

²¹ *Bulletin 45* of the Council of ECB Prisoners' Relatives, 1977, p. 11; *Bulletin 53*, 1978, pp. 18-19.

²² *Bulletin 42*, 1977, p. 38.

²³ *Bulletin 36*, 1976, pp. 9-10.

²⁴ *Bulletin 42*, 1977, pp. 19-20.

²⁵ *Information Bulletin* of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of USSR, December 1977.

²⁶ Law on Religious Associations, 8 April 1929, Art. 10.

²⁷ *Bulletin 42* of the Council of ECB Prisoners' Relatives, 1977, p. 66.

²⁸ See document on pp. 20-1 (Pentecostal Appeal to WCC).

²⁹ *Bratsky vestnik*, No. 5, 1976, p. 65; *ibid.*, No. 6, 1976, p. 9; *British Weekly*, 22 April 1977, p. 4.

³⁰ *Euroflame*, January 1978, p. 8.

³¹ *Bulletin 54* of the Council of ECB Prisoners' Relatives, 1978, pp. 24-5 and 29-31.

³² See document on pp. 21-2 (extracts from *Chronicle of Current Events*, Nos. 47 and 49).

Appendix

Soviet Law on Religion: Ukrainian Comment

The Ukrainian atheist monthly Lyudyna i svit (Man and the World) in its June 1978 issue (pp. 16-20) published a commentary on the revised "Regulations on religious associations in the Ukrainian SSR". This commentary written by O. Havrylyuk, is entitled "Legal Guarantees of Freedom of Conscience". The article emphasizes the restrictive nature of the legislation and illustrates the importance placed on registration as a means of controlling the activities of churches, while denying that it in any way limits freedom of conscience.

[. . .] In our country citizens are guaranteed full realization of freedom of conscience, that is the right to confess or not to confess any religion, to hold or not to hold a religious world-view, to perform religious cults or conduct atheist propaganda. It is not by chance that Soviet legislation on cults is justifiably called legislation on freedom of conscience. It excludes any kind of constraint on man's conscience.

Soviet legislation on cults has been developed and refined simultaneously with the development of socialist democracy. The "Regulations on religious

associations in the Ukrainian SSR" were adopted by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR on 1 November 1976. [. . .]

The present legislation on cults makes provision for questions about the registration of religious associations and the opening and closing of places of worship to be decided by a central body, the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) attached to the USSR Council of Ministers. The "Regulations" define the role and functions of the CRA attached to the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, a state body which is one of the structural subdivisions of the CRA attached to the USSR Council of Ministers.

In the new legislation the principle of centralization in the exercise of control over the implementation of the legislation on religious cults, is embodied in several articles.

The "Regulations" state that believing citizens who have reached the age of 18 may, for the satisfaction of their religious needs, come together voluntarily into religious congregations, which are local associations of believing citizens of one and the same cult, denomination or movement.

A religious congregation or group of believers has the right to begin its activities only after the CRA attached to the USSR Council of Ministers has decided to register it.

Bourgeois propaganda and sectarian extremists, especially supporters of the schismatic Baptists, unregistered Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals) and some others, try to distort the true nature of registration, making it out to be a limitation on the rights of believers, on their freedom of conscience. [. . .]

What is the purpose of registration and what is its essence? The very act of registration means that the religious association takes upon itself the obligation to obey Soviet laws, placing itself at the same time under the protection of the law. In this way registration serves the interests of the believers themselves. Of course, it also corresponds to the interests of the State, insofar as it provides for the activity of registered congregations, and consequently, their members, within the framework of existing legislation. Thus the interests of believers who have formed associations are reinforced in the legislation on cults.

Believers have all the rights and conditions necessary for satisfying their religious needs to the full and for normal internal church activity. The legal establishment of these rights has the purpose not only of defining the limits of the organizational and ecclesiastical activity of religious associations, but also of guaranteeing believers the opportunity to realize in practice the principles of freedom of conscience.

Art. 11 of the "Regulations" [corresponding to Art. 17 of the RSFSR law. *Ed.*] states that religious associations may engage only in activity directed towards the fulfilment of religious needs. Thus it is forbidden by law to create mutual aid funds, cooperatives, production associations or to use the property at the association's disposal for any purpose other than for satisfying the religious needs of the believers.

