

*State Secularism and Lived Religion  
in Soviet Russia and Ukraine*



# State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine

Edited by  
Catherine Wanner

Woodrow Wilson Center Press  
Washington, D.C.

Oxford University Press  
New York

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Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.  
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016  
www.oup.com

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Woodrow Wilson Center Press

EDITORIAL OFFICES

Woodrow Wilson Center Press  
One Woodrow Wilson Plaza  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20004-3027  
Telephone: 202-691-4029  
www.wilsoncenter.org

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*



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## Acknowledgments

Many people and institutions contributed to this collection of essays seeing the light of day. Most of this book's ten chapters began as presentations at the conference "New Religious Histories: Rethinking Religion and Secularization in Twentieth-Century Russia and Ukraine," which was held at Pennsylvania State University from March 25 to 27, 2010. This conference was made possible thanks to support from the Woskob Family Fund for Ukrainian Studies at Pennsylvania State University. The editor wishes to thank the Woskob family as well as other participants in the conference, including Olga Bertelsen, Greg Eghghian, Roger Finke, Linda Ivanits, Philip Jenkins, Judy Maltz, Michael Naydan, Serhii Plokyh, Gregg Roebber, Vera Shevzov, Olha Tytarenko, and Slava Yastremski, who presented papers, offered valuable comments, and raised challenging issues for discussion.

Another event at the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in October 2010 continued the discussion of religion in the USSR. This conference, "Religion and the State in

Desecularizing Russia,” and was sponsored by the Keston Institute of Baylor University and the Kennan Institute. Here thanks go to the organizer, Christopher Marsh, as well as Peter Berger, Vyacheslav Karpov, and Elena Lisovskaya.

The editor and contributors express their gratitude to Blair Ruble, the director of the Kennan Institute, for his ongoing support of innovative scholarship in the humanities of the former Soviet Union. Joe Brinley, the director of the Woodrow Wilson Center Press, was supportive of this volume from its inception. Robert H. Greene and another anonymous reader provided very engaged and insightful comments, from which all of us have benefited. Alfred Imhoff ably managed the book’s editorial-production process, and Barbara Kohl likewise copyedited the book.

Last, as for all other things I undertake to accomplish in life, I express heartfelt thanks and gratitude to Adrian Wanner, for his patience, encouragement, and sharp critical eye.

## Chapter 10

### Revival before Revival: Popular and Institutionalized Religion in Ukraine on the Eve of the Collapse of Communism

*Viktor Yelensky*

When present-day observers and historians refer to the phenomenon of “religious revival” in Ukraine and Russia, they usually mean the outburst of religion in the former Soviet Union after the collapse of communism. However, twentieth-century Ukraine witnessed a steady growth of interest in religion, which has not yet been comprehensively explored by scholars. The ongoing enthusiasm for religion challenged the very foundation of official ideology and was perceived by the authorities as a real threat that needed to be eliminated. Yet, by the 1970s and 1980s the failure of antireligious policies became obvious even to Party officials charged with realizing these goals. They could no longer ignore the rise of popular religiosity and religious seeking among Soviet intellectuals and professionals. Spiritual and mystical-religious aspirations engaged broad circles of intellectuals by the 1970s and found expression in poetry and the arts.<sup>1</sup> Despite the endless stream of reports on the consistent decline of popular religiosity, religion in everyday life became ever more present in the late Soviet period. Moreover, in spite of substantial resources invested in fighting

“illegal sectarian activity,” the so-called religious underground persisted and became even more active. Using archival data, interviews with clergy Communist Party officials, and Soviet propagandists, as well as a variety of published sources, in this chapter I explore the peculiarities of the turn to religion in the 1970s and 1980s against the background of the regime’s continuing efforts to eliminate religion.

### Soviet Antireligious Policy: The Last Round

Several themes have dominated the scholarship on religious revivals in twentieth-century Ukraine. Nikolai Berdyaev, one of the most energetic proponents of the religious renaissance in the early twentieth century, argued that “this was nevertheless a movement [among the cultural elite, estranged not only from the processes occurring among the masses of the people, but also from the processes occurring in the wider circles of the intelligentsia.]”<sup>2</sup> Some scholars have analyzed the conversion of Marxists to Eastern Orthodoxy, which is described by Nikolai Zernov in his book, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century*.<sup>3</sup> Converted Marxists were figures of great importance and tremendous intellectual power, but they comprised a tiny group within the prerevolutionary intelligentsia.

A second theme of key importance, and in sharp counterdistinction to Berdyaev’s emphasis on the intelligentsia, was the renewal of popular religious life in Ukrainian territories occupied by the Nazis in the 1941–44 period.<sup>4</sup> The renaissance in the occupied areas was a purely spontaneous embrace of religion without intellectual and theological foundations, but often with considerable political implications, as reflected in chapter 3 in this volume, by John-Paul Himka. Religious affiliation in Ukraine often reinforced national allegiance and in some instances became an expression of anti-Soviet views. Wartime religious upheaval was also propelled by the horrors of war and the need for spiritual retreat in the midst of everyday threats and tragedies. However, both of these processes, the wartime popular resurgence of religion and the embrace of religiosity among the intelligentsia, generally occurred with the benevolent neutrality of the authorities and sometimes even with their official support.

In contrast, the religious revival of the 1970s and 1980s occurred against the backdrop of a weakening, but still active, campaign to eliminate religion. Religious policies somewhat changed again after Nikita Khrushchev’s dismissal in 1964. Party officials reconsidered the most odious elements of

the former first secretary's approach to religion, which focused on the attainment of comprehensive control over religious institutions, the eradication of clandestine religious activity, the elimination of the "religious underground," and the creation of a mammoth scientific-atheistic education system.

Despite the fact that the religious situation was becoming increasingly explosive and effectively undermining the reputation of the USSR on the international scene, during the Brezhnev period the government did not make any radical changes. Brezhnev's policies were based on the ideal of a police state superpower with strong military arsenals, a developed economy, a relatively high standard of living, nonexistent official opposition, and the "moral-political" unity of the nation. The regime's religious policies were driven by two factors: the political elite's desire to maintain stability by undercutting the roots of instability and the need to create a relative balance between the needs of the ideological apparatus and foreign policy imperatives.

The ideological apparatus aimed at overcoming religiosity by taking actions to limit the number of religious communities and the number of faithful, and by devaluing the significance of religious ceremonies. The party's ideological cadres used Lenin's dogma of an uncompromising attitude of all communists toward "religious prejudice" as well as a widespread propaganda network to achieve these goals. Certain aspects of the ideological doctrine became sacred, resulting in their unconditional implementation even when they ran contrary to the state's interests and sometimes even to common sense.

At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, some KGB services, and journalists stationed abroad were assigned the task of creating a beneficial environment for reaching Soviet foreign policy goals. Hence, they were interested in somewhat liberalizing religious regulations, softening restrictions on religious activity, and limiting atheist education to its less militant forms. Given ongoing worldwide human rights campaigns and the growing attention of Western governments (as well as Western societies in general) to the problem of religious freedom in the USSR, these Communist Party officials were aware that discrimination against the faithful would have international repercussions. In addition, the restrictions on church activities were fueling religious opposition and contributing to the cooperation of religious activists with political dissident movements, all of which were utterly undesirable to the KGB.

The legal basis for restricting the activity of religious organizations in Soviet Ukraine was defined by the "Regulations Concerning Religious

Organizations in the Ukrainian SSR.”<sup>5</sup> Although these regulations were written in 1976, in large part they reproduced the Stalinist legislation of 1929. In 1929, the government revoked the right of registered religions to spread “religious propaganda” and outlawed any external activity of religious organizations, thereby containing religious communities within then-existing church walls.

In contrast, the state had unrestricted freedom to spread atheist propaganda. In addition, a large number of special decrees and regulations led to even more severe restrictions of religious activity than was prescribed by the 1929 basic law. Thus, the violation of the minimal set of rights granted to believers was a common occurrence.

The eighteen years of Brezhnev’s tenure represented a crisis in orientation for religious policy. Officials in the central party and government apparatus were becoming increasingly aware that total suppression of religious activity was impossible. Yet, they were not in a position to articulate an alternative policy that was compatible with Leninist-Stalinist postulates propagated over the course of decades. Among certain younger party functionaries (the ideological predecessors of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation), projects circulated incorporating the Russian Orthodox Church into the ideological apparatus of the party, which, in turn was supposed to fundamentally blend the Russian Orthodox Church with Russian nationalism and reduce the Church’s flirtation with the national republics and its use of internationalist rhetoric. The church-state model they proposed ultimately gave birth to right-wing, anti-Semitic nationalists such as Chivilikhin, Belov,<sup>6</sup> and Prokhanov,<sup>7</sup> and to Vasilyev’s “Pamyat.”<sup>8</sup> While aware of the demise of the traditional Soviet ideological integrators, the old party cadre at all levels were unprepared to pursue such radical changes in church-state policies.<sup>9</sup>

The ideological departments and sections within party central and regional committees still possessed a solid organizational infrastructure and considerable financing. Suffice it to say that in the early 1980s about 1 million lectures to promote atheism and “dethrone religious myths” were given in the USSR every year, in comparison with 760,000 in 1966.<sup>10</sup> However, when Mikhail Gorbachev launched the policy of glasnost, those responsible for atheist propaganda, when questioned by the Institute for Scientific Atheism attached to the Academy of Social Sciences, acknowledged that the “effectiveness of atheist propaganda was low or even of no significance.”<sup>11</sup> The almost sacred attitude of stalwart communists, led by the chief party ideologist Mikhail Suslov, toward certain aspects of Lenin’s doctrine produced

antireligious fervor even when such zeal expressly contradicted common sense and even national interests.<sup>12</sup> Disagreements over the limits of religious liberties, which may have existed between pragmatically disposed foreign service officials, including the KGB's externally oriented departments and the propaganda departments and local party organizations, were usually solved in favor of the group that advocated an uncompromising limitation on all religious activity that could in any way contribute to national and religious distinctiveness. In the end, the farther from Moscow and the closer to the provinces, the more intense the atheist propaganda became.

