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Soviet antireligious poster, entitled "You Cannot See God's Light": a grandmother points to an icon, but her grandson is more interested in life outside

Combating God and Grandma. The Soviet Antireligious Campaigns and the Battle for Childhood

by Julie deGraffenried[1]

About one month after seizing power, on 11 December 1917, the Bolshevik government produced its first significant piece of antireligious legislation. This act removed all control over education from the church, placing it into the hands of the government's Commissariat of Education. A week later, civil authorities succeeded the church as regulators of marriage, family, and children. In 1918, Lenin's Decree on Separation of Church from State prohibited religious education in any school, public or private, allowing only for private spiritual instruction. The next major antireligious legislation, in the late 1920s, excluded children from the practice of organised religion altogether. Beginning in the late 1950s, atheist education became a standard feature of general education for children. At the same time, authorities cautioned parents to protect their young ones from the dangerous spiritual influences of . . . grandmothers.

This essay asks the reader to think about the antireligious campaigns in the Soviet

From the Editor

It was a pleasure to welcome Keston members to the 2022 AGM, when Dr Julie deGraffenried gave an excellent talk to Keston members in the afternoon on anti-religious propaganda and the upbringing of children in the Soviet Union. Those who were not able to be present will now be able to read her text in this issue of the *Keston Newsletter* (pp.1-19).

Following on from the article about the Ukraine war in the last issue by Bishop Rowan Williams, this issue includes an article by two Russian professional historians about the response of Russian evangelicals to this crisis.

Before Michael Bourdeaux died, he gave me a tape on which Professor Leonard Schapiro's speech to the Keston AGM in 1983 had been recorded. For Michael this speech was of the greatest significance: Leonard Schapiro had understood the importance of the aims behind the founding of Keston in 1969, had helped obtain a short-term fellowship for Michael at his academic institution, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), and had then joined the Council of Management when Keston was finally founded. I, too, was a member of the Council right from the outset. At the time I worked for Leonard Schapiro as his research assistant, and remember attending Council meetings which were held at the LSE. When I handed this tape to Professor Kathy Hillman, Director of the Keston Center, she warned me not to try to play the tape as it was old and might break – and that would have been the end of that! Thanks to the help of experts at Baylor, the tape was processed and preserved. I then transcribed the text and have included it in this issue (pp.35-40).

In his speech, Leonard Schapiro referred to the case of a Russian rock musician, Valeri Barinov (see p.37) from Leningrad, where he and his fellow Baptists had been ministering to rough sleepers and drug addicts on the streets of the city. Valeri, the composer of a Christian rock opera *Trumpet Call*, had been harassed, imprisoned in a mental hospital and was later sentenced to 2½ years in a labour camp. Eventually in 1987 he was allowed to emigrate to the West, and soon after visited Keston, which had regularly reported on his case in the *Keston News Service* (*KNS*), and had supported a campaign for his release. There are a myriad reports in issues of *KNS*, all of which have been digitised by the Keston Center: it proved a fascinating task to read through these reports, which were emailed to my computer; I have included a fraction of them on pp.40-44.

Xenia Dennen

Also in this issue:

Union in a new way – as a battle for childhood – and lays out the possibilities inherent in such an approach. Historians have long viewed Soviet education and cultural policies as an attempt to mould children into "New Soviet Men and Women" by instilling certain values and political sensibilities into impressionable, young children. Rarely, however, do they regard the antireligious campaigns as part of this same effort to modernise childhood. The attempt to pull children away from ideologically harmful influences of faith and push them toward secularism and, ultimately, atheism, set up a conflict between public and private worlds, between state institutions and family. For the Soviet authorities, religion was incompatible with a modern Soviet childhood; for Soviet children and families, however, the issue appears to have been far more complicated.

One of the unique aspects of the Soviet Union, as it existed from 1917 to 1991, was its approach to religion. Marx famously called religion the "sigh of the oppressed" and "the opium of the people," while Vladimir Lenin called it a "sort of spiritual booze in which the slaves of capital drown their human image."[2] Despite Lenin's prerevolutionary assurances that socialist governance guaranteed freedom to practise or not practise any religion, the Bolshevik agenda included combating God (in any form) in a variety of ways in the days, months, and years following their ascension to power in October 1917. Many scholars have written about the methods, propaganda, consequences, legacies, dissidents, and heroes of the faith related to antireligious campaigns in the former Soviet Union. A topic that has received less systematic exploration, however, is the emphasis placed on children, childhood, and religion by the Bolshevik/Communist Party throughout the 20th century.

The potential in this project is immensely exciting and compelling, especially within the context of the history of Russia and the history of children and childhood. Historians of childhood look at how conceptions of childhood, definitions of "child" and "youth," and approaches to child-rearing have shifted profoundly over time and place. Many of the ideals of childhood taken for granted today developed over the last century and are quite specific to American culture. The history of childhood, which focuses on ideas about children and practices toward children, is often combined with children's history, which uses age as a primary category of analysis for understanding the past. Historians of children and childhood ask questions about the effects of events or ideas on children of the past, about children's understanding of and reactions to certain events or ideas, and how societies' ideas about children and childhood reflect a certain view of children's roles consistent with particular value systems or ideologies. It is a relatively new and dynamic interdisciplinary field, engendering studies by scholars of history, law, literature, film, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and religion, among others, as well as generating significant works by historians of Russia.[3] This project proposes uniting several lines of scholarship – Soviet

history, history of children and childhood, and history of religion – that have only occasionally intersected.

Such an approach will enrich the story of the Soviet antireligious campaigns told thus far, giving voice to children, who, despite comprising about one-third of modern-era populations, rarely have the power of voice in society. The campaigns also give us an additional means of understanding how Soviet authorities conceived of an ideal childhood and the complications they faced in its creation. A number of questions come to mind immediately: is it fair to say that those in charge of the antireligious campaigns aimed at forging or reshaping Soviet childhood in specific ways? Could it be that children experienced these campaigns in unique ways because of their age, position in the family, and position in society? Is it useful to look at the Soviet campaigns through this particular lens? What seems clear, even upon preliminary investigation, is that the drive to eradicate religion in children's lives was by no means a simple or uncontested project. Instead, the antireligious campaigns appear to have transgressed boundaries of public and private life in children's lives in significant ways, setting up a complex competition to redefine Soviet childhood.

What follows is both an overview of this argument and a case for future inquiry, rather than a completed study. The primary source analysis of Soviet law and antireligious propaganda engaged in here is heavily supplemented with anecdotal evidence drawn from other historians' work with primary source materials. A few notes on scope. First, the term "children" refers to those aged 16 and under, using Soviet-era law and practice as a guide. Second, the focus will be primarily on Russia and Christianity – more specifically, the Russian Orthodox Church and the small "sects" (or denominations) of Christianity that authorities considered so dangerous – occasionally throwing in examples relating to Islam and Judaism, with the acknowledgement that the Soviet Union eventually contained 14 other republics and dozens of confessional communities. Geography and faith community mattered intensely, yet focusing on Christianity makes sense as it would have been the religious background of the majority of children in Soviet Russia, the largest of the socialist republics.[4] Third, the project will not address questions of religion, such as whether or not Soviet authorities or faith communities created a specific theology of childhood or how Soviet campaigns affected roles of children or perspectives on childhood in Christian, Jewish, or Muslim traditions. Clearly, there remains much rich work here for scholars of religion.[5] Fourth, in this essay, the words "public", "private", "state", and "family", are used, acknowledging the highly mutable nature of these categories and ongoing debate over the existence of privacy in the Soviet context, but recognising as useful the distinctions between them made both by Soviet authorities and individuals.[6]

Soviet authorities, religion, and children

In beautifully understated fashion, Felix Corley writes that "religion *mattered* to

the Communist state."[7] Religion, like other trappings of prerevolutionary, capitalist society, was supposed to "wither away," unneeded in a communist new world. Separation of the church from the state and of the school from the church was a plank in the platform of Russian socialism long before 1917.[8] To accelerate the "withering" process, the newly formed and self-proclaimed Bolshevik government immediately began formulating plans that would continue to evolve over the next 70 years.

The first antireligious formal legislation appeared in January 1918, with the Decree on Separation of Church from State and of School from Church, sometimes referred to as the Decree on Freedom of Conscience, Church, and Religious Organisations. An act of "radical secularisation against the church hierarchy and apparatus" that removed the privilege, funding, and property of the Russian Orthodox Church, this decree also announced that "the school shall be separate from the Church" and forbade the teaching of religion in any public or private general education schools, though individuals could continue to receive or provide private religious instruction.[9] Simultaneously, the Bolsheviks sanctioned violence against targeted groups, such as priests, "easily identified" by villagers and outsiders alike. Some had their homes confiscated while others were publicly executed.[10] This persecution continued during the Civil War (1918-1921), culminating in the seizure of church valuables taken ostensibly to feed the starving during the terrible famine of the early 1920s and a series of show trials in 1922 in which dozens of "princes of the church" or clergy were charged with counterrevolutionary activities.[11] More will be said about this later, but keep in mind that Orthodox priests, for the most part, were married and had children – *lots* of them.[12]

The 1918 decree affected not only the 42,000 schools run by the Russian Orthodox Church but all schools, whether run by the state, city council, or private individuals, launching a radical change in curriculum for children across the country. The prerevolutionary curriculum had emphasised piety as much as loyalty to the tsarist regime by devoting 12 of 27 hours of weekly instructional time to religion, while primary and secondary schools had included compulsory church attendance and comportment grading, classes on religious knowledge, prayer, and moral education.[13] Reactions to the 1918 decree were mixed. For non-Orthodox children, the 1918 law promised unprecedented protection from discriminatory grading, unjust retention, and exclusion from higher education.[14] Parents and children of the intelligentsia lauded the triumph of a "rational" or secular education and the privatisation of religion, while some Orthodox became furious by the thought that the *Zakon Bozhii* (law of God) would no longer be taught in school.[15] For many children, religious decorations in schools came down and lessons in "religious knowledge" ended. For all the law foreshadowed unprecedented state intervention in education, culture, and family.

Susan Reid points out that "in Soviet terms there was nothing shameful about attempting to intervene in the terms of

everyday life" because such intervention was "a legitimate part of the effort to build communism."[16] Children, in particular, were considered an integral part of the "political legitimacy and viability of the Soviet state" from its inception.[17] The Marxist emphasis on change-the-environment, change-the-person meant that of all age groups, the Bolsheviks' best shot at creating the New Soviet Man began with its youngest inhabitants: children. A tutelary state could fill the blank slates (or empty beehives, as writer Maxim Gorky put it), moulding from birth these future builders of communism through proper institutions and upbringing (*vospitanie*). Children became both object and symbol of a super-parent state that delegated but did not hand over the right to parent to biological mothers and fathers.[18] The exploitative, patriarchal family, like institutional religion, was part of the bourgeois past to be superseded by state care and guidance.[19]

The state's creation of a Soviet childhood was quite an ambitious project considering the vast majority of its citizenry were peasants, with conceptions of childhood common to agricultural societies – in other words, children were labour (highly gendered labour at that), and family and religious practices emphasised obedience in order to protect property; further, rural hygiene, medical resources, and practices meant high infant and child mortality rates. The Party sought to modernise that childhood, to bring it more in line with ideas about childhood emerging in the West in the late 19th nineteenth and early 20th centuries: children should be safe and protected both from physical harm such as disease or superstition, and from the "adult" world by being in school. The communist variation of modernity involved massive state intervention in making this happen and an expectation, from the beginning, that children were "not just… recipients of nurture, but… an audience for political ideas."[20] Children should be *activists*, models for the adults around them.[21]

The Party issued nearly one hundred decrees related to social services, many of them affecting children, in their first five years of power.[22] State-run publishing houses disseminated vast quantities of material on prenatal and infant care, discipline of children, and childcare.[23] Old bourgeois authorities, including priests, teachers, and parents, were to be challenged. As quickly as possible, children were to be in centralised, state schools designed to discipline the body and instill the sense of time so key to "modern living."[24] Overall, Catriona Kelly describes the governing image of Soviet childhood in the first decade of Soviet power as rationalistic, anti-bourgeois, pro-child/anti-adult, and steeped in class struggle and politics.[25]

To come full circle: the 1918 legislation demonstrates how the Bolsheviks connected secular education and the attack on the Church with a modern Soviet childhood. Free education for all children – and an education free of religious influence, but packed with correct socialist morality, established by a 1919 act creating the United School of Labour[26] – was an integral part of a larger programme to modernise Soviet life. Secularisation, in this case, was not simply compartmentalisation (that is, check your faith at the

door) but a secularisation meant to go home and extend to family and private life.[27] In fact, Leon Trotsky called the social education of children one of the three major elements in the "complete transformation of morals" in the Soviet Union.[28] Good communists were not born, but *made*. So, for that matter, were good believers or non-believers.[29]

To enforce the 1918 decree, Soviet authorities created and empowered a number of institutions, most notably the Commission to Establish Separation of Church and State in 1922.[30] Headed by Emelyan Yaroslavsky, the Commission brought in special representatives to "consult" on specific points with the committee; one of these was Nadezhda Krupskaya. Aside from being Lenin's wife, Krupskaya was also the foremost voice on children in the first decade of the Soviet Union. Her consistent involvement as consultant suggests that policies and practices related to children occurred with some regularity. It should be noted that, at this point, secular education did not mean atheist instruction or an end to the private religious education of children.[31] Krupskaya and Anatoli Lunacharsky, head of the Commissariat of Enlightenment, believed that a nonreligious, scientific content in school was sufficient and that the "special implanting of antireligious views into each child" was unnecessary to achieve their goal of a rational education, though they cautioned teachers to carefully observe children's free play to monitor progress.[32] In fact, their attitude here seems almost tame in comparison to the intensive campaign launched by the *Evsektsiya* (the Jewish Section of the Communist Party) against Jewish religious education. Lamenting the arrest of teachers and school closure, Rabbi Moshe Eisenstadt wrote to an American Jewish aid association in 1926 that "our younger generation is being torn from us by force."[33] While synagogues and public houses of prayer remained open, the *heder* (primary school) and *yeshiva* (upper school) were publicly liquidated, essentially disappearing by the late 1920s. The patient approach might be acceptable for adults ensconced in their faith, but not for young, impressionable students.[34] The aggressive tone of the Jewish Section echoed the message of the V.I. Lenin All-Union Young Pioneer Organisation, or the Young Pioneers, the Party's organisation for children aged 10 -14 founded in 1922. The Pioneers encouraged state-sanctioned child activism in the 1920s, asking children to participate in all sorts of campaigns intended to build Soviet socialism, including the struggle against backward religion or mysticism and for the promotion of atheism.

