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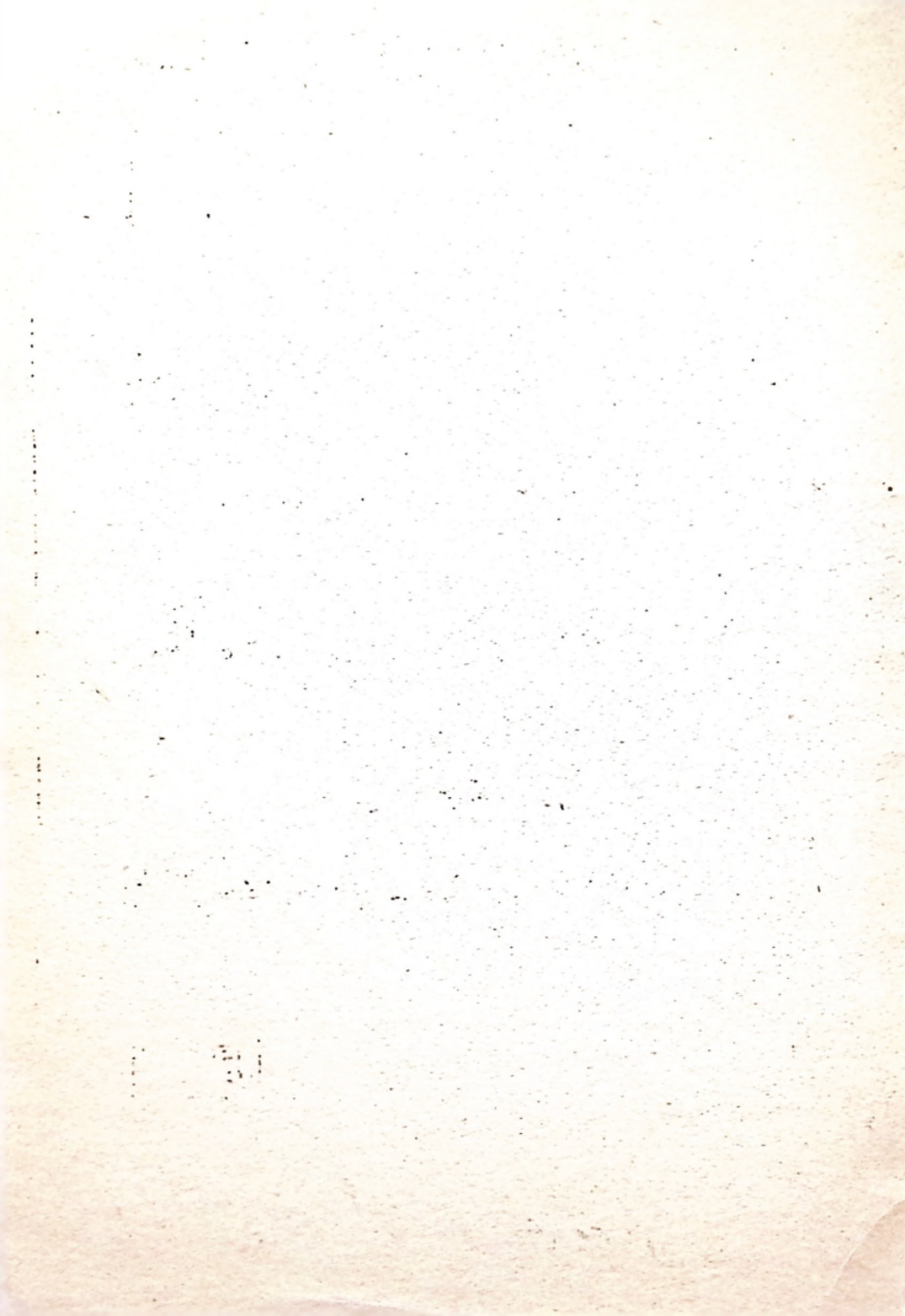
RELIGION
TODAY
IN THE U.S.S.R.

by

Rev. William Howard Melish

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National Council of American-Soviet Friendship



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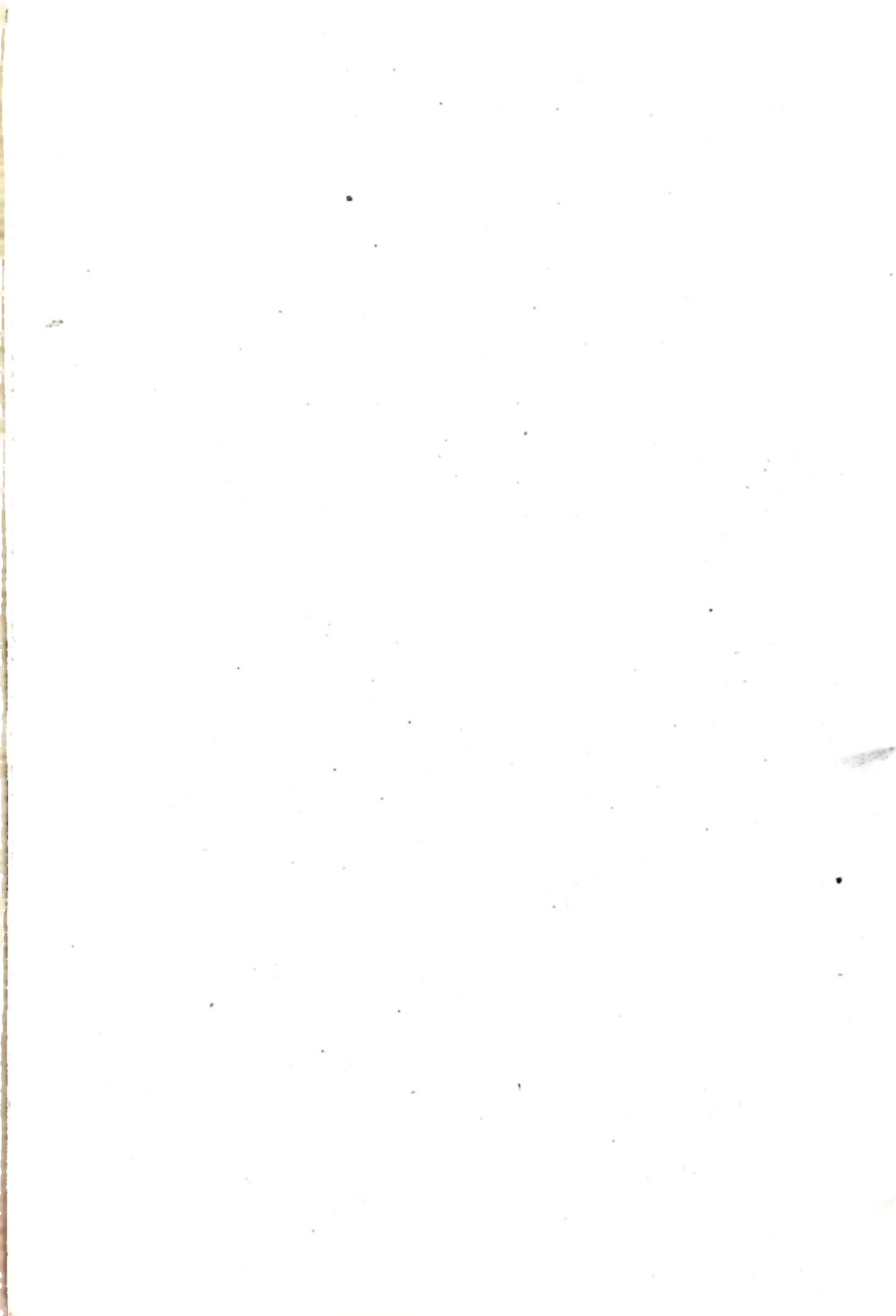
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Rev. William Howard Melish

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The patriarchs and patriarchal representatives of Eastern Orthodox Churches at a service in Moscow's Epiphany Cathedral during the February 1945 Sobor. (see page 29)

Foreword

RELIGIOUS men and women who stand in the Hebrew and Christian tradition are committed by their faith in a rational, just and gracious Creator to believe that life in this world is purposeful, that men can learn to live together as brothers, that war between nations must be banished from the earth and the social and economic life of humanity so ordered that the material needs of men can be met and their spiritual capacities fully released. "I have come," declared Jesus, the Jew who was the Founder of Christianity, "that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly."

Religious people desire an enduring peace and a better world. They have been painfully learning, however, that it takes something more tangible than mere wanting to achieve these objectives. Peace and social advancement must be wrought out of the rude fabric of things as they are. For better or for worse, men must assume their part in the ongoing struggle for human freedom at the point where they now stand and within the context of their times.