“For the Same Misdeed in Moscow Nails  
Are Trimmed, While in Kyiv the Hand Is Cut”:  
Ukrainian Versions of Soviet Antireligious Policy

Historically, the religious and national policies of Ukrainian Communists were under particularly strict surveillance by the Kremlin. The geopolitical significance of Ukraine, its resources, and a suspiciousness among Moscow officials of Ukrainian “separatism” and “bourgeois nationalism,” led to rapid and sharp responses by Lenin and later Stalin upon the slightest demonstration of autonomy by Ukrainian leaders.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, Moscow sent “leading figures” to Ukraine who were able to unconditionally implement policies prescribed by the Kremlin. A notorious “political tradition” emerged from an ongoing, uncompromising struggle against national and religious aspirations, cultural novelties, and freethinking intelligentsia that became quite harsh, especially when compared with how similar dynamics played out in Moscow. In Ukraine there were prohibitions against even mentioning the Christian roots of Ukrainian culture, and efforts were made to eliminate all visible traces of religion in the public sphere, which sometimes assumed ridiculous proportions. For instance, in the late 1970s a Ukrainian opera prima donna, Evgeniya Myroshnichenko, was prohibited from appearing on television for several months as a punishment for wearing a cross during a concert performance.

Volodymyr Shcherbitsky, who headed the Communist Party of Ukraine from 1972 until 1989, took uncompromising stands on religious issues. Archival documents and reminiscences of party officials from that period disprove the memoirs of Shcherbitsky's associate, Valeryi Vrublevskyyi, who claimed that Shcherbitsky was very tolerant toward religion and did his best to protect and respect the religious sentiments of Ukrainians from

the attacks of “Moscovite boyars.” In actual fact, the party’s first secretary in Ukraine showed his obvious displeasure with the disproportionately high number of religious communities in Ukraine and expressed his unyielding determination to change this state of affairs. Indeed, on the eve of Gorbachev’s reforms in Ukraine, there were over 6,000 officially functioning religious communities in Ukraine, or one-third of the total number of religious organizations in the USSR. This number included 4,000 Orthodox parishes, which constituted 65 percent of the religious communities in Ukraine; more than 1,100 communities of Evangelical Christians–Baptists; about 100 communities of Roman Catholics; and 80 communities of the Church of Reformation, which served Transcarpathian Hungarians and others.<sup>14</sup> However, the number of official church institutions in no way reflected the real religious needs of the Ukrainian population and yet the authorities refused to permit an increase in the number of church institutions.

Vladimir Kuroedov, head of the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) attached to the USSR Council of Ministers, recalled:

I have heard (although I cannot present documented evidence for this) that the extremely fierce attitude [toward religion and churches] came personally from V. Shcherbytsky. He believed that there were too many churches in Ukraine, and that there was a need to “put an end to this shame.” They liked to close churches in Ukraine. It often happened that they [Ukrainians] brought packs of proposals to close churches in Ukraine to a session of the Council for Religious Affairs [only the Moscow Council was authorized to make the final decision to close or to open a church]. I did come across [Valentyn] Malanchuk and [Yuryi] Yelchenko, secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine on ideology in the 1970s. Yelchenko seemed to be a sincere, interesting man, but his line on the church was very tough. He even wanted to close Florovsky and Pokrovsky monasteries in Kyiv. Monasteries, he said, disgrace us.<sup>15</sup>

The policy toward religious communities of national minorities (e.g., Jews, Poles, and Hungarians) was based on three goals: separating national and religious components, preventing the consolidation of ethnic groups on religious grounds, and neutralizing the influence of foreign religious centers. Such a policy had an obvious antinationalist connotation because, for instance, neither Jewish nor Polish minorities had secular national or cultural institutions and they expressed their ethnic identities through religious institutions. Shcherbytsky’s regime in Ukraine did not leave any space for the public expression of unofficial views, not to mention opposition



opinions. It was impossible to form clubs of intellectuals, institutionalize any type of non-Marxist social or cultural movement, to establish a media enterprise that did not glorify the regime, or to create nongovernmental organizations, like Solidarity or the Lutheran Church, which played significant roles in “the mobilization of conscience” in Poland and East Germany, respectively. It was also impossible to express national communism, which took quite eloquent forms in the Trans-Caucasian Soviet republics.<sup>16</sup> In spite of routine appeals from Moscow to eliminate “the remnants of bourgeois nationalism” and the suppression of anticommunist sentiments, the leaders of Soviet Armenia and Georgia strengthened their respective nationalisms by granting the Armenian Apostolic Churches and the Georgian Orthodox Church a prominent role in the forging of national identities on the republic level. Until the late 1970s, foreign observers spoke of “the second baptism of Georgia.”<sup>17</sup>

All these indulgences were absolutely not feasible in Ukraine. A phenomenon such as the Russian Pochvennichestvo (Return to the Soil) with its pathos of resistance to the denationalization of the Russian people was not allowed. Such pathos against supporting one’s own nation and Ukrainian historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage meant that Ukrainian intellectuals were not only confined to a prescribed ideological framework, but crossing the limits of the permissible was particularly dangerous, as dissident intellectuals and writers, such as Yevgen Sverstyuk, Ivan Dzyuba, and others learned in the 1960s.

### “A Country of Mass Atheism”: Calculations, Miscalculations, and Distortions

During the period of stagnation under Brezhnev, religion was firmly considered by the thinking public as an alternative value system that could uncompromisingly stand up to official ideology and slogans, the untenability of which became more and more obvious. Noting the increase of adult baptism, the intelligentsia’s fascination with religious literature, the growing popularity of religious broadcasting by foreign radio stations, and the outspoken disregard for atheist propaganda and other materials, party officials expressed anxiety over the anticommunist trends in the country that these developments represented. Communist ideologists increasingly realized that the USSR could no longer pretend to call itself “a country of mass atheism.” Beginning in the mid-1970s, party officials more or less

openly confessed that “religious elements hold up their heads,” meaning that believers no longer felt compelled to hide or deny their religious practices and even felt empowered to propagate their beliefs. At the same time, to obscure the growing interest in religion, new euphemisms were coined and introduced into semiofficial discourse. In an interview with the author in 1993, the head of the Religious Affairs Section attached to the Odessa region’s state administration said:

Attending the advanced training program in Moscow in 1979 for the first time ever, I learned about the “rising religious brazenness” of the Soviet people, which meant the rise in attendance at churches and the growth in the number of baptisms and funerals conducted by priests. The [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] Central Committee’s officials emphasized that religion had come into fashion among youth and “rotten” intelligentsia. They warned that the servants of religious cults were trying to take advantage of the policy of *détente* to crucially strengthen their positions. However, they said, the party and Soviet cadres would not “spread panic” and therefore could not admit to all these facts publicly.<sup>18</sup>

Echoing these views, the former first deputy head of the CRA in Kyiv said in 1993,

Having been instructed by the Central Committee of Communist Party of Ukraine before my assignment to Kyiv’s Council for Religious Affairs, I was forewarned of the changing religious landscape in comparison with the early 1960s. Religion, I had been told, had ceased to be the exclusive domain of old women.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, many party officials realized that the achievements of the communist administration’s efforts to substitute some secular ersatz-religion for religiosity was much more flawed than was officially declared. In closed meetings, communist leaders admitted the fact of a religious resurgence and sometimes expressed cautious doubts about the existing system of atheist education and the party’s attitude toward religion, churches, and believers. The commissioner for the Donetsk region to the CRA attached to the Ukraine Republic Council of Ministers even said, “In frank talks with some of my colleagues, we reasoned that sixty years of struggling against religion devoured enormous resources [and] embittered millions of our compatriots but finally led to nothing.”<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, no reliable data are available to characterize the religious identities of the Ukrainian population in the 1970s and 1980s. Several

factors render the sociological research from that period problematic, such as lack of unbiased data accumulated by Soviet sociologists of religion; peculiarities of the Marxist-Leninist view of religion, which is sometimes extensively described in the empirical material; the self-imposed isolation of Soviet society; and the inclination of many believers in the USSR, particularly highly educated persons who held respected positions, to practice covertly, which presumably would mean that religious practice was more extensive than reported, and especially among this group; subordination of research on religion to the aim of overcoming religion, which meant that sociologists had to manipulate empirical data to prove that Soviet society was one of “victorious atheism”; and the outspoken ideologically motivated “understatements” in the interpretation of data that documented a persistence in religious belief and practice among Ukrainians.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, to list the number of religious institutions and even to speculate in print about the approximate number of believers in the country was strictly prohibited. It was highly problematic to try to argue about the actual level of religiosity with the Glavlit (General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press, the main nonmilitary censorship establishment). Censors ruthlessly deleted the numbers and any other evidence of the persistence of religion, not to mention indicators of a religious revival. Data from some surveys conducted in various regions of the USSR, such as North Caucasia, Central Asia, and Western Ukraine, for example, were not only left unpublished, but no attempts were made to interpret them because they so heavily contradicted the official discourse.<sup>22</sup> Even in 1986, the relatively “innocent” statement that “religions and churches have existed for thousands of years and will exist for a long time in the future, having significant impact on social consciousness and the political life of different states and nations”<sup>23</sup> became a subject of furious criticism from ideological “purists” after it was published.<sup>24</sup>