State authorities, however, faced a critical problem in making their ideal Soviet childhood a reality in the 1920s: lack of resources. Schools, nurseries, and childcare facilities promised to the countryside did not materialise – even when requested.[35] While the conversion of church buildings into schools addressed the problem in some places, in others, local Party officials foiled such actions by selling dismantled churches for scrap.[36] The decree against religious instruction made tsarist-era textbooks and curricula unusable, but there was neither money nor paper available to

replace an entire country's books in the 1920s. Further, about half the teachers in primary schools were children of clergy who tended to ignore the directives; yet the state had no personnel with which to replace them.[37] Students' poverty thwarted state plans as well: nearly half of the school-aged children in Russia did not attend school, either because they could not afford school fees or because they lacked proper clothing and shoes.[38]

Such overwhelming needs could not be subsidised by Soviet authorities, so "traditionalist"-dominated village councils or clergy took advantage, providing notebooks, textbooks, and hot meals to attract students to the schools they still controlled.[39] This coincided with an active effort by rural Orthodox clergy to appeal to youngsters, organising discussion circles, children's choirs, nighttime parties for older children, sports teams, dances, craft circles, zoo trips or other excursions, and children's libraries, often well-supplied with biscuits and sweets. Circles of the Baby Jesus and Baby Mary competed with the Young Pioneers for the attention of children.[40] Participation in these events, no doubt, marks children's contribution to the religious revival of the 1920s.

This was too much. In 1928, the Commission to Establish Separation of Church and State took its first steps to address the problem, prohibiting religious organisations from setting up field trips or playgrounds, and forbidding children to participate in religious choirs.[41] The big blow fell in April 1929 with the Law on Religious Associations, which introduced sweeping limitations on faith communities in the Soviet Union. Religious associations were prohibited from teaching religion to children, prohibited from holding special events for children, prohibited from doing charity work, and prohibited from organising libraries.[42] The Law on Religious Associations coincided with a massive drive to collectivise agriculture, an event accompanied by a class struggle against kulaks and a fresh round of attacks on religion. Once again, priests and their families were targeted, disenfranchised, and deported.[43]

By 1933, the excesses of the class struggle, sometimes referred to as the Cultural Revolution, were rather abruptly halted. Joseph Stalin announced the "accomplishment" of socialism because of successful industrialisation and collectivisation, thus diminishing the need for activist children. In the 1930s, children could finally enjoy the bountiful, ideal "happy childhood" provided by the state and Papa Stalin. Authority figures and the family were restored as critical elements in the lives of Soviet children, an order that reflected both the paternal state and the fact that the state could not provide all the institutions needed to replace the family. Childhood remained politicised, through directed activism and, especially, children's role as visible symbol of Soviet success.

But beneath the surface of realised socialism lay the threat of "enemies of the people" and with it, Stalin's Terror. For a third time, a wave of repression struck clergy and their families. By 1941, for example, only one in forty Old Believer bishops remained free from

imprisonment.[44] In 1937, an NKVD operational order mandated the arrest of wives and children of "enemies of the people", with babies and toddlers going to prison nurseries, 4-15-year-olds to state orphanages, and children over 15 to be assessed individually and sentenced according to "socially dangerous" qualities.[45] While children of the repressed experienced the effects of the Terror within their homes, many more children were to feel the Terror through spatial change. Nathaniel Davis observes that the greatest wave of church closing occurred in the late 1930s; by 1939, only two to three hundred churches remained, down from 50,000 in the prerevolutionary era.[46]

War brought a liberalisation of state treatment of religion in the 1940s, though the relaxation of policy did not show up meaningfully in state-produced children's culture. Priests were once again allowed, however, to proselytise and instruct groups of children, and a few Islamic regions felt emboldened enough to request approval to open *mektebs* (primary schools) and to teach the Muslim faith and Qur'an in school.[47] The period 1945-1954 saw the regimentation and control of religion, rather than brutality, as state-approved bodies representing the Russian Orthodox Church and other Christian sects appeared.[48] In the wake of three decades of repression, however, the Orthodox Church's postwar revival amongst laypeople was largely a rural and female phenomenon.[49]

The year 1954 marked the beginning of a new, vigorous campaign against religion under Nikita Khrushchev, a drive that fits with his efforts to modernise rural areas, but contrasts with his relative liberalisation of culture and political repression.[50] At the 22nd Party Congress in 1960 and in years following, Khrushchev himself emphasised the importance of scientific-atheist education, calling for special attention to be given to children and adolescents.[51] At the same time authorities prohibited children from participating in or attending services altogether, a directive so contentious that it caused division among various Christian groups.[52]

The post-Stalin Soviet view of children embraced a fully modern communist childhood, with the vast majority of children in school and in youth organisations by the late 1950s, infant/child mortality rates dropping rapidly, and a plethora of social services and child-centred institutions provided by the state. In part a revival of the "happy childhood" trope of the 1930s, minus the father-figure of Stalin, Soviet society, authorities, and culture essentially idealised children and childhood for the remainder of the Soviet era as a time of innocence and privilege. Children's happiness demonstrated Soviet power and commitment to world peace.

Official concerns about children and religion reflect this view. The Communist Youth League (or Komsomol) stoutly declared that "no parent should be allowed to cripple a child spiritually" as "freedom of conscience does not apply to children."[53] Khrushchev asserted the need to "protect children and adolescents from the influence of clergymen" while the Council of Religious Cults pledged to "guard against the influence of church people and sect members on youth and

children".[54] Amended throughout the 1960s, Article 227 of the Russian Criminal Code made it a crime to run a group "whose activity, carried on under the guise of preaching religious beliefs and performing religious ceremonies, is connected with causing harm to citizens' health, or with any other infringement of the person or right of citizens, or with inducing citizens to refuse social activity or the performance of civic duties, or with drawing minors into such a group."[55] Thus, the law criminalised baptising infants or children (baptism was said to make babies ill, or even kill them), inviting a child to a church, or stopping children from joining the Young Pioneers. The Fundamentals of Legislation of the USSR and Union Republics of Marriage and Family (or "Fundamentals") in 1968 allowed the state to remove children from unfit parents – those who were abusive, neglectful, immoral, antisocial, alcoholic, drug-addicted, in dissident religious sects, or who taught religion to their children.[56]

A final wave of antireligious measures began in the late 1970s in response to factors including the end of détente, criticism from Pope John Paul II, and the Islamic Revolution in Iran. As in earlier years, children of believing families once again experienced persecution or loss of parents. Gorbachev ushered in a relaxation of antireligious policies, particularly in the years surrounding the millennial anniversary of Christianity in Russia, celebrated in 1988, which lasted until the fall of the Soviet Union.

Over the course of the Soviet era, authorities adhered to and generally achieved the establishment of a modern model of communist childhood, while overcoming many obstacles, some self-inflicted. For the most part, their views, policies, and practices on children and religion between 1917 and 1991 fit into their larger project: the creation of a Soviet childhood. Even a brief survey of children, childhood, and religion, such as is presented here, appears to indicate plenty of evidence of debate, policies, and actions in the antireligious campaigns specifically targeting and affecting children to warrant further investigation.

Gods and Grandmas

State authorities identified the family as a particular stumbling block to their efforts to create and mould New Soviet Children. While official policies and laws often identified ignorant parents and predatory priests as problematic, antireligious propagandists consistently pointed out the dangers of home and family. More specifically, propagandists targeted believing grandmothers.

A survey of antireligious propaganda posters, for example, reveals the regular use of images of *babushki* in conjunction with images of children. Dmitri Moor's "Protect your children from the tenacious clutches of the Evangelical Baptist scoundrels" (1928) features two small Pioneers, a boy and a girl, all in red save for their black shoes and the boy's black hair in the center foreground. Surrounding them are seven ghostly old ladies in white, their skeletal hands reaching out in an attempt to clasp the children.[57]

In one of the most famous, N. B. Terpsikhorov's "Religion is Poison: Protect the Children" (1930), a black clad elderly woman pulls the braid of a clearly distressed blond girl; while her gnarled finger points toward a dilapidated church in the back left, the child's open hands stretch out in opposition, toward a modern school building, complete with horn-blowing Pioneer and flying airplane to represent technological progress.[58]

Posters in the post-Stalin era depicted grandmas taking children to church, secretly teaching children the Gospel, baptising babies under the nose of unobservant or indifferent parents, and preventing children from joining the Young Pioneers.[59] Trunev's "Sect" (1975) shows anthropomorphised fish being lured by the promise of a ticket to heaven on a giant fishhook. While one of the fish is an elderly man that wears vest and cap, three others are elderly, black-kerchiefed women; one of them clutches a tiny fish by the fin.[60] While that grandmother acts out of gullibility, the one in Travin's "You Cannot See God's Light" (1975) is less ignorant [poster printed on p.1 of this *Keston Newsletter*. *Ed*.]. She angrily pulls her grandson's arm, gesturing toward the icon with her other hand; her grandson leans away from her towards a well-lit window, gazing longingly at the Young Pioneer parade in the street.[61]

Clearly, propagandists were alarmed by what they viewed as grandma's negative influence on children. They were probably correct to be concerned. Plenty of anecdotal evidence and oral history supports the role of grandmothers in

Trunev's antireligious poster "Sect"

transmitting religious values to grandchildren, particularly in the postwar period.[62] They baptised grandchildren, sometimes without parents' knowledge or consent, told children stories based on religious tradition, or taught children prayers to say. And because many children recall having a special affection for their protective, good-hearted, forgiving grandmothers, any association with religion was all the more positive.[63]

Ironically, grandma's presence at home reflected realities about family structures, Soviet housing, and migration patterns. Extended families, especially couples with a young child living with one or two parents, were extremely common in the Soviet Union.[64] A survey of Muscovites born in the 1960s shows that one-third lived with a grandparent.[65] This was the case in Central Asia, amongst Islamic households, as well.[66] This was due to a variety of factors, including housing

shortages, a perennial problem in the Soviet era.[67] During waves of migration from rural to urban areas, *babushka* came from the village to live with her children in the city, bringing her faith with her. Often this was because parents requested it. Despite Soviet authorities' intent to provide child care for all children, there simply were not enough spaces for them in state-run nurseries or preschools.[68] For a large percentage of working parents, bringing a grandmother in from the village to cook, shop, clean, and babysit was a good solution.[69]

Thus, the state was in the unenviable position of having to vilify *babushka*, a useful, if not always beloved, member of the household and in the postwar era, most likely a war widow. Occasionally this resulted in sensational, headline-grabbing stories about child sacrifice and penitential murder, such as the woman accused of beating her grandson to death while in a fanatical religious state.[70] More frequently, however, propaganda depicted the grandmother figure as simply misguided and backward. Was this an effective tactic and why was it thought to be so? What was the effect on children of the well-documented feminisation of Orthodoxy?[71] To be sure, generational conflict long played a role in Soviet propaganda; sons educated in communist mores were expected to replace their fathers. Anecdotally, however, there seems to have been an exchange of sorts occurring between grandmothers and grandchildren in the home: children got to take care of their often illiterate elders, showing them how to navigate urban transportation, shopping, and entertainment, while grandmothers provided care and distraction at home.[72] This reciprocity complicated the propagandistic message: perhaps grandma's lack of modernity confirmed what the state proclaimed about the backwardness of religion, but the generally positive affective association generated by grandparent-child relationships blunted the "danger" portrayed in antireligious propaganda. This relationship, and the meanings of female transmission of faith, both deserve further attention by scholars.