One should dwell also on Art. 17 of the "Regulations". It states that ministers of the cult may commence their activity only after they have been registered according to the established procedure. Their activities are limited to the place of residence of the members

of the religious association which they serve, and to the location of the prayer premises of the association.

These regulations follow logically from the established procedure for registering religious associations with the state authorities. Their essence is that after registration both religious associations and their ministers of the cult come under the protection of Soviet legislation. In practice, unfortunately, there are some cases when ministers of the cult (presbyters, deacons and preachers) perform their duties without registration with the state authorities. In this way they are violating Soviet legislation on cults. It is necessary to eliminate these violations and not to allow them.

The "Regulations" (Art. 20) indicate that religious associations may be removed from registration in the event of their violating the legislation on cults. The final decision on the removal of registration from a religious association, and on the closure of a church or any other prayer building, is taken by the CRA attached to the USSR Council of Ministers at the request of the executive committee of the regional *soviet* of people's deputies, and on the recommendation of the CRA attached to the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR. This approach to the matter makes a deep and all-round examination of each individual case possible and helps avoid mistakes.

Soviet legislation on religious cults clearly defines the procedure and reasons for removing religious associations from registration, and for closing prayer buildings and churches. Religious associations may be removed from registration for the following reasons: (a) gross violation of the legislation on religious cults; (b) failure of the religious association to observe the conditions of the agreement reached with the executive committee of the district *soviet* [for use of the building. *Ed.*] and (c) the collapse of the congregation.

The closure of prayer buildings and churches is allowed in two cases: (a) if the religious association using the prayer premises is removed from registration and (b) if the premises of the cult require to be demolished in the course of redevelopment of the area or if the building is unsafe.

In the latter case the believers may receive other premises for worship if available. It is appropriate to emphasise here that according to the legislation on cults all prayer premises, and also all property necessary for the conduct of the cult, whether made available to the believers of religious congregations under a contract, or acquired by them or donated to them, are the property of the State, and the executive committee of the district or city *soviet* of people's deputies is accountable for them. They are made available *gratis* to believers who have formed a religious congregation on the conditions and according to the procedure provided for by the contract (Arts. 28-9).

Soviet legislation guarantees free conduct of religious rites, provided they do not disturb public order and are not accompanied by infringements on the rights and health of citizens. At the same time the legislation does not permit the performance of religious rites or ceremonies, or the storage of any objects of the cult on the premises of state, cooperative or public enterprises, institutions or organizations (Arts. 22, 25).

The "Regulations" stipulate that the performance of religious rites in the open air, outside the premises of the cult, may take place in each individual case only with the permission of the executive committee of the district or town *soviet* of people's deputies (Art. 25).

Soviet legislation lays down special legal norms which protect believers, ministers of the cult and religious associations from infringements of their legal rights. These norms cover responsibility for the hindrance of religious rites, provided the latter do not disturb public order and are not accompanied by infringements of the rights and health of citizens. Any kind of discrimination against believers or constraint on their conscience is forbidden by law.

As we can see, Soviet legislation guarantees all citizens full freedom to choose their attitude to religion, and it is a firm legal guarantee of freedom of conscience. At the same time it specifies that a citizen's adherence to one or other religious movement cannot serve as a reason for refusing to fulfil any civic obligation. "Nobody", reads Art. 1

of the "Regulations", "may evade the fulfilment of his civic duties on the grounds of his religious convictions." This requirement is entirely in accordance with the new Constitution of the USSR, in particular with Art. 59, which reads: "The realization of rights and freedoms is indivisible from the fulfilment of his duties by a citizen", and also with the stipulations of Art. 39, which states that "the enjoyment of rights and freedoms by citizens may not cause harm to the interests of society and the State, or to the rights of other citizens".

It should be made clear that an absolute majority of ministers of the cult in the republic takes a consistently loyal position towards the Soviet State, and actively supports its policy and conducts religious activity within the framework of the law. The vast majority of rank and file believers conscientiously fulfils civic obligations, and alongside all Soviet people works actively and eagerly to fulfil the great plans of communist construction and the historic decisions of the XXV Congress of the CPSU.

Unfortunately, here and there in our republic violations of the legislation on the part of some ministers and believers still take place. These involve the luring of children and young people into participating in services, rituals and orchestras and into serving the clergy in church. Sometimes ministers of the cult try to teach religion to children.