Significantly, scholars not only avoided estimating the level of religiosity throughout the USSR, but also failed to report on the principal results of their research when they conflicted with ideological mandates. For instance, a survey and detailed study of the sociodemographic structure of a “religious” population was conducted in Belorussia in 1967 in which 10,000 people were surveyed in five or six regions of the republic. However, thanks to the censors, there are no reports pertaining to the percentage of believers or their activities in this population in a single file of 10,000 cases. The findings of other studies that were conducted in the regions of Sumy, Ternopil’, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zakarpatia, Chernihiv, and elsewhere in Ukraine suffered a similar fate.<sup>25</sup> Based on this evidence, one might assume

that the research findings were dissonant with the prevailing ideology and challenged the assertion that the USSR was a country of “mass atheism.”

Analyzing the fragments of empirical data that were collected and reported in sociological research of religion in the USSR from the middle 1960s to the early 1980s, William Fletcher comes to the conclusion that 45 percent of the population of the USSR were believers and that, although Soviet sociologists claimed religion was a phenomenon of the past, and that since the Revolution it had been weakening and dying out, a lot of evidence contracted these claims.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, as Fletcher points out, his index of religiosity is only an “average” for the entire Soviet Union. For regions where Russians predominate, this average is high; but for areas where Islam is widespread, as well as for Lithuania and Western Ukraine, it is low.<sup>27</sup>

Fletcher’s assertions are somewhat abstract and imprecise mainly because of the limited empirical data that were available at the time. Nonetheless, Fletcher’s conclusions are much more realistic than official declarations asserting that the vast majority of Soviet people were neither influenced by nor members of any religious group.<sup>28</sup>

The report of the CRA under the Council of Ministers of the USSR stressed that in 1984 in Ukraine, 178,000 persons were baptized. Also in 1984, in the Ukrainian regions of Ivano-Frankivsk, L’viv, Sumy, and Ternopil’, a church funeral service was performed, respectively, for more than 69.6, 65.7, 64.8, and 62.9 percent of those who died.<sup>29</sup> Another report noted that in the Khmelnyts’k region approximately 20 percent of adults participated in church services on the most important holy days.<sup>30</sup>

Secret reports submitted by party officials reveal that in 1985, the first year of Gorbachev’s reforms, 26 percent of newborns in Ukraine were baptized. Nearly 3 percent of marriages were consecrated in a church, and more than 40 percent of the dead were buried with the assistance of a church. Notably, the figures on baptism and funerals performed by the Catholic Church in the Netherlands that same year did not essentially differ from the figures in Ukraine.<sup>31</sup> After studying the available data of the percentage of baptisms performed in the Russian Orthodox Church during the 1960s, Christel Lane concluded that the rate of baptism was not much lower than infant baptisms in the Church of England: “Viewed against the background of strong pressure against the baptism from the official side and of the practical obstacles of obtaining one in churchless areas these figures are impressive.”<sup>32</sup> Undoubtedly, the Ukrainian figures are underestimated. They do not include baptisms and funerals conducted by underground or unregistered religious institutions and or those conducted by clergy in private. These practices were common, especially in the big cities.

“illegal sectarian activity,” the so-called religious underground persisted and became even more active. Using archival data, interviews with clergy Communist Party officials, and Soviet propagandists, as well as a variety of published sources, in this chapter I explore the peculiarities of the turn to religion in the 1970s and 1980s against the background of the regime’s continuing efforts to eliminate religion.

### Soviet Antireligious Policy: The Last Round

Several themes have dominated the scholarship on religious revivals in twentieth-century Ukraine. Nikolai Berdyaev, one of the most energetic proponents of the religious renaissance in the early twentieth century, argued that “this was nevertheless a movement [among the cultural elite, estranged not only from the processes occurring among the masses of the people, but also from the processes occurring in the wider circles of the intelligentsia.]”<sup>2</sup> Some scholars have analyzed the conversion of Marxists to Eastern Orthodoxy, which is described by Nikolai Zernov in his book, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century*.<sup>3</sup> Converted Marxists were figures of great importance and tremendous intellectual power, but they comprised a tiny group within the prerevolutionary intelligentsia.

A second theme of key importance, and in sharp counterdistinction to Berdyaev’s emphasis on the intelligentsia, was the renewal of popular religious life in Ukrainian territories occupied by the Nazis in the 1941–44 period.<sup>4</sup> The renaissance in the occupied areas was a purely spontaneous embrace of religion without intellectual and theological foundations, but often with considerable political implications, as reflected in chapter 3 in this volume, by John-Paul Himka. Religious affiliation in Ukraine often reinforced national allegiance and in some instances became an expression of anti-Soviet views. Wartime religious upheaval was also propelled by the horrors of war and the need for spiritual retreat in the midst of everyday threats and tragedies. However, both of these processes, the wartime popular resurgence of religion and the embrace of religiosity among the intelligentsia, generally occurred with the benevolent neutrality of the authorities and sometimes even with their official support.

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The legal basis for restricting the activity of religious organizations in Soviet Ukraine was defined by the "Regulations Concerning Religious

Organizations in the Ukrainian SSR.”<sup>5</sup> Although these regulations were written in 1976, in large part they reproduced the Stalinist legislation of 1929. In 1929, the government revoked the right of registered religions to spread “religious propaganda” and outlawed any external activity of religious organizations, thereby containing religious communities within then-existing church walls.

In contrast, the state had unrestricted freedom to spread atheist propaganda. In addition, a large number of special decrees and regulations led to even more severe restrictions of religious activity than was prescribed by the 1929 basic law. Thus, the violation of the minimal set of rights granted to believers was a common occurrence.

The eighteen years of Brezhnev’s tenure represented a crisis in orientation for religious policy. Officials in the central party and government apparatus were becoming increasingly aware that total suppression of religious activity was impossible. Yet, they were not in a position to articulate an alternative policy that was compatible with Leninist-Stalinist postulates propagated over the course of decades. Among certain younger party functionaries (the ideological predecessors of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation), projects circulated incorporating the Russian Orthodox Church into the ideological apparatus of the party, which, in turn was supposed to fundamentally blend the Russian Orthodox Church with Russian nationalism and reduce the Church’s flirtation with the national republics and its use of internationalist rhetoric. The church-state model they proposed ultimately gave birth to right-wing, anti-Semitic nationalists such as Chivilikhin, Belov,<sup>6</sup> and Prokhanov,<sup>7</sup> and to Vasilyev’s “Pamyat.”<sup>8</sup> While aware of the demise of the traditional Soviet ideological integrators, the old party cadre at all levels were unprepared to pursue such radical changes in church-state policies.<sup>9</sup>

The ideological departments and sections within party central and regional committees still possessed a solid organizational infrastructure and considerable financing. Suffice it to say that in the early 1980s about 1 million lectures to promote atheism and “dethrone religious myths” were given in the USSR every year, in comparison with 760,000 in 1966.<sup>10</sup> However, when Mikhail Gorbachev launched the policy of glasnost, those responsible for atheist propaganda, when questioned by the Institute for Scientific Atheism attached to the Academy of Social Sciences, acknowledged that the “effectiveness of atheist propaganda was low or even of no significance.”<sup>11</sup> The almost sacred attitude of stalwart communists, led by the chief party ideologist Mikhail Suslov, toward certain aspects of Lenin’s doctrine produced

antireligious fervor even when such zeal expressly contradicted common sense and even national interests.<sup>12</sup> Disagreements over the limits of religious liberties, which may have existed between pragmatically disposed foreign service officials, including the KGB's externally oriented departments and the propaganda departments and local party organizations, were usually solved in favor of the group that advocated an uncompromising limitation on all religious activity that could in any way contribute to national and religious distinctiveness. In the end, the farther from Moscow and the closer to the provinces, the more intense the atheist propaganda became.

