

ABSTRACT

Soviet Religious *Samizdat* as a Powerful Weapon of Soviet Religious Dissent:
A Comparative Study of Baptist and Orthodox *Samizdat* Publications
from the early 1960s to the late 1980s

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In the Soviet Union where government controlled every written and spoken word the sole way of communicating uncensored information was *samizdat* – a system of underground publication which existed in the Soviet Union from the early 1950s to the late 1980s. Soviet religious dissidents extensively used *samizdat* in their struggle for freedom of conscience. Many of their publications reached the West and soon became the sole source of truthful information about religious persecution in the Soviet Union.

Baptist and Orthodox dissents contributed the most to Soviet religious *samizdat*. This study analyzes and describes *samizdat* publications produced by these denominations. It explores the two groups' forms of organizational efforts and their use of *samizdat*. It demonstrates that while Orthodox dissent produced a greater variety of *samizdat* publications, Baptist dissent turned it into a powerful weapon in its struggle for religious freedom.

Soviet Religious *Samizdat* as a Powerful Weapon of Soviet Religious Dissent:
A Comparative Study of Baptist and Orthodox *Samizdat* Publications
from the early 1960s to the late 1980s

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Bolsheviks fought against religion since coming into power in 1917. However, deprived of its material base, religion did not “wither away.” While the majority of believers suffered silently, every now and then a few of them reminded the authorities of their existence with occasional protests. The protests eventually became organized. This was evident at the beginning of Nikita Khrushchev’s anti-religious campaign when the authorities attempted to impose new regulations on religious communities in the Soviet Union. Believers’ reaction to the state’s further interference with the church’s internal life led to emergence of religious dissent.

In the Soviet Union where the government controlled every written and spoken word the sole way of communicating uncensored information was by means of an illegal underground printing and distributing system *samizdat*. Religious dissent had to rely on *samizdat* in its struggle for freedom of conscience. By the mid-1970s it produced 50% of Soviet *samizdat*.¹ Two largest groups of religious dissent in the Soviet Union, Russian Orthodox and Baptist, contributed to the religious *samizdat* the most.²

This study analyzes and describes *samizdat* publications produced by these groups. It explores the two groups’ forms of organizational efforts and their use of

¹ Mikhail Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ pri Staline i Khrushcheve* (Moskva: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvor’e, 1999), 281.

² Barbara Wolfe Jancar, “Religious Dissent in the Soviet Union,” in *Dissent in the USSR*, ed. Rudolf Tokes (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins Press, 1975),196.

samizdat. It demonstrates that while Orthodox dissent produced a greater variety of *samizdat* publications, Baptist dissent turned it into a powerful weapon in its struggle for religious freedom.

Phenomenon of Soviet Samizdat

The Russian term *samizdat* literally means “self-published.” It was coined by analogy with the official acronym *Gosizdat* (abbreviated from *Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo*) which means “published by state.” The term refers to a system of underground publication which existed in the Soviet Union from the early 1950s to the late 1980s.³

Different types of Soviet *samizdat* include literary, political, religious and philosophical, and nationalistic. Literary *samizdat* “officially” emerged in the Soviet Union early in the 1950s when poet Nikolai Glazkov reportedly used a similar term “samsebiaizdat” (“I-published-myself”) on manuscripts of his poems.⁴ The purpose of *samizdat* was to avoid state censorship because many original literary works were significantly altered or simply denied official publication. The start of the human rights movement in the mid-1960s marked the beginning of political *samizdat*. Historical documents, protest statements, appeals, and trial records which indicated the existence of social and political problems within the Soviet society never passed the state’s censorship process. *Samizdat* was the sole way of publishing and disseminating truthful information about the life in the Soviet Union.

³ Ann Komaromi, “Material Existence of Soviet Samizdat,” *Slavic Review* 63, no. 3 (Autumn, 2004): 598.

⁴ Aleksandr Daniel’, “Istoki i smysl sovetskogo samizdata,” *Antologiiia samizdata*, http://antology.igrunov.ru/a_daniel.html (accessed January 15, 2013).

Soviet religious *samizdat* officially emerged with the start of the movement for human rights, while the hand copied and unofficially circulated 1918 encyclical of Patriarch Tikhon could be considered the first account of religious *samizdat* in the Soviet Union.⁵ Needless to say, religious and political *samizdat* are interconnected since the right to believe is one of the most essential human rights. Also, politically oriented nationalistic *samizdat* appeared with the start of national movement at the beginning of the 1960s.⁶

The process of producing *samizdat* usually included typing a text of a document on onionskin paper using a typewriter and carbon copy paper. Five-to-six copies of a document could be typed at once. Sometimes the last copy was almost illegible. The copies were then distributed to a close circle of friends and like-minded colleagues who copied them again and so on. In some cases, a mimeograph or hand-crafted printing press was used to make copies of an original hand printed text. While access to copy machines became available in the Soviet Union in 1966, printing facilities were under the strict control of the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti* or *KGB* (Committee for State Security) and local police. Soviet citizens could not own a personal copy machine.⁷ For convenience *samizdat* publications often were disseminated unbound. This way several

⁵ Dmitry Pospelovsky, "From Samizdat to Tamizdat." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 20, no. 1 (March 1978): 46.

⁶ Ludmila Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movement for National, Religious and Human Rights* (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 8, 376.

⁷ As noted on the Keston Institute (Oxford) website <http://www.keston.org.uk/archive.php> (accessed January 18, 2013).

people in a group could divide the pages for speedy reading. Besides, they were easy to copy, secure, and hide.

Review of the Literature

A majority of academic studies of Soviet *samizdat* were accomplished by Western scholars who focused primarily on its significance as cultural, socio-political, and historical phenomenon.⁸ Western historians based their research of the history of religion and dissident movement in the Soviet Union on historical facts documented in *samizdat* because until recently this was the sole source of truthful information about the life in the USSR.⁹ Official sources from the Soviet state sources contained false or skewed information and could not be trusted.¹⁰

Russian sources on *samizdat* are significantly less extensive. They focus mainly on its history and literary aspects, including *samizdat*'s impact on developing the Soviet

⁸ See, for instance, Dmitry Pospelovsky, *From Samizdat to Tamizdat*, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 20, no. 1 (March 1978); Ann Komaromi, "The Material Existence of Samizdat," *Slavic Review* 63, no. 3 (Autumn, 2004); Barbara Wolfe Jancar, "Religious Dissent in the Soviet Union," in *Dissent in the USSR*, ed. Rudolf Tokes, (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins Press, 1975); H. Gordon Skilling, *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1989); George Saunders, *Samizdat: Voices of the Soviet Opposition*, (New York, Monad Press; distributed by Pathfinder Press, 1974).

⁹ See Dmitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), *A History of Marxist-Leninist Atheism and Soviet Antireligious Policies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), *Soviet Antireligious Campaigns and Persecutions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), *Soviet Studies on the Church and the Believer's Response to Atheism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988); Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: A Contemporary History* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

¹⁰ Dmitry Pospelovsky, *Soviet Studies on the Church and the Believer's Response to Atheism*, vol. 3 of *A History of Soviet Atheism in Theory and Practice, and the Believer* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 27-28

underground culture. A large number of Russian sources are written by authors who themselves used to be a part of the informal cultural circles and participated in *samizdat*. These sources which are usually a part of an internet based *Samizdat* archive, the collection of “unofficial poetry”, or *Samizdat* anthology, talk about their authors’ personal experiences in creating and disseminating *samizdat* publications and the risk and commitment involved in these activities.¹¹

Modern Russian historians writing about church-state relations in the USSR prefer to base their research on materials from state and local archives which were only recently opened to the public.¹² There are several possible reasons for this. One is that the majority of *samizdat* was smuggled out of the country and gradually collected and preserved in Western archives. Many *samizdat* publications in Russia, particularly periodicals, continued to be destroyed throughout the 1990s.¹³ Therefore, *samizdat* may have not been used simply because it is not available. Another is that, historically,

¹¹ See Vladimir Bukovskii, “I vozvrashchaetsia veter...” *Biblioteka “Vekhi”*. *Arkhiv Samizdata*, <http://www.vehi.net/samizdat/bukovsky.html> (accessed January 15, 2013); Aleksandr Daniel’, “Istoki i smysl sovetskogo Samizdata.” *Antologiiia samizdata*, http://antology.igrunov.ru/a_daniel.html (accessed January 15, 2013); B. Konstrikor (Boris Vantalov), “Dyshala noch’ vostorgom samizdata.” *RVB neofitsial’naia poeziiia. Antologiiia*, <http://www.rvb.ru/np/pulication/03misc/konstrikor.htm> (accessed January 15, 2013); Vladimir Krivulin, “Zolotoi vek samizdata” *RVB neofitsial’naia poeziiia. Antologiiia*, <http://www.rvb.ru/np/publication/00htm> (accessed January 15, 2013).

¹² See Mikhail Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ pri Staline i Khrushcheve* (Moskva: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvor’e, 1999), 3; Tatiana Chumachenko, *Gosudarstvo, pravoslavnaia tserkov’, veruiushchie, 1941-1961 gg.* (Moskva: “AIRO-XX”, 1999), 2.

¹³ In 2009 I received an electronic letter from well-known Soviet religious dissident Alexander Ogorodnikov, who asked for copies of his *samizdat* journal *Bulletin of Christian Community* preserved in the Keston Archive since his personal copies “were irretrievably lost during KGB searches in Moscow” After his rehabilitation Ogorodnikov received back only a small amount of materials which were confiscated from him. He was told that the rest of the materials were destroyed by KGB.

Russians trust “official” information more than “unofficial” information which *samizdat* is considered to be.

While in Russia literary *samizdat* is the most discussed and valued category, in the West scholars turn primarily to political and religious *samizdat* in their studies of the Soviet dissident movement. In Ludmila Alexeyeva’s words, Soviet *samizdat* constituted “a backbone of the movement for human rights” in the USSR.¹⁴ Her book, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious and Human Rights*, is the most comprehensive Russian source on the history of Soviet dissident movement.

Alexeyeva emphasizes the role of *samizdat* in the growth of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union:

...*Samizdat* ... facilitates the dissemination of human rights ideas. The channels of communication used by *samizdat* provide the connecting links essential for organizational work. These channels spread out silently and invisibly; like mushroom spores, they emerge here and there in the form of public statements.

The two separate categories of *samizdat* – political and religious – are interconnected because the right to believe is a fundamental human right. Unfortunately, there are no known scholarly studies of religious *samizdat* in particular, as there is lack of attention to the role of religious element in Soviet dissent or its possible impact on the Soviet society as a whole.¹⁵

Keston Collection of Samizdat

The Keston collection of *samizdat* materials is one of the most renowned in the world. It is a part of the Keston Archive and Library which is housed in the Keston

¹⁴ Alexeyeva, 284.

¹⁵ Barbara Wolfe Jancar, “Religious Dissent in the Soviet Union,” in *Dissent in the USSR*, ed. Rudolf Tokes (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1975), 191.

Center for Religion, Politics, and Society at Baylor University (Waco, Texas). The Keston Archive is one of the world's largest artificially assembled collections of materials about persecutions on religious grounds. It was moved to Baylor University in 2007 from the Keston College (Oxford, UK) where it was originally located.

The Keston Archive was started by the founder of the Keston College Reverend Cannon Michael Bourdeaux, who in the 1950s was one of the first British exchange students to visit the Soviet Union. During his first trip to Moscow Michael witnessed a demolition of an Orthodox church which made a strong impression on him. Two women approached him as he was watching the ancient walls falling down turning to dust. They gave him letters describing persecution of believers in their area hoping that he would take them out of the country and tell people in the West the truth about religion in the Soviet Union. These letters could be the first example of Soviet religious *samizdat* which reached the West in the late 1950s.

Collecting and disseminating the truth about religious persecution in the Soviet Union and around the world became Michael's calling. Evidences of suffering of believers which flooded the Keston College were overwhelming. The staff assembled the materials into the Keston Archive, a large part of which is now the collection of *samizdat* materials from the former Soviet Union and the countries of East European block.

The Keston collection of *samizdat* contains more than 4,000 items¹⁶ from Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland and the Soviet Union. Soviet materials representing Adventists, Baptists, Jews, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, and Armenian, Georgian and Russian Orthodox include appeals to the Soviet authorities against the closure of

¹⁶ As estimated by the Keston Institute, Oxford, UK, <http://www.keston.org.uk/archive.php> (accessed January 18, 2013).

churches, transcripts of court proceedings against believers, petitions to free prisoners of conscience, spiritual testimonies, handmade prayer books, memoirs of believers and other evidence of the religious persecution under Soviet regime. Most of these materials are unique and cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

The Keston collection of Soviet religious *samizdat* periodicals is extensive. It contains Baptist, Catholic, Pentecostal, Russian Orthodox and other Christian publications. Baptist *samizdat* periodicals include *Bratskii Listok (Fraternal Leaflet)*, *Vestnik Spasenia (Herald of Salvation)*, *Vestnik Istiny (Herald of Truth)*, and *Biulleten' soveta rodstvennikov uznikov evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR (Bulletin of the Council of Relatives of Evangelical Christians-Baptists Prisoners in the USSR)* from 1964 to 1987. Russian Orthodox periodicals in the Keston Archive include issues of *Mnogaia Leta (Many Years)*, *Moskovskii Sbornik (Moscow Collection)*, *Nadezhda (Hope)*, *Obshchina (Community)*, *Veche (Public Assembly)*, and *Vybor (Choice)*. The journal *Przyv (Call)* published by Sandr Riga the leader of Ecumenical Movement, and *Biulleten' Khristianskoi Obshchestvennosti (Bulletin of Christian Community)* and *Express-khronika (Express Chronicle)* should be classified as Christian *samizdat*. The latter two were published by Orthodox dissident Aleksandr Ogorodnikov from 1987 to 1989. The Keston Archive also contains *The Chronicle of Lithuanian Catholic Church* and *Informatsionnyi Biulleten' soveta tserkvei piatidesiatnikov (Information Bulletin of the Council of Pentecostal Churches)*.

While all the religious *samizdat* publications mentioned above provide invaluable evidence of existence of Soviet religious dissent, this study focuses on Baptist and Orthodox religious *samizdat* as important source of truthful information about dissidents

of these particular groups, their activity, and persecution. Baptist periodicals include *Bratstii Listok*, *Vestnik Spaseniia*, *Vestnik Istiny*, and *Biulleten' soveta rodstvennikov uznikov evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov*. Orthodox publications are *Obshchina*, *37*, *Nadezhda*, *Biulleten' Khristianskoi Obshchestvennosty*, *Veche*, and *Moskovskii Sbornik* .