The violations of the legislation also include such activities as missionary work, the interference of ministers of the cult in the financial affairs of the congregations, and the performance of rituals and also the repair of prayer premises in violation of the established procedure. The facts show that most violations of the legislation on cults result from inadequate knowledge of the legislation. At the same time one should not forget that Soviet laws provide for both administrative and criminal responsibility for violating the legislation on cults, the law on the separation of Church and State and school and Church, and for the infringement of the person and rights of citizens on the pretext of performing religious rites. [..]

Nobody has the right to ignore our laws, to evade the fulfilment of civic

duties, to violate the procedures existing in the country, or to infringe the person and rights of other citizens. Every citizen of the USSR must un-

swervingly keep his constitutional obligations and the laws of our country, including the laws on religious cults.

New Year Appeal from Baptists

The Initsiativniki group called the Council of ECB (Evangelical Christian and Baptist) Prisoners' Relatives, which was formed to support ECB prisoners and their families, regularly issues a samizdat Bulletin. This contains information on discrimination against Evangelical Christians and Baptists in the USSR. A New Year appeal to the Soviet government is regularly printed in this Bulletin and gives a survey of events during the previous year. The New Year appeal for 1978 (printed below) which appeared in Bulletin No. 50 asserts that the new Soviet Constitution, adopted in October 1977, inaugurated increased repression against the unregistered churches.

APPEAL

From: the Council of ECB Prisoners' Relatives

To: the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU

Copies to: the USSR Procuracy, the USSR Committee of State Security (KGB), the Permanent Soviet Representative at the UNO

To all Christians of the world, all heads of governments in the world, to the Council of ECB Churches in the USSR.

From the Council of ECB Prisoners' Relatives, those suffering for the Word of God in the USSR.

"And the Lord said: Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." (Gen. 18: 20-21.)

January 1978. We have entered a New Year once more. Our whole planet Earth has passed through yet another stage - the last year - in its headlong flight towards eternity.

At the beginning of 1976, we wrote you a detailed New Year letter about the true position of the believers living within the territory of the USSR. That letter covered an extensive period of time, including details of the past.

At the beginning of 1977, we again sent you a New Year letter. Your silent answer was expressed in the cruel actions against Christians which followed, actions which filled to the brim the cup of our suffering for the right to believe and to worship the true living God, Creator of heaven and earth. After such actions, it became clear that our letters to you were completely useless.

Later, paying no attention to the tears of suffering Christians and the cries of children, you did not put an end to your cruel deeds against the believers, but intensified them in accordance with the New Constitution, and after its adoption embarked on a course which aimed at the complete extermination of religious believers.

With such cunning aims, you deliberately refused to take into account any suggestions put forward by believers concerning the draft Constitution,* so that they would have some defence, be given some rights in the country and be able to serve God sincerely, fulfilling all the commands of Jesus Christ. You did not publish a single suggestion in defence of their rights. The Council of ECB Prisoners' Relatives warned you, even before the Constitution was adopted, that if it was adopted in the draft text, legal extermination would be the fate of Christians. However, you paid no attention to that either.

Not a single amendment averting the situation threatening true Christians was made to any article of the Constitution which concerned the civil rights of believers.

* See for example "Christian Critique of Soviet Draft Constitution" in RCL Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 34-40. Ed.

The new Constitution has been adopted. Now you have established and legalized your right physically to exterminate the believers. This our declaration was confirmed in real life immediately after the adoption of the Constitution.

In various parts of the country new repressions against the believers flared up with fresh violence. Prayer meetings were cruelly broken up (in the towns of Bryansk, Gorlovka in Donetsk region, Rostov, Magnitogorsk and others).

Searches in the flats of believers, which would be better called robberies, often involving direct attempts to steal the private property of the believers, were renewed at the same time throughout the country.

The greediness of the officials who carried out the searches at the homes of believers often surpassed anything that had occurred before.

As a result of these latest searches a great deal of religious literature was confiscated. 10,000 books were confiscated in the town of Dzhetysai, in Central Asia, alone. In the town of Semipalatinsk a great deal of spiritually instructive literature was also confiscated. We draw your attention to the fact that literature is being confiscated in single copies from individual believers, during the dispersal of prayer meetings, while boarding aeroplanes and in other situations. This has already become an ordinary fact of life for believing Christians in this country.

