant. Lutheran Communities in the rest of Russia, particularly among the German settlers along the Volga and in Southern Ukraine, were destroyed in the Stalinist terror of the 1930's.

The Evangelical Christians and Baptists

The most lively Christian church in the Soviet Union is that church formed by the union of the Evangelical Christians and Baptists. They are probably the only denomination which is still growing in numbers today. Although the Evangelical Christian and Baptists are subject to the same repressive Soviet legislation as the other churches, and suffer equally, their congregation life is still amazingly lively and through strong pressure from the grassroots, they have been able to secure concessions which are not given to other churches.

The Evangelical Christians and Baptists have always exercised strong powers of attraction which are conceded and taken seriously even by the atheist ideologues.²⁶ Atheist researchers believe the most important social causes for

the success of such groups arise because large numbers of those who attend, feel humiliated and deceived by life and feel they are victims of fate, and that they are outside socialist society and are not provided for in it.

Soviet religio-sociological investigations of recent years have actually shown that the Evangelical Christians and Baptists are not only loyal Soviet citizens, but in many cases are the best workers. There are no less than three weekly services in any congregation. In the big Moscow congregation with some 5,000 members there are six services, each one averaging over 2,000. There are some 500,000 members throughout the country, and more than 5,000 churches. To a large extent most of these churches are independent congregations -- not all of which have been able to obtain their registration from the state authorities.

The failure of religion to "wither away" at the present advanced stage of transition from socialism to Communism more than half a century after the October revolution is now explained as a result of a new insecurity and fear that has been generated in the Soviet population by the threat of thermonuclear war.²⁷ The following chapter will examine Judaism in the Soviet Union from a historical vantage point as well as from a current vantage point.

Chapter 3 - Religion
Part II: Judaism in the Soviet Union

I. A Historical Look at Judaism in Tsarist Russia: 1881-1917

The following chapter will deal with a people who have been a part of Russia for hundreds of years, but yet still not an accepted part of the society. The ancient Hebrew writer of the book of Exodus stated the situation in Russia quite correctly when he said in Exodus 22:21, "I have been a stranger in a strange land."²⁸ Such a verse from the Bible describes quite correctly the particular relationship that the Jews have had with not only the Soviet government but likewise with the Czarist government. This chapter will seek to allow the reader a greater understanding of the historical problems that Jews have faced, as well as the problems facing them today under the Soviet government.

The term "Judaism" has several meanings. It denotes only the Jewish religion; a religion that comprises the religion, the Jewish secular culture, the Jewish language, (Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino) Jewish history, Jewish ethnicity, and the concept of nationality. Judaism is a term where both national and religious components are intertwined in the ethnic group's consciousness. The Jewish religion stands very much apart from all other religions. It has for

centuries likewise been in violent conflict with most of the other religions, and it is practiced by only one ethnic group.

Soviet Jews comprise an estimated population of 3 million people, 23% of the Jewish people in the world. Soviet Jews make up the second largest Jewish community in the world. There are only 220,000 Jews in the rest of the Communist world. The 1970 census listed Jews as making 0.9% of the total Soviet population.²⁹

II. The Russian Jew Under Alexander III and Nicholas II 1881-1914

The Tsars had traditionally felt that the old ideals of Russian nationalism and Orthodoxy were the only safeguards for continued Russian greatness. They sought to promote obscurantism among the peasant masses, and to suppress both religious dissent and the nationalistic movement among the peoples of foreign stock. It is interesting to note that both of these items allowed them to play right into the hands of the rising revolutionary parties, parties of which the successful assassination of Alexander II should have served them as a warning of the dissent and unrest present in their country.³⁰

The assassination of Alexander II was used as an excuse for anti-Jewish legislation -- due mainly in fact to one of the terrorists being Jewish, Hesia Helfman. Officially inspired rumors were spread that Jews had played a leading part in the revolutionary upheaval. As a result of rumors,

large-scale anti-Jewish propaganda was continued. The government justified using such tactics saying that it was necessary for the Jews to suffer retribution. As a result, Jews in towns throughout the country were attacked, assaulted and looted while the police merely looked on. All of this essentially created an intense feeling of insecurity which engulfed the entire Jewish population. The Tsar restricted the rights of his Jewish subjects more and more because he said that the rapid economic expansion of the Jews during the preceding regime was incompatible with the nature and growth of the Russian people.

The Tsar went so far that he even set up a committee to look at the so-called harmful impact of the economic activity of Jews on the Christian population. The committee's findings implemented new temporary rules forbidding Jews to settle outside in new towns and hamlets and to carry on business on Sundays and Christian holidays.

Corrupt Russian bureaucrats interpreted this ruling to relate to new settlement. Sometimes the Jew was refused readmittance even to their old residences after an absence of only a few days for synagogue services in a neighboring city or for a funeral. The city officials would label them as new settlers. On occasion, the officials would expel Jews who merely changed their residence from one house to another even in the same locality.

The Tsar was faced with a most unusual problem. On the

one hand some 5,000,000 Jews, Russian subjects, wanted to be freed from all special restraints, while on the other hand, some 85,000,000 Russian subjects wanted to have the 5,000,000 Jews expelled from the empire.

Jewish university students often had to overcome serious legal and financial difficulties to obtain their higher education at foreign universities. In 1889, a decree was issued that restricted the admission of Jewish lawyers to the bar.³¹ This decree required, in each case; special permission from the minister of justice on the recommendation of the presidents of local bar associations or judicial institutions.

The government went so far as to banish the Jews from Moscow on the first day of the Jewish Passover of 1891. Only a small group of very old settlers were allowed to remain, while a newly constructed synagogue was closed down and later turned into a charitable institution by the government.

During these years, Jewish emigration became ever-increasing. A high governmental official said that the only solution to the problem was to have, "one-third of all Jews in Russia emigrate, one-third become Christianized, and one-third should perish."³²

Even in literature, the Jew was portrayed as Jewish poisoners, spies, and cowardly traitors. Fiodorm Distoeusky, a famous Russian writer, wrote into his Journal of an Author:

"the master of all and of the whole of Europe, is the Jew and his bank. The Jew and his bank now dominate everything: Europe and enlightenment, the whole civilization, especially socialism, for with its help the Jews will eradicate Christianity and destroy the Christian civilization. Then nothing is left but anarchy. The Jew will command everything."³³

The situation began changing slowly after the death of Alexander III in 1894.

III. The Last Tsar: Nicholas II: 1894-1917

With the accession to the throne of Nicholas II there were no immediate changes in the governmental system or in detailed policies towards the Jews. Nicholas did announce in his imperial manifesto that his sole aim was to seek the happiness of all his loyal subjects and he even extended one invitation to three rabbis to participate at government expense in the coronation ceremonies. This seemed to be a promising gesture, but in the end it was not.