CHAPTER TWO

Evangelical Baptist Christians

Rise of Baptist Religious Dissent

Despite severe persecution, Evangelical Christian Baptists were the fastest growing and the second largest Christian denomination in the Soviet Union after the Russian Orthodox Church. Their history reflects every change in the Soviet power and religious policy. For a very brief time after the October Revolution and Lenin's 1918 decree on separation of church and state, Soviet Evangelicals and Baptists enjoyed relative freedom from and noninterference by the state. But by the early 1920s, Soviet authorities began persecution of leaders who did not demonstrate loyalty to the state. 1929 marked the start of intense antireligious propaganda and a campaign against religious sects. The Union of Military Godless declared all members of Protestant denominations "foreign spies" working for "international bourgeoisie."¹ In April 1929, the All-Union Central Executive Committee's resolution "On Religious Associations" established a mandatory registration of all religious communities. The document limited church activities to delivering religious services inside prayer houses and banned mission work and religious propaganda. Severe persecution of senior pastors and ministers began during this period and continued through the 1930s. By 1935 there was no legal

¹ Michel Bourdeaux and Sergei Filatov, *Sovremennaiia Religioznaia Zhizn' Rossii: Opyt Sistematicheskogo Opisaniia* (Moskva: Logos, 2003), 150.

Evangelical or Baptist community left outside of Moscow; in the capital, one Evangelical church always remained open.²

Like all other believers, Evangelicals and Baptists enjoyed the short “interlude” of Stalin’s liberal religious policy from 1943 to 1948. Approximately 5,000 Baptist communities were revived after the end of the World War II. Only one-third of them, however, were registered by the authorities. After 1948, the mandatory registration was denied to the communities which did not recognize the supremacy of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (the Council) established by the authorities’ permission in 1944.³ The Council united Evangelical and Baptist communities which demonstrated their loyalty to the state. Communities which were opposed to the state’s interference in their religious life lost their registration. Their churches were closed.

The state authorities used the Council to show the world community that Protestants in the Soviet Union enjoyed religious freedom. Leaders and some members of the loyal Evangelical and Baptist communities were allowed to travel abroad, participate in international conferences and congresses of Western Evangelicals and Baptists, and host foreign delegations. In 1945 the Council began to publish *Bratskii Vestnik (Fraternal Herald)*. During the resumption of Stalin’s antireligious campaign in 1949-1954, the Council’s foreign contacts were interrupted and the publication of the journal was stopped. The Council’s activity was resumed in 1954, after Stalin’s death.

The All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists was the only legal Protestant organization in the Soviet Union. It represented the sole opportunity for

² Bourdeaux and Filatov, 151-154.

³ Alexeyeva, 202.

unregistered religious communities to legalize themselves. Protestant groups wishing to be registered had to agree to certain conditions laid down by the authorities. Thus Pentecostals who joined the Council in 1945 agreed to stop “speaking in tongues” without an interpreter and discontinue “feet washing.”⁴ Therefore, by 1960 the Council consisted of various Protestant groups, many of which had only one thing in common – their complete loyalty to the Soviet state.

The authorities’ interference in the Council’s affairs continued as it was developing its ideology and structure. It was a complicated task since the Council consisted of various Protestant groups united under Evangelical and Baptist leadership. While Evangelicals and Baptists shared theology, they had different forms of worship, organizational structures, and priorities of religious life.⁵ Evangelicals’ traditional loyalty and willingness to compromise⁶ resulted in gradual domination of the Baptist element. The Council adopted a Baptist organizational structure in which a senior pastor performed the worship and was the head of his religious community. Eventually the Council’s organization became a strict hierarchy with a senior pastor at the top, then minister, and deacon. The hierarchical structure was easy to control. The state appointed senior pastors who controlled the communities. Furthermore, the authorities limited the Council’s activity to religious worship. Since active preaching and religious propaganda

⁴ Bourdeaux and Filatov, 161.

⁵ Ibid., 162.

⁶ The All-Russian Council of Evangelical Christians established by Ivan Prokhanov existed until 1944 due to the founder’s loyalty to the socialist ideas which he attempted to interpret in Christian context. He cooperated with the state authorities until his emigration in 1928. In 1944 the All-Russian Council of Evangelical Christians became the basis for the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

were illegal under the 1929 Law on Religious Associations, the life in each religious community focused on the worship service and living in accordance with the Christian principles outside the church. Head pastors also preached about importance for each believer to focus on Christian principles in his or her personal life. Unable to do missionary work, communities were isolated from each other and the rest of the society. As the Council's cooperation with the state deepened, believers' concern with abandoning Evangelical principles by its leaders grew. The increasing pressure resulted in the 1961 schism and the start of the Baptist dissident movement.

In 1959, at the beginning of Khrushchev's antireligious campaign, the Council adopted two key documents: the "New Regulations of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists" and the "Instructive Letter." The "Instructive Letter" was sent only to senior pastors. Both documents violated the fundamental Evangelical principles by instructing pastors to "stop holding meetings with sermons inviting sinners to repent." This basically meant denying salvation to the sinners. Further instruction to pastors included reducing "to the absolute minimum the number of those being baptized between the ages of 18 and 30." Furthermore, the documents forbade "young people's choirs, string orchestras, and children's Sunday schools." Church members were not allowed to "organize material help for the sick, for the poor or for orphans." The church could not "elect or replace its pastor without [the permission of] empowered atheist official."⁷ The documents instructed senior pastors to "remember that at present the main task of divine service is not the enlistment of new members" but "to check unhealthy

⁷ "The position of the Church on 17 October 1971," *English transcript of Russian tape of the Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists condemned for the Word of God in the Soviet Union*, Archive file <SU/Ini S Inistiativniki>, 3, Keston Center, Baylor University.

missionary tendencies.” The documents also warned them not to “become too involved in preaching.”⁸ A year after the documents were sent to the local communities, senior pastors reported that the majority of the churches refused to agree with the instructions. They preferred to lose their registration rather than accept the conditions which limited “canonical and spiritual life of the church.”⁹ This was an indication that the state authorities overestimated the power of the Council.

The first official protest against “introducing these atheistic documents into the life of the church”¹⁰ came from an Initiative Group (*Initsiativniki*) of Baptists in the middle of 1961. The group consisted of 11 people under the leadership of Alexei Prokof’ev and Gennadi Kiuchkov.¹¹ Twice, on August 13 and 23, *Initsiativniki* appealed to the Council demanding the convention of an extraordinary All-Union Congress of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists to correct the Council’s mistakes and stabilize the critical situation in the communities. Since *Initsiativniki* never received a response, they sent a copy of the documents, along with their criticism, to all local churches. In 1962, the group renamed itself an Organizational Committee for the All-Union Congress of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. Both the Organizational Committee and the Council sent appeals to the government, concerned about the growing divide in the church.

Initsiativniki forwarded copies of their appeals, with explanation of their requirements, to

⁸ Michael Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), 21.

⁹ *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR* (Moskva: Izd. Vses. soveta evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov, 1989), 241.

¹⁰ “The position of the Church...,” 3.

¹¹ *Istoriia Evangel'skikh Khristian-Baptistov v SSSR*, 242.

all local churches. In 1963, the state's Council for Religious Cults' Affairs gave permission for a "conference." The conference was held by the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists on October 15 and was renamed a congress. *Initsiativniki* refused to recognize it. Of all the 450 people present at the Congress there was not a single representative of *Initsiativniki* supporters.¹² The Congress replaced the "New Regulations" with a new document which the Organizational Committee declared "a more refined trap for Evangelical Christian Baptist believers." The *Initsiativniki's* position remained firm:

In your constitution adopted in 1963, there is no mention of the most important point: for what purpose the ECB Union was created and what are its aims. For you (the AUCECB) have rejected the basic purpose of the church's presence on earth, which was always set out in the opening paragraphs of the constitutions of both the Evangelical and Baptist Union: "The Union of Evangelical Christians has as its aim the task of spreading the gospel..."

...You may say that the New Regulations of 1960 and the Instructive Letter no longer exist and that therefore there is no point in discussing them. Yes, you have hidden the New Regulations now, but you have not rejected the main point: that, as you have remained the same, willing to act on and agree with any unlawful transaction with atheism against the church, so your corrupt alliance with the world is still in existence, just as before. And this alliance is unlawful, impure and evil!

We do not say that ministers of the church must be opposed to lawful, honest and open contacts with the representatives of the authorities, contacts about which one can openly speak from the pulpit of God's people; but we do say and insist that alongside this the principle of the church's full independence from the state and the complete absence of interference in the church's affairs by any government body must be observed.¹³

The schism was finalized in 1965 after many fruitless attempts by the Organizational Committee to negotiate its requirements with high state officials.

Initsiativniki founded the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (the

¹² Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 66.

¹³ *Bratskii Vestnik*, no 2-3 (1965), Archive file <SU/Ini 11/10 S Bratskii Vestnik 1965>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

Council of Churches) which united followers of the reform movement. They elected eleven people to govern the Council of Churches. Gennadi Kriuchkov became its chairman and Georgi Vins, its secretary.

With the establishing of the Council of Churches, *Initsiativniki's* fight for their religious rights was only starting. The movement faced harsh persecution until the mass release of religious and political prisoners by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987. All members of the Council of Churches¹⁴ served several terms in prison beginning in the 1960s. Gennadi Kriuchkov for years lived in hiding because of risk being arrested. Georgi Vins was exchanged for some Soviet spies detained in the United States and settled in Indiana.

Despite all the suffering and hardship, *Initsiativniki's* impact on the future of the Evangelical Christian Baptists in the Soviet Union was enormous. The independent church engaged in active proselytism over the entire country. In a very short time the number of its followers increased and continued growing. Fr. Gleb Iakunin called Evangelical Christian Baptists' efforts in attracting new converts very successful. He suggested that their church's experience of struggle should be used as a model by churches in societies with atheist governments. According to Iakunin the independent Evangelical Christian Baptist Church was strong because instead of hiding from the government, it co-existed side-by-side with the registered Church. It served as an alternative for religious communities and a way for them to escape increasing pressure from the state. As a result, the government hesitated to apply excessive pressure to the registered church.¹⁵ Iakunin was right in his assessment of Reform Evangelical Christian

¹⁴ Their number increased to 15.

¹⁵ Gleb Iakunin, "O sovremennom polovenii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi i perspektivakh ee vozrozhdeniia," *SSSR: Vnutrennie protivorehii*, no 3 (1982):191-192.

Baptist movement's ability to achieve its goals. The "New Regulations" were revised in 1963 and then again in 1966.

Class Characteristic and Forms of Organization of Baptist Dissent

Initsiativniki enjoyed widespread support of fellow believers across the country. Naturally, social and demographic statistics of Evangelical Christian Baptists are available for the followers of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. Statistics were extensively used in atheist publications with the purpose of demonstrating that religious people belong to particular categories of citizens. For instance, one source talked about Evangelical Christian Baptists being mostly women of pension age who do not participate in active social life and do not work. It went on to state that 60-70% of the Church members were uneducated, making them more susceptible to "antiscientific propaganda."¹⁶ The statistics supported the theory. In 1965-66 there were more women (72.2%) than men (22.8%). Their distribution by age was as follows: under 20 – 3%, 31-40 – 10%, 41-50 – 11%, 51-60 – 16%, and over 60 – 60%. The majority of the group did not work (63%). They included pensioners (29%), housewives (32%), and dependents and disabled (2%). Only 0.5% possessed a higher education. Believers who graduated from high school constituted 2.3%. A majority, 55.2 %, went to school but did not finish.¹⁷

The Soviet policy toward believers explains the low level of education among Evangelical Christian Baptists. Those whose religious beliefs were discovered faced

¹⁶ Fedor Fedorenko, *Sekty, ikh vera i dela* (Moskva: Politizdat, 1965), 164.

¹⁷ Lev Mitrokhin, *Baptizm: istoriia i sovremennost'* (Sankt-Peterburg : Izd-vo Russkogo Khristianskogo gumanitarnogo in-ta, 1997), 442.

expulsion from schools and colleges. Those who did not finish school could not apply to a university. Traditionally, Evangelical Christian Baptists had large families with 9-12 children. This explains why wives stayed at home. It was also very hard to stay on a job as few wanted to hire a religious person.¹⁸ The majority of Evangelical Christian Baptists were self-educated since this was the sole way for them to learn. They usually held low profile jobs, such as maids and auxiliary workers.

The Keston Archive contains a large volume of material about persecuted Evangelical Christian Baptists. Unfortunately, though, there is little or no information about the first leader of the *Initsiativniki* movement, Alexei Prokofiev. He became a believer in 1945 while imprisoned for anti-Soviet activity. Prokofiev was a former school teacher. In 1940 he entered a university to study geology. Prokofiev joined the Evangelical Christian Baptists after World War II and in 1954 he was sentenced to 25 years for missionary activity. He was released in 1958 because his case was reevaluated. After the release Prokofiev devoted all his time to evangelical activity. He became a key founder of the *Initsiativniki* movement. In fact, the movement was often referred to as “Prokofievtsy” in the atheist press.¹⁹ In 1962 Prokofiev was arrested again. Multiple attacks on the movement and Prokofiev personally in the Soviet atheist publications in

¹⁸ Every Soviet employer had a local Communist Party committee (*Partkom*). Partkom’s duties include maintaining communist consciousness of employees. Hiring a believer meant imposing a potential harmful ideological influence on other workers. Because of this, believers, once discovered, were always under pressure from Partkom activists who wanted them to convert to atheism. If it did not work out, believers were usually fired like ideologically dangerous.

¹⁹ Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II* (Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1981), 160.

the 1960s demonstrate that the authorities were very concerned with his influence on fellow believers.²⁰

While Prokofiev was already in his 40s when the *Initsiativniki* movement began, the other two leaders Gennadi Kriuchkov and Georgi Vins were in their early 30s. Relatively well-educated, they very soon became the main leaders of the reform movement. Both Kriuchkov and Vins were born into families of believers. Gennadi Kriuchkov's father, Konstantin Pavlovich, was a member of the Moscow community of Evangelical Christians and a choir director. In 1929 he was sentenced to three years in prison. After his release the family moved several times because Konstantin Kriuchkov lost his Moscow resident registration. At first he was sent to work in a coal mine in Donbass, and later moved to Tula region. In 1955 Gennadi's mother passed away. Konstantin Pavlovich moved his twelve children back to Moscow. He married for a second time and became an active church member. In 1961, both Gennadi and his father joined the *Initsiativniki* movement. Konstantin Pavlovich served as a minister at Moscow community of reformed Baptists until his death in 1976.²¹

After serving in the Soviet Army from 1944 to 1950, Gennadi Kriuchkov returned to his family in Tula region and became electrician in a coal mine. In 1951 he was baptized in Tula Evangelical church and got married. Gennadi began preaching and soon was elected a choir director and then deacon. He eventually became a minister of an unregistered Evangelical Christian Baptist community in Tula region. In a 1961 meeting with believers' representatives from Ukraine, Kriuchkov suggested the formation of an

²⁰ F. Garkavenko, "Baptism: vnutrennie techeniia i bor'ba," *Nauka i Religii*, no. 9 (1966): 19-24.