In the town of Dzhabul, about 22,000 roubles of church funds were confiscated during searches. Is this not stealing from several hundred believers who made their individual contributions to the good of the Church in the name of the Lord?

Searches were carried out in the towns of Dzhabul, Dzhetysai, Alma-Ata, Rostov, Kiev, in Donetsk region, Bryansk, Kharkov and Leningrad. An illegal search, infringing a number of laws, was carried out in Kiev in the flat of Lydia Mikhailovna Vins, a member of the Council of ECB Prisoners' Relatives, and religious literature was confiscated without record.

Pastors of the ECB Church and ordinary Christians are being arrested again on various pretexts in an intensified new wave of pressure.

Grigory Vasilievich Kostyuchenko, pastor of the ECB Church in Timoshevsk, Krasnodar territory, has been arrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment for parasitism.

On what basis by such arrests are you depriving the Church of the right to choose its own pastors as it thinks fit, and to release them from factory work? The Church has every right to do so, in obedience both to the Lord and according to the law. However, the various reservations and omissions in the Constitution have given full rein to those who have been longing to wipe out even the mention of believers and of the Lord's name in our land.

Ivan Yakovlevich Antonov, pastor of the Church in Kirovograd and member of the Council of Churches, has been arrested on the same kind of pretext.

Pyotr Danilovich Peters, pastor of the Church in Rostov and evangelist of the Council of Churches, has also been arrested.

In addition, criminal charges have been brought against the following pastors of the ECB Church: Yakov Grigorevich Skornyakov (Dzhambul), Pavel Timofeevich Rytikov (Krasnodon, Voroshilovgrad region), Yevgeny Nikiforovich Pushkov (Khartsyzsk, Donetsk region), Nikolai Georgievich Baturin, member of the Council of Churches (Shakhty, Rostov region); while Dmitry Vasilevich Minyakov (Valga) and Mikhail Ivanovich Khorev (Kishinev), members of the ECB Council of Churches, have been detained more than once by state officials.

On what basis do you constantly interfere in the Church's affairs in this way and prevent its pastors from serving the Lord in their churches?

And all this is fully approved and legalized against the background of the new Constitution.

A constant search is going on for the President of the Council of Churches, Gennady Konstantinovich Kryuchkov, so that he can be arrested.

For many years now, since her youth, the Christian Aida Skripnikova (Leningrad) has been persecuted: she has already served two terms of imprisonment and has been deprived of a residence permit in Leningrad by the Leningrad authorities; the new Constitution reinforces and gives fresh support to these actions by the authorities.

A case is being fabricated against Fyodor Vladimirovich Makhovitsky, presbyter of the Leningrad ECB Church, with the aim of arresting him.

The new Constitution has granted the right to arrest and bring criminal charges against ECB believers, often leaving out any charge of infringing the legislation on religious cults and accusing believers of crimes contradicting Christian teaching.

Thus a criminal case was brought against Anatoly Alexandrovich Petrenko, pastor of the ECB Church in Shostky, Sumy region. There was an attempt to charge him with stealing state property and speculation.

These charges were based on anonymous letters and photographs of various everyday objects such as clothes (old and new) and sheets (new and old, even some put out for washing), which were taken during a search of Petrenko's flat.

In Omsk region, in the village of Novo-Alexandrovka, Moskalensk district, brothers K. K. Gur and A. A. Penner (a 73 year-old man) have been arrested on an obviously falsified charge of beating up a teenage girl. This unheard-of lie is being upheld by the representatives of authority.

In addition, everywhere young Christian men, who have been called up into the Soviet army and have refused to take the military oath, are being threatened with prosecution; criminal cases are being made out against them and many have already been sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. These innocent boys, children still, are being thrown into the dreadful conditions of camp life, where debauchery flourishes, that awful foul-mouthed world where horrifying crimes are an ordinary fact of life. Many of them have fathers who also spent time in the camps for their Christian views, and who know quite well what it means for Christian boys to find themselves in that criminal, debauched camp world, how the conditions of camp life can shake the spirit.

We receive letters from all over the country - cries from the hearts of mothers who have seen their innocent sons off into the army to be threatened with prosecution for refusing to take the military oath.

We have already explained to you more than once the reason for this be-

haviour on the part of young Christians. It is a direct command of Jesus Christ: "Swear not at all". How can we and our children break Christ's commandment?