Antireligious propaganda exposes home and family as problematic for the Soviet authorities. While the Soviet family was supposed to play a crucial role in socialising the socialist child, the campaigns against religion show that the family was not always a reliable partner in this task.[73] The state recognised this difficulty

"'Miraculous' heavenly phenomena have down-to-earth explanations," reads a Soviet antireligious poster. A child points to the words "it's clear".

and blamed churches for exploiting the family for religious purposes.[74] In the mid-1960s, a Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults official in Turkmenistan went so far as to report that atheist school instruction mattered not at all in the face of family influence among Muslims.[75]

Memoirs and oral histories are more mixed than this official's description. Some informants report of their families that "we were all atheists" while others remember the "everyday reality" of faith being played out at home rather than in public.[76] Many memories fall somewhere in between: "My upbringing wasn't atheist, it was just ordinary: no one in my friends' families celebrated religious holidays or went to church. If anything like that had gone on, it would have been laughed at."[77] The antireligious campaigns and reactions to them blurred the borders between public and private, the personal and the political – and children were in a pivotal position in the borderlands. Further exploration may help us better understand the limits and capabilities of Soviet policy and culture to affect children and childhood.

According to antireligious propaganda, religion and education stood in opposition to one another. Even more so than the family, the state envisioned the school as playing a key role in socialising children. This held true for antireligious/pro-atheist education as well. Lack of resources and personnel strained these efforts in the 1920s, but by the Khrushchev era, schools and their faculty became the faces of antireligious efforts for many children.

The Soviet Union never intended to eradicate values; instead, it meant to replace them. Khrushchev even arranged socialist values such as collectivism, discipline, sacrifice, honesty, and modesty into a moral code.[78] At various times in the Soviet era, teachers were asked not just to encourage socialist values and denigrate religion, but to teach atheism. Authorities expected these lessons to affect home life via children and faculty; in fact, teachers were sometimes dispatched to question or correct parents suspected of practicing religion. For children of believing families, this created a tension between home and school that could affect not only their school performance, but relationships at home as well. As Mikhail Men, son of Fr Aleksandr Men, recalls of his early adolescent years, "It was very difficult both for my sister and me to study at school because there they taught one interpretation, and in our family we heard another."[79]

The methods by which teachers instructed children in these topics deserve to be studied further. A systematic review of children's literature, textbooks, science experiments, field trips, and toys used to teach atheism would help illuminate this subject.[80] Might the emphasis in school present an opportunity for children to confront a question of belief they may not have otherwise? Did teachers' encouragement to correct ignorant elders channel an inherent rebelliousness or hostility toward authority in appropriate ways? Or was it just confusing to children? After all, the same regime that asked children to question religious beliefs in the home prioritised an

"orderly, tranquil private life [as] a fundamental requirement for the ideal citizen" in most other respects.[81] Discord at home, according to Khrushchev, only distracted from state-building goals.

Such instruction sometimes evolved into active persecution of believing students, though it is unclear why, how, and how often. Anecdotal evidence tells us that some students experienced ridicule from peers, shaming in wall newspapers, in-class humiliation by teachers, undeservedly poor grades, in-school interrogations from police – even teacher-sanctioned beatings by other students – while others escaped such cruelty.[82] The long-term effects of such persecution, on the accused child, on peers and other observers, and on instructors, are largely unknown. The relationship to the longstanding practice of self-criticism and a larger Soviet culture of denunciation merits exploration.[83]

Even the physical spaces of childhood were affected by the antireligious campaigns. Occasionally authorities converted churches into schools or Young Pioneer clubhouses. Moscow's historic Danilov Monastery was transformed into an NKVD reception centre for children accused of crimes or removed from their parents.[84] How might children have interpreted this? Did state institutions or families acknowledge or ignore the shift? This aspect of landscape Sovietisation deserves more attention.

Some of the most striking antireligious images, such as the Terpsikhorov and Travin posters, used light and dark as well as figure positioning to suggest faith and Soviet-ness as a dichotomous either/or choice. In both images, the poster is visually divided in half, as grandma leans toward the dimly-lit past and child to the bright future. Undoubtedly, some people accepted the Soviet line that faith and modernity were incompatible.[85] For others, however, "either/or" images obscured lived experiences.

While sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses or Pentecostals could be portrayed as foreign, Orthodoxy could not. For many, then, to be Soviet and Orthodox was not necessarily contradictory, despite messages from the state.[86] Even the village church and village club could coexist without competing, with young people attending a church festival then a movie at the club.[87] As another example, families dealt with membership in the Young Pioneers in varying ways. While it is certain that some religious families prohibited their children from joining, evidence demonstrates that some believing children chose to join, with or without parental approval.[88] Interviewing Evangelical Christians in Siberia, April French encountered a mother who eventually recalled that oh yes, one of her daughters *had* been a Pioneer. "I paid no attention to it," she commented.[89] The ways in which children invested their associations with meaning and negotiated potential conflict at home and at school is worth further study. Adept at adaptation, many children learned to "speak Bolshevik" when needed and to move smoothly between various worlds. Their unique position, at the crux of the state-family relationships, both necessitated and honed these skills. Flexibility and adaptation could not always prevent suffering.

Though antireligious propaganda suggested religion endangered children, being a part of a believing family placed children at risk of state persecution. Yet we know little about the children of clergy in the broader context of Soviet "enemies of the people." When clergy were disenfranchised, it meant they had no right to work, no state insurance, no pension, no medical care, no housing, no rations, and their children had no right to an education. They were portrayed in the press as vermin, reptiles, and dogs.[90] Vera Vorontsova, born in 1909 into an Orthodox clergy family, noted that in the early years of Soviet power, "I already sensed that people didn't treat us the way they treated other children. And the older I got, the more strongly I sensed this… That's the way it was."[91] In a 1932 letter to the Russian Red Cross from 12 siblings: "Maybe our father is being punished for being a priest, but what have we done? Why should children endure emotional pain and physical hardship? Use your authority to provide a little bit of joy on the 15th Anniversary of the Revolution. Show us that everything that's being written and said to refute the bourgeois lies is more than pretty words."[92]

The ways in which these children understood and coped with their experiences has been little explored. For example, did the longtime tradition of intermarriage among Russian Orthodox clergy help or hurt these children? How did the "politics of forgetfulness" or a faith community's emphasis on holy suffering play a role in helping children survive? From the state's perspective, one might question the usefulness of this particular deviant childhood and the ways in which it was used to acknowledge differences in children's lives and legitimise the state's conceptions of childhood. Lev Kopelev was born into a Jewish family in 1911 in Ukraine. Kopelev's Orthodox nanny secretly took little Lyova to church and taught him that his parents "belonged to the bad faith of the Yids." By 1923, at the age of 12, he recalls having "lost God" altogether: he had never really believed in the Jewish God of his grandparents, but in the Orthodox God and then the Lutheran God of his successive nannies. As Kopelev approached the age of 13, his grandfather upped the ante, promising Lyova a bicycle if he would say one prayer at his upcoming bar mitzvah. Kopelev went back to his Young Pioneer troop, deeply conflicted about what to do, knowing that his instructions were to espouse atheism. The whole troop debated Lyova's predicament. Some of his friends urged him to say the prayer, take the bicycle, and use it for the revolution. Others advised him to be a hero and withstand cultic pressure. Sensing her son's distress, Kopelev's mother finally proposed that he be "sick" on his 13th birthday, and he complied. Having avoided the bar mitzvah and forfeited the bike, Kopelev reflected on his disappointment: he didn't feel much like a "valorous champion of atheism."[93]

One of the most important things that focusing on children and ideas of childhood can do is to remind us of the *many* possible responses to and perspectives on official policies and actions. The Soviet antireligious campaigns, meant to act upon children and shape their childhoods

according to specific plans, also unleased powerful opportunities for children to exert agency and created a distinctive space for family-state interaction in both public and private spheres. Further, they reveal the limits of state power to predict or fully control individual actions. Though debates about childhood are ongoing in the former Soviet Union, in this particular case, it seems that the Soviet state may have won several battles over 70 years, but God and Grandma won the war.

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1. Thanks to Michael Bourdeaux, Wallace Daniel, Dominic Erdozain, April French, Adina Johnson, and Larisa Seago for helpful comments and suggestions. Thanks also to the Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society at Baylor University where initial thoughts about this essay were shared at the 2016 Keston Lecture.
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3. For an overview of the field, see essays in *The Journal of the History of Children and Youth* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2008). Pivotal works on Russia, children and childhood history include Lisa Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades: Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia,* 1917-1932 (London: Routledge-Falmer, 2001) and Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2007)
4. Felix Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 13
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7. Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 3.
8. "Programma Rossiiskoi sotsial-demokraticheskoi rabochei partii, 1903," in *Zakonodatel'stvo o religioznykh kul'takh: Sbornik materialov i dokumentov* (Moscow: Yuridicheskaya literatura, 1971), 20-21.
9. First quote from William Husband, "*Godless Communists": Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 47; second quote from "Ob otdelenii tserkvi ot gosudarstva i shkoly ot tserkvi, dekret Soveta Narodnykh Komissarov ot 23 yanvarya 1918 g.," in *Zakondatel'stvo o religioznykh kul'takh,* 54.
10. Cathy Frierson and Semyon Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 26-28.
11. Frierson and Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag*, 73-74.
12. Examples of letters from priests' children, all of which reference numerous siblings, ibid., 74.
13. Kelly, *Children's World*, 30, 522-24; Husband, "*Godless Communists,"* 80. Nichols and Stavrou state that the Russian Orthodox Church operated 46 percent of primary schools in Russia in 1905. Robert L. Nichols and Theofanis George Stavrou, *Russian Orthodoxy under the Old Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 7.
14. "Decree of the Communist State Organization of the Baikal Region on the Separation of School and Church, 26 February 1918," in Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 17.
15. Glennys Young, *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Village* (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 75.
16. Susan Reid, "The Meaning of Home: 'The Only Bit of the World You Can Have to Yourself,'" in Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism*, 152.
17. Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades*, 161. Gorky's beehive analogy in the next sentence is quoted in Kirschenbaum, 162.

18. Herschel Alt and Edith Alt, *Russia's Children: A First Report on Child Welfare in the Soviet Union* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1959), 94.
19. Literally: the 1900 Civil Code gave parents absolute rights and control over their children. Kelly, *Children's World*, 27.
20. Ibid., 62.
21. Catriona Kelly, "'Shaping the Future Race': Regulating the Daily Life of Children in Early Soviet Russia," in *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*, ed. Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 257.
22. Liubov Denisova, *Rural Women in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*, trans. Irina Mukhina (New York: Rutledge, 2010), 165
23. Kelly, *Children's World*, 371.
24. Kelly, "'Shaping the Future Race,'" 259.
25. Kelly, *Children's World*, 76. She points out the "emboldened, politicised" children in the 1920s literature of Mikhail Zoshchenko, Vera Inber, and Evgeni Zamiatin, in Kelly, "'Shaping the Future Race,'" 273-74.
26. Husband, "*Godless Communists*," 80.
27. Sonja Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011) 208.
28. Kelly, "'Shaping the Future Race,'" 256. Trotsky's quote from 1923.
29. Ya. A. Karpovsky, quoted in David E. Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union: A Study of Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1975), 72. Karpovsky; "Children are not born atheists or believers, they become one or the other under the influence of their environment or upbringing."
30. Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 50.
31. Husband, "*Godless Communists*," 80; "RSFSR NKVD, 22 Sept. 1923 letter to Yarolslavksy, head of CSCS, from Ya. Peters, GPU East Division," in Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 40.
32. Powell, Antireligious Propaganda, 37; Husband, "Godless Communists," 80; "Letters on Method" from Narkompros, 1926, in Kelly, "'Shaping the Future Race,'" 267.
33. Quoted in David E. Fishman, "Judaism in the USSR, 1917-1930: The Fate of Religious Education," in *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (Essex, England: Frank Cass, 1995), 252.
34. Fishman, "Judaism in the USSR," 251-53, The *haderim* went underground for a few years, funded by the American Jewish community, then disappeared entirely.
35. Denisova, *Rural Women*, 165, 73.
36. Ibid., 133.
37. Husband, "*Godless Communists*," 80, 82.
38. Ibid., 84-85.
39. Young, *Power and the Sacred*, 76; Husband "*Godless Communists*," 84-85.
40. Young, *Power and the Sacred*, 164-65; William C. Fletcher, *A Study in Survival: The Church in Russia, 1927-1943* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 46.
41. "Commission to Establish Separation of Church and State Protocol no. 102, 27 June 1928," in Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 60.
42. "O religioznykh ob'edineniyakh, postanovlenie VTsIK i SNK RSFSR ot 8 aprelya 1929 g.," in *Zakondatel'stvo o religioznykh kul'takh,* 83-97.
43. Irina Korovushkina Paert, "Memory and Survival in Stalin's Russia: Old Believers in the Urals during the 1930s-50s," in *On Living Through Soviet Russia*, ed. Daniel Bertaux, Paul Thompson, and Anna Rotkirch (London: Routledge, 2004), 198.
44. Paert, "Memory and Survival," 198.
45. Frierson and Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag*, 156-62.
46. Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy*, 2nd. ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003), 12-13.
47. Fletcher, *A Study in Survival,* 114; Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 353.
48. Miriam Dobson, "Child Sacrifice in the Soviet Press: Sensationalism and the 'Sectarian' in the Post-Stalin Era," *Russian Review* 73, no. 2 (April 2014): 243.
49. Denisova, *Rural Women*, 135.
50. A four-month campaign from July to November 1954 was followed up by an extended, lengthy campaign beginning in 1959. See "O krupnykh nedostatkakh v nauchno-ateisticheskoi propagande i merakh ee uluchsheniya, postanovlenie TsK KPSS ot 7 iyulya 1954 g." and "Ob oshibkakh v provedenii nauchno-ateisticheskoi propagandy sredi naseleniya, postanovlenie TsK KPSS ot 10 noyabrya 1954 g.," in *Zakondatel'stvo o religioznykh kul'takh,* 34-39, 40-45.