²¹ Sawatsky, 236.

initiative group. While he avoided arrest, he suffered other setbacks. After losing his job, Kriuchkov dedicated all his time to the *Initsiativniki* Organizational Committee. For years he lived in hiding to avoid arrest.²²

Georgii Vins was born to a family of an active member of an Evangelical movement in Siberia and the Far East. Vins' father was first arrested in 1930 at a Moscow Baptist conference, when Georgii was only two. In 1937 Vins' father was arrested again. He did not come back and presumed to have died in a labor camp. Georgii was baptized in Siberia in 1945 at the age of 17. He moved to Kiev with his mother, Lidia Vins, in 1946. While ministering at a registered church on Spasskaia Street, he studied electrical engineering at the Kiev Polytechnic Institute. In 1952 Georgii married Nadezhda Lazaruk, also a Christian since the age of 15. He graduated in 1954 with a diploma of electrical engineering. In 1961 Georgii joined the *Initsiativniki* movement for convening an extraordinary congress of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. He participated in an open meeting of the Organizational Committee in 1962. After excommunication by his registered church, Vins, together with other supporters of the *Initsiativniki* movement, formed their own unregistered community. Following *Initsiativniki* (by A. Shalashov), Vins left his job at the institute and dedicated all his time to the Organizational Committee.²³

These biographies suggest that Baptist dissent leaders did not differ significantly from the majority of their followers, despite their attainment of higher education and gender. Like the majority of their fellow believers they were self-educated in religion.

²² Sawatsky, 236.

²³ *Ibid.*, 235-236.

The fact that before forming the Organizational Committee they were both preachers does not make them unique either. First, proselytizing is one of the most essential principles of Evangelical Christian faith. Second, because of frequent arrests of local ministers, the churches consistently trained new ones to replace them. This resulted in many people learning to preach.

What these two examples do demonstrate is that the leaders of Baptist dissent drew their courage and decisiveness from their families' Christian traditions. Both families suffered over their faith. They lost their loved ones because of the government system. For both leaders their fathers' experience of Christian living was an essential example. For both of them baptism was a step for which they prepared themselves. They were aware of the "three generations of suffering" path, as Georgii Vins referred to it, on which they were stepping.²⁴ The leaders of Baptist dissent accepted the atheist system's challenge. Their willingness and readiness to fight the system attracted many followers. The authorities must have not realized that they were helping Baptist dissent to grow in number and spiritual strength by continuing persecution of their loved ones.

The Baptist dissent's influence was strong because they used very efficient forms of organization. The *Initsiativniki* group, which later became the Organizational Committee, put a lot of effort in establishing personal contacts with the churches all over the Soviet Union. From the very first days they used *samizdat* as the sole and the most efficient way of spreading the information about the movement. The Organizational Committee immediately published all its documents and detailed reports of their activity in *Bratskii Listok* (Fraternal Leaflet). The issues then were sent to all local Reform

²⁴ Georgii Vins, *Three Generations of Suffering*, trans. Jane Ellis (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979).

Baptist churches. *Initsiativniki* deserved a high respect for their legal analysis of the “New Regulations” and actions of state authorities. The analysis was also published in *Bratskii Listok*.²⁵ This tactic won many followers for the movement in the Soviet Union and supporters abroad. Formed in 1965, the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists successfully continued its activity despite severe persecution of its members because new activists were taking their place.

The second efficient form of organization of Baptist dissent was the Council of Relatives of Evangelical Christians-Baptists Prisoners. It was formed in 1964 following the multiple arrests of A. Prokofiev’s supporters which took place from 1961 to 1964. The Council of Relatives’ purpose was to fight for the rights of Evangelical Christian Baptist prisoners. Its members collected detailed information about all Baptist prisoners. They processed it and published in their own *saimizdat* periodical. At the first conference in 1964, the Council of Relatives collected information about 155 prisoners including articles of the penal code on which they were arrested and length of their sentences.²⁶ By the second conference, The Council of Relatives presented information on 197, though, the number did not include five who died in camps or some who were still under investigation.²⁷ Lidia Vins, Georgi Vins’ mother, served on the Council of Relatives until her own arrest in 1970. After 1974 its information on prisoners regularly appeared in the Chronicle of Current Events, a *samizdat* periodical on the human rights

²⁵ *Bratskii Listok*, no. 1-2 (1965), <SU/Ini S Bratskii Listok 1965>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

²⁶ This kind of information was often not known.

²⁷ Michael Bourdeaux, “Religious Liberty in the Soviet Union: Baptists in the Early Days of Protest (1960-1966),” in *Eastern European Baptist History: New Perspectives*, ed. Sharyl Corrado and Toivo Pilli (Praha, Czech Republic : International Baptist Theological Seminary, c2007): 127.

movement in the Soviet Union. The Council of Relatives continued its activity through 1987, when Mikhail Gorbachev released the majority of political and religious prisoners.

Baptist Religious Samizdat and Its Use

The first Baptist religious *samizdat* appeared in 1961 when *Initsiativniki* began sending their letters and appeals to the religious communities. For years it reinforced Soviet believers' legal and moral education.²⁸ Next to personal contacts, Baptist religious *samizdat* was the most essential tool for maintaining the organization of the movement. *Sovetskaia Belorussia* (Soviet Belorussia) described the distribution of it at the Brest congregation on May 12, 1963:

They actively mimeographed and disseminated 'appeals', 'addresses' and 'protests' of the Organizing Committee, not only among Brest Baptists, but they even made missionary journeys to 'the brothers and sisters in Christ' in the Kamenets and Kobrin districts, at Pinsk and even in the Orenburg regions.²⁹

The first periodical publication to appear was *Bratskii Listok (Fraternal Leaflet)* which contained the news about the *Initsiativniki* movement to reform the church and free it from the government interference. In 1965 the publication became regular. *Bratskii Listok* contained full texts of documents produced by the group, members' appeals to fellow believers on religious and social matters, and letters and appeals from local religious communities to the group and to the government. *Initsiativniki* provided a detailed description of their actions, including meetings with the Council and government officials and their outcome. The Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists continued publication of *Bratskii Listok* until 1990.

²⁸ Alexeyeva, 210.

²⁹ As quoted in Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 49.

In 1963 the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists began publishing a journal of spiritual instruction, *Vestnik Spaseniia (Herald of Salvation)*. Its title was changed to *Vestnik Istiny (Herald of Truth)* in 1976. *Vestnik* published passages from the Bible, sermons, spiritual poems and writings by Baptist believers, and religious poems and stories for children. The publication of *Vestnik Istiny* continues by Benjamin Khorev, the son of a prominent leader of unregistered Baptists in the Soviet Union, Mikhail Khorev.³⁰

Baptists used *samizdat* to print religious literature. Needless to say, that religious literature was in great demand in the Baptist communities. A request from 1966 appeals for 10,000 copies of the Bible and 5,000 hymnals.³¹ This was beyond the capabilities of the hectograph normally used for Baptist *samizdat*. *Initsiativniki* submitted a request asking for a government permission to print this literature legally. Of course the authorities did not grant the permission. Baptists learned printing technique and established their own typography with handmade printing presses. Despite their efforts to keep the information about the typography's location and workers' names secret, the authorities found it and imprisoned the people. Over a ten-year period, four printing houses were discovered by police.³² But soon after one was closed, another one appeared at a new location. Baptist printing houses existed in Leningrad and Novorossiysk regions, as well as in Latvia, Ukraine, and Kirgizia.³³

³⁰ Mikhail Khorev passed away in 2012.

³¹ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 211.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

Another remarkable Baptist *samizdat* periodical publication – Bulletin of the Council of Relatives of Evangelical Christians-Baptists Prisoners – was published from 1963 to 1987 by the relatives of Reform Baptist prisoners. The purpose of the Bulletin was to provide as complete as possible information about Baptist prisoners. It is hard to overestimate the value of this data. It contains not just believers’ personal arrest information – articles of the penal code on which they were arrested and length of their sentence – but also information on Soviet labor and prison camps. As F.J.M. Feldbrugge points out in his book *Samizdat and Political Dissent in the Soviet Union* that:

The publication of generalized data concerning the repressive system of the Soviet government, however, provides more solid underpinnings for a more comprehensive critique of that government’s policies; additionally, knowledge of the existence of such publications may serve in the future as a brake on arbitrary practices of the secret police.³⁴

The majority of Baptist *samizdat* was smuggled out of the Soviet Union in hope that the world would learn the truth about religious freedom in the USSR. Official information was always very polished. William R. Tolbert, the president of the Baptist World Alliance, took an official trip to the Soviet Union in 1970. He was hosted by the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, which meant he toured only registered churches. As a result he gathered information favorable to the Council and the government.³⁵ Baptist *samizdat* played an important role in bringing down the wall of official disinformation. Later that year Danish missionary Baptist Ulf Oldenberg went to the USSR as a tourist and visited unregistered communities of Reform Baptists in Central

³⁴ F.J.M. Feldbrugge, *Samizdat and Political Dissent in the Soviet Union*, (Leyden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1975), 54.

³⁵ Alexeyeva, 212.

Asia. He testified about his experience upon his return to the West.³⁶ Oldenberg's story prompted Western believers to offer their support to Reform Baptists in the Soviet Union. They collected funds for oppressed families, for children whose parents were in prison, and sent religious literature. In 1974 tens of thousands of American Baptists signed a petition to release Georgi Vins.

³⁶ Alexeyeva, 212.

CHAPTER THREE

Orthodox Christians

Rise of Orthodox Religious Dissent

Unlike Protestant denominations the Russian Orthodox Church has always received negative attention from the Soviet authorities. The persecution of Marxists' ideological enemy started immediately after the October revolution. In the beginning of 1918 Lenin signed the decree which deprived the Church of its legal person status and right to own property and teach religion. Bolsheviks believed that the Church would die on its own once deprived of its material base. The state authorities took over the possession of church land and buildings. Bolsheviks robbed and burnt churches and monasteries and arrested and killed clergy and laymen who dared to protest. In February 1918 in Kievo-Pechersk Lavra armed seamen killed Metropolitan of Kiev Vladimir.¹ In that one year the Bolsheviks executed 3,000 and subjected 1,500 clergymen to other forms of repression.² In his famous address of January 19, 1918, Patriarch Tikhon anathematized the Bolsheviks for the attacks on the Russian Orthodox Church. He appealed to all faithful to defend the Church till death if necessary.³ In October, of the

¹ Protoierei Dmitrii Konstantinov, *Gonimaia tserkov': Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' v SSSR* (N'iu York: Vseslavianskoe Izdatel'stvo, 1967), 12.

² Natalia Krivova, *Vlast' i tserkov' v 1922-1925* (Moskva: "AIRO-XX", 1997), 15.

³ Patriarkh Tikhon, *Akty Sviateishogo Tikhona, Patriarkha Moskovskogo i vseia Rossii, pozdneishie dokumenty i perepiska o kanonicheskom preemstve vysshei tserkovnoi vlasti, 1917-1943 : sbornik v dvukh chastiakh*, ed. M.E. Gubonin (Moskva : Izd-vo Pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo bogoslovskogo in-ta, 1994), 82-85.

same year Patriarch Tikhon condemned the Soviet of People's Commissars for the "red terror."⁴ The authorities responded with a new set of measures.

In 1919 the People's Committee of Justice issued a decree about confiscation and opening of relics of Orthodox saints. A few months later another decree ordered their destruction throughout Russia. The campaign turned into an act of desecration of the relics and outraged believers' feelings. It resulted in mass anti-government protests all over Russia. In 1919 the population of Sergiev Posad and surrounding villages attempted to prevent removal of Sergii of Radonezh's relics from Troitse-Sergieva Lavra. Their letter to People's Commissar Mikhail Kalinin did not make any difference. Neither did Patriarch Tikhon's appeal to Lenin to prevent the relics from being removed. In 1920 Lavra was closed under the Decree on Confiscation of Church Valuables.

During the campaign on confiscation of church valuables the Soviet press reported 1,414 violent protests with injuries on both opposing sides.⁵ They were most intense in central Russia and in large cities including Moscow and Petrograd.⁶ The first reported large protest took place in 1922 in Shuia (Ivanovskaia region). The state authorities used the great famine of 1921 as an excuse to speed up the campaign. A priest of Voskresenskii Cathedral, Pavel Svetozarov, suggested taking a collection of food items and money to send to victims of the famine. The authorities, on the other hand, preferred gold and silver from the local churches. To protest the confiscation nearly a quarter of the population of Shuia came to the square in front of the Cathedral. The

⁴ Patriarkh Tikhon, 149-151.

⁵ Krivova, 75.

⁶ Ibid.

authorities used armed forces which wounded 11 believers, 5 fatally. The protesters beat 27 Red Army soldiers, 3 of them severely.⁷ The authorities arrested 24 protesters. Lenin personally insisted on the death sentence for the leaders. The authorities accused three priests Petr Iazykov, Pavel Svetozarov, and Ivan Rozhdestvenskii of “counterrevolutionary activity.” They all received the death penalty. Their open trial received great coverage in the Soviet press.⁸ The incident in Shuia marked the beginning of the second attack on the Church.

From 1922 to 1925 the state authorities’ campaign on confiscation of church valuables became more violent. Bloody protests took place in Ivanov-Voznesensk, Smolensk, Moscow, Petrograd and other cities.⁹ Many clergymen were killed for resisting the Bolsheviks’ actions, including Metropolitan of Petrograd and Gdovsk Veniamin. Metropolitan Veniamin appealed to the Soviet authorities to allow the Church to start a charity campaign to help the famine victims. He insisted that consecrated church items which were being confiscated as valuables should remain in the church as they were used in the services and should not be touched by laymen. Metropolitan also suggested that non consecrated church items should be turned into bars of silver and gold prior to confiscation.¹⁰ The authorities arrested and tried Metropolitan Veniamin in 1922. The court charged him with counter-revolutionary activity and issuing statements, turning

⁷ Krivova, 58.

⁸ Ibid., 70.