“For the Same Misdeed in Moscow Nails  
Are Trimmed, While in Kyiv the Hand Is Cut”:  
Ukrainian Versions of Soviet Antireligious Policy

Historically, the religious and national policies of Ukrainian Communists were under particularly strict surveillance by the Kremlin. The geopolitical significance of Ukraine, its resources, and a suspiciousness among Moscow officials of Ukrainian “separatism” and “bourgeois nationalism,” led to rapid and sharp responses by Lenin and later Stalin upon the slightest demonstration of autonomy by Ukrainian leaders.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, Moscow sent “leading figures” to Ukraine who were able to unconditionally implement policies prescribed by the Kremlin. A notorious “political tradition” emerged from an ongoing, uncompromising struggle against national and religious aspirations, cultural novelties, and freethinking intelligentsia that became quite harsh, especially when compared with how similar dynamics played out in Moscow. In Ukraine there were prohibitions against even mentioning the Christian roots of Ukrainian culture, and efforts were made to eliminate all visible traces of religion in the public sphere, which sometimes assumed ridiculous proportions. For instance, in the late 1970s a Ukrainian opera prima donna, Evgeniya Myroshnichenko, was prohibited from appearing on television for several months as a punishment for wearing a cross during a concert performance.

Volodymyr Shcherbitsky, who headed the Communist Party of Ukraine from 1972 until 1989, took uncompromising stands on religious issues. Archival documents and reminiscences of party officials from that period disprove the memoirs of Shcherbitsky's associate, Valeryi Vrublevskyyi, who claimed that Shcherbitsky was very tolerant toward religion and did his best to protect and respect the religious sentiments of Ukrainians from



the attacks of “Moscovite boyars.” In actual fact, the party’s first secretary in Ukraine showed his obvious displeasure with the disproportionately high number of religious communities in Ukraine and expressed his unyielding determination to change this state of affairs. Indeed, on the eve of Gorbachev’s reforms in Ukraine, there were over 6,000 officially functioning religious communities in Ukraine, or one-third of the total number of religious organizations in the USSR. This number included 4,000 Orthodox parishes, which constituted 65 percent of the religious communities in Ukraine; more than 1,100 communities of Evangelical Christians–Baptists; about 100 communities of Roman Catholics; and 80 communities of the Church of Reformation, which served Transcarpathian Hungarians and others.<sup>14</sup> However, the number of official church institutions in no way reflected the real religious needs of the Ukrainian population and yet the authorities refused to permit an increase in the number of church institutions.

Vladimir Kuroedov, head of the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) attached to the USSR Council of Ministers, recalled:

I have heard (although I cannot present documented evidence for this) that the extremely fierce attitude [toward religion and churches] came personally from V. Shcherbytsky. He believed that there were too many churches in Ukraine, and that there was a need to “put an end to this shame.” They liked to close churches in Ukraine. It often happened that they [Ukrainians] brought packs of proposals to close churches in Ukraine to a session of the Council for Religious Affairs [only the Moscow Council was authorized to make the final decision to close or to open a church]. I did come across [Valentyn] Malanchuk and [Yuryi] Yelchenko, secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine on ideology in the 1970s. Yelchenko seemed to be a sincere, interesting man, but his line on the church was very tough. He even wanted to close Florovsky and Pokrovsky monasteries in Kyiv. Monasteries, he said, disgrace us.<sup>15</sup>

The policy toward religious communities of national minorities (e.g., Jews, Poles, and Hungarians) was based on three goals: separating national and religious components, preventing the consolidation of ethnic groups on religious grounds, and neutralizing the influence of foreign religious centers. Such a policy had an obvious antinationalist connotation because, for instance, neither Jewish nor Polish minorities had secular national or cultural institutions and they expressed their ethnic identities through religious institutions. Shcherbytsky’s regime in Ukraine did not leave any space for the public expression of unofficial views, not to mention opposition

opinions. It was impossible to form clubs of intellectuals, institutionalize any type of non-Marxist social or cultural movement, to establish a media enterprise that did not glorify the regime, or to create nongovernmental organizations, like Solidarity or the Lutheran Church, which played significant roles in “the mobilization of conscience” in Poland and East Germany, respectively. It was also impossible to express national communism, which took quite eloquent forms in the Trans-Caucasian Soviet republics.<sup>16</sup> In spite of routine appeals from Moscow to eliminate “the remnants of bourgeois nationalism” and the suppression of anticommunist sentiments, the leaders of Soviet Armenia and Georgia strengthened their respective nationalisms by granting the Armenian Apostolic Churches and the Georgian Orthodox Church a prominent role in the forging of national identities on the republic level. Until the late 1970s, foreign observers spoke of “the second baptism of Georgia.”<sup>17</sup>

All these indulgences were absolutely not feasible in Ukraine. A phenomenon such as the Russian Pochvennichestvo (Return to the Soil) with its pathos of resistance to the denationalization of the Russian people was not allowed. Such pathos against supporting one’s own nation and Ukrainian historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage meant that Ukrainian intellectuals were not only confined to a prescribed ideological framework, but crossing the limits of the permissible was particularly dangerous, as dissident intellectuals and writers, such as Yevgen Sverstyuk, Ivan Dzyuba, and others learned in the 1960s.

### “A Country of Mass Atheism”: Calculations, Miscalculations, and Distortions

During the period of stagnation under Brezhnev, religion was firmly considered by the thinking public as an alternative value system that could uncompromisingly stand up to official ideology and slogans, the untenability of which became more and more obvious. Noting the increase of adult baptism, the intelligentsia’s fascination with religious literature, the growing popularity of religious broadcasting by foreign radio stations, and the outspoken disregard for atheist propaganda and other materials, party officials expressed anxiety over the anticommunist trends in the country that these developments represented. Communist ideologists increasingly realized that the USSR could no longer pretend to call itself “a country of mass atheism.” Beginning in the mid-1970s, party officials more or less

openly confessed that “religious elements hold up their heads,” meaning that believers no longer felt compelled to hide or deny their religious practices and even felt empowered to propagate their beliefs. At the same time, to obscure the growing interest in religion, new euphemisms were coined and introduced into semiofficial discourse. In an interview with the author in 1993, the head of the Religious Affairs Section attached to the Odessa region’s state administration said:

Attending the advanced training program in Moscow in 1979 for the first time ever, I learned about the “rising religious brazenness” of the Soviet people, which meant the rise in attendance at churches and the growth in the number of baptisms and funerals conducted by priests. The [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] Central Committee’s officials emphasized that religion had come into fashion among youth and “rotten” intelligentsia. They warned that the servants of religious cults were trying to take advantage of the policy of *détente* to crucially strengthen their positions. However, they said, the party and Soviet cadres would not “spread panic” and therefore could not admit to all these facts publicly.<sup>18</sup>

Echoing these views, the former first deputy head of the CRA in Kyiv said in 1993,

Having been instructed by the Central Committee of Communist Party of Ukraine before my assignment to Kyiv’s Council for Religious Affairs, I was forewarned of the changing religious landscape in comparison with the early 1960s. Religion, I had been told, had ceased to be the exclusive domain of old women.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, many party officials realized that the achievements of the communist administration’s efforts to substitute some secular ersatz-religion for religiosity was much more flawed than was officially declared. In closed meetings, communist leaders admitted the fact of a religious resurgence and sometimes expressed cautious doubts about the existing system of atheist education and the party’s attitude toward religion, churches, and believers. The commissioner for the Donetsk region to the CRA attached to the Ukraine Republic Council of Ministers even said, “In frank talks with some of my colleagues, we reasoned that sixty years of struggling against religion devoured enormous resources [and] embittered millions of our compatriots but finally led to nothing.”<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, no reliable data are available to characterize the religious identities of the Ukrainian population in the 1970s and 1980s. Several

factors render the sociological research from that period problematic, such as lack of unbiased data accumulated by Soviet sociologists of religion; peculiarities of the Marxist-Leninist view of religion, which is sometimes extensively described in the empirical material; the self-imposed isolation of Soviet society; and the inclination of many believers in the USSR, particularly highly educated persons who held respected positions, to practice covertly, which presumably would mean that religious practice was more extensive than reported, and especially among this group; subordination of research on religion to the aim of overcoming religion, which meant that sociologists had to manipulate empirical data to prove that Soviet society was one of “victorious atheism”; and the outspoken ideologically motivated “understatements” in the interpretation of data that documented a persistence in religious belief and practice among Ukrainians.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, to list the number of religious institutions and even to speculate in print about the approximate number of believers in the country was strictly prohibited. It was highly problematic to try to argue about the actual level of religiosity with the Glavlit (General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press, the main nonmilitary censorship establishment). Censors ruthlessly deleted the numbers and any other evidence of the persistence of religion, not to mention indicators of a religious revival. Data from some surveys conducted in various regions of the USSR, such as North Caucasia, Central Asia, and Western Ukraine, for example, were not only left unpublished, but no attempts were made to interpret them because they so heavily contradicted the official discourse.<sup>22</sup> Even in 1986, the relatively “innocent” statement that “religions and churches have existed for thousands of years and will exist for a long time in the future, having significant impact on social consciousness and the political life of different states and nations”<sup>23</sup> became a subject of furious criticism from ideological “purists” after it was published.<sup>24</sup>

Significantly, scholars not only avoided estimating the level of religiosity throughout the USSR, but also failed to report on the principal results of their research when they conflicted with ideological mandates. For instance, a survey and detailed study of the sociodemographic structure of a “religious” population was conducted in Belorussia in 1967 in which 10,000 people were surveyed in five or six regions of the republic. However, thanks to the censors, there are no reports pertaining to the percentage of believers or their activities in this population in a single file of 10,000 cases. The findings of other studies that were conducted in the regions of Sumy, Ternopil’, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zakarpatia, Chernihiv, and elsewhere in Ukraine suffered a similar fate.<sup>25</sup> Based on this evidence, one might assume

that the research findings were dissonant with the prevailing ideology and challenged the assertion that the USSR was a country of “mass atheism.”