The defeat of Germany and Japan by the Allied coalition removed the grave menace of the Axis' military aggression but, in itself, does not make for an enduring peace. Those nations which have locked hands in mutual self-defense must continue to bind their destinies together in good faith and common aspiration. That is the basic condition for an enduring peace. Clearly, this is the premise on which the United Nations have gathered at San Francisco and have drawn up the Charter for a permanent international organization.

The old League of Nations, from which so many religious people expected so much, failed in its mission because the two most important nations of the coming world were on the outside, and because the European powers that formed the backbone of the old League's structure allowed their fear of an emerging socialist state in Russia to drive them into a fatal policy of appeasement towards their real enemy—the Axis aggressors. The lesson of these tragic years should by now be plain to all thinking men and women in our churches and synagogues. The new international organization will include both the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics, and the constant spirit that guides its deliberations must be that of a united approach to world problems, based upon the firm conviction that the older capitalistic states of the west can, and must, sit down and work together with the new socialized state in a common endeavor.

This is the political framework and the fundamental problem of our times. It is important that religious men and women should grasp it and lend their efforts to solve it constructively. For the truth is that the religious issue has been a major separating influence constantly at work between the United States and the Soviet Union. The opinions of church people have had much to do with the coolness between us, and today to a considerable degree will determine the character of our nation's foreign policy towards the Soviet Union and the extent of our country's participation in the future United Nations' organization. German propaganda portrayed the Soviets as the spearhead of a "godless communism", exploiting in the Nazi interest certain aspects of Russian life. Today Goebbels is dead but his words have taken deep root and the myth he planted now stalks on. Unless this fiction can be weeded out and the vast accumulation of misinformation cleared away, we shall harvest a crop of prejudices unrelated to the facts and able to undermine essential ties between our peoples. If unchecked, they could help to send us spinning down the ugly spiral to World War III.

I

The Church in the Great Crisis

When Adolf Hitler attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the German Propaganda Ministry made use of the air-waves and a flood of printed literature to appeal to religious groups in Russia to welcome and support the Nazi invaders as liberators. Lush promises of political freedom and financial assistance were loudly proclaimed. When a few isolated churchmen here and there in the Ukraine succumbed to these blandishments, their collaboration was retailed at large along with descriptions of the better days that Nazism had brought to religious institutions in the satellite countries through which the Wehrmacht had rolled. It was the confident expectation of the German High Command that religious dissidence on a large scale would help produce a rapid Soviet defeat. To their dismay, exactly the opposite happened.

The Soviet Union's religious leaders instantaneously and unanimously supported their government with the strongest possible messages of sympathy and promises of aid. Telegrams poured into the Kremlin from Orthodox, Evangelical, Jewish and Mohammedan authorities alike. Within the first few days following the attack, a nationwide hook-up on the radio carried the voices of these leaders, summoning their respective constituencies to repel the invader. Goebbels had failed. He had operated on the false assumption, shared by a host of Americans, that religious leadership in the Soviet Union was chafing under the heel of an oppressive government and was ripe for revolt. When the great crisis came, there was no religious dissidence in Russia.

This summons by religious leaders evoked a whole-hearted response from their people. Although it was assumed in Hitlerite Germany, and by many in the United States, that a deep cleavage existed between religious people and the Soviet government, no such chasm was there. Quite to the contrary, congregations vied with secular

organizations in contributing to the Defense Fund and all wartime appeals. They petitioned the government to let them purchase equipment for units to be named after historic personages, and at least two such "all-church" tank columns were authorized, the Dmitri Donskoi tank column purchased by Russian church contributions and the David Sasun tank column purchased by Armenian church gifts. Airplanes named after Dmitri Donskoi, Alexander Nevski and other canonized heroes were contributed by individual clergy. A typical letter accompanying such gifts is the following:

*"Joseph Stalin
The Kremlin, Moscow.*

"It is not without God's will that in this stern year of cruel, bloody trials which have befallen our country you stand at the head of peoples of the U.S.S.R., at the head of our valiant army.

"Praying that God may help you and your soldiers, defending our beloved country from the invasion of the fascists; merging with the general patriotic upsurge of the people, the Russian Orthodox Christians of the city of Kuibyshev are desirous of materially helping the nationwide cause of defending our country.

"In the last few days the Kuibyshev Cathedral Church, the priests of the Cathedral, the Parish Council and the faithful in response to the initiative of the venerable patriot, the Patriarchal Incumbent, Metropolitan Sergei, have contributed 594,000 rubles to the Dmitri Donskoi tank column (374,000 rubles being contributed by the Cathedral, the Parish Council and the faithful; 220,000 rubles by the clergy). Many articles of value have also been contributed to this fund: gold watches, a gold ring, a ten-ruble gold piece. The collection of contributions is continuing.

"In addition to this, during the past year the Kuibyshev Cathedral Church and the faithful contributed all told 1,558,742 rubles to various causes (Defense Fund—1,294,287 rubles; fund for evacuated children—133,000 rubles; gifts for Red Army soldiers—80,000 rubles; gifts for soldiers wounded in the defense of Stalingrad—31,455 rubles; tank column—20,000 rubles; and a ten-ruble gold coin to the Defense Fund).

"We believe in the strength and might of our people, we have every faith in the staunch courage and soldierly skill of our leaders and fighters, we have faith in the coming victory over the bloody enemy.

"We wish you, Joseph Vissarionovich, the chief commander and leader of our victorious armies, good health and success in your difficult tasks.

"ALEXEI, Archbishop of Kuibyshev."

Many such letters appeared in the press along with grateful acknowledgements from the government. The total of such contributions is not known but clearly it ran into many millions of rubles. Religious people of all faiths were in full support of what rightly was called "the great patriotic war".

Spiritual and Material Aid

Churchmen prayed for the whole nation without distinction in all services and sought through the Liturgy and personal utterance to strengthen the will to resist and to make sacrifices. The defense of the Soviet Union was no simple matter. The Nazis had developed the most powerful army the world had as yet seen and the first drive on Moscow rolled on relentlessly. The stand which saved the Soviet capitol was epic, as were the three-year long siege of Leningrad, the decisive battle for Stalingrad, and the massive counter-offensives which ultimately broke the Wehrmacht and drove the invader from Soviet soil. Victory cost the people dearly, and it cost the churches. Before the war a religious census of the entire country indicated that half the total population claimed some religious loyalty; one-third of the urban population so registered and two-thirds of the rural.

Metropolitan Nikolai addressing Red Army officers and men at the presentation of the Dmitri Donskoi tank unit purchased by church contributions.



The Red Army before the war was drawn in large measure from urban and industrial workers but when the nationwide draft went into high gear the Red Army drew more and more heavily upon the agricultural manpower of the provinces. This vastly increased the number of believers in the ranks and was the reason for the issuance of an edict signed by President Kalinin to the effect that there must be no ridiculing of religious acts or of the wearing of religious medallions by Red Army men.

Not only did religious congregations as the war progressed come to have a considerable personal stake in the Red Army but as the toll of life increased to staggering proportions, hardly a family throughout the nation but had some immediate loss of kin. The churches knew they had work cut out for them and they swiftly and unselfishly bent every effort to bring out the inner meaning of the doctrines of the Faith on the significance of struggle and the value of sacrifice to steel the people to meet the national tragedy.

Moreover, women had to assume a disproportionate share of home front labor, much of which also fell on the aged who in better times would have enjoyed their well-earned rest, and there was personal strengthening which the churches could provide. The steadily increasing number of ruptured homes and the presence of a multitude of war orphans brought a sharp challenge to the faithful. In his Easter pastoral message the Archbishop of Saratov wrote:

"How much the magnificent Easter hymn teaches us! It teaches us to love those who are suffering, especially children who have been bereaved of maternal love and paternal care . . . Many patriots have conceived the kindly idea of providing these orphans with the motherly love and caresses of which they have been deprived by the loss of their mothers and fathers in the war . . . Mother, woman and patriot! Can you remain calm, knowing that upon you depends the life and happiness of an orphan child? Go today to a children's home and heal the wounds of some poor, suffering child; comfort it with maternal caresses and take the place of its parents who have died at the hands of the fascist fiends! Restore this child to hearth and home!"

The number of war orphans rapidly assumed grave proportions. They were placed temporarily in state institutions but Soviet notions of child care encouraged wherever possible their eventual absorption into families in homes. Already a quarter of a million have been adopted, many of them into the homes of believers on the direct ap-

peal of their churches. Thus, in a hundred and more ways, religious institutions have sought to inspire and strengthen the populace, asking for themselves no rewards and setting no conditions for their service. *The heart of believers and the heart of the nation beat as one!*

The Church Identifies Itself with the People

That the Orthodox Church had deliberately identified itself with the Soviet people was the blunt statement contained in a lengthy volume published in 1942 by the Moscow Patriarchate, entitled *The Truth About Religion In Russia*. This enormously important book (now available in English in a British edition), in spite of its quiet tone, careful documentation and copious use of photostats and illustrations, received a singularly bad press when it first appeared. That it was printed in several colors on good paper stock, handsomely bound and decorated with artistic chapter headings in Old Church Slavonic type, suggested to hostile and suspicious critics that it might be just another piece of elaborate political propaganda.