The so-called entrenched Russian bureaucracy successfully resisted any attempts to relax pressures currently on the Jewish population. Although no new policies were adopted, the old screws of legal and administrative discrimination were turned all the more tighter. The state continued to justify such actions because they said that the Jews were more natively gifted, better educated and much more aggressive than the average Russian, and thus the latter must be protected from total Jewish domination.

The ratio of Jews in the legal profession constantly declined. Physicians also were now restricted to private

practice and were likewise excluded from all government posts. The continual enforcement of the settlement restrictions relating to the Jews became more intensive. Jewish poor likewise increased by 27% in 4 years from 1894-1898 according to a well-known Russian economist, A. Subbotin, and the flight abroad likewise continued.

More and more during this time Jews felt that their ultimate future lay with political action which hopefully would in the end force the government to grant full equality of rights to all citizens. This period of history became well known for the various Jewish ideologies springing up as well as the formation of various Jewish parties. In 1897 both the Jewish-Socialist Bund and the World Zionist Organization were founded. The government reacted sharply to all of these movements, labeling them as equally subversive groups and eventually outlawing the Zionism movement because it supposedly contributed to Jewish militancy against the prevailing oppression.

More bloodshed took place in 1903-1905. A group called the League of Russian People was founded in 1904, and was comprised of individuals who had intense hatred for the Jews. They blamed the Jews for the strength of subversive movements within Russia. The Tsar during this time even encouraged this group to perform crimes against the Jewish people in a hintful way. He even went so far as to accept an honorary membership in the League of the Russian People. The Tsar said of the Jews: "We shall make your position in Russia so

unbearable that the Jews will leave the country to the last man. The Jews constitute in Southern Russia 90%, in the interior 40% of all revolutionaries."³⁴

This statement was a gross exaggeration and was part of the government's campaign to discredit the revolutionary movement by identifying it with Jews. The government itself instigated public disorders to get rid of their Jews. On one such raid or riot a community of 50,000 Jews and 60,000 Christians was attacked by government police and in two days 45 Jews were killed, 86 were seriously wounded and 500 Jews were less severely hurt. More than 1,500 houses and shops were plundered or destroyed.³⁵ In 1905 in connection with the First Russian Revolution some 660 Jewish communities were attacked in the course of a single week. As a result of all of this violent action, they organized their own self-defense and continued to enter into the broad stream of Russian politics, particularly during the Russian Revolution of 1905. In 1905 also, a "Declaration of Jewish Citizens" was signed and sent to the Tsar demanding civil equality and equal submission to general laws due to human dignity and as conscientious citizens of the state.

Jews continued to participate actively in the election of the First Duma (Parliament) voting wherever advisable for Jewish candidates and elsewhere throwing the weight of their ballots on the side of generally liberal and moderate labor leaders. The Duma was later disbanded by the Tsar as a

result of the various revolutionary attempts.

The government only intensified its attacks on Jews during the revolutionary years. In the decade of 1905-16, the government permitted the printing and distribution of 14,327,000 copies of 2,837 anti-Semitic books and pamphlets. The Tsar himself allegedly contributed 12,239,000 rubles from his private holdings toward the printing.³⁶ The final defeat of the Tsar should have served as a warning to all future governmental leaders that extreme persecution of the Jew would not, as it had been hoped, divert the attention of the masses from their genuine grievances to the Jewish scapegoat.

During the era of revolution, 1917-1923, the Jews welcomed with great joy the so-called February (March) Revolution of 1917. The second stage of the Revolution, headed by Lenin, opened virtually a new chapter in Jewish as well as in world history. From the very beginning of the revolution movement, there were many Jews present in the top levels of the Communist Party. This in itself made it appear to outsiders that the new regime would reform Jewish status in a way that would be acceptable to the Jewish people. However, no sooner did the Communists attain power in Russia than did the Jewish Communists push and persuade the government to outlaw all existing Jewish parties, especially the Zionist organizations -- because of its counter-revolutionary role.

Anti-Judiastic policies of the government occurred because the government was convinced that all religion was but an "opiate" for the masses. Lenin and his associates had long proclaimed their opposition to any theistic faith. Religious officials were treated as "declassified" members of society, and most synagogues were closed, too, by decree. Jewish Communists were surprisingly enough among the most intense objectors to religion; one of them, Emelian Maroslavski even served as president of the Russian Godless Society, which was a society that with full governmental support, spread atheistic propaganda throughout the country. Such anti-religious measures affected the Jews even more severely than their non-Jewish neighbors. This anti-Semitism began to raise its ugly head once again soon after the establishment of the Soviet Union.

IV. Judaism in the Soviet Union

"I have been a stranger in a strange land"

Exodus 22:21

Under Communism in the Soviet Union Jews have continued to suffer intensely and continuously. Theirs is the only nationality which is deprived of the basic cultural rights accorded to all others in the U.S.S.R. Hebrew schools are forbidden to the Jews, as well as other educational religious schools. Judaism is permitted no publication facilities and no publications. All religions in the U.S.S.R. exist within a context of official anti-religious ideology and propaganda. For the Jews a subtler but harsher form of

of discrimination has resulted from the national ban on the Hebrew language. This ban has made it impossible for Jews educated under the Soviet government to make sense of their synagogue services. Until 1957, religious Jews had no institution to train rabbis. Likewise, no Jewish religious delegation from the U.S.S.R. has ever been permitted to visit religious institutions abroad.

On the one hand, the government desperately wants the Jews to assimilate, become a part of the Soviet life, while on the other hand authorities initially fear the full penetration of Soviet life which assimilation implies.³⁷ So Jews are formally recognized as a nationality, as a religious group, as equal citizens, but are at the same time deprived of their national and religious rights as a group, and of full equality as individuals.

Jews have been treated differently in the Soviet Union for various reasons it seems. Their nationality problem is viewed by the state as a potentially dangerous one. In no other country in Eastern Europe is this a problem. Perhaps the main reason for such treatment is Jewish separateness.³⁸ The fewer the opportunities the Jews have to congregate, the fewer the opportunities for them to keep Jewish separateness alive -- thus the state has tried to keep the number of open synagogues in Russia to a minimum.

Jews were a minority severely oppressed by the Tsarist regime, and in each of the two generations preceding the

the Revolution the Jews joined ranks with the revolutionaries. They paid a heavy price in blood for their support of the new regime in Soviet Russia, and yet their rewards appear to be only more of the same old anti-Semitic propaganda and persecution.

Anti-Jewish sentiments in the U.S.S.R. were encouraged by Stalin. Restrictions against Yiddish culture were ordained in the middle 1930's. As a group the Jews were indeed the strongest early supporters of the Soviet regime and the least inclined to oppose or sabotage the regime either before or during the German-Soviet war.