If you are not willing to agree that the sons of Christians will not be forced to take the military oath or prosecuted for this, then Christian mothers are ready to appeal to world public opinion and declare that they do not bring their sons into the world and nurture them so that their youth can be destroyed in the conditions of criminal camp life.

Christians do not refuse to serve in the ranks of the army. Young Christians do their military service conscientiously. In private conversations with officers of the military units, parents of Christian sons serving in the army hear good reports of them as the most disciplined, well brought up, dependable and honest soldiers.

However, more than ten young Christians have already been sentenced for refusing to take the military oath. Many have been threatened with prosecution and criminal cases have been made out against them.

For example, a criminal case has been made out against Ivan Grigorevich Rotar, now on military service in the settlement of Arkhara, v/ch [voennaya chast = unit] 74571 "A", in the Amur region. A criminal case has also been brought against Vladimir Mikhailovich Zhikhov, now serving in the settlement of Solnechny, v/ch 45783, Khabarovsk territory; Alexandr Mikhailovich Pugachov, in v/ch 29681, Rostov Veliky, Yaroslavl region, is being threatened with prosecution for refusing to take the oath, and so on.

Young Nikolai Kravchenko, beaten and maimed while in the army, was discharged after unsuccessful treatment of his broken jaw. In the town of Sumy, where Kravchenko lives, doctors have refused to accept that he is ill or to give him a medical exemption, thus forcing him to go out to work. He is in bad health and is in constant danger of paralysis.

Christian prisoners are condemned to long terms in camps and exile. From the south, they are to serve these terms in the far north, in the wilds, with the aim of physically exterminating them.

That was what happened to G. P.

Vins, Secretary of the ECB Council of Churches, a resident of Ukraine, who was sent to serve his term of imprisonment in the wilds of cold Yakutia. His health has been undermined and his life is in constant danger. A medical commission, set up because of the insistence of believers, specially and deliberately declared him healthy. G. P. Vins is still confined and suffering in a Yakutian camp.

A native of southern Ukraine, Stepan Grigorievich Germanyuk from Voroshilovgrad region, has been exiled - quite clearly with the deliberate aim of killing him - to the settlement of Chumikan, Khabarovsk territory, on the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk. The climate is unbelievably severe: frosts of 50-60°C; bleak, cold storm winds from the sea, and the low air pressure and lack of oxygen constantly put his health and life at risk. According to the reckoning of the local inhabitants, only about 20 per cent of people sent there survive. The rest perish, either because of the climatic conditions or at the hands of the local inhabitants. Stepan Grigorievich's health has already been undermined by four year's imprisonment in camps.

This never-ending stream of events, spreading like lightning throughout the land and seen in the increased repression of believers everywhere, is nothing less than a centralized decision, backed by the Constitution, to wipe out any attempt to confess the Lord's name in the USSR.

We insist on the immediate release of the Christians already arrested, the immediate review of cases of Christians condemned and their release. We insist that you should not interfere in the Church's affairs or in its services. Give the pastors of the Church the opportunity to hold services freely.

Put an end to your intended extermination

of Christians and their mass arrests.

You may exterminate us, but the whole world is watching us and can see it.

And we, as relatives of the prisoners, as relatives of Christians inevitably threatened by extermination for faith in the Lord and loyalty to Him, must call on you to stop this, put an end to it! Do not think that the Lord is slow in coming to the aid of His chosen. He is not slow, but long-suffering towards you.

Know that the Lord will soon help His chosen. We do not say this ourselves: so speaks the Word of God which cannot be refuted. And the Word of God will not pass away, for it is written, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."

So hold your trials and do justice!

Reply to the address:

Voroshilovgrad region
Krasnodon 1, Podgornaya 30
RYTIKOVA, GALINA YURIEVNA

The Council of ECB Prisoners' Relatives, those condemned for the Word of God in the USSR.