However, those who took this book in hand and studied its contents recognized at once that its account of the current status of the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union was undoubtedly accurate. It detailed the ways in which the churches were supporting the war effort, it meticulously exploded the myth of Nazi friendship for religion by a gallery of photographs showing what they had done to churches and to innocent people in the areas they had inundated, it declared the identity of the interests of the Orthodox Church with the survival of the nation and the perpetuation of the new Soviet way of life, and it expressed the satisfaction of the church authorities with the constitutional guarantees of freedom of conscience and freedom of worship which they were enjoying.

The picture of religion in the Soviet Union which this volume gave has been fully authenticated by the passage of time. It is now clear that those in the United States who doubted its integrity were raking over dead embers and refusing to consider that Russian churchmen might have minds of their own and had come to see things in a different light and from another vantage point than that which Americans shared.

II

Feeding the Fires of Prejudice

Looking backwards with the historian's hindsight, we can now clearly see how American religious opinion was influenced to discredit documents which should have been accepted as authentic and reliable. The German Propaganda Ministry was working hard to keep alive the fiction of "godless communism" in the hope that it would restrain our aid to the Soviets and rupture the unity of the Anglo-American-Soviet coalition. In this program it was unconsciously aided and abetted by those anti-Soviet forces in the United States which feared the Russians for ideological or ecclesiastical reasons. Whatever the motive, the method was the same. Developments within the Soviet Union were deliberately ignored and earlier events from the Civil War period and the Godless Movement of the 1930's were retailed as contemporary happenings. This is a simple propaganda technique that, unfortunately, is still in existence, as one can judge by scrutinizing with care certain political and religious publications now being circulated. But apart from these falsifications, there were also certain events influencing public opinion against the Soviet Union, to which time has given a somewhat different complexion.

War-time Propaganda

As part of the defensive preparation for the war which the authorities saw coming, the Soviet Union incorporated the Baltic States as constituent Soviet Republics and the Red Army advanced into eastern Poland to a point approximating the Curzon Line. By these two moves large bodies of Lutherans and Roman Catholics were brought under Soviet jurisdiction. We now know that the reason for this incorporation of territory was defensive and was required by the steady infiltration into these areas of German agents and the widespread circulation of propaganda of the most viciously anti-Soviet and pro-Nazi character. While the majority of the people in these areas understood what it meant when the Red Army moved in,

thousands of residents including many church people fled out, frightened to death as to what the occupation portended. They did not know that they were themselves the victims of Nazi propaganda that had brutalized the Red Army in caricature. Furthermore, in the months previous there had been a tendency inspired by this propaganda, for the people of wealth to draw closer to the Germans, and for propertied men and some of the clergy to collaborate with the Nazis.

When the Baltic States declared for the U.S.S.R. and eastern Poland was occupied by Soviet troops, a horde of refugees fled into German Poland, East Prussia and the Berlin district, carrying along with them the most lurid tales of the "Red Terror" from which they thought they had fled. Soviet occupation of these areas was the first round of the as-yet undeclared war which was later to come. Persons sympathetic towards the Nazis did receive harsh treatment but the evidence indicates that the Soviets were careful not to molest the churches; they did not secularize the country, and permitted church holding of property which was not tolerated in the socialist economy of the Soviet Union. In other words, the refugees were fleeing on the basis of fears stimulated by propaganda or because in the political jockeying they were personally implicated in a way that laid them open to suspicion as traffickers with the Nazis and liable to arrest. Religion had little or nothing to do with a situation that was first and foremost political in a state of undeclared war. But Lutherans in Scandinavia and the United States, and Roman Catholics generally, assumed that they had first-hand evidence of the anti-religious policy of the Soviets. Nor did the Germans mind repeating the charges.

The Myth of Religious Persecution

Similarly, the German attack upon the Soviet Union created a situation for the Kremlin which had widespread religious repercussions abroad, especially in Lutheran and Baptist circles in the United States. It so happened that before the war nearly a million Soviet citizens of German extraction, speaking the German language, affiliated with Lutheran or Evangelical churches and susceptible to the shrewd and subtle racial appeals of the Nazi propaganda, lived along the vast Volga waterway. The German High Command expected to

utilize these assumedly friendly and helpful communities when the proper time came. Here was a pretty problem for the Soviet authorities to handle, in some ways not dissimilar to that which faced our Army authorities on our own West Coast immediately after Pearl Harbor when a Japanese invasion of limited character was feared. The Kremlin acted equally decisively. It interned the Volga Germans and re-settled them in camps somewhere east of the Urals. As these people were Lutheran or Evangelical and had many ties with their co-religionists in northern Europe, a wave of accusations shot through the religious world at their incarceration. The myth of religious persecution was once again that much the more strengthened.

Curiously and tragically, one of the finest acts of Soviet humanitarianism led to the same result. The Soviets knew what Nazism meant for the Jewish people. Although no government could possibly have foreseen the Maidanek, Tremblyanka and Oswiecim death camps, the human soap factories and experimental biological laboratories, the Kremlin was concerned immediately over what the invasion of the Ukraine and Byelo-Russia would necessarily mean for the Jews, great numbers of whom lived in these two Republics. The authorities decided to evacuate as many of the women and children as possible *before* the movement of other residents. To lessen the feeling of discrimination among those who were compelled to wait their turn at the risk of their lives, a brief but intensive educational program was developed, fully explaining the racial theories and practices of the Nazis. Then the vast movement of Jewish and other refugees began until they were safely re-settled in temporary camps in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

That this could be done in the Ukraine and Byelo-Russia—scenes of anti-Jewish pogroms engineered in Tsarist days—is a magnificent tribute to the firm policies of the Soviet Union designed to eradicate religious and racial antagonism. Yet in the United States ugly questions circulated in Jewish areas as to what had become of the Jews in Russia, and to this day certain anti-Soviet propagandists will renew the charge that in the Ukraine and Byelo-Russia the Soviet government indulged in deliberate anti-Semitism! In such ways the truth has been maliciously distorted and then the distortions retailed as the truth by ignorant people, because such slanders conformed to what their prejudices had prepared them to expect.

III

The Orthodox Church

American religious opinion was consequently more than bewildered when the news was released that Marshal Stalin had invited a committee of three Orthodox bishops to the Kremlin to sit down with him and with Foreign Commissar Molotov to discuss the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the government. Out of this conference, which one of the attending bishops said was extraordinarily friendly and revealed an unexpected knowledge of church affairs on Stalin's part, came the official announcement that approval was being given to the Orthodox Church to hold a Congress of Bishops for the establishment of a Holy Synod, the election of a Patriarch, and the acceptance by the church of a plan to open a state bureau on church affairs. In addition, it was stated that permission was being given for the opening of theological institutes and pastors' schools, and for the publication of a monthly magazine, *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*.

The Congress of Bishops met in Moscow in September, 1943, and elected the Patriarchal Incumbent, Metropolitan Sergei, as the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. He was immediately enthroned in the Moscow Cathedral amid crowds of pleased and excited Muscovites and the chanted "He is worthy!" of the Orthodox ritual. Among his first official acts was to receive a delegation from the Church of England, headed by the Archbishop of York, Dr. Cyril Forster Garbett, who returned to England to declare that "the Russian Church is enjoying a freedom such as it has not possessed for centuries." Dr. Garbett shortly thereafter visited the United States and lectured on his impressions of the Russian Church before many audiences and spoke over a nationwide radio hook-up. In spite of such assurances from eye-witnesses of indubitable veracity and personal disinterestedness, the election of the Patriarch and the opening of the state bureau



The Archbishop of York, official representative of the Church of England, is received by the newly-enthroned Patriarch Sergy.

in particular resulted in journalistic comments once again of the most skeptical sort, ranging from insinuations that these moves were to placate public opinion and strengthen the Anglo-American-Soviet coalition to the crudest charges of "Byzantinism"—by which was meant that the Soviet Government had deliberately taken the Orthodox Church into camp and that henceforth the church would be employed as an instrument of power politics. Even responsible journalists failed to sense the implications behind the restoration of the ancient Patriarchate, and few correctly appraised the reasons why some clarification of church-state relations had become desirable—in deed, indispensable—to both parties.

The Revival of the Patriarchate

The leaders in the Kremlin are not religious men. They are Marxists and accept the principles of historical materialism, but as Marxists they are respectful students of history. In recent years they have been paying increasing attention to the roots of Russian culture. The results of their studies have been evidenced in the more recent dramas, the keen interest in all phases of national art and music, and

text-books introduced into the public schools, the revival of important the production of historical moving pictures on great patriotic themes. In the course of this research the Russian Church has been studied as a creative source and vehicle of developing Russian culture. Consideration has been given to its art, architecture, music and cultural influence.