51. See, for example, “Otchetnyi doklad tsentral’nogo komiteta XXII s”ezdu partii” and “O meropriyatiyakh po usileniyu ateisticheskogo vospitaniya naseleniya,” in *Zakondatel’stvo o religioznykh kul’takh,* 46, 47-51.
52. Constantin Prokhorov, “The State and the Baptist Churches in the USSR (1960-1980),” in *Counter-Cultural Communities: Baptistic Life in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Keith G. Jones and Ian M. Randall (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 13; Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 184-85; Denisova, *Rural Women*, 137; Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style*, 2007.
53. Quoted from Izvestiya in Donald A. Lowrie and William C. Fletcher, “Khrushchev’s Religious Policy, 1959-1964”, in *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union*, *1917-1967*, ed. Richard H. Marshall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 145.
54. Joshua Rothenberg, “The Legal Status of Religion,” in Marshall, *Aspects of Religion*, 87; “Kostroma Plan of Work for CAROC and CARC, 1964,” in Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 236.
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56. Peter H. Juviler, “The Family in the Soviet System,” *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 306 (1984): 13.
57. Moor, “Okhranyaite detei ot tsepkikh lap baptistskikh i evangelistskikh proidokh” [Protect your children from the tenacious clutches of the Baptist and Evangelical scoundrels], *Bezbozhnik u stanka* 5-6 (1928), cover. Moor’s illustration also appeared as a poster.
58. N. B. Terpsikhorov, “Religiya – yad; beregi rebiat” [Religion is poison; protect the children], 1930. Poster Collection, RU/SU 650A, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.
59. See, for example, Travin, “Babushka, a chto s Serezhei?,” in *My – ateisti!, comp*. Boevoi Karandash (Leningrad: Izd. Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1979), 2; Kaminsky, “Pro papu, mamu, vanyu i prikhodiashchuyu nyanyu,” in *Oruzhiem satiry po sueveriyam i predrassudkam, comp*. Boevoi Karandash (Leningrad: Izd. Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1985), 15; Zhelobinsky, “On ne ‘protiv’ i ne ‘za,’ prosto on otvel glaza,” in Boevoi Karandash, *Oruzhiem*, 1.
60. I. V. Trunev, “Sekta” [Sect], 1975. Keston Poster ID 06keston-pos-00031. Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society, Baylor University.
61. V. A. Travin, “Sveta Bozh’ego ne vidish’…” [You cannot see God’s light], 1975 Keston Poster ID 06keston-pos-00034, Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society, Baylor University.
62. See, for example, Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia’s Cold War Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 43; David Mace and Vera Mace, *The Soviet Family* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), 251; Kelly *Children’s World*, 376; Victoria Semenova and Paul Thompson, “Family Models and Transgenerational Influences: Grandparents, Parents, and Children in Moscow and Leningrad from the Soviet to the Market Era,” in Bertaux et al.; *On Living Through Soviet Russia*, 136.
63. Semenova and Thompson, “Family Models,” 129; Ariela Lowenstien, “Solidarity and Conflicts in Coresidence of Three-Generational Immigrant Families from the Former Soviet Union,” *Journal of Aging Studies* 16, no. 3 (2002): 229, 231.
64. A definite tendency toward nuclear families was evident in the Soviet era, but the extended, three-generation household was so common that the authors call it a unique feature of Russian society. Sergey Afontsev, Gijs Kessler, Andrei Markevich, Victoria Tyazhelnikova, Timur Valetov, “The Urban Household in Russia and the Soviet Union, 1900-2000: Patterns of Family Formation in a Turbulent Century,” *The History of the Family* 13, no.2 (2008): 192.
65. Semenova and Thompson, “Family Models,” 128-29.
66. Ro’i, *Islam*, 441-42.
67. Afontsev et al., “The Urban Household,” 189, 191
68. Mace and Mace, in *The Soviet Family*, 257, state that in 1931 at least 10% of infants and perhaps as many as 20% could be accommodated in nurseries; Alt and Alt, *Russia’s Children*, 101, gives a figure of 12-15% for the late 1950s; Yulia Gradskova states that up to 65% of children were placed by the mid-1980s in Gradskova, “‘Supporting Genuine Development of the Child’: Public Childcare Centers versus Family in Post-Soviet Russia,” in *And They Lived Happily Ever After: Norms and Everyday Practices of Family and Parenthood in Russia and Eastern Europe*, ed. Helen Carlbäck, Yulia Gradskova, and Zhanna Kravchenko (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012), 169.
69. Afontsev et al., “The Urban Household,” 184-85.
70. Dobson, “Child Sacrifice,” 246-50.
71. See, for example, Denisova, *Rural Women*, 133.

72. Semenova and Thompson, "Family Models," 130, on kids "educating" their grandmothers about urban life.
73. Reid, "The Meaning of Home," 145, 147; Juvilier, "The Family in the Soviet System," 38; Salvatore Imbrogno, "Changes in the Collective Family in the Soviet Union: A Comparative Perspective," *International Social Work* 29, no. 4 (1986); 336-37; Deborah A. Field, "Irreconcilable Differences: Divorce and Conceptions of Private Life in the Khrushchev Era," *Russian Review* 57, no.4 (October 1998); 600.
74. Lowrie and Fletcher, "Khrushchev's Religious Policy," 143.
75. Ro'i, *Islam*, 510-11.
76. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers*, 42; Paert, "Memory and Survival," 207; Constantin Prokhorov, "Russian Baptists and Orthodoxy, 1960-1990: A Comparative Study of Theology, Liturgy, and Traditions" (PhD diss., University of Wales International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 142.
77. Kelly, *Children's World*, 390.
78. Field, "Irreconcilable Differences," 601-2
79. Wallace Daniel, *Russia's Uncommon Prophet: Father Aleksandr Men and His Times* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016), 167.
80. Kelly, *Children's World*, 528; Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda*, 60.
81. Field, "Irreconcilable Differences," 600.
82. On student maltreatment, see Alexander Veinbergs, "Lutheranism and Other Denominations in the Baltic Regions," in Marshall, *Aspects of Religion*, 410; Michael Bourdeaux and Katherine Murray, *Young Christians in Russia* (London: Lakeland, 1976), 139, 147-49, 153; Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 319-20; Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda*, 103; Prokhorov, *Russian Baptists*, 288. Mikhail Men', on the other hand, recalls teachers in his village school as understanding and fairly tolerant of his beliefs. Daniel, *Russia's Uncommon Prophet*, 167
83. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, eds., *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History*, 1789-1989 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
84. Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 72, 171; Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style*, 100, on parents having to make up an answer to "what is that?" questions about a church; children's letters in Deborah Hoffman, ed., *The Littlest Enemies: Children in the Shadow of the Gulag* (Bloomington, IND: Slavica, 2008), 125, discuss the NKVD center at Danilov. The NKVD, or People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, functioned as the Communist Party's police.
85. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers*, 42; Paert, "Memory and Survival," 211; Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 23.
86. Denisova, *Rural Women*, 141.
87. Ibid., 137.
88. Prokhorov, *Russian Baptists*, 265-66, 291; Paert, "Memory and Survival," 210-11.
89. Evdokia Alekseevna Shevchuk, oral history interview by April French, May 4, 2015, Iskitim (Novosibirsk oblast). April French, "Evangelicals and Education in Late Soviet Siberia: Children as Sites of Conflict between Believing Parents and the Party/State Apparatus," unpublished paper presented at ASEEES National Convention, November 2015, 15.
90. Frierson and Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag*, 142; Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, 75; Ro'i, *Jews and Jewish Life*, 259; Fletcher, *A Study in Survival*, 88.
91. Frierson and Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag,* 29.
92. Hoffman, *The Littlest Enemies*, 33.
93. Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades*, 174.

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What lies behind the silence of Russian evangelicals? How Russia's war against Ukraine has influenced behaviour within Russia

by Nadezhda Belyakova and Vera Klyueva

The authors of this article, written in August 2022, are historians who have spent many years collecting oral histories from evangelicals about the Soviet past. Their study of the history of relations between the government and religious minorities in Russia, and in other countries in the post-Soviet space, has revealed a tradition of sustainable behavioural strategies in public and when dealing with government agencies. Informal ties have been key to the existence of these communities, and have enabled us to talk to a wide range of people. Over the years we have found ourselves included in these informal networks. However, most of our Russian respondents were only prepared to publish their responses on condition of anonymity. That is the reality in contemporary Russia, which is radically different from the Ukrainian context and the loud rhetoric emanating from it. We recognise our personal responsibility towards our sources, and understand that the situation is changing rapidly. We hope that the personal trust our respondents placed in us, and their frankness with us, will allow us to convey the circumstances and attitudes of those who are unable to talk freely about their experiences.

Since the start of the war against Ukraine, Russia's media has been publishing announcements by religious leaders in support of what is officially termed the "special operation". The appearance of Sergei Ryakhovsky, the head of the largest Russian Pentecostal association, the Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (ROSKhVE), at a round table at the Russian State Duma in March 2022 caused an enormous outcry.[1] Other announcements and actions by local/regional church leaders in support of the war have also done the rounds. It was assumed that these pronouncements represented the position of the entire Russian evangelical community, and this therefore provoked a correspondingly negative/critical reaction from Ukraine, which was reinforced by the trauma of the war. Some Ukrainian evangelicals, impatient for some criticism of Russia's politicians from their fellow believers, began writing about a break in relations with Russian evangelical associations and unions,[2] and on a personal level there was indeed a break in relations between many believers.

At the same time, voices opposing the war, describing it as a catastrophe both for Ukraine and for Russia, remain suppressed and often go unheeded. As early as 2 March, there was a public "Appeal

to compatriots", in which evangelical church leaders called for repentance and for "an end to this senseless bloodshed":

"Our army is conducting full-scale military operations in another country, dropping bombs and firing missiles on the cities of our neighbour, Ukraine. As believers, we regard what is happening as the major sin of fratricide – the sin of Cain who raised his hand against his brother Abel.

No political interests or goals can justify the death of innocent people. Old people, women and children are dying. Soldiers are being killed on both sides, and cities and infrastructure destroyed. Apart from military targets, the shelling and bombing is destroying hospitals and residential and community buildings. Most people have become refugees, combat zones are on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe.

In addition to the bloodshed, the invasion of sovereign Ukraine infringes upon her citizens' right of self-determination. Hatred is being sown between our nations, which will produce a gulf of alienation and enmity for generations to come. The war is not just destroying Ukraine but Russia too – her people, her economy, her morality, her future...

We all need to call things by their proper names. We still have a chance to avoid punishment from on high and not allow our country to be destroyed. We must repent for what has been done first of all before God and then before the people of Ukraine. We must renounce lies and hatred. We call on our country's authorities to end this senseless bloodshed!"

This appeal gathered 400 signatures in just a few days.[3]

To what extent is it possible to talk about a united/coordinated position among Russian evangelicals? Can particular patterns of behaviour be identified among representatives of the different evangelical denominations in response to the progress of the war? How are evangelicals able to express themselves in Russia, in conditions where there is a state monopoly on the media, and legislation has been adopted that criminalises the spreading of information about the war even on individuals' social media pages? We presented these questions to both Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals.

The specific nature of the position of evangelicals in Russia and Ukraine

During the Soviet era, the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (AUCECB) was the umbrella organisation which brought together evangelical communities of different denominations across all the Soviet republics into a legal union. Outside any legal framework was the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (CCECB) and also other groups belonging to different denominations, the largest being the Pentecostals, who refused to register. From the early 1970s, there were communities in the Soviet Union which registered themselves autonomously, meaning they were responsible for their own registration without

belonging to the AUCECB. Most evangelical communities relied heavily on Ukraine which provided most of their leaders.

During perestroika there was an exodus of religious organisations from the AUCECB, which was replaced by structures within the new independent states. Thus, in Ukraine and in Russia there are several unions of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (ECB) and of Pentecostals. Charismatic churches began to appear during this period. At the same time, a number of "trans-state" missions were set up which began running educational projects.