⁹ *Resolution of revolutionary tribunal on the sentence of Mitropolitan Veniamin and others.* (6 July, 1922), 2. Archive file <15 Nezhny>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹⁰ Krivova, 111.

believers against the Soviet government, and sentenced him to death by shooting. Nine other churchmen arrested in connection with Metropolitan Veniamin's case also received death sentence: Professor of law Iu. P. Novitskii, Church council members I.M. Kovsharov and N.A. Elachich, Archbishop Sergii (Shein), Professor D.F. Ognev, Archpriest of Kazanski Cathedral N.K Chukov, Archpriest of St. Isaac's Cathedral L.K. Bogoiavlenskii, Bishop of Kronshtadt Venedikt (Plotnikov), Archpriest of St. Trinity's Cathedral M.P. Chel'tsov.¹¹ Despite many appeals from believers to change the verdict, Metropolitan Veniamin, Prof. Novitskii, Archbishop Sergii, and I.M. Kovsharov were executed.¹² The execution was secret as the authorities were afraid of new protests. Before being shot the clergymen were dressed up as laymen. Bolsheviks even cut their hair, so that no one knew whom they were transporting and shooting.¹³

From 1921 to 1923 nearly 10,000 people were arrested. Approximately 2,000 of them were executed. By 1924, 66 archbishops had been persecuted – almost half of the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church.¹⁴ In many cases the verdicts were more severe than the Soviet law required. The severe persecution and physical elimination of the clergy significantly weakened the church, but it remained alive.

¹¹ A. Zhizhilenko, *Report on the case of Metropolitan Veniamin, Professor Iu.P. Novitskii and others sentenced by revolutionary tribunal of Petrograd to be shot for resisting to confiscation of church valuables* (July 23, 1922) Archive file <14 Nezhny>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹² Krivova, 150.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 155.

The Soviet authorities attempted to destroy the Church's organization by supporting a "Renovationist" movement inside the Church which led to a schism.¹⁵ The movement united clergymen who shared liberal and radical social ideas. Such ideas became common among lower clergy before the revolution.¹⁶ Renovationists wanted to renovate the Church through democratic-conciliar form of administration and changes in liturgical practice. The changes included adopting Gregorian calendar, conducting services in spoken Russian instead of Church-Slavonic, reintroducing married bishops and eliminating the monopoly of monastic bishops. They also demanded separation of Church and state.¹⁷

In 1922 after Patriarch Tikhon was placed under house arrest, Renovationists formed a Supreme Church Administration. They received support of a single canonical Bishop Antonin (Granovskii). According to Patriarch Tikhon's decree in his absence Metropolitan of Iaroslavl' Agafangel was to take charge of the Church. The Renovationist leaders V. Krasnitskii, A. Vvedenskii, and S. Kalinovskii attempted to get permission from Patriarch Tikhon to run the Church until Metropolitan arrived. In the meantime the authorities forbade Agafangel to leave the city.¹⁸ Soon Metropolitan Sergii (Stargorodskii) and Archbishops Evdokim (Meshcherskii) and Serafim (Meshcheriakov) issued a document known as "Memorandum of the Three" in which they recognized the Renovationist Supreme Church Administration as the official canonical church

¹⁵ Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime, 1917-1982* (New York: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1984), 53.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

authority.¹⁹ The memorandum had a very destructive effect on the Church. By July 1922, only 36 of 73 Patriarchal bishops remained faithful to the canonical Church.²⁰ Metropolitan Agafangel responded with an address calling to the Church unity: “Keep the unity of holy faith in the union of brotherly love. Do not be tempted by the scandal which new people are seeking to bring into your hearts in regards to the teaching of our Orthodox faith. Do not be won over by the temptations with which they want to seduce you...”²¹ Metropolitan declared the Supreme Church Administration an uncanonical body. Agafangel’s support added confidence to Tikhon and his followers. Though a majority of bishops left the church, the majority of believers remained faithful to Patriarch and his Church.²²

The authorities put a lot of effort in the campaigns against Patriarch Tikhon because he refused to pledge the Church’s loyalty to the Soviet state. His addresses, issued in response to the state’s attacks on the Church in 1918, inspired believers’ resistance against the Bolsheviks’ antireligious policy. Texts of the addresses were secretly circulated among Orthodox believers.²³ The continuous violent attacks on the Church eventually forced Patriarch Tikhon to declare the Church’s political neutrality to the Soviet authorities, but the Bolsheviks wanted full control over the Church. In attempt to neutralize the Patriarch they put him under house arrests in 1918 and 1922. The

¹⁹ Krivova, 163.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ As cited in Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Patriarch Tikhon, 82-85.

authorities had to exercise caution in their dealings with Patriarch Tikhon, due to Soviet Russia's unstable international status and the pressure from world political and religious leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury.²⁴ In 1922 the authorities fabricated a case against the Patriarch accusing him of counterrevolutionary activity and collecting information on persecution of Orthodox clergy. The government formed an Antireligious Commission of the Party of Workers and Peasants' Central Committee to prosecute the case. Evgenii Tuchkov, the Chief Political Administration (GPU) official, became its head.²⁵ The Commission's goal was to create a public image of the Patriarch as an anti-Soviet element and a central figure of a counterrevolutionary plot which would justify the state's persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Patriarch could have faced the death penalty but he was not brought to trial.²⁶

Although the state did not try Patriarch Tikhon, the Renovationists did. The 1923 Renovationist Sobor deprived him of his monastic status. One month later the Patriarch was released. He refused to recognize the Sobor or its documents. Clergy, including Metropolitan Sergii, and laity were returning to the Patriarchal Church.²⁷ The Renovationist movement was losing its strength because it lacked unity.²⁸ Disagreements between its members led to a schism and resulted in the formation of three major branches: the Living Church, the Union of Communities of Ancient Apostolic Church

²⁴ Krivova, 164.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 165.

²⁷ Ibid., 200-201.

²⁸ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime*, 56.

and the Union for Church Renovation. Possibly because of extensive state support, none of these movements attracted many believers; the majority remained faithful to the Patriarchal Church.²⁹ By 1925, in Tuchkov's words

the Tikhonovite Church appeared as ideological and organizational whole.... At present time Tikhonovites shaped into an anti-Soviet group of clergy and active laymen united in parish councils. They play a significant role in the struggle against renovationists who they call "red"...At present time Tikhonovites are the strongest and largest of all remaining in the USSR anti-Soviet groups.³⁰

This quote is an excellent evaluation of Patriarch Tikhon's success in preserving the Church's organization and unity despite the state's continuous attempts to destroy it.

After Patriarch Tikhon's death in 1925, the state authorities arrested Metropolitan of Krutitsy Petr (Polianskii), who was to take charge of the Church. In Petr's absence, Metropolitan of Nizhnii Novgorod Sergii (Stargorodskii) who, at first, joined the Renovationists, but later, along with other bishops, returned to the Patriarchal Church, became a Deputy to the *locum tenens*³¹. Sergii felt the pressure from all directions. The Renovationists blame him for not being loyal to the state. Grigorians who claimed to be "the traditional Orthodox"³² accused him of becoming a Renovationist, while the state authorities did not recognize his Church. In May 1927, the GPU finally approved

²⁹ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime*, 56.

³⁰ As quoted in Krivova, 209.

³¹ Latin phrase "locum tenens" means "place holder" or person who temporary fulfills the duties of another. In the Russian Orthodox Church *locum tenens* is a hierarch who temporary fulfills the duties of a Patriarch until the new Patriarch is elected by a Sobor.

³² "Grigorians" were named after their leader Archbishop of Ekaterinburg Grigorii. They represented a fraction of the Church which appeared to be Orthodox to the believers and at the same time loyal to the state. It was controlled by GPU; See Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime*, 67, 70.

Sergii's candidacy to govern the church.³³ A few days later Sergii received the government's permission to form a Temporary Patriarchal Holy Synod.³⁴ The Temporary Synod recommended diocesan bishops to form temporary eparchial councils and to register them with the local authorities. Vicars were advised to establish decanal councils. This marked the beginning of the legalization of the Patriarchal Church's organization.³⁵

The Bishops of Solovki described the state of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1926 in their Memorandum to the Soviet Government, secretly circulated among believers in 1927. The authorities refused to allow the Church to run its regular central, diocesan, and parish administrative organs. Consecrated bishops were prevented from residing in the dioceses to which they were appointed by the Patriarch. While the Church's duty is to deliver the gospel message to all, it was prohibited from educating children in religion. The authorities arrested and imprisoned its locum tenens and about half of its bishops. The state forced Orthodox monasteries to close, even after all of them became self-supporting monastic working communities. The authorities confiscated all city cathedrals and gave them to Renovationists.³⁶

From 1925 to 1927, 117 of 160 Patriarchal bishops were arrested. The authorities threatened Sergii with the execution of the arrested bishops if he refused to declare the

³³ Lev Regelson, *Tragediia russkoi tserkvi, 1917-1945* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1977), 616.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 414-417.

³⁵ Mikhail Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' pri Staline i Khrushcheve* (Moskva: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvor'e, 1999), 86.

³⁶ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime*, 143.

Russian Orthodox Church's loyalty to the state.³⁷ According to the Very Reverend John Meyendorff, in this difficult situation, the Patriarch had to choose whether "to agree to eliminate the Patriarchal 'center'" or preserve the Patriarchal Church's organization. The former meant "transferring the monopoly to legalized Renovationist Synod (recognized by the Eastern Patriarchs) which would gradually take possession of all functioning churches." The latter presupposed the state's control.³⁸ In 1927 Patriarch Sergii issued the Declaration of Loyalty, allowing the authorities to interfere in the organization of the Church. Exiled bishops were retired, while "unreliable" and those who returned from exile were sent to remote locations. All consecrations of bishops required the GPU's approval. The candidates were usually chosen from former Renovationists.³⁹

Sergii's declaration of loyalty led to a schism. The conservative part of the Church did not agree with changing the Church's position from political neutrality to internal spiritual solidarity with the government.⁴⁰ Bishops imprisoned in Solovki reacted to the document in the following words: "...The concept of the Church's subordination to secular regulations is expressed in such categorical and unconditional form that it can be easily understood as complete interlacing of Church and state."⁴¹ The bishops' opposition to any accommodation with the regime, expressed earlier in their "Letter to the Soviet Government", one can view as the beginning of the democratic

³⁷ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime*, 67.

³⁸ Regelson, 616-617.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 436.

opposition in the USSR.⁴² While attempting to save the Patriarchal Church's organizational form, Sergii sacrificed its internal freedom.

A new attack on the Church started in 1929 in the form of the Law on Religious Associations. The statute placed all religious associations under the state control. According to the law, a group of twenty laymen ("twenty") was in charge of a parish church. The statute required the "twenty" to apply and receive registration from the state within one year from the date it took effect. If the authorities refused to register a parish it was dissolved. The state maintained control over the "twenty" by infiltrating it with its agents. The 1929 Law banned any type of missionary and charity work and limited church activity to religious services conducted inside its building. Clergy visits to the sick and the dying were the only religious services outside of the Church walls which did not require the authorities' approval. The legislature forbade any form of religious education of children and youth.⁴³

In addition to judicial pressure, the authorities used economic means to destroy the Church. In 1930 the state announced the beginning of the first five-year plan. The Soviet legislative system treated the Church as a private profit-making business and set unrealistically high tax rates on the incomes of priests, bishops and parishes. Under the decree "On struggle against counterrevolutionary elements in administrative organs of religious associations," the local authorities excluded *kulaks* (wealthy peasants) from parish councils, depriving village churches of material support.⁴⁴

⁴² Michael Bourdeaux, *The Role of Religion in the Fall of Soviet Communism* (London: Center for Policy Studies, 1992), 6.

⁴³ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime*, 165.

⁴⁴ Shkarovskii, 89.

Persecution reached its peak by 1934. In 1933, in Leningrad alone, the state authorities denied passports to 200 of the 600 priests. As a result they were forced to leave the city. Later that year the authorities banned bell ringing in many areas which led to a campaign of bells removal in functioning churches. While the Soviet of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) issued directives for the campaign, the GPU inventoried the amount of bronze acquired.⁴⁵

Persecution of the Church in the 1930s fluctuated. First, in 1931 in response to Pope Pius XI's appeal to all world believers to pray for the persecuted Russian Orthodox Church, the authorities decreased planned anti-church activity. The first issue of the *Journal of Moscow Patriarchate* was also published that year.⁴⁶ Second, in 1934 the state relationship with the Church improved briefly because of the influence of Sergei Kirov's group in the Political Bureau (Politbiuro) of the All-Union Communist Party's Central Committee. The group opposed extreme means of persecution. The mitigation of the policy resulted in the Patriarchal Synod elevating Sergii to the title "the Most Blessed Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna." Unfortunately, after Kirov's assassination the persecution intensified.⁴⁷

The Union of Militant Godless played a significant role in increasing the persecution of the Church. The Union published monthly journals *Bezbozhnik (Godless)* and *Antireligioznik (Antireligious)* and criticized the Communist Youth League (Komsomol) for the lack of efficient antireligious propaganda among the youth. It

⁴⁵ Shkarovskii, 91.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 89-90.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 91.

declared clergy counterrevolutionary elements working for foreign centers. The Militant Godless accused the Church of planning a plot against the Soviet government. On this account the *Narodnyi Komitet Vnutrennikh Del* or NKVD (People's Committee of Internal Affairs)⁴⁸ intensified arrests of Orthodox clergy and believers for spying and other counterrevolutionary activities.⁴⁹ According to the Moscow Patriarchate's Commission on Rehabilitation, by 1941, 350,000 believers had been persecuted, including 140,000 clergymen. In 1937 alone, the authorities arrested 150,000 Orthodox priests, 80,000 of whom were killed.⁵⁰ The publication of the *Journal of Moscow Patriarchate* ceased in 1935. A few months later the Temporary Patriarchal Synod dissolved for lack of membership.⁵¹

By 1939, only 8,302 Orthodox churches of all rites remained open - less than one-fourth of the previously existing 37,000. Remaining churches were not all functioning due to lack of priests. In 1939, only 4 bishops remained in service in Patriarchal Church. Ten retired bishops who survived the persecution sometimes served as priests. For instance, Bishop of Astrakhan' Andrei (Komarov), who retired in April 1939 became a parish priest at the Cathedral of Intercession of the Mother of God in Kuibyshev.⁵² The Church's organizational structure practically dissolved. Existing dioceses did not

⁴⁸ GPU became a part of NKVD in 1934.