In the earlier period of its life, in theory if not always in practice, the Orthodox Church was an independent institution with a purely religious function existing within and alongside of the state whose secular authority was vested in the Prince and later the Tsar. This co-existence of a church headed by a Patriarch and a government headed by a Tsar made for a certain healthy and creative tension between the two in what is sometimes called a "symphonic relationship". This was destroyed when in 1721 Tsar Peter the Great abolished the independent Patriarchate and created in its place a Holy Synod whose members were appointed by himself and subject to removal by the Crown. Modeling the church organization on the pattern of the State Lutheran Churches in Sweden and Prussia, Peter the Great made the Orthodox Church virtually a department of the civil service.

As a result, the church was secularized, its bishops and higher clergy were salaried on the civil lists, its monasteries and seminaries received state grants, church business was handled by a State Department of Religious Affairs, and the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod held the rank of a cabinet minister in the Tsar's government. It was this absorption of the ancient independent patriarchal church into the Tsarist state that paved the way for the tragedy which we have witnessed within our lifetime. When the Tsar's government went down, the Church went down with it.

What the Soviet government and the Orthodox authorities were doing in September, 1943, was to turn the clock back to the period prior to 1721 and to revive in a modernized fashion that "symphonic relationship" of the historic patriarchate and the civil government on the basis of an absolute separation of church and state.

Why, then, we may well ask, did they revive a Bureau of Church Affairs? A brief examination of the situation in the Soviet Union will show at once that the new government office bears no relationship whatsoever to that of Peter's day.

IV

Religion Under Socialism

The Soviet Union is a socialist state. Existence in a socialist economy presents a problem of maintenance that is utterly new in the experience of Christian church, Jewish synagogue and Moslem mosque alike. History provides no previous pattern for it. That is undoubtedly one reason why religious leadership generally feared the socialist revolution in Russia, and certainly a major reason why the Russian hierarchy almost to a man fought the Communists under the White Banner in the vicious Civil War that followed. It looked to most churchmen as if the expropriation of church property would destroy the financial base of the churches' existence. History has now proven that this conviction was wrong. It has not done so. Religious institutions are surviving and expanding today under socialism but it has taken a tragic decade and much painful experimentation to work out the new methods of church, synagogue and mosque support.

In the Soviet economy all capital investments, buildings, land, subsurface rights, etc., are owned by the state or by various collective enterprises in trust for the people. It is no longer possible in the Soviet Union for an individual or for a private institution such as a church or a synagogue to live off unearned income from property or investments or accumulated endowments. The individual must earn his own livelihood. The private institution such as the church, the synagogue, or mosque must live off of current voluntary offerings, contributions, fees for services, and income from the sale of candles or religious articles; and a congregation's prosperity will be in direct proportion to the size and the prosperity of its membership and the generosity of their support. It owns no property in its own name but by registering its existence in conformity with the religious laws is given the right to lease premises from the government. These are now tax exempt but the parish council must contract to maintain them in good condition.

Maintaining Churches under Socialism

Furthermore, in the Soviet economy all production and distribution are under the control of the state and are determined in accordance with an over-all plan. Material for church maintenance and repair, equipment, material for vestments, ikons and art objects, printing presses and paper stocks, electricity, water—all such things involve the state in some fashion, and, in view of the many thousands of churches, some provision for religious needs must be included in the current state budget or they cannot be met. Prior to 1943 there had existed no machinery for the handling of such details. Procedures had varied in different cities and provinces with a consequent confusion that was as troublesome to the churches as it was to government officials. Some more efficient and uniform procedure was long overdue. Marshal Stalin's invitation to church leaders had the obvious purpose of clearing up this unsatisfactory chaos. Both sides were eager to introduce some elementary business efficiency into an area in which things had been developing without direction. The result of this consultation in the Kremlin, after the approval of the Congress of Bishops had been obtained, was the establishment in the Council of People's Commissars of a new *Bureau on Affairs of the Greek Orthodox Church* headed by Mr. Georgi Gregorievich Karpov. The central office is in Moscow but there are a number of branch

Mohammedans observing the feast of Ramadan in a mosque at Bukhara in the Uzbek Republic.



offices in other parts of the country and thirty field representatives, a number to be increased up to one hundred as the need of the Orthodox churches appears to require.

From this it will be seen that the new Bureau, instead of encompassing the church as was the case in Peter's day, is simply a clearing-house for matters peculiar to the Soviet economy. The Bureau in all its operations is based on a clear-cut assumption of the complete separation of church and state implied in the Soviet Constitution.

That the government was not especially favoring or promoting the Orthodox Church became apparent in the ensuing few months. Similar negotiations were carried on with other religious bodies. In each case the procedure was roughly the same: a meeting with responsible authorities, the establishment of a recognized institutional structure, the election of a head, and the affiliation of the legal body with a *Bureau on Affairs of Religious Cults* under the direction of Mr. Ivan Vassilievich Poliansky, also with its branch offices and field representatives. Thus the Moslems met in Baku, set up the Central Board of the Transcaucasus and named as their president Sheik Ahund Aga Alizade of Baku. One after another the various religious groups of the Soviet Union went through this organizational process.

Today Mr. Poliansky's bureau handles affairs for the following bodies: the Armenian-Gregorian Church, the Old Believers (a schismatic sect of Orthodoxy), Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Jews, Moslems, Buddhists, Shamanists and others. It is the law of the land that religious groups shall be given equal treatment. The Orthodox Church has its own bureau simply because the number of its adherents is considerably greater than the total of all adherents of the other religious groups. The opening of these two bureaus has caused great satisfaction among these bodies; it puts an end to what must have been endless haggling between local congregations and local officials over the simplest matters.

Religious Education and Propaganda

The existence of bureaus which can publish official policy has led to a number of interviews in which newsmen have put important questions to Mr. Karpov and Mr. Poliansky. Among these questions

of supreme interest to the outside world is the matter of the religious education of children and the circulation of educational and propagandistic materials of a religious character. A representative of *Religious News Service* received this answer from Mr. Karpov:

"The only rule the Soviet government insists upon is that religious instruction must not violate the basic principle of separation of church and state. Under our laws each person may or may not teach his children religion. However, religion may not be taught in the schools. Parents may educate children in the privacy of their homes or may send their children to the homes of priests for such education. Children of any number of parents may also gather or be gathered in groups to receive religious instruction."

He said that no ban exists against the printing and distribution of religious literature and the Orthodox Church may print whatever it wishes.

"We have given explicit permission for the church to order any quantity of Testaments, prayer books and liturgical books and are ready to facilitate this step in every way, even to the extent of making representations to the paper rationing authorities. As to distribution of such materials, there is no objection and no restrictions."

Pastor Mikhail Akimovich Orlov in the pulpit of the Baptist Church in Moscow.
(Margaret Bourke-White photo)



In a later interview he stated that Orthodox priests are free to carry on proselytizing work both in churches and outside:

"Priests may go to their parishioners and may engage in proselytizing work without any restriction except those placed upon every orderly citizen of the U.S.S.R. They may go about church business wherever they wish. They may officiate in private homes if they so desire, may perform baptismal, marriage and funeral services in or outside churches."

Mr. Karpov was speaking for the Orthodox Church which his bureau serves but when the same questions were also put to Mr. Poliansky substantially the same answers were given, with insistence upon the equality of treatment of all groups, Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. It is especially interesting, in view of the common opinion in the United States as to religious restrictions in the Soviet Union, to find Margaret Bourke-White in her book, *Shooting The Russian War*, stating that she personally witnessed street-corner preaching by Evangelicals during her tour of Russia. A Russian version of the Bible is now available for distribution. Ikons, which recent travelers state are increasingly in evidence in private homes and even in some public offices, have been manufactured in State Art Workshops since 1939, and it is reported that the Orthodox Church now operates a small cooperative factory for the manufacture of the candles used in its worship. Also, last year the first group of Mohammedans was enabled to make the pilgrimage from their Soviet homes to Mecca to visit the Ka'aba. These facts indicate that religious bodies do possess freedom of education, movement and utterance, and are able to obtain the basic materials for the conduct of their worship, religious art objects for the adornment of their people's homes, and essential literature for missionary endeavor.

Training of the Clergy

As to the education of the clergy, there is the recent report of Metropolitan Benjamin, the Patriarchal Exarch to the United States, who visited Moscow in January, 1945, that he gave three lectures in the new Theological Institute recently opened in Moscow's Novodevichi Convent. He found the old cells converted into student's cubicles and the larger apartments made into a refectory, class rooms

and a library. Twenty students were in residence, ranging from twenty to fifty years of age, the majority being younger men between twenty and twenty-five. These students spend three years in theological study and may then, if they so desire, be ordained to the priesthood. The law provides that young men drafted into the Red Army who wish to study for Holy Orders may apply for a release, and a number of the younger men in residence had done so. These candidates for the priesthood came from various parts of the Soviet Union and were supported by scholarships provided by the Moscow Patriarchate. There was a current waiting list of 108 candidates.