Today Jewish citizens might be considered "security risks." They are all thought to want to eventually leave the country, which is in turn taken as proof by the authorities that Jews never had an attachment to the nation. The long-range aim of the Soviet government is the fusion of all nationalities. The Jews were the group selected to be the first assimilated group due to both their nationality and religious beliefs. The government felt that since the one characteristic nationality, fed the other which was religion, they both must be eradicated. On the surface, the Jewish minority can be considered the ideal national group for such a long-range objective of fusion, but the results have been totally disappointing. The Jewish minority has not so easily given in to being dissolved. Methods used by the Soviet leadership to achieve that goal have been self-defeating and

counter-productive, and the government has tried to combat Jewish religion and Jewish nationalism in separate ways. They tried to use secular Judaism against religious Judaism but the end result was a mingling of the two and now the government is faced with a sizeable and important group in the upcoming Soviet Jewish generation.³⁹ Jews do not accept inequality and minor restrictions today in their socialist country -- thus they have had a violent reaction to inequalities in the Soviet Union and will most likely continue to express opposition.

There are basically 18 major points where the Soviet Jews today demand change. The American Jewry Conference on Soviet Jewry is the coordinating body of twenty-five national Jewish Organizations. In 1964 the American Jewry Conference on Soviet Jewry issued an 18 point appeal to the Soviet government protesting the denial to Soviet Jews of the means for spiritual survival. The 18 points are as follows:

1. To declare its policy of eradicating anti-Semitism by a vigorous educational effort conducted by government and Party.
2. To permit the free functioning of synagogues and private prayer meetings.
3. To remove hindrances to the observance of sacred rites such as religious burial and circumcision.
4. To make possible the production and distribution of

phylacteries, prayer shawls, religious calendars, and other religious articles.

5. To restore all rights and facilities for the production and distribution of matzoth, and kosher food.
6. To make available facilities to publish Hebrew Bibles, prayer books and other religious texts in the necessary quantities.
7. To permit the organization of a nation-wide federation of synagogues.
8. To sanction the association of such a federation with organizations of co-religionists abroad.
9. To permit Jews to make religious pilgrimages to the Holy places in Israel.
10. To make it possible to allow all qualified applicants to attend the Moscow Yeshiva to provide facilities for the establishment of additional Yeshivas as needed, and to enable rabbinical students to study at seminaries abroad.
11. To provide schools and other facilities for the study of Yiddish and Hebrew, and of Jewish history, literature and culture.
12. To permit Jewish writers, artists, and other intellectuals to create their own institutions for the encouragement of Jewish cultural and artistic life.

13. To re-establish a Yiddish publishing house and to publish books in Yiddish by classical and contemporary Jewish writers.
14. To re-establish Yiddish state theatres in major centers of Jewish population and to publish Yiddish-language newspapers with national circulation.
15. To eliminate discrimination against Jews in all areas of Soviet public life.
16. To end all propaganda campaigns which use anti-Semitic stereotypes, implied or overt.
17. To halt the discriminatory application of maximum penalties, including the death sentence, against Jews for alleged economic crimes.
18. To make it possible on humanitarian grounds for Soviet Jews who are members of families separated as a result of the Nazi holocaust to be reunited with their relatives abroad."⁴⁰

Most of these demands have not as of yet been met and are not, in the foreseeable future, going to be met.

Conflicts between the Communist state and Judaism appear to be more political than ideological. Many Jews have never believed the existence of a society in which the means of production would be socialized to be inherently in contradiction to their religion.

The Soviet government did abolish the Tsarist

restrictions on Jews in employment, residence, education, and civil rights, but the moral degradation and inhumanity of the Stalin era put an end to searches for an ideological common denominator between Jews and the government.

One can hardly be optimistic about the future fate of Judaism in the Soviet Union. Short of the total and absolute abolition of all restrictions and quotas with regard to the Jewish people in the Soviet Union, no solution seems possible.

The process of treating the Jewish people separately which began in the 1930's and peaked in the 1948-53 campaign, lasted too long and went too far to be fully reversed. The only real alternative to the total restoration of equality to Soviet Jews in all fields seems to be mass emigration.

It is obvious that post-war developments have demonstrated that the establishment of a socialist order in the Soviet Union has not solved the so-called 'Jewish problem.' It has not brought about either of the two alternatives: a complete integration and dissolution of the Jewish group in the Soviet population, or conditions for a free and continued existence of Jewish religious and cultural life.⁴¹ The future for the Jews in Soviet Russia does not appear to be promising. It will most likely be a future in which Jews will continue to feel like strangers in a very strange, hostile and foreign homeland.

Chapter 4

Propaganda: Can the Church Survive In the Soviet Union?

The January 12, 1967 issue of Pravda, a Soviet publication, stated: "the struggle against religion is not a campaign, not an isolated phenomenon, not a self-contained entity; it is an inseparable component part of the entire ideological activity of Party organization, an essential link and necessary element in the complex of Communist education."⁴²

Why is the government so opposed to religion? Samuel P. Huntington, in his book Political Order in Changing Societies stated: "The political function of Communism is not to overthrow authority, but to fill the vacuum of authority."⁴³ Communists, by attempting to do away with religion in their society, realize that without religion there is a vacuum or void that is very difficult to fill.

The Soviet Communist Party oppose religious organizations because it feels that it is basically in a power-political struggle with religion. To yield to religion would be to yield power. The Party is determined that it will not share its power with any other organization. Political concern about achieving full internal sovereignty

for the state is reinforced by the desire to mobilize the peoples' energies for radical social change. The Party sees religion as a sower of illusions, and feels that religion is a definite and serious obstacle on the path to social progress. It encourages humility and submissiveness to fate, and in a most subtle way disarms the people and makes them less creative or publically active. It is thought by the Party that religion keeps the people weak and down-trodden and urges them to resign themselves to fate requiring them patiently to endure, "all ills and misfortunes, persecution and oppression. It demands that people become slaves by conviction...hoping only for the mercy of God."⁴⁴

It is not just the general overall thrust of religion and its doctrine, its unscientific character and its continual focus on other worldly matters that the government dislikes. But it is also the Christian concept of individual salvation; a concept said to hinder the development of a spirit of collectivism. Likewise, religious differences, as well as religious teaching, propagate male chauvinism and seem to relegate women to an inferior position in society. Certain practices are seen by the government as directly endangering the health of the citizen; examples would be prolonged fasting, frenzied prayer, baptism by immersion, over-indulgence at religious celebration or even contact with stagnant holy water. The government also distrusts the members of some of the fundamentalist sects who refuse to work

on Saturday or Sunday, refuse to serve in the military, refuse to take part in elections or trade union activities, and even refuse to allow their children to join the Pioneers, a Soviet childrens activist group, or take part in sports activities.