Analyzing the fragments of empirical data that were collected and reported in sociological research of religion in the USSR from the middle 1960s to the early 1980s, William Fletcher comes to the conclusion that 45 percent of the population of the USSR were believers and that, although Soviet sociologists claimed religion was a phenomenon of the past, and that since the Revolution it had been weakening and dying out, a lot of evidence contracted these claims.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, as Fletcher points out, his index of religiosity is only an “average” for the entire Soviet Union. For regions where Russians predominate, this average is high; but for areas where Islam is widespread, as well as for Lithuania and Western Ukraine, it is low.<sup>27</sup>

Fletcher’s assertions are somewhat abstract and imprecise mainly because of the limited empirical data that were available at the time. Nonetheless, Fletcher’s conclusions are much more realistic than official declarations asserting that the vast majority of Soviet people were neither influenced by nor members of any religious group.<sup>28</sup>

The report of the CRA under the Council of Ministers of the USSR stressed that in 1984 in Ukraine, 178,000 persons were baptized. Also in 1984, in the Ukrainian regions of Ivano-Frankivsk, L’viv, Sumy, and Ternopil’, a church funeral service was performed, respectively, for more than 69.6, 65.7, 64.8, and 62.9 percent of those who died.<sup>29</sup> Another report noted that in the Khmelnyts’k region approximately 20 percent of adults participated in church services on the most important holy days.<sup>30</sup>

Secret reports submitted by party officials reveal that in 1985, the first year of Gorbachev’s reforms, 26 percent of newborns in Ukraine were baptized. Nearly 3 percent of marriages were consecrated in a church, and more than 40 percent of the dead were buried with the assistance of a church. Notably, the figures on baptism and funerals performed by the Catholic Church in the Netherlands that same year did not essentially differ from the figures in Ukraine.<sup>31</sup> After studying the available data of the percentage of baptisms performed in the Russian Orthodox Church during the 1960s, Christel Lane concluded that the rate of baptism was not much lower than infant baptisms in the Church of England: “Viewed against the background of strong pressure against the baptism from the official side and of the practical obstacles of obtaining one in churchless areas these figures are impressive.”<sup>32</sup> Undoubtedly, the Ukrainian figures are underestimated. They do not include baptisms and funerals conducted by underground or unregistered religious institutions and or those conducted by clergy in private. These practices were common, especially in the big cities.

The Soviet literature consistently insisted that the absolute majority of Soviet youth did not have religious beliefs and were not practicing believers. But even the accessible empirical data allow us to cast doubt on such assertions. For example, a survey conducted in the Smolensk region in 1970 showed that about 10 percent of survey participants openly expressed their religious convictions.<sup>33</sup> Among 3,123 young respondents polled by Ukrainian sociologists in the Donetsk, Cherkassy, Transcarpathia, and Poltava regions in 1981, only 8 percent appeared to be nonbelievers.<sup>34</sup>

The Russian intellectual Sergei Averintsev told a very revealing anecdote. In the 1970s, his wife was stopped in the street by an elderly woman and was asked to name the exact beginning date of Lent. “You are young,” she explained, “you should know.”<sup>35</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, Western observers almost unanimously proclaimed a significant rise in interest in religion among Soviet youth, and particularly in the large cities. Relatively consistent observations in “public” urban churches, which were open to foreigners, have convinced experts that official statements alleging that only 3 percent of Soviet youth were religious were open to criticism.<sup>36</sup> A young theologian from Paris who had been told that the churches in the USSR were attended exclusively by grandmothers, visited the country and observed that approximately one-third of these “grandmothers” were younger than twenty-five years of age.<sup>37</sup>

A survey of Soviet youth involvement in religious practices conducted by H. L. Biddulph in 1976 showed that one-third of the parishioners of three Orthodox churches in Kyiv, Moscow, and Tbilisi were under thirty years of age.<sup>38</sup> At Easter in 1970, half the worshippers in the patriarchal cathedral in Moscow were said to have been under thirty. Gerhard Simon, referring to a letter by the Orthodox dissident Anatolyi Levitin-Krasnov (1915–91) to Pope Paul VI, wrote about a small group experiencing religious revival and increasing interest among young intellectuals in religious questions.<sup>39</sup> In sum, not only was a religious renaissance sparked in the 1970s in Ukraine, but it was largely among urban, educated youth—both phenomena were in direct contradiction to the intended outcome of antireligious propaganda of the period.

### Popular Religiosity in the 1970s and 1980s in Ukraine

Reports by commissioners of the CRA, memos of party functionaries, and testimonies of clergy and laypeople testify to the fact that popular religiosity in those times not only persisted but expressed itself in an increasingly

active and visible manner. The leitmotif of a tremendous corpus of secret memoranda written by high-level Communist Party officials responsible for atheist education was that ordinary people were indifferent to atheism, inclined to religion, and that local party committees were not very enthusiastic about atheist education. Auditors from the party's Central Committee in Ukraine also complained that local Soviet administrations were not zealous enough in controlling the activity of religious communities and, especially, the activities of clandestine sects, for which they relied exclusively on the KGB. According to a Ukrainian businessman who served as a party official in the 1980s:

The most outspoken Soviet administrators responsible for the observance of legislation on religious cults frankly told me that religion was just one among dozens of their duties. They couldn't exercise effective supervision over industry, transport, municipal economy, and so on along with keeping religious communities under surveillance. Naturally, their performance was evaluated in terms of achievements in industrial and agricultural production. Religion for them was a secondary issue, not to mention that a great number of Soviet administrators and "captains of industry" did not have atheist convictions. Many friends of mine from these strata quietly invited priests to baptize their children and secretly brought soil from their grandparents' graves to churches.<sup>40</sup>

In an interview with the author, a Ukrainian diplomat added:

I was absolutely sure that in Galicia and Volyn' in the 1970s and 1980s—as well as before and after this period—that the rate of baptism among newborn children approached 100 percent. Party officials were not excluded. Even if they did not respect the Church's rituals, their parents and relatives did.<sup>41</sup>

According to an archpriest of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Moscow Patriarchate in Kyiv:

In the early 1980s, our church was filled with a lot of people not well-informed about Orthodoxy. Most of them studied at universities but some were middle-aged men and women absolutely deprived of a religious tradition. They wished to be baptized and to join my parish. Some of these new converts held prestigious positions and avoided publicity—everyone realized that in Kyiv the KGB had informers in every parish. Very often I performed sacraments at home. After 1988, it seemed like the dam burst: I baptized up to thirty adults every day.<sup>42</sup>

In the face of this religious activity, the chief ideological organs demanded “a real decrease in the number of the faithful and in the overall volume of religious rituals.” The local authorities responded by regularly doctoring the numbers. Occasionally, the central Communist Party authorities in Moscow and Kyiv were fed clearly falsified reports, validated neither by their authors nor by their superiors. For instance, the party leadership in Ternopil’ region in 1975 officially pegged the number of baptized newborns at 36 percent. In the same year, the leaders of Donetsk oblast, with a much smaller number of churches and much less religious activity, reported that 34.8 percent of all newborns were baptized. The Ternopil’ region was under much closer surveillance than were religious communities in Donetsk. Western Ukraine was pressured by party officials from Moscow and Kyiv to radically get rid of “the relapse into Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism,” and the vestiges of religious rituals, for which there was documented evidence. Therefore, as late as 1980 the oblast reported a much lower number of baptisms, 21.2 percent of the overall number of newborns, than the Donetsk oblast, which was under less pressure from above and therefore could afford to come up with a less “satisfactory” number, which in 1980 was 21.7 percent.