The government had offered the Patriarchate a second building, a historic monastery in Moscow's outer environs, but the need for extensive remodeling and the current shortage of available teachers had caused the Patriarchate to postpone such expansion until after the war, in spite of the grave need for additional clergy. The Theological Institute in the Novodevichi Convent is intended for candidates with advanced educational background and many of its graduates will undoubtedly be used as future teachers, theologians and church administrators. The latest issue of *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* states that by January, 1946, the Institute will be equipped and staffed to accommodate two hundred students in residence.

For the training of rank and file clergy, there is in process of establishment a series of Pastor's Schools. The first is in operation with thirty students and the plan calls for the opening of many such schools in different parts of the Soviet Union. The Patriarchate is compelled to move slowly because of the shortage of teachers and the limited library facilities. Promises of assistance in obtaining books have come to the Patriarchate from various Anglican groups in England and America. Since these will be in English, it is interesting to note that the Theological Institute is including an English Language Course in its curriculum.

No similar descriptions are as yet available of schools established by other religious groups for the training of their leadership. It is definitely known, however, that the Armenian-Gregorian Church has opened a seminary at Erivan in Armenia, and that the Mohammedans have opened a school in Uzbekistan for the training of mullahs. It is reported that the Baptist and Evangelical Unions have an educational center, as well as the Union of Orthodox Rabbis.

New Churches Opening

The end of the war has seen the opening of many new churches and the government has included all war-damaged religious buildings in the category of state properties being itemized by the State Commission on War Damage, one member of which is Metropolitan Nikolai of Kiev. The Archbishop of York during his visit in Moscow discussed some possible aid from British churches for the devastated area and the government stated that it fully approved of any such gifts. Dr. Irving Langmuir who has just returned from a trip to the 220th anniversary celebration of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow as the guest of the Soviet Government, relates that his plane was unexpectedly grounded by bad weather in a small community with a church that was closed. He asked the authorities if it was in use. They replied, "No, not yet. Our village discussed the matter and felt that it was not at present able properly to maintain the church. When a vote was taken, it was decided to do nothing until after war conditions had eased."

Metropolitan Benjamin reported that the Soviet government was encouraging the opening of churches where the local inhabitants wanted them and was demonstrating great generosity in the matter of providing materials for repairs and easing the contract terms of maintenance where the congregations were financially hard-pressed. While, in line with the policy of the separation of church and state, there is no financial aid or support ever given, many small things are done to help. "The government", he said, "has gone much more than half-way to meet the people's requests."

V

The Great Moscow Sobor

On May 15, 1944 the Orthodox Church was saddened by the death of the aged Patriarch Sergei after less than a year in office. There was good reason to pay him high tribute—he was buried under the floor of the Moscow Cathedral—because it was in large measure his patience and clear insight into the nature of the problem of the church's survival that brought it safely through the years of distinct hardship. He it was who analyzed the task as three-fold: first, the church had to learn to live in the new socialist society; second, the bishops and clergy had to live down their old association with the counter-revolution and demonstrate their loyalty to the nation; and third, the church had to identify its interests with those of the common people and win back the allegiance of industrial and farm workers who had been alienated from it when it opposed the revolution that so many of them supported.



The present Patriarch of
Moscow and All Russia, His
Holiness Alexei.

The assimilation of the church into the new society took some painful experimentation and laid Sergei open to charges from abroad that he was a time-server and trimmer. He and his brother bishops paid no attention to such criticism; they saw the task that had to be accomplished and they patiently and resolutely carried it out on all three counts. There was an element of divine justice in his living long enough to be elected Patriarch for, though his term of office was brief, he had rendered sufficient service to his church to deserve its highest honors.

His death made vacant the Patriarchate and required a new election. In Russia things were now much better. The Red Army was on its great offensive and the territory of the Soviet Union was almost entirely liberated. Rehabilitation had been begun, and transport facilities were somewhat eased for civilian use. The executive Council of Bishops felt the time had come to hold a more representative gathering of the church than that which had elected Sergei, this time with clerical and lay delegates participating. The bishops also felt that the time was ripe for the Orthodox Church, which had always been in communion with the rest of the Orthodox world, to begin restoring its external relationships. On the initiative of the bishops, the government was requested to provide travel facilities not only for official delegates to the projected "Sobor" but also for Russian Orthodox groups marooned abroad by the war and for a number of guests from the great eastern patriarchal churches.

The government replied that it was ready to grant these travel facilities and invitations were sent by the Patriarchate to its bishops abroad and to the heads of the autocephalous churches of the East. The initiative, it must be stressed, rested with the Patriarchate. The government had promised this kind of complete freedom of action and in standing by its word would be obviously strengthening the Orthodox Church. There was a compensation in this for the government, as such a gathering would undoubtedly strengthen the cultural bonds between the Russian people and their Orthodox neighbors at a time when the Red Army was expelling the Germans from their territory and was faced with the restoration of order and the emergence of stable governments that should be friendly to the Soviet Union.

An Historic Gathering

It was an historic gathering that met on January 31 and February 2, 1945 in Moscow in the five-domed Church of the Resurrection at Sokolniki. People had stood since six in the morning to get in as spectators, though the opening session was scheduled for two in the afternoon. Four Metropolitans and forty-one Archbishops and Bishops filed in and sat in the first three rows in the Cathedral; behind them one hundred and twenty six clerical and lay delegates from all the eparchies of the Russian Church in the Soviet Union, and with Metropolitan Benjamin from the United States and Canada. In front was the famous chorus of the Patriarchate with its regent, Dr. Komarov.

On a raised platform stood a large table with thirty seats for the distinguished guests from abroad: the Patriarch of Alexandria, the Patriarch of Antioch and all the Orient, the Catholicos and Patriarch of Georgia, the representative of the Patriarch of Constantinople, the representative of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the representative of the Rumanian Orthodox Church, and those who attended them.

After an opening service, the address of welcome was made by the chairman of the assembly, Metropolitan Alexius of Leningrad and Novgorod; then Mr. Karpov rose and brought a greeting from the government, and the distinguished guests were given the privilege of brief addresses, with Metropolitan Benjamin bringing a message from the North American Eparchy. Mr. Karpov then withdrew and the business of the first session was devoted to the discussion and formal adoption of a set of Administrative Statutes for the Russian Church.

The second and final session was held on February 2 when the accredited delegates nominated and unanimously elected as the new Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Metropolitan Alexius of Leningrad and Novgorod, a hero of the siege of Leningrad and holder of the Leningrad Defense Medal. Two days later in the Cathedral of the Epiphany his enthronement took place, followed by a solemn Liturgy and a service of thanksgiving. Later in the day a formal banquet concluded the festivities. The Moscow newspapers carried a full account of the entire proceedings.

A Confederation of Eastern Orthodox Churches?

In addition to the main business of the formal adoption of the new Administrative Statutes and the Patriarchal Election, the Sobor considered two matters that have a potential bearing on the future. At the suggestion of the assembly, a brief statement calling for the stern and relentless punishment of war criminals and warning against European influences favoring a soft peace, naming the Vatican among them, was drawn up and issued over the joint signatures of the new Patriarch-elect, the three visiting Patriarchs and the four patriarchal representatives.

This statement is the first joint utterance of the heads of a vast section of Christendom that many Christians in the West had almost forgotten existed. Coming out of the Moscow Sobor, it raises the interesting speculation that the Moscow Patriarchate might become a rallying point for the rejuvenation of the eastern churches. These trace their lineage back in an unbroken line to the primitive Christian Church and, as their name implies (Orthodox—i.e., the true way), consider themselves the main line of the Christian Tradition and the Roman Catholic Church a deviation or schismatic branch. The Great Schism between Rome and Constantinople occurred in 1054 A.D. Any united action within this section of historic Christianity would have profound repercussions and considerable significance



Metropolitan Benjamin,
Patriarchal representative in
the United States, Bishop
of North America and the
Aleutians, speaking at the
Moscow Sobor.

especially in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Such developments are certain to be closely watched by Roman Catholicism and Protestantism alike.

An important address was made before the Sobor by Metropolitan Benjamin, the Patriarchal Exarch to North America, in which he proposed a plan that had been advanced by the late Patriarch Sergei for the creation of a Confederation of autonomous Orthodox Churches with a permanent executive commission composed of representatives of the several national churches meeting together for regular consultation and mutual action. The Patriarch of Alexandria informed the delegates that a meeting of church representatives had taken place at Mount Athos in 1936 for the consideration of a similar project and had viewed it with favor. Metropolitan Benjamin's address was listened to with the greatest attention. Although there was no formal discussion of the project, it was later thoroughly reviewed in a number of informal gatherings and the opinion was widely expressed that consultations between the churches were highly desirable and should be held from time to time. After the Sobor Mr. Karpov made an official request for a copy of Metropolitan Benjamin's speech that the government might know what was under consideration. This was gladly given to him.