In the context of the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were trends both towards and away from the centre. Thus, the United Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith (OTsKhVE) was set up in August 1992 and brought together the Pentecostal churches in countries of the former USSR that had not been legalised during the Soviet period. The non-legal union, the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (CCECB), also retained its structure in the post-Soviet period, and has now been renamed the International Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians and Baptists; it has brought together Evangelical Christian and Baptist churches from different parts of the world.[4]

Leaders of the evangelical unions had to develop relations with the new government. Whereas some communities (particularly those that were not legalised in the Soviet era) endeavoured to keep their distance, other evangelicals were keen to cultivate relations with government bodies. For example, in Russia, in 1995 a faction of the community, headed by Sergei Ryakhovsky, who came from a Pentecostal family, broke away from the United Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith (OTsKhVE) to form the Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (ROSKhVE), which went on to become one of the main associations of Pentecostal churches in Russia. In Ukraine, evangelicals actively participated in public life and were even able to occupy senior government posts. Cooperation and the national orientation of those legal evangelical associations strengthened as the country's leadership started to put democratic values into practice. The Ukrainian government's weak social policy indirectly encouraged the development of the evangelicals' social projects.

In our material we have sought to give the floor to several authoritative evangelicals, who for many years have been involved in educational projects across state boundaries in the post-soviet space.

As representative of the Ukrainian position in our publication we present Sergei Timchenko, who came from a family of Baptists and was baptised during the Soviet era. He is the founder, and, since 1996, the director of the Christian organisation REALIS (Research, Education, and Light Christian Centre), which focuses on preparing Christian leaders. During the perestroika years, he was one of the organisers of the "Light of the Gospel" mission, which had the same focus. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was for many years one of the main providers of leadership programmes

for evangelicals in Russia and other countries in the post-Soviet space. The Donetsk Christian University was set up to train missionaries, and then REALIS was set up with a focus on further training for pastors in relations between the church and society. Hundreds of the participants in this educational project were pastors and mission leaders in different countries of the former Soviet Union, and went on to become leaders of unions of churches or regional associations.

After 2014, REALIS, working with the Dragomanov National Pedagogical University, launched the "Socio-political ethics and theology" and "Christian consulting and chaplaincy in crisis situations" masters programmes. In 2019, REALIS, working jointly with the Research Centre at Durham University, opened up its "Theology and digital culture" study programme with the participation of Orthodox theologian, Fr Georgi Kovalenko. Since 2019, REALIS has been part of the "Reaching Forgiveness" international research project[5] (Building More Forgiving Communities Around the Globe), which is ongoing despite the war. Today, Sergei Timchenko heads an aid organisation for victims of the war in Ukraine; organised streams of humanitarian aid are being sent via Bratislava. Most of this aid is distributed via evangelical churches (the rest is handed out with the help of other foundations, NGOs and through a network of their own volunteers). Detailed reports are uploaded onto Facebook daily.

Sergei Timchenko noted that relations with evangelicals in Russia began to deteriorate from 2014, i.e. coinciding with the Maidan events: "*Initially, we tried to explain to each other why we saw the situation differently. It was at that time I went onto Facebook, although I had not generally written anything there previously, and tried to explain why I was at Maidan. You see, from the Russian side there were accusations that this was a popular riot, a revolution, that it was all provoked and that it was all a consequence of the Orange revolution. I felt a responsibility to REALIS's many graduates and, as a teacher, wanted to explain what Maidan meant for us. And then some former student lost control and said publicly that he hoped people like me would soon be 'liquidated'. It was then I realised that things were very far gone...*"

It was specifically at this point, Timchenko thinks, that the lie occurred and the fateful rift began: *"The beginning of the lie was an inaccurate idea of what was happening in Ukraine, and at Maidan in particular. As a witness, I was surprised to begin with, and then annoyed, and then I let it be: why are people who know me very well, who have spent a lot of time talking to me in confidence, more inclined to believe Moscow sources? They could have phoned after all, or have come here, met me and talked to me face to face. But no, even when I did meet my interlocuters from Russia in person, they had preconceived ideas and a formulated position."*

The emotions of many Russian evangelicals are often described as close to boiling point, Timchenko continued: *"There was a perception that inside they were*

seething, simmering and were barely able to control themselves." For a time, it was possible to explain their behaviour based on their desire – understandable to anyone who had grown up in the Soviet Union – to save the church, to use their loyalty to protect it from pressure from the regime. Despite the grief caused by the statements of many Russian pastors, Timchenko defined the independent position which "*helps us withstand the rancour and maintain relations… Given they live in Russia we try to find channels where we can talk in safety. It may not always be directly … Among them there are also non-believers... I've even got a theory that, these days, believers in Russia have become particularly susceptible to the propaganda, and more used to taking things at face value. God willing, there will come a day when we will get to the bottom of all of this. At the moment, we just need not to lose what we have achieved."*

Evangelicals in Ukraine have the feeling, despite the tragic circumstances of the war, that these extreme circumstances are opening up new potential for a dialogue with the public and a rethinking of the place of the church. Sergei Timchenko also believes that with the course of the war in Ukraine comes the creation of a healthy society "*based on an understanding of the greater good – where people are prepared to sacrifice themselves for others, right up to laying down their lives. And God willing, if Ukraine wins then this will bring new hope for Russia too."*

In Russia, since 2000, there has been a gradual increase in the stigmatisation and marginalisation of evangelicals and "non-traditional" religions such as the Jehovah's Witnesses. Signs of this are the prohibition on the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation,[6] the frequent attacks on charismatic churches, the expulsion of western missions, and an increase in the rhetoric opposing cults and sects. Despite this, evangelical congregations of all denominations have remained a fixed part of the religious landscape of Russia, though they are no longer given any publicity. Complicated legislation governing the activity of religious organisations and the increased fight against "religious extremism", have made them the constant object of negative attention.

The Pentecostal bishop Sergei Ryakhovsky has become one of the high-profile faces of the Russian Protestant movement, easily recognisable and an active participant at all public events. He became a member of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation in the early 2000s and is a permanent member of the Russian President's Council for Cooperation with Religious Associations. He has provoked criticism within evangelical circles, but at the same time, the presence of an evangelical Christian within political elites has provided hope for the survival of evangelical congregations in Russia, and leaders of regional structures have also endeavoured to find a common language with the administration at local level.

The next person we talked to was Aleksei Markevich, who is the academic vice-rector of the Moscow Theological Seminary for Evangelical Christians and

Baptists (ECB), and pastor of the ECB "Salvation" church, in Moscow. In the 1990s, he was the director of the "Narnia" educational centre and presented Christian programmes on the "Teos" radio station. Between 2015 and 2021, he was a member of the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (EAAA). Since 2019, he has been the director of the Association for the Development of Evangelical Education. He has taught and run educational projects, as well as participated in inter-confessional dialogue for many years, and often travels to different parts of Russia to preach to evangelical congregations.

Of course, the question that cannot be avoided is why the impression is created in the media that Russian evangelicals do not say what they think about the war in Ukraine. Thanks to our interview with Aleksei Markevich, it has become clear why the letter signed by Russian evangelical clergy, published on 2 March 2022 [this letter is quoted on p.21. *Ed.*] and sharply criticising the war in Ukraine, did not get more attention. It was composed a few days before the adoption of the "law on fakes"[7] and attracted a few hundred signatories before access to it was restricted once the law came into effect.

Silence about the war is the dominant consensus in regional communities. According to Markevich: *"The prevailing attitude in these communities is 'let's not talk about it'. Given it dominates, it's very difficult to understand the reason for keeping quiet. This is already a tried and tested tactic: as soon as there's any sign of tension or dissent on a topic in any of the churches there is virtually an official directive imposed: no-one should give any opinion on social media and certainly not from the pulpit. I've experienced it myself. At one point, I arrived in a provincial town and gave a sermon in which I mentioned the Mariupol refugees who were staying with us. After the service, a woman came up to me with tears in her eyes and said, 'thank you for talking about this. Here, no-one says anything at all about this'. But it gets worse. For example, I know of one pastor who used to be a senior presbyter in the oblast, who spoke out against the 'military invasion of Ukraine'. He made some reference to the events in Ukraine during his sermon. He probably said 'let's pray for Ukraine, for our brothers and sisters who are suffering there'. It is unlikely he could have said anything political. Nevertheless, he was removed from office. The same has happened elsewhere. After the senior presbyter had been removed for his anti-war stance, statements in support of the actions of the Russian authorities began to be released. All this is done subject to the explanation that the 'church is outside politics'. But if we are talking about 'support' for 'the war' among evangelicals, we should first clarify the context in which such support is expressed. Normally, people say that the cause of the conflict lies on the other side of the ocean, we are being played off and the reason lies elsewhere. This means there is no discussion of support for the government or approval of its policy as a whole (within evangelical circles there are tensions associated with the restriction on religious freedom, and that is not forgotten). But the idea that the*

'collective West' is to blame does exist. All this ends with the words 'we don't know the details, they are not telling us the truth. So we'll keep quiet'."

Over the last eight years, often covered in the Russian media (2014-2022), Russian evangelicals have continued to have contact with believers in the Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics, and Aleksei Markevich has taught in these areas – areas where we know virtually nothing about the everyday lives of religious minorities. According to Markevich: *"During those eight years, some believers left the area but the churches remained. Within the Luhansk People's Republic, there was a problem in that evangelical churches were completely refused state registration, and the Ukrainian ECB Union was classified as an extremist organisation. This was done so that local churches could not remain part of the Ukrainian Union. In the Donetsk People's Republic, matters associated with the registration of ECB congregations were easier. In those regions, the authorities closed the houses of prayer. More specifically, they confiscated some of them but returned others. The most tragic and scandalous case involved the Donetsk Christian University. As early as 2014, the security services set up a base in the grounds and burned Ukraine's largest theological library. There were also media reports that in the Luhansk People's Republic, houses of prayer were confiscated, turned into a registry office and not returned to the congregation."*

Today, continued Markevich, many Russian evangelicals are providing aid to refugees, sometimes travelling to Mariupol: *"In recent months, the idea of humanitarian aid for refugees has gained active support and there are visits to temporary accommodation facilities (TA facilities). Refugees are being sent to TA facilities in different areas where they are helped by members of local churches. I heard that somewhere they did not let Christians in to start with, but now it's the reverse; in many areas believers are actively participating in this voluntary work. Once people were shocked by the picture of a bombed Mariupol, many churches had the idea of visiting Mariupol and helping those in need there."* For some months, evangelicals have been running a project involving "*visits to Taganrog TA facility. This is one of the largest TA facilities people end up in once they leave the war zone. It is located in a large sports hall full of beds. Volunteers travel there and help people with whatever they need – from conversation to help with their groceries. There is also a warehouse there, where Christians collect and distribute items. The situation of evangelical volunteers is complicated: on the one hand, officials are pleased to have volunteers, but as soon as they start preaching, the officials get very agitated and warn them that they will stop allowing Christians in."*

In recent years, evangelical educational organisations within Russia and Ukraine have generally operated independently of one another. One unique example of cooperation in education among Baptists was a programme in Bryansk, organised jointly by the Odessa and Moscow theological seminaries.

The war has led to a division in the unified approach on education among evangelicals working in the post-Soviet space, which was supported through the existence of the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (EAAA). This organisation has an office in Rivne (Ukraine) and is one of eight regional associations which make up the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE). This association has tried to introduce certain educational standards based on the Bologna Process. It has no ties whatsoever with state education systems and is not uniform even within itself. From its accreditation work, the EAAA has run CPD courses, for example, for seminary employees and teachers. After 2014, these meetings were held initially in Minsk (Belarus) and then in Kishinev (Moldova). During the pandemic, the meetings were held online. Once the war started, about 30 Ukrainian schools wrote a letter saying they wanted to wind up the association. Markevich commented: *"The constitution does allow this possibility. A general meeting of the association was held on Zoom and two thirds voted for the dissolution of the EAAA. The main reason was the impossibility of working while there was a war on. Information about the dissolution has been published and the winding-up committee is currently doing its job."*

The prospects of establishing new subregional associations are currently being discussed. Thus a preliminary meeting was held in Almaty (Kazakhstan) in July 2022 at the initiative of Central Asian educational institutions, which are few in number and are hoping to coordinate their efforts. In October 2022 a founding meeting was planned to set up a new educational association, which would include evangelical educational institutions from Belarus, Russia, Central Asia and Armenia.

Based on Aleksei Markevich's remarks, day-to-day relations between Russian and Ukrainian evangelicals have deteriorated in recent months compared with the beginning of the war: *"At the beginning of the war, many Ukrainian believers were grateful for the support, whereas now there is more talk of the collective guilt of all Russians... The leaders of evangelical educational institutions wrote a letter of compassion to their colleagues, but it did not elicit any particular reaction. It may be that that was because it did not judge Russia's actions, but simply talked about solidarity, prayer and compassion. The irony of the situation is that the believers who are in contact with Ukrainians are the very ones who oppose the war."*

The war is directly affecting the position of evangelicals within Russia. Today, the authorities' main demand is that they keep quiet and keep their heads down. From time to time, the government gives a signal of what could happen. The campaign against the leaders of the "New Generation" Pentecostal churches was seen as such a signal to all evangelicals. Markevich believes: "*The action against 'New Generation' is clear intimidation. They immediately had a link to the terrorist Azov organisation attributed to them. It seems to me that was a signal to all evangelicals to 'keep up and shut up'."*

How can we stay silent?