By 1985 the official numbers of recorded baptisms had completely parted ways with reality. For example, it was asserted that only 12.2 percent of newborns were baptized in the Ternopil’ region, whereas the proportion in the Donetsk region was 15.2 percent. As an inspector of the Council of Religious Affairs in Ukraine said, “Without a doubt, the number of so-called main religious rituals (baptisms, weddings and funerals) was substantially underreported. In some regions, officials sent to Kyiv statistics that were two to three times lower than the figures they knew to exist. Additionally, no one counted the number of rituals conducted in underground churches and in churches located in resort areas where people from churchless Siberia, the Urals and the Far East brought children to be baptized during the vacation season.”<sup>43</sup>

Mikhail Koltun, a bishop in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which was outlawed in 1946 and functioned underground until 1989, recalled: “How many children I have baptized secretly! I baptized the kids of party members, police, and other officials. They strived for spirituality too.”<sup>44</sup>

The desire of the local party committees and authorities to embellish the level of atheist achievement and “to color the truth” to be in line with expectations of the ideological apparatus were not the only reasons to substantially doctor the statistics of religiosity. They also sought to hide the widespread



practice of unofficially performing religious rites, that is, these activities were not registered by any church. Yet, even under such circumstances and despite the pressure to reduce numbers of religious participants on an annual basis, the official number of those who attended Easter services at Orthodox churches in Ukraine in 1978 totaled around 1.2 million people.<sup>45</sup>

It is worth recalling that Khrushchev's antireligious campaign met serious obstacles in western and, to a lesser extent, in Right Bank Ukraine.<sup>46</sup> According to the directive from Moscow during this campaign, Ukrainian authorities had to close half of all Orthodox Church buildings. In fact, during the late 1950s and early 1960s they almost achieved this task: In Crimea, 70 percent of all churches were closed; in the eastern region of Zaporizhzhia, 91 percent were closed; in Transcarpathia, because of the resistance of local authorities, they managed to close "only" 17 percent; and in Ternopil' 36 percent were closed.<sup>47</sup> Sometimes, buildings were closed only on paper. During the 1970s and 1980s, in many instances the Orthodox faithful demanded permission to recommence religious services in buildings that were closed during Khrushchev's rule. Hundreds of such appeals were sent to the CRA in Kyiv and Moscow, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the Supreme Councils of the USSR and Soviet Ukraine. In 1985, a total of 173 Ukrainian settlements filed such petitions. However, none of the petitions were granted. In response, in dozens of Ukrainian towns and villages, the faithful revived religious life in officially deregistered communities and opened closed church buildings without the permission of the authorities. For example, there was a case in the village of Broshniv in the Rozhnyativsky district of the Ivano-Frankivsk region when, in 1977, after the authorities refused to register the Orthodox congregation and closed it down, the faithful ripped off the padlock, repaired it, and recommenced collective prayers without a priest. According to the secretary of the local district executive committee, "Sometimes it came to open clashes. People gathered by ringing bells. Peasants wouldn't go to work for a few days because of the conflict. People said that they might kill anyone who tried to prevent the opening of a local church. I personally was threatened for this reason."<sup>48</sup>

After the Ukrainian Council for Religions refused to register the church in Rostock in the Ternopil' region, the faithful took over the church building. According to an inspector of the CRA, believers provided twenty-four-hour protection to the church from the local authorities. When the inspection was conducted, they quickly informed one another and announced that they were ready to protect the church in any way necessary. The Orthodox

community in Volyn' kept not only the keys to most of the unregistered churches but ritual objects from fifty-five closed churches in the region as well. And yet, according to the notes of the Central Committee's propaganda department in 1979, only in the Ternopil' region was worship regularly held in unregistered churches in sixty-five towns.<sup>49</sup>

A turning point came during official preparations for celebrating the Millennium of Christianity in Rus', which was celebrated in 1988. This event is critical to understanding the true state of religiosity in Ukraine. Preparations for the event made the faithful even more active in their desire to regain access to confiscated buildings and property. As CRA head Vladimir Kuroedov stated in an interview, the very first time that the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' Pimen (1910–90) raised the issue of the celebration on the governmental level was in 1977. The patriarch asked Kuroedov to help return Novodevichy Convent in Moscow to the Russian Orthodox Church under the auspices of preparations.<sup>50</sup> Such a request disturbed the party's ideologists who realized that the Church and believers might use the occasion to ask authorities to return confiscated churches all over the country. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Central Committee designed a widescale program of counterpropaganda measures to prevent use of the commemoration for anti-Soviet aims and for spurring a religious revival in connection with the 1988 event.<sup>51</sup>

The main objectives of the counterpropaganda campaign launched by the ideological department of the Communist Party of Ukraine were to minimize the impact of the commemoration on the republic's population and to preclude any significant attempts at religious revival; to block Ukrainian national aspirations and strengthening of the movement for legalizing the Greek Catholic Church; to neutralize the influence of Western Ukrainian and Ukrainian émigré institutions on other religious organizations and believers elsewhere in Soviet Ukraine by presenting "ideologically correct" interpretations of all issues concerning religion; and to use the commemoration for improving the image abroad of the USSR and Soviet Ukraine.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, as far back as 1981, the party Central Committee in Ukraine passed a secret resolution directed to local party committees and to executive committees of regional councils to prevent believers from petitioning for the return of confiscated church buildings and properties. Local authorities were instructed to occupy uninhabited buildings of deregistered communities with social institutions, art galleries, museums, and the like, even if these ramshackle church buildings were in a precarious state. This campaign was called the "exploration of uninhabited buildings" and was

put under the strict control of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Until the end of 1986, as many as 893 church buildings were “explored” in this manner.<sup>53</sup> Sometimes the conversion of church buildings to secular aims caused civil disobedience. Dairy workers at times refused to milk collective farm cows and tractor drivers hampered the sowing season because they chose to protect the churches from being taken over and used for secular purposes instead.

By the late 1980s, a deeply respectful attitude toward church-related values, religious holidays, and symbols became relatively common in Ukraine. Growing numbers of people became more open in celebrating religious holy days and more courageous in refusing to participate in the numerous sports, cultural, and propaganda events that were imposed by the party’s activists on religious holy days. People began to refuse to work on the most important holy days when they did not coincide with weekends in regions where traditional religious culture—and anti-Soviet sentiment—was preserved to the greatest degree, such as in Transcarpathia, Volyn’, Galicia, and Podilia. The authorities’ response was to introduce new proposals “to reinforce atheistic education.” Yet, this very education was facing growing resistance and even hostility. As Soviet values eroded, anticlericalism and atheism became increasingly unpopular, especially among the intelligentsia. Some members of the cultural elite, such as the worldwide acclaimed tenor Ivan Kozlovskiy (1900–93), demonstrated their aversion to atheism in a public and even aggressive manner by interrupting lecturers on atheism.<sup>54</sup> Lecturers on scientific atheism received a cool reception in scientific and research institutions. Often scholars and scientists openly refused to attend the semicompsory lectures.<sup>55</sup>

In a paradoxical manner, antiatheism combined, especially in Western Ukraine, with ironic and even wary attitudes toward Orthodox priests. On the one hand, the Church was perceived as an effective, oppositional force to the regime’s ideology. On the other hand, the idea of an intractable relationship between the Orthodox clergy and the party bureaucracy was taken for granted by the vast majority of Soviet citizens. This notion was frequently reflected in popular culture where the priests or bishops were portrayed as figures equal to party and state officials in the social hierarchy.<sup>56</sup> The belief that “all ‘holy joes’ [*poppy*] are communists” was widespread. This view was echoed by a professor of the Kyiv Pedagogical Institute who was responsible for providing lectures on atheism to workers and farmers in the different regions of Ukraine. He claimed that “when delivering a lecture to industrial workers or collective farmers I always insisted that a

religious outlook was incompatible with membership in the Communist Party. However, almost every time someone in the audience would claim that his or her friend, relative or neighbor personally met a priest with a Communist Party card.” Such moments left him with little recourse and he usually responded to such situations by stating that the Soviet Union’s party statutes demand that each communist fight against religious prejudice. Therefore, he added, the mission of clergymen is incompatible by definition with membership in the Communist Party.<sup>57</sup>

Commitment to uproot institutional religiosity began to soften in the early Brezhnev years, when the state closed forty-eight Orthodox churches on average annually from 1965 to 1974. From 1974 to 1987, it closed, only twenty-two churches on average annually. The ever-decreasing number of open churches enormously complicated the opportunities that individuals had for normal catechization and regular religious practice, community life, and so on. Therefore, all manner of occult and esoteric study groups also found fertile ground, creating a favorable environment for exotic teachings that allowed nonconfessional forms of mysticism to flourish at the same time that traditional religiosity thrived.

Xenia Kasyanova, a human rights activist and sociologist, who, on her own initiative, conducted provocative (although dangerous in those times) surveys.<sup>58</sup> A time had arrived, she concluded, when people could afford to develop a state of mind different from that prescribed by “the party, the government and Leonid Illyich personally.” As she explained:

A friend of mine, who was recently ordained, tried to convince me that all his friends who came to the faith did so in 1975. All as one. It can be discounted as a coincidence. Yet, 1975 truly did seem to be a breakthrough year. Both the intelligentsia and the youth turned to religion. . . . Our spirit was finally allowed to shrug off the shackles of reality . . . and it flew up. Yoga teachers, “bio-polarists,” clairvoyants, astrologists, teachers, and barefoot prophets became strikingly popular. The prohibition on miracles, the transcendent, and supernatural forces was lifted and people suddenly realized that many unusual and amazing things exist right next to them. They started listening. They started following those things.<sup>59</sup>

### Dissent and Religion: The About-Face

The middle 1970s and early 1980s saw the rise of such diverse religious phenomena as Orthodox Christian dissidence, mass baptisms of the urban

ntelligentsia, conversion to Orthodoxy of Jewish intellectuals and students, and the emergence of a new generation of Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church members; this Church's young priests and parishioners challenged the Soviet prohibition of it. In 1973, Volodymyr Prokopiv, a Ukrainian Catholic priest from Lithuania, came to L'viv Oblast and collected 12,000 signatures for a petition urging the state to lift the ban on the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine and then traveled to Moscow with the petition. The role of the Greek Catholic enclave can hardly be overestimated in the overall religious revival in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>60</sup> On the heels of Khrushchev's antireligious campaign, Galicia had become the most active hub of Orthodox communities that still embodied elements of national identity, which was instrumental in the formation of resistance against Soviet religious-national policies. Galician Orthodox communities also played an important role in the alliance of priests, monks, and nuns who refused to repudiate Catholicism and join the Russian Orthodox Church. They also made a critical contribution to the "quiet Ukrainization" of the Orthodox clergy. The proportion of Western Ukrainian students in Russian Orthodox theological schools was extremely high.<sup>61</sup> During the Brezhnev era, bishops who were ethnic Ukrainians became the largest ethnic group within the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>62</sup> At the Russian Orthodox Church's Local Council in 1990 two Ukrainians, Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko) and Volodymyr (Sabodan), would become real contenders for the Moscow patriarchal see.