⁴⁹ Shkarovskii, 92.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵² Shkarovskii, 99. The Cathedral was a single open church in Kuibyshev until the end of the World War II when the Church of Peter and Paul (previous turned into a warehouse) was restored.

maintain regular communication with the Patriarchate. While the Church was “legal,” any contacts with its members were illegal. It was also deprived of foreign contacts.⁵³

One would believe that on the eve of World War II the Communist Party was very close to reaching its goal of completely destroying the Russian Orthodox Church. However, the 1937 census showed that approximately half of the population of the Soviet Union remained believers.⁵⁴ In a document discovered in the New-York Jewish Institute after the World War II, Metropolitan Sergii (Voskresenskii) writes about “a very busy secret religious life” in Russia during the persecution. According to Sergii, the Soviet government was aware of the catacomb church and permitted the legal Patriarchate’s existence in order to prevent the entire Patriarchal Church from going underground where it would be difficult to control. Metropolitan Sergii wrote about this for the German command in the Riga report on November 12, 1941.⁵⁵

At the peak of Stalin’s antireligious persecutions in 1938 the Soviet government began changing its general policy from international and communist to national and patriotic.⁵⁶ This occurred for several reasons. The authorities were interested in using the Moscow Patriarchate to influence the populations of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia (annexed in 1939), which did not experience religious persecution. Also, the changes in the international situation required a shift in focus to building national unity.

⁵³ Shkarovskii, 99.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 93-94.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 100.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 95.

While the persecutions continued to 1941, after the beginning of the World War II, the Church experienced religious revival.

On June 22, 1941, Metropolitan Sergii was the first to address the nation. It took 12 days for Stalin to do the same.⁵⁷ With the start of WWII, the Church immediately became involved in patriotic activities, which included sponsoring hospitals, organizing charity campaigns, and so on. By 1945, the Church collected over 300 billion rubles in donations for the army.⁵⁸ During the prayer services held in churches all over the Soviet Union, clergy prayed for the victory of the Russian people. The Church united people and raised morale. Members of clergy participated in military action. For instance, future Patriarch Pimen (Izvekov) served as a deputy of a company commander. Many clergy members were decorated with military medals. In occupied territory, the Church participated in anti-fascist and partisan activity.⁵⁹

On the home front, the Soviet population experienced religious revival. Church attendance increased all over the country. Even during the blockade of Leningrad, in the winter 1941-1942, all the churches remained functional.⁶⁰ The Red Army officers and soldiers reportedly turned to religion in great numbers.⁶¹ During this period the church state relations began to stabilize as well.

⁵⁷ Shkarovskii, 119.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 135.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 122-123.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 127.

⁶¹ Ibid., 123-124.

The shift in state religious policy was not simply due to the need for the patriotic support, but also to the pressure from the Allies' leaders at the WWII's turning point. At the Teheran Conference in 1943 Stalin counted on the Anglican Church's support in his negotiations about the opening of the second front. The Anglican Church officials who previously sent multiple requests to visit Moscow finally received the permission. Stalin believed that their meeting with Russian Orthodox hierarchs would disprove the accusations of anti-religious persecutions in the Soviet Union.⁶² Obviously, Stalin wanted to create an image of the Soviet Union as democratic and tolerant. His plans provided the Russian Orthodox Church one of the leading roles in an international arena.

In 1943, Stalin met with the three hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitans Sergii, Alexii and Nikolai. They reached a concordat, marking the beginning of the development of new church-state relations. In 1944 Stalin formed the Council for the Russian Orthodox Church's Affairs (CROCA) which was responsible for carrying out the state's new religious policy. Until 1954 it was under control of the *NKVD*.⁶³ The CROCA's head was G. Karpov, colonel of the Committee of the State Security.

As a result of the change of the course of the government's religious policy in the 1944 Sobor consisting of 8 bishops chose Sergii as the Patriarch. This was the first step toward restoring the Church's organizational structure; however, Patriarch Sergii died in May 1944. The National Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, the largest one since 1918, convened in 1945. Orthodox Patriarchs and their representatives from Romania,

⁶² Shkarovskii, 203.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 205.

Bulgaria, Serbia, Georgia, and the Middle East received invitations to attend. The Council elected Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod Alexii (Simanskii) as Patriarch and adopted a “Statute of Administration of the Russian Orthodox Church.” The Statute restored the Church’s organizational structure.⁶⁴

In 1943, the state withdrew its support from the Renovationist movement. There was no longer need for it after the authorities bent the Church leadership to their will. By the end of the war most of the Renovationist parishes returned to the Patriarchal Church. The movement weakened and practically ceased to exist by 1946.⁶⁵ This cannot be said about the catacomb church which remained underground, in opposition to the Moscow Patriarchate. In the 1940s the number of its members and their activity increased.

In part, due to growing influence and prestige of the Russian Orthodox Church the state resumed its antireligious campaign in 1948. The Holy Synod, under pressure from the authorities, banned processions of the cross. It also prohibited such religious activities as priests’ visits to collective farm fields, outdoor prayers, and concerts of spiritual music outside of service. A month later the Holy Synod banned religious instruction for children. From 1948 to 1953 no new churches were registered. In fact, during this period the authorities took away and converted a large number of church buildings to clubs. In 1949 all Orthodox religious activities were limited to a prayer service inside a church. The state adopted a tactic of gradually limiting the Church’s influence while retaining a stable relationship with its leaders.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Shkarovskii, 213-215.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 194-195.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 344.

Soviet authorities resumed antireligious propaganda in the postwar period. *Znanie* (Knowledge) Society replaced the *Soiuz voinstvuiushchikh bezbozhnikov* (Union of Militant Godless). Its members included high level scholarly officials, university professors and doctors of sciences. They delivered lectures and published articles on antireligious subjects.⁶⁷ The Soviet press mocked *Komsomoltsy* and Communist Party members who participated in religious rites like baptisms and church weddings.

Arrests of active clergy resumed as well. By 1953, the number of clergy decreased to 12,254 from 13,104 in 1948. The number of monasteries continued to decrease from 105 in 1946 to 62 in 1952. One and a half time fewer students applied to theological schools. An even smaller number of applicants were accepted, the rest denied for political reasons. In 1952, only 633 students received theological training.⁶⁸

The period from 1955 to 1957 was the most “liberal” in the history of church-state relations in the Soviet Union.⁶⁹ While the closing of churches slowed down and the number of clergy increased, the Church’s relative well-being did not last long. The Communist Party was eager to resume attacks on religion. By 1958, proponents of the strict antireligious policy became a Party majority. They determined the future tactic of the state and the CROCA toward the Russian Orthodox Church.

The period from the late 1950s to the early 1960s is known as the second wave of religious revival in the Soviet Union. The first mass and open revival happened during the World War II and was ended by 1949. Young Soviet people who were disappointed

⁶⁷ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime*, 316.

⁶⁸ Shkarovskii, 341, 346.

⁶⁹ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime*, 330.

in communist ideology and whose parents were brought up as atheists, started looking for their cultural roots. Many of them found their roots in Orthodoxy.⁷⁰

While the first wave of religious revival in the Soviet Union included people of various social backgrounds, the second wave included primarily intelligentsia. The second wave seekers of their cultural identity became religious dissidents. Since religious literature and theological education were not available in the Soviet Union, these young people self-educated by reading *samizdat* literature and organizing secret study and discussion groups.⁷¹ For some university students, lessons of antireligious propaganda became the source of information about the Scripture. Many converts to Christianity became believers in prisons and labor camps. Vladimir Osipov, editor of *samizdat* journal *Veche*, was one of them. According to him, “a labor camp is officially called “corrective” for a reason. We get there as atheists, but leave as Christians. We have been corrected...”⁷² Many prisoners became Christians under the influence of hundreds of priests who were also serving prison terms.

Clergy and lay individuals who did not agree with the policy of the Moscow Patriarchate also became dissidents. They raised their voices in response to Krushchev’s antireligious campaign because the Patriarchate remained silent. In 1958 the first protests came from a young priest of Pskov diocese, Sergei Zheludkov, and the well-known historian of the Russian Orthodox Church, Anatolii Levitin. Levitin’s friend, Vadim Shavrov, who converted to Orthodoxy in a labor camp, refuted atheist propaganda. A

⁷⁰ Shkarovskii, 261.

⁷¹ Ibid., 263.

⁷² Ibid., 266-267.

former school master from Kirov, Boris Talantov, wrote an open letter on behalf of believers of Kirov (Viatka) diocese which was signed by 12 believers. He also kept detailed reports of methods of repression against believers in Kirov. Fr. Pavel Agelgeim, archpriest Vsevolod Shpillar, and Fr. Dmitrii Dudko were among these early dissidents.

These first few protests were not organized. They were also intended for the Moscow Patriarchate and not an international audience. The protests were their authors' reactions to the most brutal antireligious campaign in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church. Nikita Khrushchev, first secretary of the Communist Party's Central Committee, launched the campaign in 1959. Its goal was a complete eradication of religion. The campaign was based on propagation of the concept of scientific atheism. For this purpose, in 1959 *Znanie* Society started publishing the antireligious journal *Nauka i Religia (Science and Religion)*. "Scientific Atheism" became a required course in all higher educational institutions. The amount of atheist and antireligious literature became overwhelming, while possession of any kind of religious books was illegal.

The authorities resumed closing of churches and monasteries and persecution of believers. From 1961 to 1964, 1234 people were sentenced on religious grounds to various terms in labor camps and exiles. From 1961 to 1963, monks of Pochaev Lavra suffered severe repression for their resistance to the authorities' attempts to close the monastery. After the monks' appeal to the World Council of Churches and the United Nations, the state conceded.⁷³

The new parish regulations developed by the CROCA and adopted by the Council of Bishops in 1961 had the most destructive effect on the Church. According to these

⁷³ Shkarovskii, 381.

regulations each priest was subordinate to a parish council of twenty lay persons who were selected mainly by local authorities and CROCA representatives. In addition to losing control of their parishes, priests were not allowed to visit their parishioners (even if they were dying) or to perform any service at home without receiving permission from local authorities.⁷⁴

In 1962 the state authorities introduced strict control over participants in occasional religious rites like baptisms, church marriages, and burial services. Priests were required to submit personal information about all those baptized, married or buried to the local authorities at their request. It was later used to persecute the participants at their work or at school. Priests who did not wish to comply with these regulations immediately lost their registration. All Orthodox clergy in 1962 started receiving fixed salaries. Those priests who received their pay directly from believers were denied registration. As a result of all the measures from 1959 to 1962 the number of parish priests fell by half.⁷⁵

In the late 1950s the state started a campaign of replacing traditional religious rituals with new holidays and secular celebrations.⁷⁶ “Palaces of marriage” (ZAGS) decorated with the state symbols were built in cities and towns to hold state conducted marriages, birth registrations, passport issuing ceremonies, and secular memorial services.

⁷⁴ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 248.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Shkarovskii, 385.

Metropolitan of Krutitsy and Kolomna Nikolai, who was the first head of the Church's Department of External Relations, used his influence and contacts to inform the world community about the religious persecution in the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, influential foreign leaders did not pay much attention to Metropolitan Nikolai's efforts.⁷⁷

The situation changed after 1965 when two young Orthodox priests of Moscow diocese, Nikolai Eshliman and Gleb Iakunin, sent an open letter to Patriarch Alexii. While providing a detailed list of attacks on the Church carried out by the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA)⁷⁸ the priests called the Patriarchate to respond to the persecutions. In a second letter, addressed to the Chair of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Nikolay Podgorny, Iakunin and Eshliman protested the CRA's interference in internal Church affairs. The priests appealed to all the bishops asking for the revocation of the 1961 regulations on parish priests. Metropolitan of Krutitsy and Kolomna Pimen (Izvekov) prohibited Iakunin and Eshliman in service as priests.

Iakunin and Eshliman's action received support from only a few Orthodox individuals. The best known protest came from Boris Talantov (Kirov, Viatka Region). In a letter, signed by 12 believers, he described the religious persecutions in Kirov. In 1971 several clergy representatives and lay people sent letters to the Local Sobor which was going to decide whether or not to uphold the 1961 regulations adopted by the Council of Bishops. The authors of the letter wanted to bring to the Sobor's attention the 1961 regulations' disastrous consequences for the Church's parish life. This was the last attempt to appeal to the Church leadership for changes. Gradually they realized that the

⁷⁷ Shkarovskii, 374.

⁷⁸ In May 1965 the Council for the Russian Orthodox Church's Affairs combined with the Council for Religious Cults' Affairs to form the Council for Religious Affairs.

Patriarchate was not going to change its course. This forced the church dissenters to look for different approaches, beyond the Moscow Patriarchate.

Individual protests and actions proved to be inefficient. Ignoring the 1961 regulations which banned parish priests from fulfilling their direct responsibilities of providing spiritual nourishment to parishioners Fr. Dmitrii Dudko engaged in religious discussions with believers at the St. Nicholas Church in Moscow. From 1973 to 1979 his discussions attracted more people every time. Eventually, he was discovered and dismissed from his church after the tenth lecture.

In 1976 Fr. Gleb Iakunin, together with Hierodiakon Varsonofii Khaibulin and Layman Viktor Kapitanchuk, formed the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believer's Rights (CCDBR) "to help believers to exercise their right of living in accordance with their convictions."⁷⁹ The Committee for the first time focused on ecumenical cause rather than the Russian Orthodox Church. The work of the Committee was most efficient as it was directed beyond the Moscow Patriarchate. The documents produced by the Committee quickly reached the West and were translated and published. The Committee played a very important role in delivering truthful and objective information about the religious persecutions in the Soviet Union to the world community. It also made the defense of believers' rights a part of the human right movement.

In the 1970s religious dissident movement reached its peak.⁸⁰ During this period dissent became organized. The first to emerge was Russian nationalist movement

⁷⁹ Gleb Iakunin, Varsonofii Khaibulin, and Viktor Kapitanchuk, "Khristianskii komitet zashchity prav veruiushchikh v SSSR: Dokumenty," *Vol'noe Slovo*, no.28 (1977):3.

⁸⁰ Shkarovskii, 279.

Vserossiiskii sotsial-khristianskii soiuz osvobozhdeniia naroda or *VSKhSON* (The All-Russian Social and Christian Union for the Liberation of People). The movement had close ties with the Church as its members believed that Orthodox values remained Russian people's spiritual values throughout their history. The *VSKhSON* wanted to restore these values. The Union published the *samizdat* journal *Veche*.

In 1974 A. Ogorodnikov in Moscow and T. Goricheva and V. Krivulin in Leningrad started two religious and philosophic Christian Seminars. The seminars published *samizdat* journals – *Obshchina* (*Community*) and *37* respectively. A few years later more informal group formed including feminist club, *Maria*, dedicated to the Mother of God.