And not believe our heads or our hearts,
Closing our eyes for safety,
How many times have we stayed silent
for different reasons,
Yet we are not against, of course, but
for! (from the song by Aleksandr Galich "The Prospectors' Little Waltz")

The military operations launched in Ukraine, along with the legislation adopted to exclude alternative media, has given rise to a unique situation within Russian society. The absence of any space for dialogue between the government and the public or any space for public debate, has led to wars breaking out on social networks. The radicalisation of expression is stoked by the threat of being reported to the authorities, and by the prospect of criminal prosecutions for Russian citizens who have criticised the authorities. At all events, the radical nature and severity of opinions expressed on social networks (of course, this was a feature long before the war; a new propensity towards conflict arose during the Covid-19 pandemic) had already threatened the survival of local communities of believers. At the same time, most prosecutions were the result of reactions on social networks.[8] Church leaders are trying not to allow a split to develop between the church and how it is identified politically.

Our anonymous source inside the Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (ROSKhVE), who made anti-war statements on social media at the beginning of the war, has said there is no unanimous support within the Union for the "special operation". Some are for, some against, but most leaders – bishops and senior presbyters – prefer to say nothing and not to discuss the subject. The reason for silence is fear: *"They are afraid for their church and for themselves and their families. They have something to lose – the church, people, their ministry."* There is an assumption being expressed that if the Pentecostals start voicing an anti-war position, the Pentecostal movement might face the same fate as the Jehovah's Witnesses: *"Today it's all too easy to bring a case against the Pentecostals as an extremist organisation. Like what happened to the Jehovah's Witnesses."* Within particular local churches, ministers are introducing a ban on any discussion of political issues to avoid conflicts and splits between members of the congregation: "*Inside the house of prayer, inside the church we don't engage in politics. As soon as I provide a political evaluation of events there will immediately be a backlash*."

Russian Pentecostals have chosen silence as their main behavioural strategy. According to a leader of one of the largest associations: "*our business is to preach the Gospel and not to make statements."* Currently there are no relations with Ukrainian charismatic Pentecostals, despite there having previously been firm ties when Ukrainians travelled to Russia as missionaries and helped organise the churches. The ties were broken at the instigation of the Ukrainian Christians. By way of example, reference was made to a letter from the "Word of Life" Union of Christian Churches of Ukraine, in which they reported the termination of

relations with the Russian "Word of Life" movement because of a lack of reaction by the Russians to announcements by the leadership of ROSKhVE.[9] Despite several "Word of Life" ministers having announced they were leaving ROSKhVE, there was no public information about this, nor would there be any.

One of the Pentecostal leaders told us that immediately after the announcement of the "special military operation", he announced at a prayer meeting that political discussions belonged outside the church walls, and that only prayer was allowed in church. Within churches belonging to the United Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith (OTsKhVE — a Pentecostal brotherhood that owed its beginnings to unregistered Soviet Pentecostals[10]) political conversations might be penalised up to and including excommunication from the church. References to topics linked to Ukraine or the military operations were also strictly banned in ECB churches in Central Asia and Belarus.

The preservation of fraternal relations during military operations, according to an OTsKhVE bishop from Russia, whose views must remain anonymous, involved an absolute prohibition on discussing political questions within the church. It is important to note that OTsKhVE is headed by Ukrainian bishop Georgy Babiy who in the early days of the war spoke to his fellow believers about the need to maintain a pacifist position. The churches included in OTsKhVE in Ukraine consequently also adhere to a position of non-interference in political issues. That is why our source said: "*even representatives of government bodies understand this position and respect it. At all events, churches belonging to OTsKhVE Ukraine have been able to support their members in Donbas and Luhansk, have preserved good relations with Crimea, and after 2014 continued to have contact with them"*

Contemporary Pentecostal pacifism stems from the tradition, established in the Soviet era, of believers refusing to do military service. Today, the literal meaning of the commandment "thou shalt not kill" and "judge not, that ye be not judged" is used as grounds for pacifism. According to our source: *"The conservative Pentecostal movement interprets these passages of scripture literally. And that is why we refuse on principle to get involved in politics, and by that we do not just mean participation in military service but any discussion of political issues."* That is why both Russian and Ukrainian conservative Pentecostals prefer to do alternative civilian service. A consistent adherence to pacifism means the authorities are aware of the attitude of believers to military service in advance and do not insist on mobilising them: *"According to those who visited Donetsk and Luhansk, there were no complaints on the part of the authorities about our members. Our church has always adopted a pacifist stance. We have never taken up arms, not in Soviet times, not when Ukraine was liberated and not even now when they have ended up on the territory of the self-proclaimed republics. Our views have not changed. If members of our congregation were*

prepared to take up arms yesterday, whereas today they say they are pacifists, such a change provokes annoyance and a perception that, in this case, people are being disingenuous. In conditions of mobilisation, stunts like that do not work." Believers can provide help to the injured or work as volunteers.

OTsKhVE churches also provide humanitarian aid. There is a strict rule that "*anything that can be used for military purposes, such as help procuring helmets, body armour and weapons, does not count as humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid means getting hold of food, essential items and help with maintaining and repairing houses of prayer."* Russian Pentecostals are operating inside Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts. This is how humanitarian aid is organised within the Russian OTsKhVE: *"For example, there is a humanitarian convoy being organised – a number of large trucks are loaded with foodstuffs, water and all the essentials and sent to Mariupol. Those involved in the convoy – both the drivers and support workers, meaning those who will distribute the aid – are all active members of OTsKhVE churches. Other congregations collect funds for them. We are certain that when we give money directly it doesn't go on buying drones, meaning we are not financing armed units on either side*." Christian volunteers in addition to distributing aid, also hold services as there are virtually no clergy left in Mariupol.

Within Russia, refugees are not only helped to settle in, but are also given support if they want to leave Russia for Europe. It was only possible to reach Russia via the humanitarian corridor from Luhansk and Donetsk, but from Russia refugees are trying to get to countries in Northern Europe. Pentecostals and Baptists provide such help and support in St Petersburg, for example.

Our source referred to how the security agencies (the Ministry of the Interior and Federal Security Service) are establishing relations with the evangelical churches. The principle of "just keeping a lid on it" currently applies, meaning they are being asked not to go public with any comments on the military operations. At the same time, there are not normally any complaints addressed to OTsKhVE churches in this regard, as they never comment on political issues. The situation in relation to those who have received some form of government support (grants, for example) is more complicated. These organisations are required to confirm their loyalty. Our source expressed this as follows: "*Because ROSKhVE has begun to get support from the government and the authorities, the head of the Union had to make a statement about the potential for involvement in politics. That is why OTsKhVE has always been wary of receiving government support because you always have to pay for any proximity to the authorities. It's better to stay out of it."*

Our source went on to express his opinion that Russian conservative Pentecostals are protected from the effect of Russian propaganda because they do not watch television: *"In our communities, listening to news broadcasts or mass media is clearly discouraged. Watching*

television is not recommended. And that is why, in my opinion, believers are insulated from the effects of propaganda."

From what we have observed, within Russia's evangelical community, the dominant position is one of collective silence and of consistently keeping a distance from politics. However, that does not mean that on social networks (personal pages or personal YouTube channels) individual evangelical activists do not express their opinions. Social networks in Russia remain the only space where people can express their position publicly. Comments in support of Russia's actions in Ukraine, widely covered in the media, provoke protests among fellow believers that do not go beyond their social networks. For example, Vitaly Kogan, bishop of the Association of Siberian Churches of Evangelical Pentecostal Christians, has expressed his absolute opposition to the pro-war, or rather, to the pro-government stance adopted by Sergei Ryakhovsky.[11] To show their disagreement with the actions of the Union's leadership and Ryakhovsky personally, several bishops resigned as representatives of the governing bishop.

In March 2022, Vitaly Vlasenko, the secretary of the Russian Evangelical Alliance, made an announcement condemning the fratricidal war[12] and Viktor Sudakov, pastor of the "New Life" Pentecostal church in Ekaterinburg, has made no secret of his views.[13] Probably the best-known and most authoritative ECB leader to have publicly adopted an anti-war position is Yuri Sipko. From 2002-2010, he was chairman of the Russian ECB Union, although he then gave up his official position, remaining in close contact with the current chairman and retaining his moral authority within the brotherhood. Among the representatives of the Council of ECB Churches in Russia, Mikhail Shirin has been vocal about his views, as has the administrator of the evangelical newspaper *Mirt*, Roman Nosach, whose social media avatar bears the inscription "no to war".

The examples cited by us are by no means exhaustive. There may be different reasons for keeping quiet: some may be concerned for themselves and anyone close to them who frequently spends time on either side of the border, while others are afraid of harming their community or church through their comments. The evangelicals we know have said that as early as March/April 2022, members of the Federal Security Service would regularly visit church leaders and advise them not to comment on "highly political topics". For that reason, an openly anti-war position could risk a repeat of the fate of the Russian Jehovah's Witnesses.

The unique aspects of the Russian war time context

Whereas the social media threads of Ukrainian evangelicals are full of reports about their active social work, about tragic deaths, about the heroism of the defenders, about new opportunities, about support for their brothers in the faith and numerous international aid operations, Russian evangelicals, in

contrast, are psychologically repressed and depressed. We are seeing how the traumatic Soviet experience – fear of persecution, the habit of keeping quiet and keeping one's head down, have become dominant in their environment. Our sources often talked about the attention the security services pay them. The break in relations with their fellow believers in Ukraine has receded into the background against increased pressure at home. All those we spoke to emphasised that after 2014, joint projects with the Ukrainian side gradually reduced, while at the same time projects with partners from Crimea, the Luhansk People's Republic or Donetsk People's Republic expanded, meaning that the optics governing the perception of Ukrainian reality were also altered.

Furthermore, Russian evangelicals are afraid of being regarded by the government as a "fifth column", and accused of spreading hostile western propaganda. There are grounds for this: evangelicals see the signals emanating from the security structures. For example, on 14 August 2022, news emerged of simultaneous searches carried out of members of the "New Generation" church across different regions of Russia: in Moscow, Kemerovo, Novosibirsk, Chelyabinsk, Sochi and Krasnodar, resulting in several arrests. State media called the church members a "sect" that supported the Ukrainian Azov battalion, which is banned in Russia.[14] And on 16 August 2022, Interfax's religious service reported the arrest of Nikolai Ulitin, the pastor at the "Christ the Redeemer" Church of Evangelical Pentecostal Christians in Moscow.[15]

Evangelicals regard these actions as signals and try even harder "not to provoke anything". On the other hand, at the local level, municipal authorities are suggesting that evangelical churches help restore the infrastructure in Ukraine's occupied territories, which will become a new bone of contention with the Ukraine side.

On the Russian side, we are seeing a strong tendency to resurrect late Soviet patterns of behaviour, which produce particular outcomes in circumstances where there is a proliferation of internet and social networks. At the same time, Russian evangelicals have proved defenceless against TV propaganda. Whereas in the Soviet era they avoided watching television, today this ban (or strong recommendation) is retained only among conservative Pentecostals. That said, Russian Baptists also recommend that members of their congregations limit how much television they watch. It is interesting that in March 2022, Volodomyr Antonyuk, the head of the All-Ukrainian Union of ECB Churches, referred to their lack of immunity to TV propaganda as Russian evangelicals' main misfortune: *"He recalled the time of the USSR, when the church had the strength to oppose and to overcome, distinguishing God's truth from the lies of the devil. But when freedom came, something tragic happened – people began viewing television and the internet, and many pastors lost the ability to discern the dishonest plans of Satan. Christians in earlier times did not believe Stalin or Khrushchev, but now they put their trust in the 'new defender', Putin. Many among Christians*

and their pastors, unfortunately, have more faith in the 'new Bible' of television than in the testimonies of their brothers and sisters in the faith."[16]

However, we should not regard Russian evangelical leaders as passive victims. The Soviet experience has endowed them with the skills to interact with hostile authorities, to look for compromises with them, and to develop their own survival strategies, including through initiatives of their own. For example, another reason for the silence has been the noticeable revival of relations between the official leaders of the Russian and Ukrainian Baptist Union. One of our sources told us: *"We do not comment officially or give our views, not just because we are afraid, but in order not to undermine things, not to undermine the nascent revival of relations."* One source close to the leaders of the Russian ECB Union told us in confidence, that the first step towards reconciliation had been taken at a meeting in Turkey in early August 2022.

Our survey does not claim to be comprehensive or unique.[17] But six months after the start of military operations, it is possible to draw some interim conclusions. As we have seen, the initial period of demands for people to decide which side they were on (both from Ukrainian believers and the Russian authorities) is over. The Russian authorities have now adopted an approach of preventative intimidation (they are making arrests at "New Generation" churches and are developing the next round of legislation aimed at restricting religious freedom and international contacts[18]). The experience of the older generation of evangelicals during the Soviet era has taught them to read these signals. That is why the majority of believers have chosen a strategy of silence. At the same time, pro-war statements in support of the Russian authorities result in ostracism, and individuals are not afraid to voice their anti-war position. In so doing, the Russian evangelical community is clearly mirroring the strategy of Russian society as a whole.