The presence of the Serbian and Rumanian churchmen was of particular interest at this time when the Red Army was driving through the Balkans. Any strengthening of cultural and religious ties between Orthodox peoples in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Rumania would obviously facilitate the progress of the Red Army and the emergence of friendly administrations in the liberated territories. For over a year the Moscow radio had been beaming broadcasts to the Slavs in this area to recognize their kinship with the Slavs of Russia and through the underground movements to prepare the way for the Red Army. A two-day Congress of Slavs had been held in Moscow with speeches not only by uniformed representatives of the various Slavic armies but also by chaplains with the Polish and Yugoslav units that were being armed and provisioned by the Soviets. Now this association between churchmen added another strong bond between the Slavic peoples.

Slav unity introduces a useful cement and a yeast into Eastern Europe. The Soviet government has pledged its word to permit the

liberated areas to work out their own political destinies and to evolve their individual economic systems. This pledge has been kept by the Soviets. They have not sought communist governments in the liberated Balkan nations nor have they introduced a sovietized economy. They have contented themselves with the extirpation of fascism. The Soviet need for security requires friendly governments to the west. Slav unity is a cultural means to this end. At this juncture it is of as great interest to the Soviet government as it is to the Orthodox Church. There is no need to read political pressure by the state upon the church. Here is an obvious concurrence of normal historical political and ecclesiastical interests.

Orthodoxy in the United States

When it was decided to hold the Moscow Sobor, invitations were extended not only to the Patriarchal Exarch in the United States, Metropolitan Benjamin, but to the schismatic Orthodox Church headed by Archbishop Theophilus in San Francisco, whose leadership is acknowledged by the great majority of American Orthodox. Metropolitan Benjamin arrived safely in Moscow for the Sobor but the delegation composed of the Very Reverend Joseph O. Zvonchik, secretary of the Metropolitan Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in America, and Bishop Alexei of Sitka, Alaska, went by another route and was delayed, not reaching Moscow in time for the proceedings. It had been hoped that the basis of a reconciliation between the independent American Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate might be defined. Bishop Alexei and Father Zvonchik reported cordial conversations and returned to the United States with a plan of action proposed by the Patriarchate. This called for the convening of a representative council of all parishes in the United States, the election of a new hierarch, the cessation of any activities which might be construed as anti-Soviet, and the granting to the Moscow Patriarchate thereafter the right of final approval or rejection of American church appointments. This program was studied by the eight bishops of the American Church meeting at Chicago and later was rejected. An examination of their public statements in rejecting the Moscow proffer indicates that the rejection was motivated by property considerations and is the product of a continuing

hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union. A fully representative council of American Orthodox has not been called for the consideration of these terms.

It seems clear that a struggle is going on between the fears of bishops and clergy who recall the difficulties of the past and have never been too friendly to the Soviet developments and the sentiments of many Orthodox people who have been emotionally drawn closer to their Russian compatriots in the war and wish their churches to be in full communion with the Patriarchate. This opinion was expressed by a Russian university teacher in these words:

"Our bishops must understand that the people are silent . . . are silent . . . but some day they will speak out. The bishops will soon find themselves alone, and the people will go to those of the hierarchy who will show them the way, the only acceptable one: Full filial subordination to the holy Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia."

It remains to be seen whether events will now move towards such reconciliation or whether the American Church will resign itself to perpetual schism. Metropolitan Alexei of Yaroslavl has been delegated by the Moscow Patriarchate to come to the United States for further discussions and has been given his visas for travel. A similar schism has existed between the Moscow Patriarchate and four European dioceses acknowledging the leadership of Bishop Eulogius in Paris. He sent to the Moscow Sobor a request for recognition and was invited to come to Moscow at his convenience for further discussions. Little by little, the dioceses of the Russian Church which have had to fend for themselves during the harsh period following the Revolution are beginning to come home, recreating ties with the Mother Church in keeping with the spirit of conciliarity which has always marked the Orthodox tradition.

VI

Roman Catholics in the U.S.S.R.

Believers in religious freedom will be interested in what precisely the status of Roman Catholics is in the Soviet Union. The religious estimate before World War II indicated some Roman Catholics in the U.S.S.R. but well under one per cent of the total population. The joining of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia materially increased this number, and the recent decision to make the Curzon Line the border between Poland and the Soviet Union brings eight Roman Catholic dioceses under Soviet jurisdiction. The Vatican insists there are now 8,000,000 of the Catholic Faith in the U.S.S.R. and naturally all believers in religious liberty desire to see them accorded the right of free conscience and worship.

First of all, the Soviet government is conducting at the moment a careful religious survey of these territories to determine precisely what the loyalties of the population actually are. Secondly, Mr. Poliansky, the chairman of the Bureau on Affairs of Religious Cults, states categorically that Roman Catholics and Byzantine Rite Catholics—Uniates affiliated with Rome—will enjoy precisely the same rights and privileges as all other religious bodies and that no objection will be raised to normal intercourse between local church officials and the Vatican for administrative and purely religious purposes.

Because of the strong emotional loyalties of Roman Catholics and the international repercussions which discrimination would provoke, it is probable that the Soviets will be exceedingly meticulous in these local relationships. This has already been the case in Moscow where for well over a decade the Roman Catholic Church of St. Louis under the direction of Father Leopold Braun has been serving the foreign community and Soviet citizens of Roman Catholic persuasion. In a recent interview granted to an American newsman, Father Braun, although his own attitude has never been marked by sympathy for the Soviets, acknowledged that they had been cooperative in meeting

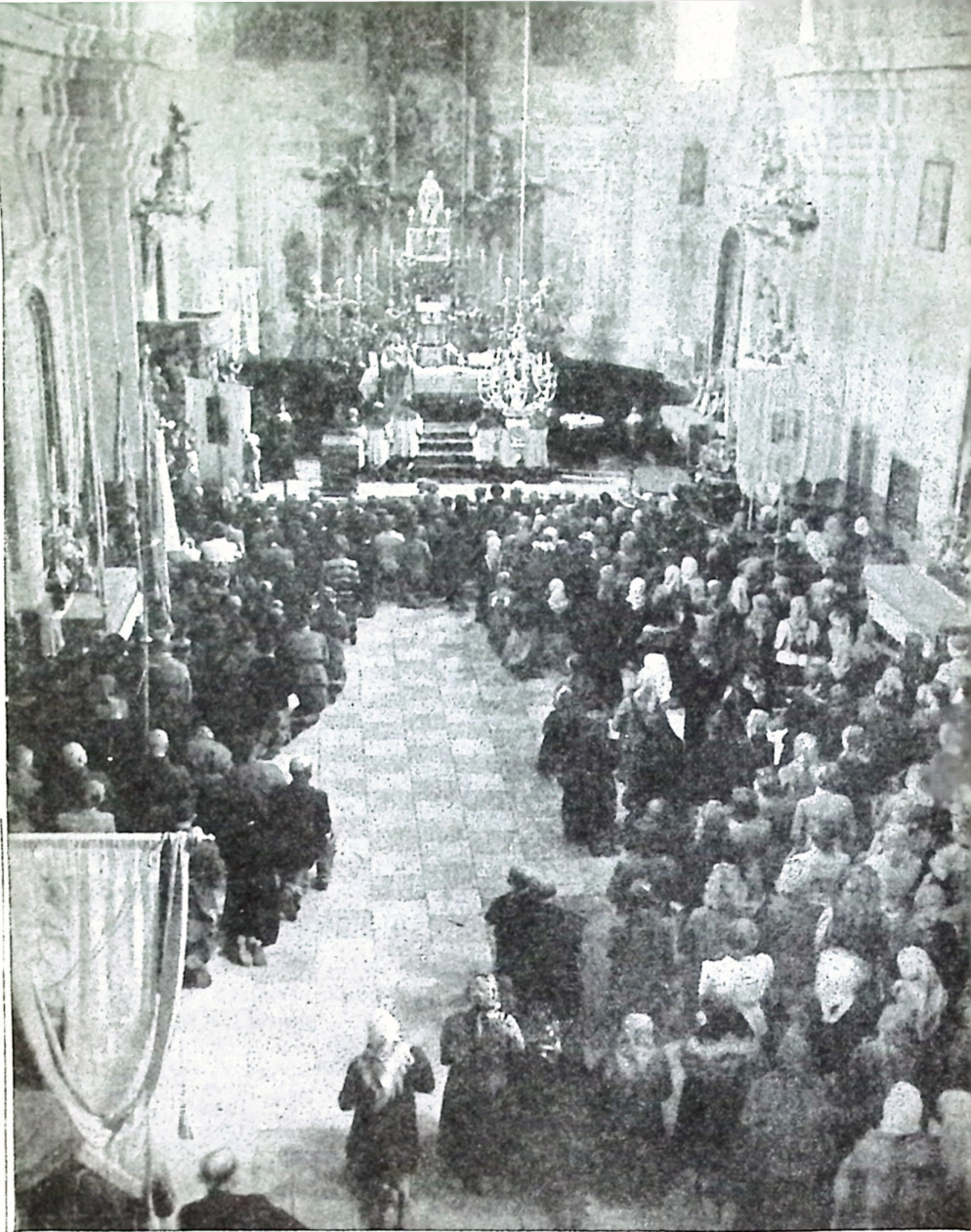
all his requests, that he had been holding services without interference of any kind, that Moscow hospital authorities had granted him access to the wards for sacramental ministrations, and that an area of consecrated ground in a Moscow cemetery had been placed at his disposal for Catholic burial.