Signed:

1. A. MELASHCHENKO (Seversk, Donetsk region)
2. A. A. SENKEVICH (Grodno)
3. V. P. DOMBROVSKAYA (Saki, Crimean region)
4. L. M. VINS (Kiev)
5. A. T. KOZOREZOVA (Voroshilovgrad)
6. L. V. RUMACHIK (Dedovsk, Moscow region)
7. S. A. YUDINTSEVA (Khartsyzsk, Donetsk region)
8. Z. YA. VELCHINSKAYA (Brest)

Treatment of Pentecostals: Authorities Ignore Helsinki

The Pentecostal community is on the whole unwilling to seek publicity for the difficulties it endures. Documents attempting an overall analysis of the situation are extremely rare. The author

of this document, Denis Karpenko, evidently has much detailed knowledge of the situation in various parts of the USSR and seems to be in tune with a large section of Pentecostal opinion. The

document is entitled "The Spirit of Helsinki and the Spirit of Atheism" and dated August 1976.

A year has gone by since the moment when the "Final Act" of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was signed at Helsinki. When this document was published, many short-sighted religious believers were glad: "At last!" they thought. "Now we shall no longer be fined, tried and libelled in the press!" (a pleasant error). After all, the countries which signed – including ours – had promised to "recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to express his religion or faith, alone or together with others, and to act in accordance with his own conscience."

"In accordance with his own conscience" – well said! Perhaps a time of peace – even the thousand-year reign of peace – had begun? When Mikhail Shokhov, one of the Pentecostal Christian presbyters of Moscow, read this out to the group he was leading, saying that a time of real freedom had begun, he was summoned by the KGB and told that he had misunderstood what had been published: there would be no changes in our country with regard to believers, that it was too soon to shout "hurrah!", that the believers would have to shout "help!" instead. However, the atheists are far-sighted: they have a great deal of experience behind them already. You can't shout "help!" if you've been gagged. For example, the believers of Donetsk region were fined, but they were then summoned and deprived of the receipts for the fines they had paid, in case these might end up in the West. And so you can't shout for help.

The Pentecostal Christians, constantly referred to as a forbidden, fanatical sect, are being offered forcible registration, while the Baptists of Sverdlovsk region – who have asked for registration – are being denied it (and these are not Baptists who support the Council of Churches, but those belonging to the All-Union ECB Council!) There is no paradox in this, merely a difference in the methods of struggle between the stick and the carrot, as one of our theologians has said.

In Zhitomir region, where the atheists are really working hard for their daily

bread, the local authorities (mostly in the villages) – after reading the Helsinki declaration – told the believers that they would now be free, that no one would break up their meetings, or fine them. Alas, they spoke too soon. After things had been "explained" to them by the district soviet executive committees, the village authorities said they had been too hasty, that nothing had changed.

The same anti-religious campaign is going on in the press. The newspaper *Vinnitskaya Pravda*, for example, in an article on 10 July 1976, "They can't hide behind their shadows" by G. Osipov and V. Gaichenko, writes that Pentecostals Vasily Matyash and Vasily Romanyuk fought against Soviet power during the war, with a prayer-book in one hand and a rifle in the other – although it was not like that at all. They were not believers during the war, but came to believe in the camps where they were serving sentences for their past deeds. The authors make mention of Pavel Kuzmich, who became rich – or so they write – by working together with his wife (not, of course, without the knowledge of the administrative authorities).

We have already written that *Vinnitskaya Pravda* often prints libels under the title of "Atheism – forward to the attack!", speaking of the past as if it were the present, stating that a believer did something when this either happened before he became a believer, or never occurred at all.

The paper calls on communists and atheists to fight constantly against sectarian "teachings" and to show up the Pentecostals for what they really are.

On the anniversary of the historic agreement, when our press writes a great deal about the spirit of Helsinki, the spirit of atheism has shown its refusal to compromise: believers from the settlements of Malakhovka and Tomilino near Moscow were surrounded during a service in the woods by policemen, volunteer militia and persons in civilian clothes; they had their names taken; the preachers had their Bibles confiscated and were later fined. Among these believers, there were people who had rejoiced that they would no longer be persecuted or fined, as in past years, that they would be able to express their faith "in accordance with their own consciences."

Pentecostal Appeal to WCC

The bulk of Pentecostal samizdat is written by leaders of the emigration movement (see "Soviet Pentecostals: Movement for Emigration" by Michael Rowe in RCL Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 170-4). These are almost the only Pentecostals who seek publicity for their cause. The following appeal, written in September 1976, summarizes their complaints against the Soviet government.

To the World Council of Churches
from Christians of the Evangelical Faith
(Pentecostals) resident in the USSR.

[. . .]