Although the authorities continued to claim that Galicia's "debris of Uniatism" (Ukrainian Catholicism) was approaching its demise, classified documents dating from the period warned that much of the "debris" had been resurrected. They pointed out that the underground church was not decaying and even continued to attract new young priests. Notably, in the 1970s almost a quarter of all antireligious publications in the Soviet Ukraine press criticized a "nonexistent" Uniatism), and in the L'viv region Uniate criticism comprised one-half of all antireligious publications.<sup>63</sup> Local authorities were urged to closely survey underground monks and nuns and to prevent them from renting apartments to young people because it turned out that a number of such "tenants" took monastic vows.

In an effort to disentangle religion from nationality/ethnicity, and specifically to extricate the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church from anti-Soviet Ukrainian nationalism, the Orthodox clergy as well as the commissioners of the CRA demanded the abolition of all traces of Eastern-Rite Catholicism in the western oblasts of Ukraine, including architectural elements and liturgical and other ritual practices. Through the second half of the

1980s, the authorities were still confiscating liturgy books blessed by Andrei Sheptytsky and icons with burning hearts, which is a purely Catholic symbol not found in the Eastern Orthodox icon tradition. The Latin-rite crucifixes with Jesus' body hanging on three nails were exchanged for traditional Orthodox ones with four nails and a straight-handed figure of the Savior. In some Galician villages, such as the Dolynskiyi district in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, people who had been forcibly resettled from Poland or their descendants refused to attend services that "didn't mention the Pope." Thirty years after the 1946 L'viv Pseudo-Sobor—during which the 1596 Union of Brest agreement (which created the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church) was renounced and the property of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was transferred to the Russian Orthodox Church, with the intention of liquidating the Greek Catholic Church—the Orthodox dissident Anatoliy Krasnov-Levitin stated that "Uniatism in Western Ukraine is a mass movement. Persecution of this movement means not only religious oppression, but also restrictions on the ethnic rights of Western Ukrainians."<sup>64</sup> Ukrainian dissident Valentyn Moroz was more categorical:

The Uniate movement has grown into the spiritual body of Ukraine and has become a national symbol. . . . The [Uniate] Church is interwoven into cultural life so deeply that it is impossible to touch it without damaging the spiritual structure of the nation. . . . One must understand that a struggle against the Church means a struggle against national culture.<sup>65</sup>

By the mid-1980s, such views were widely held in Western Ukraine.

Another complication for party and KBG officials in Ukraine was the religious upheaval among Protestants. Secret reports emphasized the growth of Baptist, Pentecostal, and Adventist congregations. The proportion of young people in these congregations was also increasing. In large urban communities, youngsters made up no fewer than 30 percent of participants. Most Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, followers of the Council of Evangelical Baptist Churches, and Adventist-Reformist communities in Ukraine existed unofficially and their members faced unrelenting repression. Although there were obvious substantial theological differences among them, these religious groups were united by their common opposition to the existing legislation that regulated religious activities in the USSR, as well as by their conscious rejection of any form of cooperation with the government and their readiness to endure suffering for their convictions.

Because many religious communities of these denominations remained unregistered, the authorities continued to shut down their prayer gatherings

and fine organizers under the provisions of the March 26, 1966, *ukaz* (decree) of the republic's Supreme Council, "On the Administrative Responsibility for the Violation of Legislation on Religious Cults." This decree was passed in response to rallies of dissident Baptists and at least initially, was directed against them. Consequently, a substantial portion of the Protestants from unregistered communities (accounting for many thousands of people) were under surveillance by local authorities and KGB regional and district departments. The local party and civic organizations were assigned to "reeducate" them via publicly condemnations at specially convened village gatherings, parent-teacher conferences at schools, and so on. Their children were subjected to forced atheism, and the opposition to Soviet schools among Protestant families in general became heated and exhausting for the authorities. In response to massive and state-sponsored attacks, Evangelicals tried to build an emotional-psychological network that would be impenetrable by outsiders. Members of this network easily recognized one other by behavior, appearance, and even greetings. A family, normally an extended family, with three or more children was the core of this network, constituting a "home church," which proved to be a reliable foundation for a persecuted church in especially hard times. Dissident Evangelicals, Reformed Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses paid a high price for their unwillingness to yield, as is documented elsewhere in this volume. Practically all leaders of the dissident Baptist and Pentecostal groups, with very few exceptions, were repeatedly charged under the criminal code. Every year dozens of Jehovah's Witnesses were imprisoned as conscientious objectors. Some believers were tried more than once for the same transgression. Six out of seven leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses Council, all ethnic Ukrainians, were sentenced to long prison terms: S. Burak died in Kyiv's Lukyanivska Prison in 1946; M. Tsyba was imprisoned from 1946 to 1956, and again from 1960 to 1970; M. Dubovynskyi was imprisoned from 1944 to 1950, and again from 1957 to 1967; P. Zyatek was imprisoned from 1945 to 1955, and from 1960 to 1970; I. Pashkovskyi was imprisoned from 1947 to 1956; and M. Dasevych was imprisoned from 1944 to 1950.<sup>66</sup>

D. Kovalewsky, who analyzed ninety-nine cases of religiously motivated protests by Soviet citizens, discovered that the majority of protests known to the West originated in three republics—Lithuania (33.3 percent), Russia (29.3 percent), and Ukraine (24.4 percent). Unregistered Baptists were responsible for 40 percent of the protests, Lithuanian Catholics for 34.3 percent, and Ukrainian Greek Catholics for 8.1 percent.<sup>67</sup> Evangelicals

produced unique, sometimes even desperate, forms of resistance to the “godless state,” including samizdat memoirs of suffering (which Olena Panych analyzes in chapter 7 of this volume), mass demonstrations, defiant public meetings of youth, prayer gatherings for prisoners, and the Pentecostal movement for emigration from the USSR, which was the most unexpected event by KGB and party officials.<sup>68</sup>

The long-standing and exhausting oppositional stance to the secular world that was upheld by these religious communities and used as a justification for trying to destroy them and to prove the futility of a Christian way of life, contributed to the formation of many common features among Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. All had a specific organizational model of communal life that included a strictly fixed and demanding understanding of membership upheld by severe sanctions for violating communal rules, unshakable confidence in the truthfulness and righteousness of their chosen way of life, the exercise of strict community control over all areas of a believer’s life, binding orders for all members to maintain a “critical distance” from the profane world, a very pronounced group self-awareness, deliberate fostering of a group psychology and collective memories to forge unity, and sincere efforts to save a fallen world and bring salvation by spreading Protestant beliefs and converting dissidents and nonbelievers. This sectarian model of communal life (in the sociological sense, not that of Soviet propaganda) was formed by and large in response to secularizing pressures imposed by the Soviet state.<sup>69</sup> The regime’s aspiration to put an end to the religious underground and, at the same time, the stiff resistance of these underground communities to the regime was a dramatic, albeit sometimes tragic, page in the history of those times.

In the meantime, the Soviet intelligentsia underwent a generational change. The “men of the sixties” who had been inspired by the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Khrushchev’s “thaw” and were mainly indifferent to religion, began to have less of a voice.<sup>70</sup> They still believed in the advantages of socialism, although they recognized that it had been distorted, violated, and crushed by Stalinists. Those who followed in their footsteps no longer believed in the ideals of “the commissars in dusty helmets.”<sup>71</sup>

A Ukrainian human rights activist and teacher of literature, Valeriy Marchenko (1947–84), who perished in a Soviet prison, shrewdly described the mood of those who took the place of the “men of the 1960s”:<sup>72</sup>



The realm of the spirit is a phenomenon that until recently remained unknown and mysterious to us. . . . And as for conscious Ukrainians, it is a generous gift that will surely bear fruit, once we invest all our spirited devotion to it.<sup>73</sup>

The Ukrainian human rights activists Oksana Meshko, Oles' Berdnyk, Ivan Kandyba, and other members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group pointed out in their 1976 manifesto that they aspired "to familiarize the Ukrainian and global community with the facts of violations of . . . religious rights." From its very beginning, the Ukrainian human rights movement was inspired by figures with deep religious convictions, such as Father Vasyl' Romanyuk (1925–95); Patriarch Volodymyr of Kyiv and All Ukraine-Rus', who served from 1993 to 1995; Georgyi Vins, secretary of the Council of Evangelical Baptist Churches; Myroslav Marynovich, the current vice rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University; and Zynovyi Antonyuk, a prominent figure in the Ukrainian Orthodox revival of the late 1980s.