Soviet policy is based on equal treatment for Roman Catholics. This, it must be pointed out, is not satisfactory to Roman Catholics who fret particularly against the illegality of parochial schools. The authorities are adamant on this point, standing on the letter of the Soviet Constitution which calls for the complete separation of the church and the school. This issue of parochial schools is by no means confined to the Soviet Union; it is equally a source of heated debate in many other countries and in the United States as well.

Vatican resentment is also currently directed against the exclusion of Roman Catholic missionary priests. For some years the Jesuit Order has maintained in Rome a seminary known as the Russian Pontifical College which has been preparing priests for a possible missionary apostolate in the Soviet Union, and where Russian translations of the Gospels and the Byzantine Rite have been prepared and printed. A similar but less pretentious school has been established in the United States by the Benedictine Order at St. Procopius' Abbey at Lisle, Illinois, under the direction of a White Russian monk, Reverend Chrysostom Tarasevich, O.S.B. In view of the nature of Vatican policy and feeling toward the Soviet Union, it is scarcely surprising that the Soviet government shows reluctance at this time over granting entrance visas to such missionary priests. *Roman Catholics today have the same legal status as all other religious groups insofar as they are citizens of the Soviet Union.*

The Attitude of the Vatican

Readers of papal encyclicals over the past two decades as well as readers of current Roman Catholic journals and newspapers will recognize that the Vatican has consistently shown open hostility to the Soviet Union. More than that, it has been an important source of propaganda intended to mobilize religious people to fight the spread of "communist influence" throughout the world. It is popularly assumed that this position of the Vatican is based on religious grounds.



Mass in the Roman Catholic church at Kloczew in Polish territory liberated by the Red Army.

Actually this is not the case. The Vatican's opposition to communism to a very large degree is motivated by economic and political considerations.

The Roman Catholic Church is something more than a spiritual movement. It is also a property-owning ecclesiastical institution with world-wide possessions, consisting of accumulated endowments, land holdings and acquired investments, in addition to its religious edifices, parochial schools, monastic establishments, educational and philanthropic undertakings. Furthermore, it is a political state claiming temporal sovereignty. Its geographical localization is the tiny Vatican City inside of Rome, but from this nerve-center are radiated diplomatic ties with many nations. In those countries where Roman Catholics are in the majority, they may enjoy the position of an established state-church and enter theocratically into the direction of domestic affairs and international diplomacy. It is obvious that the economic base of this considerable ecclesiastical structure is inextricably tied up with the present social order in Europe and Latin America—an order that has produced this war and is now crumbling under its terrible repercussions. There should be nothing surprising about the observable fact that the Vatican is trying to preserve the status quo in which its interests are so enmeshed, or that it should be driven by economic considerations into the same camp as the monarchists, feudal aristocrats, large land-owners and big industrialists who are seeking desperately to repress the flood of democratic revolt which has been unleashed by the United Nations' victory.

The Soviet Union in itself is not a direct threat to the Vatican but the Vatican is alarmed at the extension of three basic principles which now find expression in the U.S.S.R., namely: the socialization of property, the separation of church and state, and the separation of church and school. The democratic movements of Europe and Latin America have shared these three objectives since long before the Soviet Union was born—they did not originate with the Soviets—but the Russian Revolution and the success of the Soviet state have emboldened the democratic masses in all lands to renew their demands for them. The spread of Soviet influence today undoubtedly does tend to stimulate this impulse. In post-war Poland, for example, the Vatican bitterly attacked the Provisional Government because its quite moderate and democratic program included the separation of

church and state, the granting of legal equality to religious groups other than Roman Catholics, and the breaking-up of the feudal landed estates. It is little understood that Father Orlemanski, who talked with Stalin in Moscow, was repudiated by his church because he advocated this threefold democratic program in the face of declared Vatican policy. Similarly, in Spain, in Italy, in Austria, and in Latin America generally, the Roman Catholic hierarchy evidences a sharp antagonism to democratic manifestations, charging that they are "communist inspired." Outwardly, the hierarchy combats "secularism" but underneath this camouflage is the fear that these contemporary movements will introduce reforms which will weaken the position of the Roman Catholic Church and reduce her economic and political privileges.

On the other hand, the Vatican has always declared itself willing to enter into working agreements, or concordats, with existing governments, irrespective of their legal or economic structures, on the basis of the best possible agreements that can be reached with them. With the victory of the United Nations it is now clear to the Vatican that the Soviet Union is here to stay and that the future trend in post-war Europe and Latin America will be increasingly democratic. We in America therefore must be prepared to face a seeming paradox. The Vatican, in all probability, will continue in its antagonism towards the Soviet Union and will propagandize against the spread of Soviet influence, at the same time that it seeks working arrangements with the U.S.S.R. and the new governments in Eastern Europe that may appear. This Vatican denunciation of communism is by no means a purely moral or spiritual antagonism; it is rooted in the economic and political interests of a temporal institution.

VII

Towards a Free Society

In the Soviet Constitution Article 124 reads:

"In order to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the U.S.S.R. is separated from the state, and the school from the church. Freedom of religious worship and *freedom of anti-religious propaganda* is recognized for all citizens." (Italics mine)

We have already seen considerable evidence that the separation of church and state, the separation of church and school, and freedom of religious worship are principles which are being taken very seriously today in the Soviet Union. But what of the final clause—freedom of anti-religious propaganda? This phrase rarely appears in American life and needs clarification. We have a few "free-thinking" sheets and before the war had an Association for the Advancement of Atheism but the right of such to exist has been an inference from the general principle of freedom of conscience and freedom of speech and has never been specifically written into our laws. Here we must review very briefly a few facts of Russian history.

The men who led the Russian Revolution were men of high intelligence and moral principle. To them organized religion in Russia was a wholly negative thing. They saw an official church as a part of a reactionary and outmoded Tsarist state and concluded that both must go. Their attitude towards organized religion seemed to be fully confirmed, for as soon as they came into power, they found the hierarchy of the church flocking to the counter-revolutionary and intervention movements. Civil war broke out with excesses indulged in by both sides. For four bitter years the scales of the struggle rose and fell before the Red armies emerged the victors and the Whites capitulated or fled abroad. Some forty bishops lost their lives in the fighting or in the trials that followed their capture. Nearly a thousand of the clergy were killed. It was war. War costs lives and leaves a legacy of hardness of heart and great bitterness.

When the Patriarch Tikhon on June 16, 1923 capitulated to the

Soviet regime and sought the terms of the church's survival under the new government, the Communist leaders adopted a definite policy which explains much that has happened since. Knowing that great numbers of the people, especially in the rural areas, still felt an allegiance to the church, the government reaffirmed the church's legal existence and the right of freedom of worship in accordance with the constitutional guarantee. This aspect of the government's policy has been consistently maintained ever since and has not required any basic modification in the years that have passed.

At the same time, however, the government also reaffirmed the separation of the schools from the church. In the schools they established a program based on the sciences for the education of the coming generations. The Marxists firmly believed that the old folk had best have their customs; with time they would pass from the scene and the new citizenry would be freed of the old superstitions. But the elaborate blueprints for the new society with the plans for the collectivization of the land and the introduction of scientific methods of agriculture and health and childcare, not to mention social equality, could not wait upon Father Time; these things had to be introduced in the face of the conservatism of the peasantry with their religious taboos about the social status of women, their antiquated and ignorant concepts of health, their fear of machinery and skepticism towards scientific agricultural methods.