By the mid-1970s 50% of all *samizdat* was produced by religious dissenters.⁸¹ This included *samizdat* journals *Moskovskii Sbornik*, *Nadezhda*, *Zhenshchina i Rossiia*, *Mariia*, etc. A new wave of arrests in the late 1970s, however, weakened religious dissent. Soviet authorities arrested the majority of religious rights activists, including Gleb Iakunin, Dmitrii Dudko, Lev Regel'son, Aleksandr Ogorodnikov, Viktor Kapitanchuk, Vladimir Poresh, and Tatiana Shchipkova.⁸²

The last wave of Soviet religious dissidents started in 1981 and continued through 1991 until the fall of the Soviet system and the collapse of the Soviet Union. After the release in 1987 of many prisoners of conscience the amount of *samizdat* publications grew. For instance, Aleksandr Ogorodnikov launched his digests *Bulleten' Khristianskoi Obshchestvennosti* or *BKhO* (*Bulletin of Christian Community*) and *Khronika*

⁸¹ Shkarovskii, 281.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 282.

Tekushchikh Sobytii (Chronicle of Current Events). The latter contained reports on activity of A. Ogorodnikov's Khristiansko-Demokraticeskii Soiuz (Christian-Democratic Union). By 1991, some informal Christian groups and religious and philosophic seminars transformed into small Christian parties. After the fall of the Soviet system they got actively involved in Russia's political life.⁸³

Class Characteristic and Forms of Organization of Orthodox Dissent

Russian Orthodox resistance against the state's anti-religious policy always existed, although not always in organized forms.⁸⁴ Believers' protests against confiscation of church valuables during the early years of the Soviet power were not organized but spontaneous and sporadic. Although inspired mostly by clergymen, they were local rather than a part of the Church's conspiracy against the Soviet authorities. However, the protests revealed general policy disagreements within the Party of Workers and Peasants. For instance, O. Stolbunova, a school teacher and former party member, participated in the Shuia protest. She agitated against Soviet power, not just against the campaign or the state religious policy per se. While under investigation she testified that workers and peasants did not necessarily support the Soviet authority.⁸⁵ There was no agreement between the party leaders on the means of the campaign on confiscation of church valuables.⁸⁶ Believers sent numerous petitions to the authorities asking for the

⁸³ Shkarovskii, 282.

⁸⁴ Protoierei Dmitrii Konstantinov, *Religioznoe dvizhenie soprotivleniia v SSSR* (Kanada: Izdatel'stvo SBONR, 1967), 7.

⁸⁵ Krivova, 58-59.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 32, 95.

release of prosecuted priests and the preservation of churches and church items. Kalinin usually responded with positive action. However, his orders were always overruled by Trotskii and Lenin and Molotov.⁸⁷

Another wave of protests of believers in the rural areas happened during Iosif Stalin's general collectivization campaign. In 1931 believers' protests against the forceful closing of churches in Pskovskii district turned violent. Metropolitan Sergii appeal to Stalin, pointing out that "starting a *kolkhoz* (collective farm) by taking down the church bells" was a mistake.⁸⁸

Peaceful protests against forceful closing and destruction of churches in large cities included strikes and sabotage. Russian state archives contain numerous appeals to the authorities. In 1938 workers of Leningrad's Viborgskii district sent a collective letter to the authorities requesting to keep their church open.⁸⁹

Thus the early disorganized and disconnected protests came from various social classes. They were inspired by clergy, intelligentsia (mostly teachers), workers in cities, and peasants in villages. Leaders of the protest in Shuia included a merchant, a former policeman, and two former members of the Party of Workers and Peasants (one a workshop director and the other unemployed). According to the local investigation, the most active participants in the protest were a sausage maker, a glazier, a peasant, two

⁸⁷ Krivova, 58.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 89.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 101.

women, one of whom was a peasant and the other was a bourgeois, and two school masters.⁹⁰

While the statistical data for the number of clergy and churches is available for every period of the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, statistics on the number, gender, education, and social status of Orthodox believers, varies. Soviet sociologists used different approaches to receive their desired results.⁹¹ Their statistics had to support the contemporary believer's image as an old and illiterate woman. For as far as I can remember the Soviet press blamed *babushkas* for the survival of religion. Of course, the *babushkas* were not concerned about being fired from a job or expelled from the Communist Party. Unfortunately for the atheist propagandists, their propaganda did not work on these women either. *Babushkas* were concerned about keeping the family traditions. They were the force which drove couples to have church marriage, parents to baptize their children, and relatives to invite a priest for a dying family member's last confession. Growing up I remember that all funerals were done in accordance with a tradition when the body stayed at home for three days and old church *babushkas* read Psalteries days and nights. They were the keepers of the church traditions. This is why the majority of the anti-religious posters in the Keston archive picture old ladies.

William Fletcher, in his complex study of believers in the Soviet Union, combines data from different soviet sociological studies. According to his sources, in the 1960s and 1970s up to 30% of the population was religious.⁹² In some areas the number of

⁹⁰ Krivova, 58.

⁹¹ William Fletcher, *Soviet Believers: The Religious Sector of the Population* (Lawrence, Kansas: Regents Press of Kansas, 1981), 65.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 70.

Orthodox believers reached 99% of all religious people. While Fletcher does not agree with this figure he confirms that the majority of Soviet believers belonged to the Orthodox faith.⁹³ Most common data for gender proportions show higher number of religious women 80-85%.⁹⁴ However, the proportion of men in general population was lower because of the casualties during the World War II, which makes their church attendance rate higher.⁹⁵ A study of Orthodox believers in a village near Moscow produced the following data about their age: over 60 – 55%, 45-60 – 39%, and younger than 45 – 6%.⁹⁶ This supports most Soviet researches' opinion that the elderly predominated among religious people. They also believed that religiosity declines with education. Their figures showed that as many as 70% Orthodox believers were semi-illiterate and as little as 1.2% received secondary education.⁹⁷ One study found that 86% of believers would not have been able to understand scientific atheist literature even if they wanted to.⁹⁸ More than half, 55.8%, of Orthodox believers were not involved in social production. They included housewives, retired, dependents and disabled. Believers employed at collective farms at odd jobs constituted 18.8%, unskilled laborers 7.8%. Skilled workers amounted to 7% and 2.8% worked administrative and office jobs.

⁹³ Fletcher, 70.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 88.

⁹⁵ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 182.

⁹⁶ Fletcher, 80.

⁹⁷ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 182.

⁹⁸ Fletcher, 94.

While the statistics supported the image of an average believer as an old and illiterate woman, the religious revival in the 1970s resulted in increasing proportion of intelligentsia among the Orthodox in the Soviet Union, especially in large cities. Their impact on the development of Orthodox dissent and the human rights movement in the Soviet Union was invaluable.

Anatolii Levitin-Krasnov was born to a family of a baptized Jew. While his parents were not religious, he became a Christian at a very young age. Before and after the World War II he worked as a school master teaching Russian literature. During the war under the influence of Metropolitan Alexandr Vvedenskii he joined the Living Church. Vvedenskii ordained Levitin as deacon. After the war the state no longer supported the Living Church because the Patriarchate's leadership submitted to the authorities' will. In 1944 Levitin-Krasnov joined the Patriarchate. In 1960 he was dismissed from his job for his religious belief. Levitin was arrested in 1934 and 1949 and spent nearly 8 years in prison. He was arrested again in 1969 but was released because of lack of evidence. In 1971 Levitin was arrested and sentenced to 3 years. The term prevented him from participation in National Council of the Russian Orthodox Church. Levitin was released in 1973, and in 1974 he emigrated. In emigration he published his works and continued to defend believers in the Soviet Union, especially during the multiple arrests in the 1970s and 1980s. Levitin's influence, in Jane Ellis's words, "inspired many who were training for the priesthood, embarking on human rights activities or writing in *samizdat*. He helped countless people to find a new way of life."⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Jane Ellis, "Obituary: Anatoly Levitin-Krasnov," *Keston News Services*, no. 374 (2 May 1991): 16.

Another prominent figure whose life and activities impacted many Soviet believers in 1960s was Russian Orthodox laymen Boris Talantov. Talantov was a son of a Russian Orthodox priest who was arrested in 1937 and died in one of the Stalinist labor camps. Talantov's older brother was arrested in 1930 and died building the Baltic-White Sea Canal. In the 1920s Boris studied mathematics at Moscow University, while being closely watched by the authorities as the son of a priest. In 1934 he joined the Kirov Pedagogical Institute as a lecturer in mathematics. Talantov was dismissed from his job in 1954 for being an Orthodox believer. Widely recognized as a gifted teacher of mathematics, he was offered a lecturer position at the Kirov branch of the All-Union Institute of Economics. He taught a correspondence course until his dismissal in 1958.¹⁰⁰

Boris Talantov openly criticized the communist system. In 1957 he wrote a letter to *Pravda*, in which he accused the Communist Party and the state of adopting Stalinist policies which became evident after the suppression of the appraisal in Hungary in 1956:

After the 20th Party Congress some non-Party people in our country entertained bright hopes that legal order would gradually be established in our society, that secret trials would be abolished and all those unjustly sentenced would be rehabilitated, that we would be able to express our ideas freely, there would be freedom of conscience. Now it is clear that these were vain hopes.¹⁰¹

While writing about inevitable ideological conflict between the Soviet system and religious believers, Talantov believed that deeply held convictions were stronger than the political system: "Soviet atheists prefer to 'root out' religion by means of threats, slander, and violence, but ideas cannot be conquered by force."¹⁰² For his vigorous defense of the

¹⁰⁰ Aleksandr Balyberdin, *Bezumie: khrushevskie goneniia na viatskoi zemle* (Viatka: Izd-vo Bukovitsa, 2006), 222.

¹⁰¹ Xenia Dennen, "Boris Talantov: a hero of his time," *Frontier*, no. 11 (Winter 2006): 13.

¹⁰² Dennen, 14.

Russian Orthodox Church Talantov was arrested and sentenced to two years in prison in 1969. In January 1971 he died in a prison hospital.¹⁰³

Particular forms of organization of Orthodox dissent emerged in early 1960s. The *VSKhSON* (The All-Russian Social and Christian Union for the Liberation of People) was founded by an Orthodox believer Igor Ogurtsov in Leningrad in 1964. The organization united individuals adhered to the ideology of Social Christianity. Its members looked to replace the Soviet system with a political order based on Christian ethics. The *VSKhSON*'s model of the Russian national state ignored the fact that the Soviet Union was a multinational country with some ethnic groups which were not Orthodox or Christians.¹⁰⁴

The state authorities uncovered *VSKhSON* in 1967 and arrested approximately 60 of its members and supporters. The leaders of the organization Igor Ogurtsov, Evgenii Vagin, Mikhail Sado, and Boris Averichkin were charged with treason. Ogurtsov was sentenced to 15 years including 7 years in prison and 8 in labor camp and 5 years of exile. Sado received 13 years including 3 years in prison and 10 in a labor camp. Vagin and Averichkin were sentenced to 8 years in a labor camp.¹⁰⁵

In 1974 Aleksandr Ogorodnikov established an informal group, Christian Seminar on Problems of Religious Renaissance, for young Orthodox believers. The Seminar group met in private homes in Moscow and had representatives in Leningrad (Vladimir

¹⁰³ Dennen, 13.

¹⁰⁴ Nikita Moravsky, *Russian Orthodox Dissent in Historical Prospective* (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 1989), 284.

¹⁰⁵ "VSKhSON: Materialy suda i programma", *Vol'noe Slovo*, no. 22 (1976): 40-41.

Poresh) and Smolensk (Tatiana Shchipkova.) Through readings, lectures and discussions, its participants studied the Scripture, Russian religious philosophy, and the history of the Church. In 1978 the group published religious and philosophical journal *Obshchina* (*Community*).¹⁰⁶

The harassment of the members of the Christian Seminar started almost immediately and took various forms. While police broke into the meetings, the KGB searched the members' houses and confiscated literature and typewriters. In 1976 Aleksandr Argentov was subjected to psychiatric treatment for "religiosity."¹⁰⁷ In June 1978 Shchipkova was fired from her teaching job at the Smolensk Pedagogical Institute. A month later her son Aleksandr, a senior at the institute, was expelled. His wife, also a student there, was forced to transfer to distance education course. In January 1979 Ogorodnikov was sentenced to one year in a labor camp. Poresh was arrested a few months later.¹⁰⁸

In 1975, poet Victor Krivulin and Tatiana Goricheva, husband and wife, started Christian study seminar 37 in Leningrad. It received its name after the number of Krivulin and Goricheva's apartment. The 37 was more ecumenically oriented than the Christian Seminar in Moscow. While the organizers were baptized Orthodox, many members of the group belonged to different religions and Christian denominations.

¹⁰⁶ "Khristianskii Seminar po problemam religioznogo vrozhdeniia," July, 1978. Archive file <Su 12/11.1 S Christian Seminar>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹⁰⁷ Alexander Ogorodnikov, "Letter to the Secretary-General of The World Council of Churches Dr. Phillip Potter," July 27, 1976. Archive file <SU 12/11.1 S Christian Seminar>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹⁰⁸ "Kratkii spisok repressii protiv Seminara po problemam religioznogo vrozhdeniia," August 15, 1979. Archive file <SU 12/11.1 S Christian Seminar>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

Agnostics and atheists also participated in the seminar. The topics discussed at the meetings included “Christianity and Culture,” “Christianity and Patriotism,” and “Christianity and Ethics.” At the beginning, 40-50 people attended them every night.¹⁰⁹ Since the group met in private homes, one could guess that this was the maximum number of people that they could accommodate because apartments in Leningrad in the 1970s were very small.

The majority of members of seminar 37 belonged to the creative *intelligentsia*. They were poets, writers, and philosophers who published their works in *samizdat* and artists who unofficially exhibited their art. Culture was the main focus of the seminar 37. Its members wanted to build a bridge between Christian and contemporary unofficial culture. The group published a *samizdat* journal 37. In 1980 Tatiana Goricheva was forced to emigrate.¹¹⁰

Before the emigration, however, Goricheva along with writer Natalia Malakhovskaia, and artist and poetess Tatiana Mamonova started an Orthodox-inspired feminist movement and founded the Maria Group dedicated to the Mother of God. Poet Iulia Vosnesenskaia joined them a few months later. Maria Group published the *samizdat* journals *Zhenshchina i Rossiia (Woman and Russia)* and *Maria*. The group addressed problems of emancipated women in the Soviet Union. Most of its members were young mothers who looked after each other’s children and helped each other with housekeeping expenses.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 391.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 398.