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1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uL21w9866wc
2. We can cite at least one such announcement: from Ukraine's "Slovo Zhizni" (Living Word) (https://inlight.news/2022/05/30/pastory-cerkvej-dvizheniya-slovo-zhizni-ukrainy-prinyali-reshenie-prekratit-bratskie-otnosheniya-s-pastorami-dvizheniya-slovo-zhizni-rossii/). We have also been told about a similar letter from the Ukrainian Baptists, but have no confirmation of this.
3. The letter had been displayed on the "Mirt" Christian centre's website, but the page no longer exists. The text of the letter is available here: https://www.invictory.org/news/church/31668-bolee-100-sluzhitelej-evangelskij-tserkvej-rossii-podpisali-otkrytoe-obrashhenie-po-vojne-v-ukraine and here https://www.facebook.com/PROTESTANTIZM/posts/1080390956025317/
4. [Translated from Ukrainian] On 23 June 2022, the All-Ukraine Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians and Baptists decided to change to the Gregorian calendar from December that year https://risu.ua/baptisti-ukrayini-perehodyat-na-grigorianskij-kalendar-z-grudnya-2022-roku_n130471
5. https://realis.org/en/programs/educational/
6. In April 2017, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation banned Jehovah's Witnesses from operating in the country, branding them an extremist organisation. Their communities were closed down, buildings confiscated and some of those believers who continued to meet each other were arrested.

7. This is a reference to the Federal Law of 4 March 2022 No. 32-FZ "On the introduction of amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and articles 31 and 151 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation". This law makes it a crime to spread disinformation about the use of Russia's military forces or to engage in any public actions aimed at discrediting the use of Russia's military forces. Here, "discreditation" includes any anti-war statement. By August 2022, more than 1500 people had been charged under this law, with most of them receiving fines but some also being given a criminal conviction.
8. See the regularly updated statistics on the channel of anthropologist Aleksandra Arkhipova https://t.me/anthro_fun/1612
9. https://inlight.news/2022/05/30/pastory-cerkvej-dvizheniya-slovo-zhizni-ukrainy-prinyali-reshenie-prekratit-bratskie-otnosheniya-s-pastorami-dvizheniya-slovo-zhizni-rossii/
10. Today, the United Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith (OTsKhVE) is the only one of the Pentecostal associations that brings together Pentecostal churches in the countries of the former USSR. At the same time, the association has no officially registered structure, retaining a commitment to the tradition established during the Soviet era of limiting contacts with state agencies as much as possible. OTsKhVE traces its heritage back to several brotherhoods of conservative Pentecostals who refused official registration in the Soviet era. The head of OTsKhVE is the presiding bishop Georgi Babyi, who lives in Ukraine. The association's full name is the United Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith in countries of the CIS and Baltics. Within individual countries, there is OTsKhVE Russia, OTsKhVE Ukraine, OTsKhVE Moldova etc.
11. https://inlight.news/2022/04/18/vitalij-kogan-sergey-ryaxovsky/. Here, Vitaly Kogan explains why he wrote that letter https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfeJ-nSpKXc
12. https://telegra.ph/Vitalij-Vlasenko-generalnyj-sekretar-Russkogo-evangelicheskogo-alyansa-izvinilsya-pered-Ukraincami-za-vojnu-03-14
13. "Beyond politics", a full interview with the pastor Viktor Sudakov/ @Viktor Sudakov // https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BPXG4hlZOQ
14. See the selection of media reports: in several regions, "New Generation" churches have been searched in connection with the criminal offence of collaborating with an undesirable organisation: https://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/harassment/intervention/2022/08/d46797/?fbclid=IwAR1nQF_DzKyQZsNQp62PTYdHI1uZtu5g48gVB4D0-GsPRff13rrEFUpkd7E&fs=e&s=cl
15. http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=79606
16. https://risu.ua/golova-baptistskogo-soyuzu-ukrayini-zasudiv-movchannya-sluzhiteliv-slovyanskih-yevangelskih-cerkov-z-inshih-krayin-shchodo-agresiyi-rf_n127618
17. Analysis of this topic began to emerge two or three months after the beginning of the war. For example, in early May, there was a survey of "Russian evangelicals and the Russia-Ukraine military conflict" in the *Protestant* newspaper which mentioned the subject of the global standoff: http://www.gazetaprotestant.ru/2022/05/rossijskie-evangelicaly-i-rossijsko-ukrainskij-voennyj-konflikt/.
18. A press release from the Security Council of the Russian Federation mentions that the department has reviewed "a series of measures aimed at combating religious radicalism. Specifically, there is a proposal to commence work to expose the mechanisms by which foreign states exploit the work of religious associations in order to interfere in our country's internal affairs". (http://www.scrf.gov.ru/news/allnews/3285/)

Nadezhda Belyakova is a professional historian and was a member of the Centre for Religion and Church History within the Institute of World History (Russian Academy of Sciences). Now, as a scholar at risk in Germany, she is working with the Excellence Cluster "Religion and Politics" at the University of Münster. Vera Klyueva is a professional historian and anthropologist in the Department of Ethnology and Social Anthropology within the Institute for Northern Development Problems (Tyumen Scientific Centre within the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences).

Keston's 1983 AGM

Speech by Professor Leonard Schapiro

In the autumn of 1983, Professor Leonard Schapiro, one of the four founders of Keston with Michael Bourdeaux, Sir John Lawrence and Professor Peter Reddaway, addressed Keston's AGM. He described the purposes of this charity which have inspired it from its inception. During his talk, he mentioned one particular case of harassment and persecution against a Christian in the Soviet Union. This was Valeri Barinov, a Baptist aged 39 from Leningrad, who with his fellow Baptists had been trying to help rough sleepers and drug addicts on the streets of the city. He was a musician who had formed a rock group called the "Trumpet Call" and had written a rock opera of that name. Documents about this case follow Professor Schapiro's AGM speech on p.40. Ed.

I'm very proud to have been associated with Keston College, or as it was first known, the Centre for the Study of Religion in Communism, right from the start, indeed before the start. It started at the London School of Economics (LSE) towards the end of the sixties. But, of course, it was in the mind of Michael Bourdeaux, who has been the inspirer of it at every stage, that it originated. Michael was anxious to put it into operation, was pregnant with this idea. We at the LSE were fortunate in being able to offer him a fellowship, so it was in fact at the LSE, with the cooperation of some of my colleagues, that the idea took fruit and the Centre started in a very modest way. Over the years, it grew under the inspiration and drive of Michael Bourdeaux; one cannot stress too much what Keston College, as it is today, owes to the inspiration and the energy and drive and initiative of Michael.

Now one of the first problems with which the Centre had to contend, and still has to contend, is something on which I want to say a few words: that is the charge which is directed against it, not only by the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe, but by fellow travellers, and indeed by many liberal-minded but misguided people in this country – the charge that the work of Keston College has the effect of stimulating and encouraging the Cold War. Of course, it's perfectly true that if one deals with communist countries and the state of religion in those countries, one is bound to be critical if one has any kind of feeling that the freedom to worship and to propagate religion in one's own way, in different countries, is part of the heritage of mankind. The communist countries are opposed, and have always been opposed, to religion. This isn't new. This is something that stems right from the beginning of the communist regime in Russia. Actually, during the rise to power of the Bolsheviks, Lenin was very careful about what he had to say about religion, although he was an implacable enemy

of the church and faith; he was very careful with what he had to say because he realised that Russia was a country where the church was so much part of national life. To be too outspoken would have been bad propaganda for the Bolsheviks. Of course, once they came to power, their open hostility to religion became only too obvious.

There are two simple reasons for this hostility. One is that a materialist faith, such as communism – because it is a faith of a kind – is totally incompatible with the spiritual values which religion presents. There is an essential conflict between the two, which is not capable of compromise. In the case of Poland, for example, which is a communist country, the existence of the church and the strength of the church, the enormous influence which the church has, has simply been tolerated because there was no alternative. But there is no compromise between the tenets of communism and materialism and the tenets of the church. That's one reason. It's a basic fundamental reason, which nothing will alter and attempts, which one sometimes sees, to prove the contrary – dialogue between communism and the church, dialogue between religion and Marxism – hasn't really got any conceivable foundation in logic or in fact; it's eyewash from beginning to end.

The second reason why the two are incompatible is that it is the essence of a totalitarian regime that it wants to control as much as it can of the life of the inhabitants of the country, and one of the methods of control is the elimination of any alternative focus of allegiance. Now the church, or indeed any religion, whether it be Islam or Buddhism or Judaism, all of which exist in the Soviet Union, as well as Christianity, is something which offers just such an alternative focus of allegiance, and as such is something that the authorities are bound to oppose.

I come now to this charge of Cold War that is levelled against Keston College by the whole propaganda apparatus of the Soviet Union, and by the myriads of fellow travellers and supporters in the West who preach the Soviet line. We took the view from the start that whatever we did, if we were to do our job of trying to tell the world, tell everyone who would listen to us what we thought was the truth about the state of religion in the communist countries, whatever we did we would be accused of fomenting the Cold War, because you recall that it is the essence of the whole Cold War propaganda that the communist countries are allowed to say anything they like about us. That is understood. Nobody ever objects to the torrents of abuse that are poured on the imperialist, on America, on this country, on colonialism, to say nothing about countries like Israel and the Middle East generally. That is all right. But the moment we on our side attempt, even in a moderate way, to criticise any aspect of a communist country, that's Cold War. But the other way round is perfectly all right. This is the kind of pattern that for years, for

many years, for generations, the Soviet Union succeeded in imposing on an over trusting West. And it's when that changed, and the West began to realise the essential illiberal, tyrannical nature of some of these communist regimes, that the charge of Cold War began to be made. So we knew from the start that we would be faced with this constant charge, and indeed we have been and we shall continue to be.

One method of defence is to allow oneself to be muzzled, to moderate the facts that one actually presented for fear of offending the communist regimes. That is totally incompatible with academic principles. The academic principles demand, quite simply, a complete submission to truth. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with what one regards, what in one's honest investigation, one regards as truth. And therefore, we set ourselves, from the start, the objective of making quite sure that to the very best of our ability, what we put to the public was true, and put out in moderate language. We do not seek to engage in propaganda; we do seek to portray as much of the truth to the public about the state of religion in communist lands, as, to the best of our ability, we are able to do. This has been our principle, this is the academic principle on which Keston College has always acted, and this is the principle on which we shall continue to act. If we are faced with accusations of Cold War, so be it. Those of you, and I hope that includes everyone in this room, who realised the importance of the work of the College, will realise that this is the only way in which one can honestly proceed. So much for this vexed subject of Cold War, which I thought it important to mention, because it is very important.

Now, the Soviet Union has always, right from the beginning, from the time of Lenin, combined two policies: open hostility to religion, quite open hostility, quite open propagation of atheism, with the pretence, because it is a pretence, that there's complete tolerance for those who nevertheless wish to practice their particular faith. No persecution of religion exists in the Soviet Union; this is repeated again and again. We've just heard the methods by which an evangelical pop singer is treated by the regime [Valeri Barinov. *Ed*]. He's not penalised for being Christian, oh no; he's put in a lunatic asylum and subjected to torture there, on the ostensible grounds that he needs this medically. The depth of the hypocrisy is difficult to exaggerate, but that is typical of what has been the practice of the regime since its very inception in 1917. Religion is not persecuted, the story goes, when criminal proceedings are taken against members of this or that faith; the reason for it is purely criminal. Then in recent years, we've had the additional embellishment that there is this pretence that it is necessary medical treatment. That has been the characteristic of the system from its very inception.

That being so, Keston College and the Centre before it, set itself what is essentially a dual function. It's very important to remember that the function is dual, and that each side of it is

of equal importance. On the one hand, Keston College is, of course, a religious centre with a spiritual mission, with the object of giving voice to those who are silenced, to giving publicity, as we are trying to do in this most recent case which has come to our notice [Valeri Barinov. *Ed*] in publicising cases that might otherwise remain completely silent, in publishing a great deal of material that comes out of the Soviet Union and of other communist countries, and by so doing, to provide some kind of spiritual sustenance to people who live in terrible isolation. The isolation of this unfortunate young man, incarcerated in a loony bin, is difficult to imagine for those of us who live in a civilized country. That is the kind of spiritual sustenance that Keston College exists to provide. I don't know how far it succeeds; I'm very sceptical about the extent to which one can succeed; but what one can say is that if it weren't there it would be a good deal worse. It does do some good in the long run.

The second function is a purely academic one. Of course, the two to some extent coincide, but the second function, which is the academic one, is the importance of making available, studying, collecting material, and as you've probably realised, Keston College is a very important centre for scholars working on the problems of religion under communism. This second function is the academic one of collecting and distributing and making known and making available material on this question. This is of very great importance, purely academically. I'm not talking now of the spiritual, or political side at all. Purely academically, for the study of totalitarianism as a political system, for the study of communism as a political system, it is enormously important that this information should be available, and it's only since Keston has come into existence, that it has been possible, or at any rate that it's become possible, to study with academic precision and with academic standards this all-important aspect of politics. Just think what our study of Poland would be without a knowledge of the state of the church in Poland. Poland as an extreme example, as I said before; it's a paradoxical case of communists pretending the church doesn't exist when 75-80% of the country are known to be believers. But that's an exceptional case. In the case of the Soviet Union, in the case of China, which is also of importance and which unfortunately Keston is unable to study as much as it would like for lack of resources, these questions are of enormous importance for assessing the strength or weakness of the regime concerned, and for understanding how communism works, what limitations there are upon it, because, you know, we speak fairly glibly of totalitarianism, but total control by a government is something that has never existed in any country of any size. It may be possible in small countries run by a really energetic tyrant, but in large countries, it is really impossible; there has to be delegation, there has to be subordination, there have to be alternative centres of allegiance, and this is provided by religion. So the study in itself is of the greatest importance.