Thus the government, in an attempt to eradicate religion, used various modes of action. It will be the purpose of this chapter to look at the various types of means and methods used by the government, and to see how effective such propaganda methods have been.

I. Anti-Religious Propaganda in the Soviet Union

The Soviet government has sought to provide a social and economic environment that guarantees all citizens equal opportunity to develop under the Party's close supervision and control. "Religion will disappear," Marx said, "to the extent that socialism develops. It must disappear as a result of social development." To this end government has harassed, intimidated, threatened and punished clergymen and ordinary believers.⁴⁵ It has even initiated a program of scholarly research into the causes and character of religious belief in the U.S.S.R. Thus it is believed with a better knowledge of contemporary religious beliefs and practices the Party will be able to better understand and subvert such religious beliefs and practices. A set of secular holidays and ceremonies have been devised by the authorities in order to supplement various religious holy days and rituals. All of the above mentioned programs have been supplemented by a

vast propaganda effort aimed at refashioning human consciousness and raising the citizen's ideological level to such a degree that religion will not merely become superfluous, but will actually disappear.

Today the government argues that religion does not represent a social danger, and that current legal restraints placed on the church are sufficient to prevent the re-emergence of a problem. Policy towards the church has always involved a mixture of persuasion or coercion, and in the period since Stalin's death such persuasion has been marked by increased reliance on propaganda and education measures.

Propaganda specialists disagree about how and where to concentrate their efforts. They are convinced they must concentrate their efforts in one of three areas. They must (1) try to convert believers to atheism, and reinforce the convictions of atheists, or (2) direct anti-religious efforts toward youngsters and toward older people, or (3) work with ordinary believers and with clergymen and other church officials. Questions of propaganda content and style are also debated vigorously too.

V. I. Lenin said, "we have separated the church from the state, but we have not yet separated the people from religion." This remains a problem in the Soviet Union today. The church has been separated from the state but the people have not yet been separated from religion. Official policy towards religion has shifted somewhat and the attitudes of religious leaders have changed.

Today almost all denominations actually support Soviet domestic and foreign policy. Leading church figures are constantly praising their national political system and verbally stating their support of the government's position on all international issues. They continue to voice support for the government's view of arms control, peaceful coexistence, and the elimination of colonialism, and have always supported the government whenever a major international crisis has occurred.

Thus, because of such beforementioned developments, the church's loyalty to the Soviet state is no longer questioned, and the Party has even tolerated, approved and sometimes even encouraged some religious freedom. Most religious groups consider it most important for them to voice support for the current political system and see it as a small price to pay for their continued existence. The so-called church and state detente is a highly fragile one, however, because the government's tolerance may be eroded gradually or abandoned suddenly.

The Party has resolved to create an atheist society and has invested considerable energy and resources in an effort to achieve this objective. The emphasis in combating religion today is no longer terror, administrative measures or ridicule, but the propaganda messages of science, atheism and Communist morality.

Because there is at the present time no body that enjoys

the prestige and authority that the League of the Militant Godless did in Stalin's time, the Party has granted operational control over the atheist movement to a number of organizations. The Knowledge Society is the most important institution operating in the field of atheist propaganda. It was founded in 1947 and later inherited the functions of the League of the Militant Godless. This Society uses a variety of propaganda devices, such as books, pamphlets, periodicals, lectures, question-and-answer evenings, and discussions with Believers. It has kept the struggle against religion on a relatively intellectual plane. In 1947 the Society numbered 1,414 in membership. Today the society has over 2,500,000 members.⁴⁶

The school system is potentially the Party's most powerful weapon in the struggle against religion. By inculcating appropriate views into the impressionable minds of young children, the government can at least in theory hope to utterly eradicate religion within the space of a few generations. Their influence has in fact, however, not been pervasive or profound due to prior socializing experiences of the family and the lack of interest and skill of most teachers in dealing with religion. This is not to suggest that all teachers lack such skills, but that apparently the great majority of the teaching faculty does not aid the effort appreciably.

Atheism Clubs likewise have been organized. Voluntary public organizations such as these receive their members

mostly from various professionals such as doctors, teachers, scientists and governmental employees and officials. Such clubs coordinate the work of atheists in their particular community and engage in anti-religious propaganda. They arrange meetings, hold lectures and show anti-religious films and plays.

Museums are another device whereby the state tries to show the people that man and not God is the master of nature. The Leningrad Museum is the largest and most important anti-religious museum in the Soviet Union. All art works are directed at showing the origins and development of various religions, the history of atheism, and the struggle between materialism and idealism. The museum holds eight major display themes: (1) Science and Religion; (2) Origin of Religion; (3) Religion and Atheism in the Ancient World; (4) Religions of the East; (5) the Origin of Christianity; (6) Religion and Atheism in the West; (7) History of Russian Orthodoxy and Russian Atheism; (8) and the Overcoming of Religious Survivals in the Period of the Expanded Construction of Communism in the U.S.S.R.⁴⁷ Workers, students and the general public are encouraged to see the museum. Over 700,000 people visit the eight major displays a year.

The struggle on the religious front today is more decentralized than it was several years or decades ago. Certain aspects of religion, though, have proved to be particularly resistant to the Party's propaganda. One such aspect

has been religious holy days and ceremonies. The state has designed a list of various new holidays and ceremonies to act clearly as a counterpoise to religious rites and ceremonies. Their central purpose is to supplement and undercut the familiar religious holy days and ceremonies. At present there are six state holidays: (1) New Year's Day - January 1; (2) International Women's Day - March 8; (3) International Labor Day - May 1 and 2; (4) Victory Day - May 9; (5) the Anniversary of the October Revolution - November 7 and 8; and (6) Constitution Day - December 5. Each holiday provides an occasion for celebrating the government's achievements, and are all marked by a profusion of propaganda, public speeches, demonstrations, and ceremonial meetings. An elaborate spring holiday is now celebrated at Eastertime. It is usually held in late March, or on the Christian calendar, at Eastertime. A winter holiday, much the same as the spring holiday, is celebrated in December. It too is designed to undermine the celebration of Christmas.

It is clear that the network of Soviet holidays are designed to play a major role in combating religion and promoting the political socialization of the Soviet people. The programs have failed to live up to the government's expectations, however.

The introduction of new holidays and ceremonies has been only one part of the overall Soviet anti-religious effort. One final area where the government has tried to help persuade

the people that religion is wrong has been through the mass communications media.

Khrushchev said that, "Just as an army cannot wage war without weapons, the Party cannot conduct its ideological work successfully without such a strong and militant weapon as the press."⁴⁸

Major weapons used have been the press, articles in magazines, books, science journals, films, radio and television. The press has always played a major role in the Soviet effort to eradicate survivals of the past.