May God make you willing to listen to us who cry to Him and to you from a land of slavery and repression. We know that your sessions are attended by delegates from the USSR sent by the Moscow Patriarchate and the AUCECB [All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists]. We do not know these people, but they do not represent those innocent Christians who are assaulted or sentenced to prison. We too would like to attend your meetings in the persons of our elected delegates, but the atheistic authorities will never allow this. Instead, they confine us within the barbed barricades of the Soviet frontiers. However, it is not the chief of our troubles that we cannot travel abroad freely like all the citizens of your free countries can whenever they wish. Our great trouble is that we are not allowed to live in peace behind the iron curtain. The Soviet Union is for us a vast concentration camp. Here we are prosecuted because we are believers and because we bring up our children in the faith. This is what is happening now. When Stalin was alive believers of all persuasions and unorthodox thinkers were condemned for nothing less than treason: some were shot, others shut up in prisons and labour camps, from which most never returned to their homes. From those who happened to escape we know how cruel was the lot of those who lived only two or three decades ago. They were our fathers, grandfathers, brothers.

In our day things have changed a little: we are assaulted less often, sen-

tenced less severely, but after periods in prison or labour camp we are scarcely alive and, through broken health, hardly fit to earn a living for our large families. In addition, because we will not recant our beliefs, but continue to bring up our children in the faith, we are threatened with further terms of imprisonment, and even old men are re-sentenced regardless of their age. And at the same time, there in Nairobi,* you see before you those who assure you and all the world that they do not persecute believers in our country, but only criminals, and that there is no discrimination. Perhaps it is true that there is no discrimination, for there is another word for this crime against humanity, not discrimination, but GENOCIDE. Yes, it is precisely that, since we live in circumstances deliberately designed so that Christians should be remorselessly wiped off the face of the entire USSR. This is how the priests of communism want to bring about their victory.

In the 1960s we were condemned because we pressed for registration for our Christian congregations. They told us that our sect was fanatical and therefore could not be registered. They made up black slander and lies about so-called human sacrifices, and inflamed the ignorant population of towns and villages against us. Now they condemn us because we do not want to register our churches, as to Christians the conditions are unacceptable.

Oh no, we would not oppose a governmental registration such as that which exists in your countries. But you

* In November-December 1975 the WCC's General Assembly met in Nairobi. Although previously the WCC had avoided discussing religious discrimination in Eastern Europe, at Nairobi it undertook to produce a report on religious freedom in the signatory countries of the Helsinki Declaration (see RCL Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 2-3 and pp. 4-17). In August 1976 the WCC's Central Committee met in Geneva to discuss this report (see RCL Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 2-3 and pp. 4-15) *Ed.*

would not accept our laws on registration either were such a great tide of atheism to rise in your countries as it has here.

[. . .]

We request you, as representatives of the churches of the world, as our

brothers in the faith, when you have understood the import of what we have written, (and we enclose details of repressions and discrimination against us), make representations to the Soviet government to let us leave the country. [. . .]

Events in Rostov-on-Don

The Chronicle of Current Events, a Soviet samizdat journal, is compiled by members of the Soviet human rights movement and provides information on any form of discrimination in the USSR. Although Baptist contacts with the Soviet human rights movement appear to be minimal, the Chronicle's compilers recognize the deep injustices met by the Baptist community and regularly report on their difficulties. The following reports are taken from the Chronicle of Current Events No. 47 and No. 49. While the treatment of Baptists in Rostov may be untypically brutal this is by no means exceptional.

[extract from *A Chronicle of Current Events* No. 47, 30 November 1977]

The Rostov congregation of Evangelical Christians and Baptists comprises more than 300 members. The congregation has been applying for registration, having stipulated that its members would not recognise the commissioner from the Council for Religious Affairs and the KGB as occupying the place of Jesus Christ in church. The local authorities refused to register the congregation.

The believers assembled in a house belonging to two elderly women: Terekhova and Khmara. In January 1977 this house was confiscated. The members of the congregation began to assemble in other places. The assemblies were dispersed.

Thus, on 8 February the police and voluntary patrols would not allow Baptists who had gathered there to enter the house of the Zakharov family. In the process many people were beaten.

Then the authorities left the congregation in peace for a while.

The believers built a "tent", 7 × 9 metres, on the Zakharovs' personal plot and organized prayer meetings in it. The district soviet executive committee

decreed that this tent should be taken down, but the Baptists refused to submit.