In 1976 Fr. Gleb Iakunin, Hierodeacon Varsonofii Khaibulin, and Viktor Kapitanchuk formed the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights (CCDBR). The Committee worked closely with the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group providing assistance with religious materials which the group was receiving. While representing Orthodox believers' interests, the Committee had an ecumenical focus. Their strong intentions to help members of other denominations were explained in the Committee's founding Declaration. According to them, they felt obliged, because of the Russian Orthodox Church's complicity in the persecution of other religions and denominations. There had been no tradition in the Russian Orthodox Church to fight for its members' civil rights. The Committee members described the reason for assuming such responsibility in the following words:

At present, the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church and the leaders of other religious organizations do not concern themselves with the defense of believers' rights, for a variety of reasons. In such circumstances, the Christian community has to make the legal defense of believers its own concern.¹¹²

The Committee's founding Declaration listed five ways in which its members intended to help believers:

1. To collect, study, and distribute information on the situation of religious believers in the USSR;
2. To give legal advice to believers when their civil rights are infringed;
3. To appeal to state institutions concerning the defense of believers' rights;
4. To conduct research as far as this was possible, to clarify the legal and factual position of religion in the USSR;
5. To assist in putting the Soviet legislation on religion into practice.¹¹³

The documents, produced by the Christian Committee, circulated in *samizdat* until the Washington Research Center in San Francisco published 11 volumes of Russian

¹¹² Iakunin, Khaibulin, and Kapitanchuk, "Khristsianskii komitet", 3.

¹¹³ Ibid.

texts and a volume of selected English translations under the title Documents of the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in the USSR (DCCDBR).¹¹⁴

In December 1977 layman Vadim Shcheglov joined the three founding members of the Christian Committee. He was trusted with a function to reveal names of people to replace the founders if they were arrested. Soon Fr. Vasilii Fonchenkov replaced Hierodeacon Khaibulin who left the Committee to stay with his parish in Vladimir. On November 1, 1979 Fr. Iakunin was arrested. Fr. Nikolai Gainov then joined the group. Viktor Kapitanchuk was also arrested on March 12, 1980. After the arrests, ten more members joined the Committee, but their names were not revealed at that time. Apparently, they were representatives of other denominations.¹¹⁵

The six members of the Christian Committee were of different backgrounds. Iakunin, Khaibulin, and Kapitanchuk participated in the defense of religious freedom. While Iakunin and Khaibulin were dismissed from their parishes, Kapitanchuk, a chemist, retained his job until his arrest. Vadim Shcheglov, a recent convert, did not participate in an individual public activity before he joined the Committee. Even after his membership in the Committee was announced Shcheglov did not lose his job as mathematician in the Ministry of Health.¹¹⁶

Both Fonchenkov and Gainov held official positions within the Russian Orthodox Church. If Fonchenkov had previous experience in defense of believers' rights, Gainov had very little. During Khrushchev's antireligious campaign Fonchenkov worked at a

¹¹⁴ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 376.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 380.

¹¹⁶ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 380.

museum which was turned into a center for atheist work. Even so Fonchenkov and several other employees converted to Christianity. In 1972 Fonchenkov graduated from Zagorsk Theological Academy and became a lecturer there. From 1976 to 1977 he edited the *Journal of the Central European Exarchate of the Moscow Patriarchate* in East Berlin. He risked his church career by joining the Committee. He was eventually dismissed from his teaching job but retained his parish in Moscow.

Gainov was dismissed from his parish after cosigning an appeal to the 1971 Local Council of Bishops. For a short time he was a parish priest in Tsarevo (Moscow region). Gainov was dismissed from this position after joining the Committee.

The most productive phase of the Christian Committee's work ended with the arrest of Viktor Kapitanchuk. While the Committee announced that it continued to function, only a handful of documents reached the West during this period.

A brief overview of class characteristics of Orthodox believers and dissidents demonstrates that despite the illiterate *babushka* image of an average Orthodox believer promoted by the state leaders of Orthodox dissent belonged to Soviet intelligentsia. They all received high education unless they were expelled from an educational institution for their faith.¹¹⁷ Because of being believers they did not have permanent or higher level jobs. In Orthodox dissent men were definitely in majority. Many of them were priests.

With a few exceptions active Orthodox dissidents were concentrated in large cities like Moscow and Leningad which distanced them from the majority of believers. They formed groups which corresponded with their interests. While these groups were open for anyone, an average believer or less educated person most likely would not be

¹¹⁷ In this case they had *nezakonchennoe vysshee obrazovanie* ("unfinished" high education).

able to blend in. Orthodox dissent tended to stay within its own circle. Occasionally the groups competed and criticized each other (as in case of the Moscow Christian Seminar and Seminar 37 in Leningrad). The general tendency changed in 1976 when the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights formed.

Orthodox Religious Samizdat and Its Use

The early Soviet Orthodox *samizdat* included Patriarch Tikhon's addresses and occasional documents such as the letters and appeals issued by bishops (for ex., Metropolitan Agafangel's address and the Solovki Bishops' Memorandum to the Soviet Government) and secretly circulated among believers. Another example of early Soviet religious *samizdat* included the shorthand copies and retyped texts of semiofficial public lectures on social Christianity which were conducted twice a month in the Kropotkin Museum from 1923 to 1928. The lectures attracted from 60 to 70 young people of *Komsomol*.

The official Soviet Orthodox *samizdat* was produced by individual believers as early as the 1950s. Anatolii Levitin's public activity in 1958 began as a response to Nikita Khrushchev's virulent anti-religious campaign.¹¹⁸ Levitin was one of the pioneers of *samizdat*. He signed his *samizdat* publications with the pen-name Krasnov.

During a time when human rights activity was not known and believers suffered in silence, in Mikhail Meerson-Aksenov's words, Levitin-Krasnov "went on to defend the 'slandered and humiliated people,' first of all among church activists and believers."¹¹⁹ After the emergence of the human rights movement he defended its

¹¹⁸ Ellis, "Obituary", 14.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

participants “regardless of whether or not they professed any kind of faith.” Levitin-Krasnov “was the first one to speak out in *samizdat* about the Church’s problems and was also the first Orthodox Christian to become involved in the human rights movement.” He also wrote on literary, political and spiritual topics, and monasticism. Because of his influence many young people were baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church.¹²⁰

Boris Talantov’s writings circulated in *samizdat* in the 1960s. Talantov openly criticized the Soviet system for adopting Stalinist policies. In response to the suppression of the Viatskii Procession of the Cross in 1959, he sent letters to *Nauka i Religiiia* (1960), the *Journal of Moscow Patriarchy* (1961), to newspaper *Izvestiia* (1963), and to Patriarch Alexii (1963, 1965).¹²¹ In these letters Talantov criticized methods of atheist propaganda in the Kirov region and reported on churches’ lack of freedom, on mass demolition of the churches and on the violation of believers’ rights. In 1966 Talantov wrote an “Open letter of the believers of Kirov diocese” which was signed by 12 believers and sent to Patriarch Alexii and to the editor of *Izvestiia*. The person who took the letter to Moscow made several typewritten copies of it and gave them to her friends. The letter made its way abroad and was read by the BBC radio station on December 8, 1966. Unfortunately, it was not taken seriously in the West because the copy received by BBC was unanimous. Soviet authorities, on the other hand, took it quite seriously. They persecuted all twelve believers who signed the letter.

The first Orthodox *samizdat* periodicals were produced by Russian nationalists. From 1971 to 1974 ten issues of *Veche (Public Assembly)* appeared. It consisted of 300

¹²⁰ Ellis, “Obituary”, 14-15.

¹²¹ Belyberdin, 223.

pages and was produced three times a year. Several dozens of copies were produced each time. *Veche*'s editor Vladimir Osipov, a former political prisoner, defined the journal's goal: "...without depreciation of other nations' dignity... to strengthen Russian national culture and patriotic traditions in the spirit of Slavophil and Dostoevskii and to preserve Russia's identity and its quality of greatness."¹²² Regular contributors to *Veche* included Fr. Dmitrii Dudko, writer Leonid Borodin, Gennadii Shimanov, and Anatolii Ivanov. Publishing house Possev republished the journal's articles in the series "*Vol'noe Slovo*" ("*Free Word*"). The authorities closed *Veche* in 1974 as "anti-Soviet," and Osipov was sentenced to 8 years in labor camps one year later.¹²³

The Orthodox patriotic journal *Moskovskii Sbornik* (*Moscow Collection*) of religious, philosophical, and literary content was published in 1975. Its editor, Leonid Borodin, was an educator, writer, and a former political prisoner. In 1967 he was arrested as a member of *VSKhSON* and sentenced to 6 years which he spent in a Vladimir prison and in a labor camp in Mordoviia. *Moskovskii Sbornik* continued in the tradition of the Russian national and Orthodox periodicals.¹²⁴

The first issue of *Moskovskii Sbornik* is dedicated to Iurii Galasnkov, publicist and human rights activist, who died in a Mordovian labor camp in 1972. In addition to articles on topics initiated in *Veche* and *Zemlia* (Orthodox and patriotic journal), the

¹²² Vladimir Osipov, "Zaiavlenie pedaktsii zhurnala 'Veche'", *Veche*, no. 2, (1971): 2. Archive file <SU/Ort 11/10 S Veche 1971>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹²³ Mark Barbakadze, "Zhurnal 'Veche'", *Antologiia samizdata*, <http://antology.igrunov.ru/70-s/periodicals/veche/>, (accessed February 8, 2013).

¹²⁴ Borodin who was an active contributor to *Veche* had named his new journal after an almanac published in the late 1800s by a prominent ideologist of Russian conservatism, the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod Konstantin Pobedonostsev.

journal contained an anonymous article “On the Status of the Orthodox Church in Georgia” and the novel, *Unknown Motherland*. Publication of *Moskovskii Sbornik* ceased in April 1975.¹²⁵

The first issue of a *samizdat* journal published by the Christian Seminar on Problems of Religious Renaissance, *Obshchina* (*Community*), appeared in 1978. Interestingly, *Obshchina* began publication with issue No. 2. The Keston archive contains a photographic copy of the hand-bound typescript with a note explaining that No. 1 was never published because the finished master copy of the issue disappeared from Aleksandr Ogorodnikov’s medical ward while he was meeting with a doctor on June 7, 1977. *Obshchina*’s first *samizdat* issue consisted of 282 pages, which contained articles by Ogorodnikov, Poresh, and Kapitanchuk. The journal also included testimonies of young participants of the Seminar, poems of Andrei Belyi and letters of Sergei Bulgakov. On May 21, 1978, in Smolensk, the KGB confiscated a set of materials for *Obshchina* No 2 and seven copies of the complete issue. Some documents were permanently lost. After a 1978 issue, Ogorodnikov was arrested, charged with parasitism, and sentenced to a year in a labor camp. Poresh did not have time to finish the next issue of *Obshchina* before his own arrest in August 1979.¹²⁶

From January 1976 to March 1981 Seminar 37 published twenty-one issues of its journal 37. The editors were Viktor Krivulin, Tatiana Goricheva, and Viktor Antonov. The volume of the journal ranged from 5 to 25 typed pages. Its circulation varied from

¹²⁵ Mark Barbakadze, “Moskovskii Sbornik”, *Antologiya samizdata*, http://antology.igrunov.ru/after_75/periodicals/mosc_sb/(accessed February 8, 2013).

¹²⁶“Ot sostavitelei,” *Obshchina*, no. 2, (1978), 1. Archive file <SU 11/10 S Obshchina>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

15 to 200 copies.¹²⁷ The journal was quite popular among a broad circle of people interested in different aspects of the seminar's activities. For instance, issue No. 17 published feedback from a young poet, a writer, an engineer, a middle aged sociologist, and a historian.¹²⁸ The journal 37 published articles mainly on philosophy and religion, some of which were polemical. One of the largest sections was on literature. It contained poetry and prose including translations of foreign authors, some of which were never before published in Russian. Its Chronicle section contained announcements of upcoming unofficial cultural events like exhibits and showings. The Chronicle section in the issue No. 17 gives accounts of the seminar 37's relations with other groups and individuals. This includes a report on a conversation with Poresh and a positive opinion on the Christian Seminar's journal *Obshchina*. However, the 37 group was offended by the "superfluous self-confidence" in Ogorodnikov's statements, which led to a distant relationship with the Moscow Seminar.¹²⁹

The Maria Group published two *samizdat* journals *Zhenshchina i Rossiia* (Woman and Russia) and *Mariia*. *Zhenshchina i Rossiia* stood out among Leningrad *samizdat* publications because it was more politically oriented. It was closed almost immediately after the first issue came out. The Journal *Mariia* lasted through six issues. It addressed problems of emancipated women in the Soviet Union. Stressing the difference between the Soviet feminist movement and the Western one, Tatiana Goricheva wrote in 37:

¹²⁷ Mark Barbakadze, "Zhurnal '37,'" *Anologiiia samizdata*, http://antology.igrunov.ru/after_75/periodicals/37/ (accessed February 09, 2013).

¹²⁸ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 394.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 396.

Emancipation of women has produced paradoxical results: in our times the most emancipated women in Russia are to be found in the Church. ... Those who acknowledged neither gods nor men have submitted to the Christian God, because in Him they have found Life and Truth and the Way, and they have submitted to Him with a readiness to give up everything, to sacrifice everything.¹³⁰

In 1980 the founders of the movement, Malakhovskaia, Goricheva, and Mamonova, were forced to emigrate. While the first issue of *Maria* came out in Moscow, the later issues were printed in Germany.

As a part of Orthodox educational efforts, Zoia Krakhmalnikova published the purely religious journal *Nadezhda. Khristianskoe chtenie (Hope. Christian Readings)* in Moscow. In her own words it “was addressed to all seeking hope for salvation regardless of their stage of spiritual life.”¹³¹ Krakhmalnikova graduated from the Gorky Institute of Literature and received a Candidate of Philology degree from the Institute of World Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. After converting to Christianity, she was dismissed from her position as a senior researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences. Krakhmalnikova began writing on religious revival in the Soviet Union.¹³² Her journal, *Nadezhda*, imitated similar prerevolutionary series *Khristianskoe chtenie (Christian Readings)* published in Russia from 1821 to 1917.¹³³ Launched in

¹³⁰ As quoted in Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 398.

¹³¹ “K chitateliam ‘Nadezhdy,’” *Nadezhda: khristianskoe chtenie*, no. 5, (1981), 6.

¹³² Zoya Krakhmalnikova, *Listen, Prison!: Lefortovo Notes, Letters from Exile* (Redding, California: Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, 1993), 3.