V. I. Lenin in 1922 addressed the subject of mass oral propaganda in this way, he said,

"It is necessary to present the masses with the most diverse materials on atheist propaganda, to acquaint them with facts from the most varied spheres of life, to approach them this way and that, in order to interest them to rouse them from their religious dream, to shake them from the most varied sides, with the most varied means..."⁴⁹

Professional Soviet atheists view the press as the principal vehicle for indoctrinating the masses. The theatre and films likewise play a substantial role in combating religion and propagating the Party's atheist doctrine. Radio and television are also powerful instruments of propaganda and education. Radio and television seem to add little to the struggle against religion. Atheist programs are produced infrequently and when they are put on, they are not likely to hold the attention of the audience.

In its effort to mold a new Soviet man, the anti-religious movement has relied heavily on mass oral propaganda techniques.

This has been done through various methods. The principal instrument of mass anti-religious propaganda is the "lecture," and it remains a favored weapon in the struggle against religion. The ideal lecture mixes information, propaganda, agitation and organizational efforts.⁵⁰

Irrational appeals can of course play a useful role. Meetings set up with the people and with former believers are said to be one of the most effective forms of anti-religious work. They are held on specially arranged evenings at which time local citizens meet with former believers. The use of debates have aroused a good deal of controversy among Soviet propagandists. The government calls such debates the "Evening for Believers and Nonbelievers." The only problem with this event has been that the believers rarely show up for such debates.

None of the mass oral propaganda measures seems to work very well. It has proved extremely difficult to attract believers to them, and if they do attend they almost always react negatively. Audiences at anti-religious functions consist typically of nonbelievers, according to one survey only about 15% of those who attended were believers. Another study has revealed that only 2% of the religious population ever attend any atheist affair.⁵¹

II. Why Religion Remains in the Soviet Union

Throughout the recent history of the Soviet Union, religion has remained probably the most visible ideological

alternative to Communism. It has remained the only opponent of Communism able to preserve at least some of its historical and institutional forms. Thus, any appraisal of the state of Russia is incomplete unless it takes the survival of religion into account. Religion survives in the hearts of men who believe in God; it survives in prayers and in pious thoughts.

Religious believers, church members, are only a minority of the population of the U.S.S.R., although they still constitute many millions as the charts indicate. However, from this, one must not conclude that the majority of the inhabitants of the U.S.S.R. have consciously embraced the atheist doctrine.⁵² There has been active, continual, persecution of religion by the Communist regime. The questions of how and why religion could survive under an oppressive atheist regime will be dealt with in the concluding part of this chapter.

There are various reasons why religion remains very much alive today within the Soviet Union. Soviet leadership has deliberately sought to preserve some religion in the U.S.S.R. simply to keep from alienating the vast number of citizens who profess faith in God.⁵³ Also many people turn to religion to escape from their personal or family burdens. To remove this escape would put added pressure on the state to replace such an escape with another viable alternative. It is also clear that certain individuals are particularly attracted to

religion for psychological and irrational reasons. The state sees no real harm or danger in allowing these individuals such a release. Another simple reason why religion remains alive today is because of the contact that occurs between believers, i.e. those individuals who put faith in God, and non-believers in the state. It is inevitable, due to such contact, that religion would be kept alive due to new converts being constantly won. Activity by ministers and churches likewise aid in the survival of the church. Aid to religion also comes from foreign sources which give financial support to the institution. Religion continues to exert an influence over a portion of the citizenry because of past and present deficiencies in anti-religious programs. Where atheist propaganda is weakest, religious belief and behavior remains widespread.

Atheist propaganda seldom impresses believers. When such propaganda does reach believers, their faith is seldom undermined by the arguments. The Party has assumed without justification, that faith can always be undermined by reason. Anti-religious propaganda is often irrelevant to the life of the typical believer. The conclusion seems inescapable that atheist propaganda is misconceived, misdirected and clumsy.⁵⁴

The Communist failure to wipe out religion and religious beliefs can be contributed basically to two main factors. The first factor is, as mentioned above, the relative ineffectiveness of anti-religious propaganda, and the second

factor, is the Communist's inability to create a new civilization and morality sufficiently solid and successful to put an end to the religious era in the history of mankind.⁵⁵

It is difficult for the Communists to accept the fact that technology has not vanquished theology. Religion has survived Communist social engineering. Not only millions of women, but also millions of men in the Soviet Union seek refuge in the religious morality which the Communist morality has been unable to replace.⁵⁶

The Communist Party regards religion as an unfortunate, undesirable and outdated relic of the past.⁵⁷ Over the fifty-five years of Soviet power, the regime has sought to achieve six anti-religious objectives: (1) To destroy the political and economic strength of the church, and it has been basically successful in this effort. (2) To limit the church's access to the citizenry and especially to children. The regime has succeeded in this area as well. (3) To induce people not to attend church; the Party has been fairly successful in this quest. It has closed large numbers of churches, and prevented others from being built. (4) To induce people not to celebrate religious holy days or perform religious rituals. The state has been moderately successful in this endeavor. (5) To convince religious believers that their views are "wrong." The party has been highly unsuccessful in achieving this objective. (6) To mold citizens into militant atheists and new Soviet men and women. This effort has

been an almost total failure. Most people are simply uninterested in religion or anti-religion, and very few are anxious to take on the responsibility of becoming atheist propagandists.⁵⁸ For these reasons the Communist Party has been successful in achieving only some of its goals. Anti-religious programs have involved heavy costs, and atheist efforts have been more destructive than the authorities realized -- thus it appears that the erosion of religious beliefs has given rise to a moral vacuum in Soviet society. Anti-religious efforts have stimulated dissent, and in some instances transformed dissent into political opposition.