Why is it important? It's important for a number of reasons. First of all, it is important because it is a corrective. The knowledge of the survival of religion for, whatever it is, 67 years in the Soviet Union, is evidence of the fact that the claim, which is being made to total allegiance, to total control, is untrue. This is not what the facts suggest. And one of the ways in which this has been shown to be untrue is through study of the survival and indeed revival of faith. In particular I'm thinking now of the Soviet Union; but the same is true of other communist regimes. That's one reason. The other reason is that the claim of allegiance to the materialist faith, which communism claims, is accepted by the great majority. As communist spokesmen will tell you, religion is just a matter for some old women, for some grannies who still keep to the old faith, but otherwise it means nothing. We have shown that this is totally untrue. It's a false picture of the nature of the country, and therefore belies the claim of this total allegiance and total control. And thirdly, it is an index of the failure of the totality of control, which totalitarianism claims. You see, the basic claim of a totalitarian regime is unity. We, in our primitive liberal democratic way, pride ourselves on diversity. We think diversity is the greatest achievement of human existence. We like to think that if everyone thought the same way, it would be very dull indeed, and we know, of course, that free human beings never do think all in the same way, that there has to be diversity; wherever there's life there's diversity. Now that is totally opposed to the communist pretence. I think it's pretence because they must know it's untrue. But the communist pretence is that there is complete unanimity, that there is no diversity of opinion, that everyone is agreed, symbolised in their fake elections when the list prepared by the Communist Party returns 99.9% in its favour. Obviously, if there were a free election, this return would be very different indeed. They'd be lucky to get 30-40%, or maybe 50 or 60%, but certainly not 99%; 99% is itself proof of a fake because it can't be anything else. They are proud of that, they regard that as evidence of the support which they have achieved through their regime in the course of years, or anyway, that is the way it is presented. The study of the growth of religion, the making plain of the individual cases of suppression of religion, making known the extent to which religious convictions are growing, if that be the case, are instances which belie this claim. And that is very important because in my old-fashioned way, I still think that the only thing that matters in social life is truth. Unless you start with truth, you get nowhere. In the pursuit of truth, this knowledge is of enormous importance, and to that I think Keston College has contributed a great deal. I wish I could give you statistics, and maybe others can and know the material better, of cases of individuals who have been helped by campaigns which Keston initiated. I can't do that. I don't know if anyone can. But the fact remains that communist regimes, in spite of belief to the contrary, are very chary of their reputations, they know they have to put up with a great deal of criticism and abuse, but they are very chary of their

reputation becoming too much tarnished. They believe that they ought to do what they can to preserve at any rate some of the façade. They're not particularly concerned about truth in the sense of what they say corresponding to reality, because the essence of ideology, on which the state is founded, is in fact that truth is immaterial. Ideology is a method of expressing what you want to express without regard to truth: for example, the way in which the concept of peace is used for a warlike policy, the way in which democracy is used for a system which does its best to prevent democracy from emerging and so forth, that is the function of ideology. In the pursuit and development of this ideology, the only weapon against it is truth – and it's a fragment of that truth that Keston College strives to present. Finally, I would say that perhaps the most important fact that emerges from the work that has been done here at Keston, over the years, is the proof, which it provides of the indomitable nature of the human spirit. Here we are: we're told again and again that you can achieve anything by propaganda, that you can indoctrinate people to the extent to which they cease to know the difference between truth and falsehood. We've heard this again and again – it's totally false. Experience shows again and again that the human spirit is indomitable. We see this in the secular field, in the vast amount of dissident literature that comes out of the Soviet Union. Those people know perfectly well, in spite of indoctrination, the elementary facts of political and social life. So it is with the survival of the church; it proves that the indoctrination and propaganda are ineffectual, and it proves, once again, if proof were required, that the human spirit is indomitable.

The Case of Valeri Barinov

The Keston News Service (KNS) *began reporting on the case of Valeri Barinov in February 1983. In June 1983, it reported that Barinov and his fellow Baptist musician, Sergei Timokhin, were being harassed as they planned to perform their rock opera* Trumpet Call. *The next year in November, he and Timokhin were arrested and tried: Barinov was sentenced to 2½ years in a labour camp and Timokhin to two years. On 22 November 1987, Barinov was allowed to emigrate from the USSR. We print below a selection of* KNS *reports. Ed.*

Keston News Service, 15 December 1983

The members of the Leningrad Christian rock group "Trumpet Call" have announced that they intend to conduct a week of fasting and prayer the week before Christmas. They will be praying that they will be able to continue their work of evangelism among the young alcoholics and drug addicts of the city despite the difficulties they encounter both from Soviet authorities and the

elders of the registered Baptist church in Leningrad.

Valeri Barinov

In an appeal to Christians in the West, the "Trumpet Call" group says:

"We ask you to remember us in your prayers as you prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord, who brought the light of salvation to all men and whose love extends to all, even the lowest and most wretched. We ask for the support of your prayers that we may continue to bring the joy of His message of salvation to those who stand in greatest need of it."

Despite the pressures on the group's leader, Valeri Barinov, and members of the group, they remain optimistic and full of joy. Barinov, who was interned in a psychiatric hospital in October, but released after only ten days, was taken before a board of psychiatrists and local officials early in December and was told he was not considered fully well yet. He was also asked if he had any connections with Keston College. There has been no further word on charges being prepared against Sergei Timokhin. The group reports that there is great spiritual interest, especially since Valeri's internment, shown among the young people with whom they are in contact.

Keston News Service, 3 May 1984

Christian Musician Arrested

Keston College was informed last week by reliable sources in the Soviet Union that two members of the Christian rock group "Trumpet Call", Valeri Barinov and Sergei Timokhin, are under arrest in the Kresty Prison in Leningrad, charged with attempting to cross the frontier near Murmansk. According to the information received by Keston College, there are a number of disturbing question marks around the entire matter, and a deliberate frame-up cannot be ruled out.

In early March, Barinov was visited by a young man who said he was from Murmansk, and who expressed a great interest in and admiration for the group's music. Several days later (3 March) Barinov and Timokhin travelled from Leningrad to Murmansk – friends assume that this trip was undertaken on the invitation or at the suggestion of the young man from Murmansk. As Barinov and Timokhin have been unable to obtain employment on a regular basis and have been harassed by the Leningrad KGB, their families did not oppose the trip and were not particularly worried when some weeks went by with no word.

On 3 April groups of KGB and militia arrived simultaneously at the homes of

Barinov, Timokhin, their Baptist friend Arkadi Mikhailov and a number of other people. Searches of their flats lasted from 8am until 4pm. All religious literature, personal correspondence and photographs were confiscated. The officials conducting the searches stated that these were "in connection with the cases of Barinov and Timokhin, who were arrested near Murmansk on 4 March and charged with attempting to cross the Soviet border illegally". This was the first notification Barinov and Timokhin's wives had of what had occurred. They learned that their husbands had been brought back to Leningrad and are being held in the Kresty Prison.

In the past few weeks the KGB have been summoning friends and relatives of the two men for questioning, but Tatyana Barinov and Nina Timokhin have not been allowed to see their husbands. Officials have told them that they are questioning "everyone whose names and addresses were found in Barinov's possession", and this has given rise to suspicions that the "escape attempt" is a KGB provocation.

The "Trumpet Call" is a group of young Christian musicians which has come under increasing pressure from the KGB for the past few years. The group has sought official permission to perform their religiously-oriented repertoire in public, and its members have been doing evangelistic work among young drop outs and drug addicts in Leningrad. Last year Barinov was arrested and held in a psychiatric hospital in Leningrad, but released when Russian language radio services from the West reported on his incarceration, and the fact that he was being forcibly injected with aminazin (largactil), a drug used in the treatment of schizophrenia.

Keston News Service , 4 April 1985

Valeri Barinov arrives at labour camp

Christian rock musician Valeri Barinov has been moved from prison in Leningrad to a labour camp in the Komi ASSR in the northern part of European Russia. Barinov was sentenced on 20 November 1984 to 2½ years' ordinary regime camp for allegedly attempting an illegal border crossing. The other leading member of the "Trumpet Call" group Sergei Timokhin, who was arrested with Barinov, was sentenced at the same time to two years' ordinary regime camp and is being held in a labour camp near Vologda.

Keston College now has confirmation of a number of details about the case of Barinov and Timokhin. Both the official Soviet TASS news agency and the Leningrad daily paper *Leningradskaya Pravda* concentrated heavily in their report on the activity of the "Trumpet Call" rock group, and gave very little coverage to the alleged border crossing. It is now clear that both the investigation by the KGB, in which about 60 people were interrogated, and the trial itself also concentrated on the activity of the group. The only prosecution witness whose evidence was relevant to the actual

charge was a man who shared a cell with Barinov after he was arrested. This fellow prisoner claimed that Barinov had asked him for help in making another attempt. Barinov and Timokhin were arrested at the railway station in Kandalaksha, 80 miles (130km) from the border, where they were waiting for a train to Leningrad. There was no proof that they had been any closer to the frontier. (Leningrad itself is, in fact, almost as close to the frontier!)

It is now known that Barinov immediately declared a hunger-strike, which he maintained for 22 days. When he was sentenced, he announced another hunger-strike in protest at the mockery of justice in his case. Despite a heart attack eight days later, brought on by the stress of being force-fed, Barinov continued this hunger-strike for 40 days, until the end of December. (See KNS 198, 209, 210, 213, 214)

Barinov's full camp address is:

169418 Komi ASSR
g. Ukhta,
pos. Nizhni Domanik,
uchr. OS-34/27-4

169418 Коми АССР
г. Ухта,
пос. Нижний Доманик
учр. ОС-34/27-4

Keston News Service, 30 May 1985

The campaign for the release of Valeri Barinov is gathering pace. Both David Steel and Neil Kinnock signed a joint appeal recently for Valeri and addressed it to Mikhail Gorbachev. George Robertson (a Labour MP who was in the USSR to mark the VE Day celebrations) mentioned Valeri's case while in Moscow. Liberal MP David Alton has tabled an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons. It states, "No evidence was produced at his trial to support the charges and his trial concentrated on the activities of his Christian rock group." Danny Smith, who is heading the Prayer Action Campaign for Valeri, spoke on the ITV News programme and pointed out that Valeri was not trying to escape but was, in fact, on his way back home to Leningrad when arrested.

Keston News Service, 8 August 1985

Barinov in punishment cell

Keston College reports alarming changes in the condition of imprisoned Russian Christian rock musician Valeri Barinov. Barinov, 40, who was sentenced to 2½ years' labour camp in November 1984, has conducted a number of protest hunger strikes since his imprisonment.

Keston College has learned that Barinov began yet another protest fast on 17 June and was placed in the camp's punishment isolation cell. He became extremely ill in the rigorous conditions of the punishment cell (narrow confinement in a dank concrete cell; food ration reduced to token

level), but it was not until 3 July that the camp authorities became alarmed enough to have Barinov examined by a medical commission. Keston College notes that medical facilities in most Soviet labour camps are primitive sick bays, usually staffed by paramedics rather than qualified doctors. The commission stated that Barinov was in need of immediate hospitalisation, as he was suffering from acute abdominal pains and was covered from head to foot with eczema. However, when the commission left, the camp authorities simply returned Barinov to the prisoners' barracks and the only medication offered him were a couple of tablets "for the skin condition".

As far as is known, Barinov has received no further medical assistance, although he is so ill he cannot cope with the daily work assigned to him. His friends fear that this circumstance – the inability to fulfil his "work norm" – may be used by the camp authorities as an excuse to accuse him of "refusal to work", which, in turn, could lead to an extension of his present sentence of "insubordination to camp regulations".

Barinov was the founder and leader of the unofficial Christian rock group "Trumpet Call" in Leningrad. He was arrested with fellow musician Sergei Timokhin on 4 March 1984 and charged with planning to cross the Soviet border into Finland. At the trial Barinov maintained his innocence, pointing out that although he and Timokhin had contemplated trying to escape from the USSR, they changed their minds more then 100 miles from the Soviet border and were, in fact, on their way back to Leningrad when arrested. However, Barinov and Timokhin were sentenced to 2½ and 2 years' labour camp respectively. The camp in which Barinov is serving his sentence has a particularly bad reputation for brutality and is known as "blood-soaked 27" (27 being the number of the camp in the Komi Autonomous Republic of the USSR).

A recording of a Christian rock opera composed and performed by the "Trumpet Call" group is shortly to be released in the USA on "I Care" label. This rock opera, also entitled *Trumpet Call*, deals with the second coming of Christ. On 22 October 1985 the British publishers Marshall Pickering will be releasing a book written by Lorna Bourdeaux about Barinov and the "Trumpet Call" group.

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