On 8 August the police took down the tent. Together with the building materials out of which the tent had been made, they took from the plot seven cubic metres of firewood, welding apparatus, two gas cylinders, electric lamps, a table and benches.

The Baptists continued to assemble on the Zakharovs' plot and soon afterwards built a new tent there.

On 23 August late in the evening the police and workmen again took down the tent on the orders of the district soviet executive committee and took away the building materials.

On 26 August a prayer meeting was again held in the Zakharovs' yard. Ranks of policemen, KGB officials and voluntary patrols filled the streets around it. When the service started on the plot, they switched on a deafening loud-speaker. They began to disperse the believers, pushing them and twisting their arms. The minister of the church, P. Peters, was taken away. Then members of the congregation assembled near the police station and began demanding his release. Some were taken into the police station, others were driven into buses and taken to far-off districts of the town. In the course of this, physical force was again applied.

The congregation arranged a "youth communion" for 27-28 August. On this occasion they gathered in a wood. The believers had scarcely reached the place, when the police appeared, together with voluntary patrols, and busloads of workers especially taken off the production line. Loudspeakers started up, a crush began. The service was cut short. A few people were taken into the police station. After talks there the believers were allowed to go to the Zakharovs' plot.

However, on 2 and 4 October prayer

meetings at the Zakharovs' were again broken up.

On 14 September massive searches were carried out at the homes of members of the Rostov congregation.

Rumours were released around the town that the Baptists had sacrificed a child and killed a policeman.

The *soviet* executive committee of the city's Pervomaisky district decreed that the children be confiscated from the Zakharov family. Nina Zakharova was deprived of guardianship over her younger sister Lena. (The Zakharovs are the children of a Baptist minister. There are three sisters of 24, 19 and 11, and one brother of 22. Their parents died in 1971. The oldest sister Nina has brought up the children.)

A criminal case has been brought against P. Peters. He is 34, and has already served three terms of imprisonment as a dissenting Baptist. In 1969 they tried to persuade him to cooperate with the KGB under threat of imprisonment.

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This report on the Rostov ECB congregation is continued in A Chronicle of Current Events No. 49 (14 May 1978).

In March the Baptist congregation was practically deprived of the possibility of holding prayer meetings. The believers were trying to meet on a plot of land belonging to N. Zakharova (*Chronicle 47*), where a tent demolished by the authorities used to stand. On days when meetings were held, vigilantes led by deputy chairman Arutyunov, of the city *soviet* executive committee and police chief Likhobaba would arrive there ahead of time. Sentries would detain believers while they were still out on the street and push them into buses marked with signs saying "Welcome!" The Baptists were then taken to the police station, where they were charged with breaking the law, for example - with making an attempt on the life of a policeman, disobedience to the authorities, and so on. This was followed by arrest for 10-15 days or fines. Those detained at the police station were put in the cooler, and some were beaten up.

In March over 70 members of the congregation were arrested for 10-15 days.

* * *

At the beginning of May the Rostov Baptist congregation notified the chairman of the city *soviet* executive committee about a forthcoming important prayer meeting. On 7 May, two days before the meeting was due to take place, mass arrests of believers began in the city.

Believers were roused from their beds by people climbing through their windows and breaking down their doors. Searches were conducted involving the confiscation of religious literature and ordinary objects - without the sanction of the Procuracy. The Baptists were even pulled off suburban trains. About 2,000 people were arrested altogether. Many were sentenced to 10-15 days' imprisonment. In the special reception centres some people had their hair cut off, others were taken to the venereal disease clinic and forced to give blood samples. Lyubov Ovchinnikova was detained in the clinic, though the doctors declared her to be healthy.

After the Baptists complained to Moscow, the local authorities began to release those imprisoned without waiting for their sentences to end.

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On 13 May the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR sent a letter to I. A. Bondarenko, first secretary of the Rostov regional Party committee, demanding that he end these illegalities.

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On 10 March Pyotr Danilovich Peters (*Chronicles 47, 48*) was sentenced to 2½ years' imprisonment under article 190-3 of the RSFSR Criminal Code ("Organizing or actively participating in group activities which contravene public order"). Only the father of the accused was able to be present at his trial. His friends and fellow-believers who tried to get into the courtroom were pushed into buses and taken to the police station, where they were held until evening.