If there is to be a future for religion in the U.S.S.R. there will have to be a re-interpretation of Communist ideology. The Soviet Communists have had nearly six decades to purify their society and rid themselves of the dreaded disease called religion. After over five decades the state still has an estimated 50 million Russians who belong to the Orthodox church, and some 3 million Jews.⁵⁹ There are at least 20,000 religious societies functioning in Russia today, and those who practice radical or religious intolerance in any form are jailed.⁶⁰

A special correspondent for Christian Century, in a recent article entitled, "Religion in the Soviet Union On-the-Scene-Observations," corroborated these statistics and added that there are fifty churches operating in Moscow today. This is exactly the same number that existed ten years ago.⁶¹

Marx and Lenin firmly believed that religion could be phased out of the people's consciousness as the true socialist consciousness was phased in. It is obvious now that religion has not been phased out. There is in fact a pluralist quality about the Soviet Union today. This society is in a state of existence in which members of diverse ethnic racial, religious and social groups maintain an autonomous participation in and development of their traditional cultures. As one Soviet official recently stated, "the country cannot continue indefinitely to consider suspect the intelligence and loyalty of 50 million of its citizens."⁶² Religion, it appears, will have a future in the Soviet Union if the believers maintain steadfastness and piety in the face of persecution, inequalities, anti-religious propaganda and temptation, and until Communism has achieved a victory on a world-wide scale -- because religious influences still penetrate the Soviet Union from the outside.⁶³

Finally, and importantly, religion has always been a highly significant aspect of Soviet history and culture. It is this fact that Soviet officials now finally realize. Winston Churchill's oft-quoted epigram about the Soviet Union fits the modern relationship that exists today between religion and the state. He said that, "Russia is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."⁶⁴ Perhaps nowhere is the mystery and the enigma greater than in the area of a Soviet citizen's religious life. As far as theological observers of Soviet

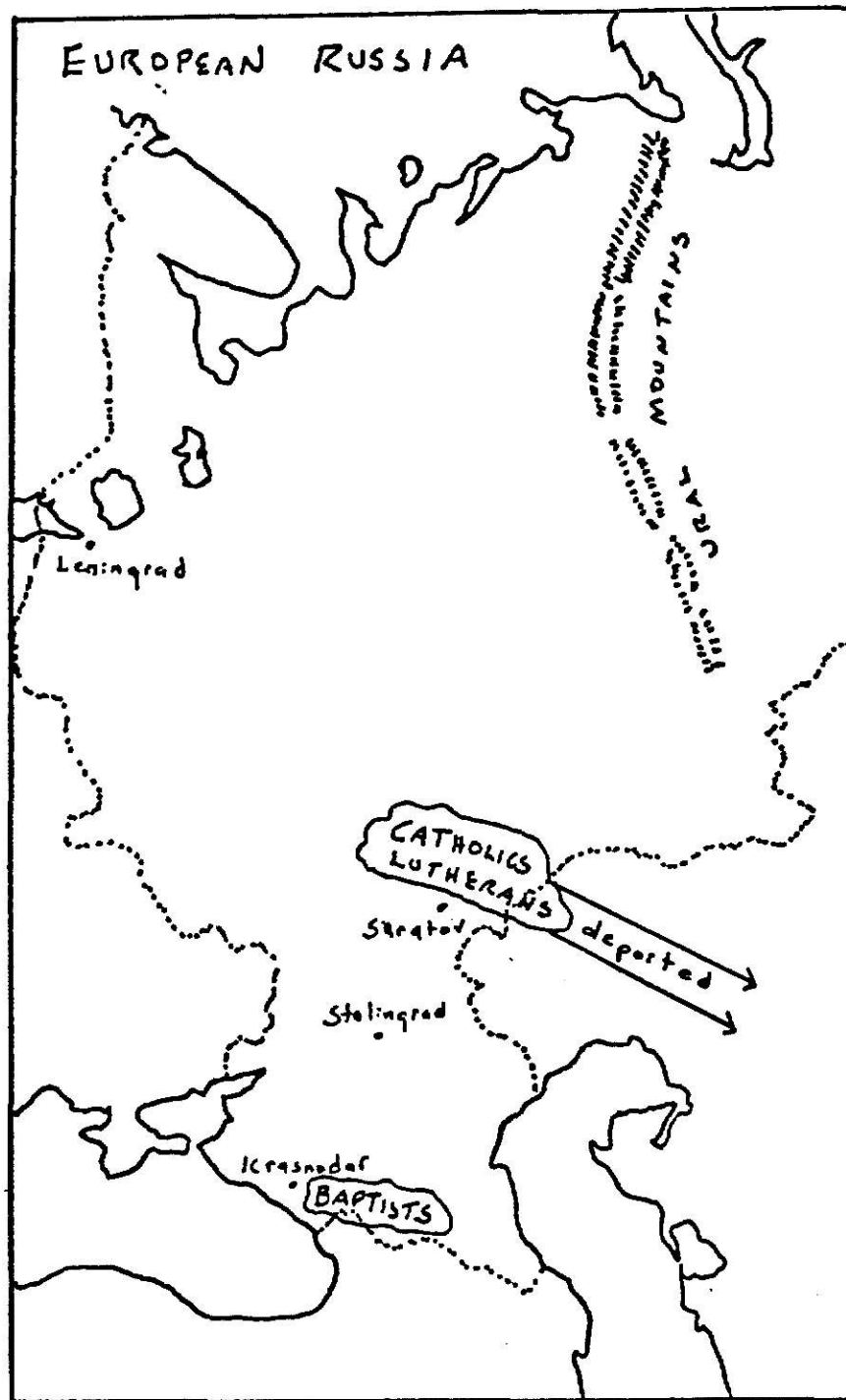
affairs are concerned it appears that the decade of the 1980's will be an extremely important period. It will be a period that will either see an end to the state's pressures on religious groups and sects and the incorporation of such groups into Soviet society without discrimination, or it will be a period in which the nightmare for the church will only be beginning.

Appendix I

Geographical Distribution of Religious Denominations in the U.S.S.R.

**THIS BOOK
CONTAINS
NUMEROUS PAGES
WITH DIAGRAMS
THAT ARE CROOKED
COMPARED TO THE
REST OF THE
INFORMATION ON
THE PAGE.**

**THIS IS AS
RECEIVED FROM
CUSTOMER.**



Source: Walter Kolarz, Religion in the Soviet Union (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), p. 79; David E. Powell, Anti-religious Propaganda in the Soviet Union (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1975), p. 160.



Source: Walter Kolarz, Religion in the Soviet Union (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), p. 205; David E. Powell, Anti-religious Propaganda in the Soviet Union (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1975), p. 163.