¹³³ “Podderzhite ‘Nadezhdu!’” *Vol’noe Slovo*, no. 44, (1981): 5.

1976, it circulated in *samizdat* until Possev started printing it in Frankfurt (West Germany).¹³⁴

In the late 1980s, Aleksandr Ogorodnikov was a head editor of his *samizdat* journal, *Biulleten' khristianskoi obshchestvennosti* or *BKhO* (*Bulletin of Christian Community*), and published a digest, *Khronika Nedeli* (*Weekly Chronicle*). The purpose of *BKhO* as outlined in the collectors' note was "to publicize religious documents – addresses, letters, statements, and testimonies – about the status of the Church in the country, fates of believers, ways of Christianity and other issues of religious life."¹³⁵ The bulletin which "appeared in the fold of the Russian Orthodox Church" was open "for a dialog with other confessions."¹³⁶

The early issues of *BKhO* were typed on a typewriter and consisted of nearly 300 pages. Later issues used more advanced technology, which reduced them to 100-150 pages.¹³⁷ *Khronika Nedeli* contained news about persecution of believers all over the Soviet Union and reports about the activity of Khristiansko-Demokratiheskii Soiuz (Ogorodnikov's party). *Khronika* usually consisted of just a few typed pages.

The Christian Committee for the Defense of the Believers' Rights, formed in 1976 by Fr. Gleb Iakunin, Hierodeacon Varsonofii Khaibulin, and Viktor Kapitanchuk,

¹³⁴ Krakhmalnikova, 3. The Keston archive contains issues 1-13 which were printed in Germany during the period from 1977 to 1986.

¹³⁵ *Biulleten' Khristianskoi Obshchestvennosti*, no. 1-2, (1987): 1. Archive file <Su 11/10 S BKhO 1987>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³⁷ The Keston archive contains issues No. 1-13 in Russian and English.

produced 423 documents in the late 1970s.¹³⁸ They were circulated in *samizdat* until the Washington Research Center in San Francisco (USA) published them in 11 volumes under the title *Documents of the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in the USSR (DCCDBR)*. One volume (vol. 3) contained selected English translations.¹³⁹ The Christian Committee signed 64 documents; 46 concerned denominational issues and eight the Committee itself. The majority of the documents were submitted to the Committee by believers of different denominations.

The Committee produced ten documents which dealt with the problems related to the Russian Orthodox Church as a whole rather than individual believers and groups. They include the Committee's founding *Declaration*, detailed commentary on the draft of the new Soviet Constitution, a document dealing with economic discrimination against church employees, and a commentary on foreign religious broadcasts. On April 11, 1978, the Committee appealed to the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrius to come to aid of the Russian Orthodox Church and defend oppressed Christians since the Russian bishops abandoned their responsibilities. Another letter, addressed to the successor of Pope John Paul I, expressed hope for establishing good relationship between the next Pope and the Russian Orthodox Church, be based on a true understanding of the position of the Church and its relationship with the Soviet state. The next document was sent to Pope John Paul II, the heads of Orthodox autocephalous churches, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the World Council of Churches and the American President Jimmy Carter. The Committee urged the world leaders to adopt an international "pact on religious rights" or a

¹³⁸ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 376.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

“convention on the struggle against religious discrimination.” Like international agreements on human rights, the proposed international agreement would protect religious communities against state interference. A letter to Pope John Paul II revealed evidence of close relations between the Moscow Patriarchate of External Church Relations and the Council for Religious Affairs.¹⁴⁰

The most significant document of the Christian Committee was Fr. Gleb Iakunin’s “Report on the Current Situation of the Orthodox Church and the Prospects for a Religious Renaissance in Russia.” In the Report, Iakunin gave “a detailed and comprehensive analysis of every aspect of the life of the Russian Orthodox Church, providing carefully assembled and argued evidence of the way in which the Church has been hemmed in and restricted by the State – both by legislation and by the extra-legal actions of the State bodies – to the point where it has virtually no freedom of independent action left.”¹⁴¹ As a solution he proposed that the Russian Orthodox Church follow the model of organization adopted by the Soviet Baptists:

... the ideal form of existence of the Church in modern conditions should be a structure built in the principle of a schoolboy’s physics experiment with two communicating vessels filled with liquid. The meaning of this visual aid is to demonstrate the changes of the level of the liquid in one vessel in relation to the change of the level in the other.

In the church structure, built in an analogous manner, the two communicating vessels would be two church organizations: one official, registered by the State, and the other unofficial and unregistered.

Such a dynamic structure would permit the Church to bear the heaviest pressure from the State, since pressure on the official part of the Church would only increase and strengthen the unregistered Church and raise the level of religious life in it.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 402.

¹⁴¹ Jane Ellis, “The Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers’ Rights in the USSR,” *Religion in Communist Lands* 8, no. 4 (Winter, 1980): 282-283.

¹⁴² Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, 403.

The unregistered Orthodox communities would have to remain faithful to the Moscow Patriarchate and the official Church. Otherwise, it would be a schism. The unregistered Orthodox communities would provide an alternative for believers who disagree with the official Church's policy. Iakunin believed that such church organization would be an efficient administrative tool to manage the state domination of the Church. He pointed out religious revival, especially among young people in the Soviet Union, and the Moscow Patriarchate's inability to deal with it.

The tenth document titled "Appeal to Christians of the Whole World" was signed by members of the Committee and members of Ogorodnikov's Christian Seminar on Problems of Religious Renaissance. It urged the world community to find every possible means to send Christian books to Russia where they were in great demand. The documents produced by the Christian Committee significantly contributed to *samizdat* sources of information about the religious persecution in the Soviet Union from 1976 to 1980.

Considering that most believers claimed to be Orthodox, it may seem that Orthodox dissent should have produced the greatest amount of *samizdat*. Orthodox *samizdat*, however, ranks second in the total amount of *samizdat* publications produced in the Soviet Union.¹⁴³ The reason for this is that many of the journals mentioned here were short-lived. For instance, Ogorodnikov's Christian Seminar published only one issue of *Obshchina* before its members were arrested. Only one issue of *Moskovskii Sbornik* came out in 1975 before the authorities forced Borodin to stop its publication. The other Orthodox *samizdat* periodicals did not survive longer than a dozen issues. Some of the

¹⁴³ Wolfe Jancar, 196.

longer lived journals were published abroad because editors were forced to emigrate or were either imprisoned or forced into exile. These published abroad journals had to be smuggled back into the country before reaching their readers.

A brief overview of the history of persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church demonstrates that until the late 1950s Orthodox dissent was diffused. While Orthodox movement of resistance against state's anti-religious campaigns always existed, it did not take on an organized form until the early 1960s. The organizational efforts of Orthodox religious dissidents included formation of secret seminars and study groups focusing on a variety of topics from Russian Orthodox nationalism, patriotism, and Christian emancipation to religion, philosophy and religious literature. Orthodox religious samizdat produced by these seminars and groups reflected their interest in particular topics.

The most efficient organization of Orthodox dissent was the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights formed in 1976. Its ecumenical focus and international approach in struggle for religious freedom in the Soviet Union provided the Committee a wide support of believers in the USSR and abroad.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

The Bolsheviks began their attacks against religion in Russia immediately after coming into power in 1917. While not pressuring the Evangelical Christian Baptists until approximately the mid-1920s, the authorities focused on persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church as the main representative of a major counter ideology to Marxism. Their acute measures led to multiple protests of Orthodox believers over the entire country. The protests often turned violent and the Russian Orthodox believers' resistance to the state's anti-religious policy was not organized at that time.

The "Law on Religious Associations," adopted in 1929, marked the beginning of the new anti-religious campaign in the Soviet Union. The law, banning any type of religious activity outside a church building, religious education of children and youth, and missionary and charity work, affected both Orthodox and Baptists. The authorities persecuted the most active leaders of both Evangelical Baptist and Russian Orthodox churches. The persecutions continued through the 1930s and affected particularly those leaders who refused to show their loyalty to the state. By the beginning of the World War II only one legal Evangelical church remained open outside of Moscow. The Russian Orthodox Church lost a great number of its hierarchs and was also significantly weakened by the Renovationist schism facilitated by the State. This is despite the fact that two years after the death of Patriarch Tikhon, in 1927, Metropolitan Sergii attempted to save the Church's organization infrastructure by declaring the Orthodox Church's loyalty to the Soviet authorities.

During World War II Evangelical Christian Baptist and Russian Orthodox churches experienced revival because of Stalin's liberalization of the state anti-religious policy. In 1943 the Soviet authorities and the Russian Orthodox Church, represented by its three hierarchs, reached a "concordat." The concordat marked the beginning of the new Church-State relations and allowed State interference in the Church's organization. In 1944 the authorities facilitated the creation of the collaborationist All-Union Council of Evangelical Baptists-Christians, the sole legal Protestant organization in the Soviet Union for years to come. Two government bodies – the Council for Religious Cults' Affairs and the Council for Russian Orthodox Church's Affairs – were established in 1944 for carrying out the state religious policy following end of the war.

The authorities intensively used the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian-Baptists and the Moscow Patriarchate to improve the international status of the Soviet Union. Leaders and representatives of both organizations traveled abroad, established contacts and accepted foreign church delegations. Fulfilling their part of the agreement with the state, leaders of both organizations remained silent about persecution of their churches and believers, creating the illusion of a democratic society and healthy church-state relationship in the USSR.

The situation changed with Khrushchev's severe anti-religious campaign. The state attempted to impose new regulations on the life of the Evangelical Christian Baptist Church's communities and the Russian Orthodox Church's parishes. The official leadership of both denominations adopted the regulations causing believers to protest. Both Baptists and Orthodox protested against the adoption of the documents which would prove destructive to their churches.

If until now there were more similarities than differences between the Evangelical Christian Baptist and the Russian Orthodox churches' paths, their dissent against the state diverged in their fight for believers' rights. While Baptist dissent emerged as opposition to the registered Evangelical Christian Baptist Church (which resulted in a schism), Orthodox dissent remained within the Moscow Patriarchate. Orthodox clergy and laymen continued sending their individual protests to the Patriarch until 1971, hoping that the Patriarchate changes its policy, while Baptist dissent immediately took on more organized form. In 1965 Baptist dissent formed the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists with its own *samizdat* publications. Russian Orthodox dissent did not take on organized form until 1976 when, the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights was established.

Differences in upbringing of Baptist and Orthodox dissidents explain variations between the latter's tactics of struggle for religious rights. Leaders of Baptist dissent belonged to religious families and were brought up as believers. They had a family history of persecutions based on several generations of believers. The suffering made them stronger. Although, better educated they belonged to the same social category with the majority of their church members.

The Evangelical tradition of maintaining close relationships between Baptist communities united the church members and made them feel a part of the whole. This is the reason why *Initsiativniki* received strong support from many Evangelical churches all over the Soviet Union. Frequent trips of Baptist dissent leaders to other communities and personal contacts were used to maintain the organizational structure of the *Initsiativniki* movement.

Only a few titles of Baptist *samizdat* are widely known. However, they were published regularly from 1963 to 1990, while publication of a journal of spiritual instruction *Vestnik Istiny (Herald of Truth)* continues even today. Baptist *samizdat* included reports on the activity of the *Initsiativniki* movement and religious and spiritual instructions for children and adults. Baptist *samizdat*, for years, reinforced legal and moral education of its readers. It was also effectively used to maintain the organizational structure of the movement. The *Bulletin of the Council of Relatives of Evangelical Christians-Baptists Prisoners* was a unique publication containing detailed information about Baptist prisoners and Soviet labor and prison camps. Today this is a comprehensive, reliable source of collected generalized data about the Soviet regime's practices of persecution on religious grounds.

Many Baptist *samizdat* publications made their way to the West and played an important role in bringing down the wall of official disinformation. After learning the truth Western believers showed their support for Reform Baptists in the Soviet Union. They sent religious literature and collected funds for oppressed families and children of imprisoned believers.

Orthodox religious dissent emerged during the second wave of religious revival in the late 1950s to the early 1960s. Religious dissidents were young people disappointed with communist ideology. They were seeking their cultural roots and found them in Orthodoxy. Many of them were converts from second or third generation of Soviet citizens who were brought up as atheists. The Majority of Orthodox dissidents belonged to the Soviet intelligentsia. Many Orthodox dissidents became believers in prisons and labor camps. Besides converted Soviet intelligentsia, Orthodox religious dissent included

church dissidents – clergy and laymen who opposed the Moscow Patriarchate’s policy of complete submission to the state.

Orthodox dissidents formed secret groups in which they could read, study, and discuss *samizdat* religious literature and educate themselves in religion. These illegal study groups produced their own *samizdat* publications primarily of religious and philosophical and literary content which served educational purposes. Orthodox *samizdat* journals addressing human rights issues appeared in the late 1970s. First, *Zhenzhina i Rossiia* and *Maria* raised issues of emancipation of women in the Soviet society. Then *Bulletin of Christian Community* and *Khronika Nedeli* addressed problems of religious life in the Soviet Union.

Without doubt, the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers’ Rights was the most efficient organizational effort of the Orthodox dissent. Its ecumenical focus made it a connecting point for oppressed believers of different denominations and provided it with widespread support. Adopting the tactics of Baptist dissent, the Christian Committee reached out to the world community instead of limiting its activity to a dialog with the authorities and the Church leadership. While it did not have its own *samizdat* publication, all Committee documents circulated in *samizdat* before they reached the West.

While it may seem that the amount of *samizdat* produced by Orthodox dissent was greater than the amount of Baptist *samizdat*, many of the former’s titles were short-lived. Only one issue of both *Moskovskii Sbornik* (Moscow Collection) and *Obshchina* (Public Assembly) came out before their editors were arrested. However, arrests never stopped publication of Baptist periodicals because other members were always standing

by ready to assume editorial responsibilities. The majority of the Orthodox *samizdat* publications were quite lengthy journals published a few times a year, while Baptist journals and bulletins were smaller, more regularly distributed, and contained updated information. While publication of Baptist *samizdat* titles continued for decades, Orthodox periodicals, which were published over a longer period of time, produced far fewer issues.

In conclusion the study finds that while Baptist religious dissidents published fewer *samizdat* titles, they produced a greater amount of *samizdat* than Orthodox religious dissidents. Baptist dissidents' organizational structure and their use of *samizdat* in achieving their goals proved very efficient. Used in combination with a traditional Protestants unity and disciplined approach, Baptist religious *samizdat* turned into a powerful weapon in the Reform Evangelical Christian Baptist Church's struggle for religious freedom.

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