Freedom of Anti-Religious Propaganda

Thus, whether rightly or wrongly, the Communists felt that they had to break "the dead hand of the past" which they identified with the non-scientific or superstitious approach to life. The Communist Party voted to finance anti-religious propaganda and the Union of Militant Godless was brought into existence. It went about its business wholesale, making no discrimination between the legitimate manifestations of healthy religion and those conservative attitudes and superstitious practices that most intelligent men of faith would be quick to condemn, such as the determination of the time for spring sowing by the date of a religious festival rather than by conditions of weather and soil. The Union of Militant Godless enrolled many millions of members in the early 1930's. It is fully described and documented in Paul B. Anderson: *People, Church and State in Modern*

Russia, published by Macmillan. The crude ruffianism of this movement among the agricultural workers shocked the outside world. However, the outside world was not aware that the rural clergy tied their fortunes in with the survival of the kulaks, the last propertied class, and ended up sharing defeat with them.

All Russia was in a gigantic convulsion of collectivization; things were not happening in an orderly or rational fashion and it is impossible to apply any normal standards of judgment to the events that occurred. But this much is clear. As collectivization became a fact, the work of the Godless movement, although it had been used as a special weapon in substituting science for superstition, was seen to be detrimental rather than constructive, Communist Party support was withdrawn from it, in a single year its membership collapsed, and it proceeded to die a swift and unlamented death. Its journals and newspapers continued to appear until the outbreak of the war when the paper supply allotted to it was quietly requisitioned to some more useful purpose. An odd thing, which foreign opinion never quite understood, was the way in which the churches never lost the right to appeal to the courts against the excesses of Party members or adherents of the Union of Militant Godless. In the years 1936-37 the courts heard 157 such complaints and 78 per cent of these cases resulted in verdicts granting damages to the complaining churches.

Anti-religious propaganda was never conducted by the State, but handled through a special agency. Thus the movement could be ended without involving or requiring any change in official governmental policy towards the churches. This has been consistent and uniform. That is one reason why the church authorities are correct when they insist there has been no persecution of the church by the government. The church had its deep waters to cross but its relations with the government were always correct. For over six years there has been no further attack of this character on religion, nor is there likely to be again. The reasons are two-fold: the Godless movement was a failure as an educational technique, and the churches today are assimilated economically and psychologically into Soviet society so that fear of them as centers of reaction requiring suppression by violence is a thing of the past. But just to make certain, the Constitution reserves the right of anti-religious propaganda.

The control of the educational system provided a much more subtle and successful tool, and in the early years direct anti-religious teaching was given all children. The purpose was to train them in a scientific approach to the modern world. The motives behind this program were not objectionable; what was open to condemnation was the dogmatic rejection of all aspects of religion. But even here it is wise for the foreigner to exercise some caution in passing final judgment. The conflict between modern science and fundamentalist religion was not wholly absent even in the United States where we still remember the embarrassing Scopes Trial at Dayton, Tennessee, when the late William Jennings Bryan, many times candidate for the presidency of the United States, earnestly pled in his shirt-sleeves for the conviction of a school-teacher whose only crime was that he taught children the Darwinian theory of evolution in a science class. If this could happen among us, we can dimly sense how in the Russian Revolution a vast and illiterate country tried to accept and apply a modern scientific approach to life in a single decade. It had a bad case of colic in the process more than once, but it survived the attacks, and gradually learned to recognize one or two things that should not be eaten again. As Sir Bernard Pares has written in *Foreign Affairs*, the attack on religion was the weakest link in the whole revolutionary program. It is probable that the banner of atheism will long be held officially aloft, he declares, but:

"Marxism itself, though acknowledging no foundation but sheer materialism, in Russia inevitably, like any other form of belief, has become an idealism. . . . The Marxist objective is the happiness of all—the poor, the maimed, the oppressed, the weak, the very old, the very young, the weaker sex—in other words, what we should describe as the Kingdom of God on earth, and the really great things that have been achieved in these directions are the finest part of the Soviet record. . . . Communism no longer means to Russians anything connected with the first blood-stained years of the Revolution; it is the ideal, to be realized fully in the future, of complete and absolute devotion to the community."

New Respect for Religion

Today the pendulum has swung considerably. The public education system is still firmly based on the Marxist scientific approach but anti-religious statements have been expunged from the textbooks and histories. Children cannot be taught religion in the schools but

they are inculcated with a respect for Russian institutions of the creative periods of the past, they are given an accurate picture of the place of religion in the historic development of Russian culture, and emphasis is freely placed on the art, the architecture and the music which have their roots in the church. There is little direct conflict today between the education of the schools and the religious education of the home and the church, *provided* the latter is intelligent and adjusted to young minds trained in scientific thinking. This puts a heavier burden on religious leadership, of course, but it

Easter Service in the Moscow cathedral.



has never done religion harm to make it present its case intelligently and at its best.

In past years it is true that young people were under a certain pressure to abjure religion because it eliminated them from certain jobs and from membership in the Communist Party which was the sole road to a political career. This is no longer true. Applications for employment and for advancement now omit all questions as to religious belief; this is now considered a purely private matter for the individual's own conscience. Believers are probably in a slight majority in the Red Army and some of them hold commissions and a few have reached high places. More and more of them are entering administrative posts of prominence, and even preferment in the Party is no longer barred for religious belief as it once was.

Metropolitan Benjamin observed that during his recent travels by train in the Soviet Union he saw no signs of antagonism to religion anywhere; in fact, he was the target of innumerable questions as to why he—obviously an educated and traveled man—was religious. After one such conversation, a professor of physics said to him, "I respect your position. Do others in the Church reason the way you do?" The theocratic mind will not be satisfied with the situation in the Soviet Union because it is not avowedly "a Christian state". But believers in a free society have long recognized that religion cannot be legislated. Conviction is born only of spiritual, moral and intellectual persuasion. It is to that form of a free society that both church and state are committed in the Soviet Union.

Soviet Morality

Morals are not religion but a religion without morals is not religion either, and the morals of the Soviet Union are good. After an early and brief period of experimentation with conventions, Soviet society has taken a very conservative view of personal responsibility. The family reigns supreme. Marriage is encouraged early and made economically feasible for youth. A stern puritanism prevails, with the members of the Communist Party and the Young Communists' League expected to set a high example. Even the Vatican, for all its distaste for every aspect of communist philosophy and economics, has paid a tribute through its press to the present state of Soviet morals, family

standards, the attitude towards divorce, the cleanness of Soviet journalism and the quality of Soviet films.

The elimination of anti-semitism and racial prejudice is one of the happiest and finest chapters in Soviet achievement. For those who place integrity in business relations high on the list of social virtues, our U. S. Department of Commerce reports that the Soviet Union is the best credit risk with the highest rating of any nation with which American businessmen have dealings. The war has certainly revealed the selflessness of an entire people in a time of national catastrophe. It is impossible for any one who really knows the Russians to consider them in anything but the highest way. Soviet morality is in no sense a departure from fundamental moral standards; if anything, it is the heightening of group loyalty beyond anything the older western nations know—in the words of Sir Bernard Pares again: "the ideal of a complete and absolute devotion to the community."

The Quality of Religion

In the Soviet Union today religion can survive and perpetuate itself only on the strength of its own inner moral and spiritual quality. It has no hand-me-down of accumulated endowments on which to live. It has no vast institutional structure with countless schools and hospitals and orphanages that penetrate the whole of society so that, as in America, many support the churches because of their good works rather than any personal devotion to a religious faith. In the Soviet Union the church performs a spiritual function—nothing else.

On first acquaintance, it seems to many Americans that religion has been robbed of its rightful sphere of operations. It is severed from the educational system and from the administration of public philanthropies. But let us frankly face this question: Why did the church in our society feel drawn to pioneer in education except because there was so little of it? To build hospitals except because there were so few? To care for the orphans and the aged except that no one else would bother? The church entered these fields in western society because there were human needs crying to be met! *But suppose that there had been an adequate provision within our society to care for educating all its members, healing the sick, providing for the orphans and aged, assuring work for the unemployed?* The church would not have felt constrained to enter these areas. It

would have sought to serve another function. *In such a society* it would have undertaken to stimulate the knowledge and worship of God so that character would be built, life be infused with healthy purpose, and the social structure constantly leavened by the creative faith of the church's sons.

In the Soviet Union the community undertakes to perform these many social functions. For a new country whose constructive plans were less than fifteen years old when Hitler struck and set back the clock, it was making tremendous strides toward the fulfilment of its program. Had this war not occurred, we should have seen far greater results in the past four years. The Soviets are not downhearted, although they are sad at the thought of the fruits of their labor that the Nazi locusts have eaten. They are determined to build again, and they will.

Religion in Russia is simpler, more elemental, more spiritual. The church is freed of innumerable responsibilities and philanthropic chores, the infinite raising of money for this and for that. Here is one reason why Russian churchmen feel they are freer than foreign churchmen. It is the ancient superiority of Mary who sits at the Master's feet over Martha who does the drudgery in the kitchen. They think American churchmen too concerned with outward things and not enough with the Spirit. Which is right, time alone can tell, but this much is clear. The Soviet Union is not "*Godless*" nor is the United States *God's sole chosen people*. Both are His. They are meant to live each with the other.

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