Appendix II

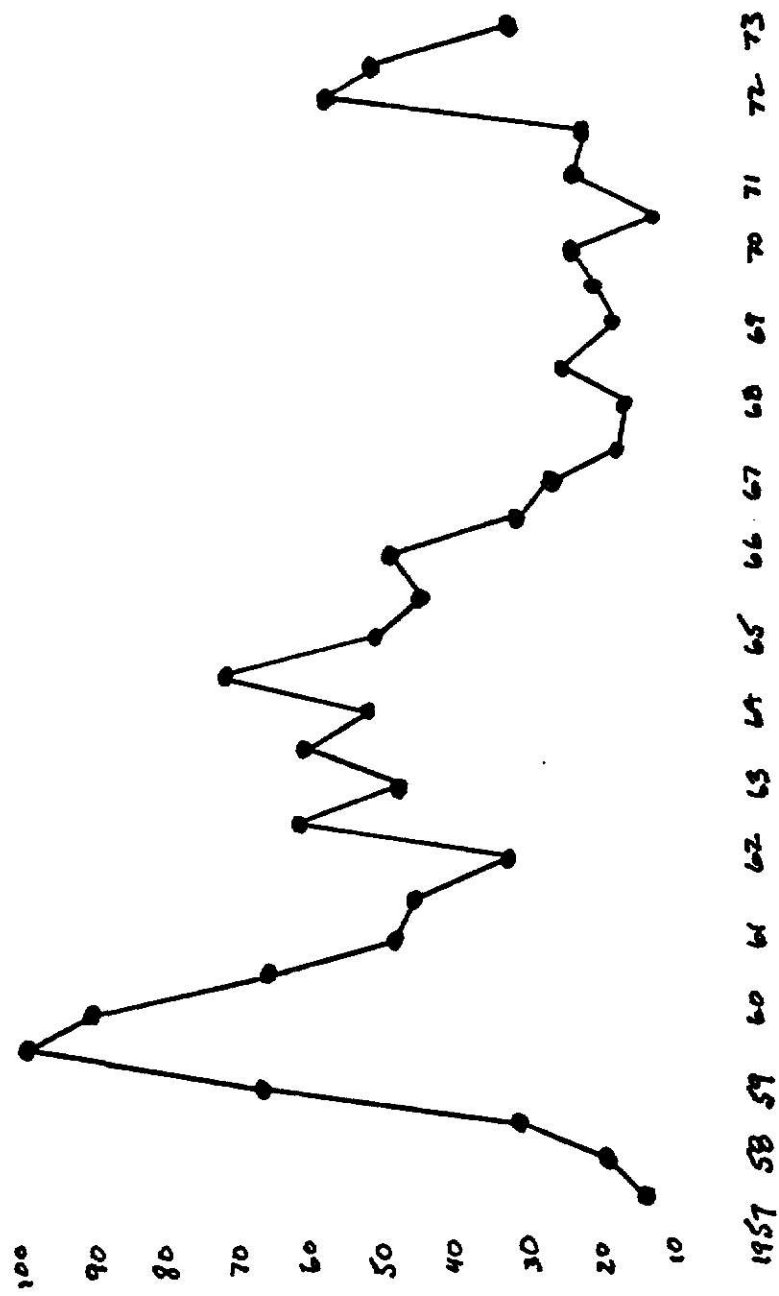
Anti-Religious Propaganda Charts and Believers, Churches and Synagogues Charts

Table 1.1 CHURCHES AND SYNAGOGUES IN THE U.S.S.R.

Year	Number of Orthodox Churches	Number of Synagogues
1914	54,000	
1917		1,034
1928	39,000	
1929-30		934
1941	4,200	
1945	16,000	
1948	15,000	
1956		450
1958	17,500	
1963		96
1966	7,500	60-62

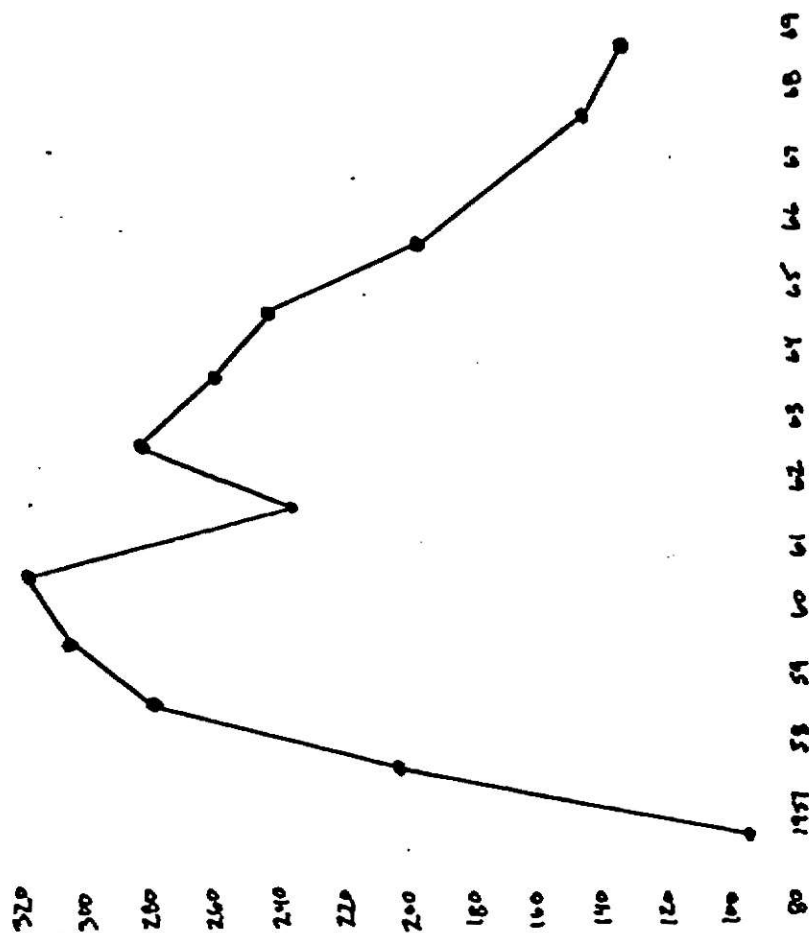
Sources: Robert Conquest, Religion in the U.S.S.R. (New York: Frederick A. Proeger, 1968), pp. 11, 20, 29, 37; Zvi Gitelman, "The Jews," Problems of Communism, Vol. XVI, No. 5 (September - October, 1967), p. 92, Walter Kolarz, Religion in the Soviet Union (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), p. 386; Joshua Rothenberg, Synagogues in the Soviet Union (Waltham, Mass.: Institute of East European Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, 1966), pp. 6-8; Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, "Religion in the U.S.S.R. After Khrushchev," in John W. Strong (ed.), The Soviet Union Under Brezhnev and Kosygin (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1971), pp. 135, 151; David E. Power, Anti-Religious Propaganda in the Soviet Union (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1975), p. 41.

Table 1.2 Anti-religious articles in the central press, 1957-1973.



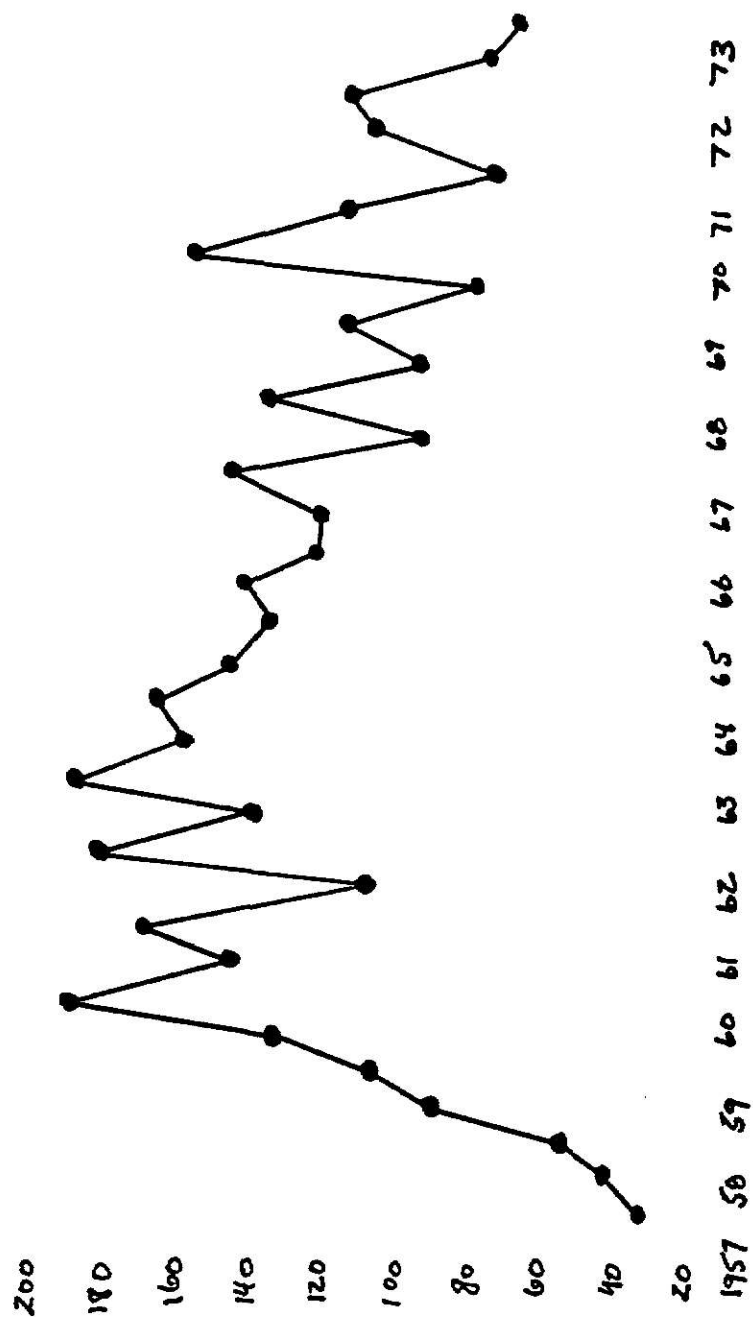
Source: David E. Powell, Anti-religious Propaganda in the Soviet Union (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1975), p. 28.

Table 1.3 Publication of anti-religious books, 1957-1969.



Source: David E. Powell, Anti-religious Propaganda in the Soviet Union (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1975), p. 89.

Table 1.4 Anti-religious articles in major Soviet journals, 1957-1973.



Source: David E. Powell, Anti-religious Propaganda in the Soviet Union (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1975), p. 90.

Table 1.5 Estimated Number of Believers (1964)

Religious Group	Number
Russian Orthodox	35,000,000
Moslems	15,000,000
Old Believers	5,000,000
Evangelical Christian Baptists	4,000,000
Roman Catholics	3,500,000
Lutherans	900,000
Jews	500,000
Calvinists	90,000
Mennonites	10,000
TOTAL	64,000,000

Source: Paul B. Anderson, testimony before the Sub-Committee on Europe, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, 88th Congress, Second Session, Recent Developments in the Soviet Bloc, Part I (January 27-30, 1964), pp. 100-101, David E. Powell, Anti-religious Propaganda in the Soviet Union (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1975, p. 135.

Table 1.6
Age/Sex Sect Membership Breakdown in the Byelorussian SSR, 1961-1963
(in percentages)

Group	Brest Province	Eastern Provinces of the BSSR			
		Mogilev	Gomel	Vitebsk	
Men	33.6	13.0	25.0	23.0	
Women	64.4	87.0	75.0	77.0	
Nonworking	10.3	47.0	53.0	60.0	
20-40 years	26.4	12.0	15.3	7.2	
40-50 years	13.5	--	--	--	
40-60 years	--	45.0	40.7	34.5	
50 years and older	60.1	--	--	--	
60 years and older	--	43.0	44.0	58.3	
Illiterate and semi-literate	71.4	65.0	55.0	35.3	

Source: A. I. Kilibanov, *Religioznoye Sektanstvo: Sovremennost* (Moscow, 1969);
p. 82. David E. Powell, *Anti-religious Propaganda in the Soviet Union*
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³Ibid., p. 131.

⁴Ibid., p. 132.

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⁶Ibid., p. 20.

⁷Ibid., p. 20.

⁸Kline, George L., Religious and Anti-religious Thought in Russia (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 138.

⁹Ibid., p. 140.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 141.

¹¹Ibid., p. 142.

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¹⁷Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 9.

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²⁵Ibid., p. 158.

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²⁷Ibid., p. 162.

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³⁰Ibid., p. 43.

³¹Ibid., p. 48.

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³³Ibid., p. 52.

³⁴Ibid., p. 57.

³⁵Ibid., p. 59.

³⁶Ibid., p. 61.

³⁷Rubin, Ronald I., The Unredeemed: Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), p. 57.

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⁴²N. Tarasenska, "My-ateisty," Pravda, January 12, 1967.

⁴³Huntington, Samuel P., Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 335.

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⁴⁵Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 50.

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⁴⁹Ibid., p. 104.

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ORGANIZED RELIGION AND THE STATE RELATIONS
IN THE SOVIET UNION

by

STEPHEN PRIBBLE LARKIN

B.S., Kansas State University, 1975

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Political Science

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1977

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Report is in essence to examine the relationship that currently exists today in the Soviet Union between the state and religion. In order to fully explore such a relationship the Report firstly examines Marxist-Leninist philosophy concerning Communism and religion.

The Report secondly deals with the Christian Churches in the Soviet Union and views the church from a legal standpoint as well as from a historical and present day standpoint.

The third part of the Report examines the relationship that exists today between Judaism and the Soviet Union. Likewise much time and effort was put into reviewing the Jewish situation under the Tsars--i.e., Alexander III (1881-1914), and Nicholas II (1894-1917).

The final section of the Report deals with the current relationship between religion and the state, and examines how propaganda and the various anti-religious campaigns will affect this future relationship. Why religion remains in the Soviet Union today is a key question dealt with in this Report--it is an important question given the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. How the state has and will deal with religion likewise is a valid and salient question. For there to be a future for religion in the Soviet Union the traditional Communist philosophy concerning religion must change.