In February 1977, Levko Lukyanenko, a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, published his "Christmas Appeal to Engaged Atheists," in which he claimed that religion was for Ukrainian activists a battlefield for human rights and freedoms:

Have you ever come to church? Not with hammers to smash crucifixes, not with the keys to lock out parishioners, not with hate, but with an open heart? No, you most certainly haven't. Because if you had, you would have at least once stepped in front of the high dome over the iconostasis and looked to the One, who instead of the heathen moral justice maxim, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," gave people the principle of magnanimity, who urged people not to respond to evil with evil, but to forgive. You would have understood how strongly Christianity contributed to softening human habits and how considerably it forwarded people from initial barbarism to humanity!<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusion

The revival of religion in Ukraine reflected serious shifts, if not tectonic dislocations, within the entire Soviet Union. Toward the end of the 1970s, the eschatological prospect of communism with its kingdom of heaven on earth was finally desacralized. Ironically, this quasireligious surrogate appeared to be "secularized" by modernization, rationalization and, especially, by globalization, "which destroyed all closed borders and destroyed communism before our very eyes," as Fr. Vladimir Zelinskii said.<sup>75</sup> The Soviet

“gospel” had been discredited. Technocratic enthusiasm waned in spite of the breakthroughs of Soviet science and especially the cosmic odyssey of the first Soviet astronauts who had to prove that “heaven is empty.” As Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock argues, “The story of the conquest of the cosmos in Soviet atheism lays bare the paradox of the attempt to invest scientific materialism with a spiritual center. Not only did Soviet space achievements fail to produce mass religious disbelief, they also revealed the ideological pitfalls of the utopia promised by Marxism-Leninism.”<sup>76</sup> The Soviet people increasingly perceived the furious attacks on religion as senseless and counterproductive—they were not only attacks against human dignity and human rights but against social stability as well.<sup>77</sup> It was this very perception in the late 1980s that led to the rapid cessation of the system of atheist education and advocacy of antireligious policies as well as to an acknowledged and widespread consensus of the significance of religion, a consensus that was rarely heard in Soviet society at that time in many other types of discussions of the country’s future.

### Notes

1. Eloquent biblical themes and spiritual motifs appear in the poetry of prominent Ukrainian dissidents, e.g., Vasyl’ Stus (1938–85), who spent half of his life in prison, and Yehen Sverstiuk (b. 1928), and in the poetry of Ukrainian poets Lina Kostenko (b. 1930) and Iryna Zhylenko (b. 1941). See, e.g., R. R. Halytska, “Religious-Spiritual Discourse of Feminine Poetry of the 1960s (On the Works of Emma Andievska, Anna-Maria Holod, Iryna Zhylenko, Zoreslava Koval, Lina Kostenko and Marta Melnychuk-Oberraukh),” Ph.D. diss., Vasyl Stefanyk Transcarpathian National University, 2008.

2. Nikolai Berdyaev, “Russkii dukhovnyi renesans nachala XX v. i Zhurnal *Put’*” [The Russian spiritual renaissance of the early XX century and the journal *Put’*], *Put’* 49 (1935), 12–13, <http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Philosophy/Sui-Generis/Berdyaev/essays/rsr.htm>.

3. Nicolas Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

4. Karel Berghoff, “Chi bulo religiyne vidrodzhennya v Ukraini pid chas natsistskoi okupatsii?” *Ukrainskyi istorychnyi zhurnal* 3 (2005): 16–36.

5. N. A. Kolesnik, ed., “Regulations Concerning the Religious Organizations in the Ukrainian SSR (for Official Use Only), Collection of Documents and Data on Religion and the Church (Kyiv: Redaktsionno-izdatel’skii otdel MVD USSR, 1983), 75–88.

6. Vladimir Chivilikhin (1928–84) and Vasili Belov (b. 1932) are both prominent Soviet and Russian novelists, eloquent antiliberals and anti-Westernists, and proponents of an exclusively Russian historical pathway and world mission.

7. Alexander Prokhanov (b. 1938) is a Soviet and Russian journalist, novelist, and political figure, and one of the most consistent supporters of the idea of a Russian

imperial future. For his rapturous essays about the USSR's military power and Soviet military action in Afghanistan, he was nicknamed by political opponents as the "nightingale of the [Soviet Army] General Staff."

8. "Vasilyev's "Pamyat" (Memory) is a national patriotic organization led by Dmitrii Vasilyev (1945–93). During the 1980s, it was Russia's best-known Russian nationalist organization.

9. Hegumen Innokentyi (Pavlov) considered the possible attitudes of the high-ranking Orthodox hierarchy toward such political evolution, and quoted the most prominent and energetic among them in the 1960s and 1970s, Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov, 1929–78). In a trusted circle of confidants, he admitted, "Wait a while. We will reach a time when the Politburo [of the Communist Party's Central Committee] will be begin [meetings] by singing the 'Heavenly Father.'" Hegumen Innokentyi (Pavlov), "Outgoing Epoch," *Russkaya mysl'* 4313 (2000). See also Vladimir Bondarenko, "'Russkii orden' v TsK partii: Mifi i real'nost'—Beseda s predsedatelem Soiuzu pisatelei Rossii Valeriem Ganichevim" ["Russian order" in Party's Central Committee: Myths and reality—Conversation with the chairman of the Union of Writers of Russia Valeryi Ganichev], *Russkoe Voskresenie. Pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost'*, no. 109 (July 18, 2002).

10. David E. Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975), 105.

11. V. V. Melnikov and T. O. Tserbaev, "Opinion Poll on the Jubilee," *1000-Year Anniversary of the Baptism of Rus'* (Moscow: Academy of Social Sciences of CC CPSU, 1989), 88–89.

12. "My colleagues and I personally could not convince our commanders in Moscow to allow us to put a stop to traditional antireligious rhetoric while conducting political propaganda among Afghan militants. Old generals from the Political Command of the Soviet Army and Navy assessed the rejection of antireligious agitation as a revision of the foundations of Marxism-Leninism. They insisted that we never would be successful in our goals so long as the Afghan people were under the influence of the 'reactionary teachings of Islam.' For that antireligious propaganda, which had an eloquent anti-Islamic character, we paid with our soldiers' lives." P.D., staff member of the commissioner for human rights of Ukraine from 1979 to 1982 and political adviser to the Soviet military contingent in Afghanistan, interview by the author, September 1999.

13. At the Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1922, Vladimir Lenin made the following revealing statement: "Ukraine is an independent republic, and this is very good. However, . . . there lie cunning people and the Central Committee [of the Communist Party of Ukraine] cannot claim that they fool us, but somehow they move aside us." V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 45, 105–6.

14. For more detail, see Victor Yelensky, *Derzhavno-Tserkovni vidnosini na Ukraini, 1917–1990* [Church and State in Ukraine, 1917–1990] (Kyiv: Znannya, 1991).

15. Vladimir Kuroedov (1906–94) headed the Council for Russian Orthodox Affairs from 1960 until its merger with the Council for Religious Cult Affairs into the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the Soviet Council of Ministers in 1965. He then headed the combined Council from 1965 to 1984. For a 2,200-word fragment of his only interview to the press (excluding several "parade" interviews in support of official propaganda on the "triumph of Socialist freedom of conscience"), see Vladimir Kuroedov, "Chleni Politbiuro ne buli dobrimi christianami . . ." [Members of Politbiuro Were Not Good Christians . . .], *Lyudyna i Svit* 1 (1992), 16–22.

16. The best-known concession of Soviet power to Georgian nationalism was reinstatement of the constitutional status of the Georgian language as Georgia's official state language after mass street demonstrations in Tbilisi on April 14, 1978. The Communist Party of Georgia, and even its leader Edward Shevardnadze, supported the demonstrators. The Trans-Caucasian republics were the only republics within the USSR where national languages had an official status written into their respective constitutions.

17. See, e.g., C. I. Peters, "The Georgian Orthodox Church," in *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Petro Ramet (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1988), 307.

18. V.K., head of the Section for Religious Affairs attached to Odessa region administration, former commissioner of Council for Religious Affairs attached to Soviet Ukraine's Council of Ministers for the Odessa region from the late 1970s through the 1980s, interview with the author, in Puscha-Voditsa, near Kyiv, November 1993.

19. P.P., retired state official, first deputy head of Council for Religious Affairs attached to the Council of Ministers of Soviet Ukraine in the 1970s and 1980s, interview by the author, Kyiv, September 11–13, 1993.

20. L.S., retiree, former head of the Shahtarsk City Council's Executive Committee in 1970s, and commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the Council of Ministers of Soviet Ukraine for the Donetsk region in the 1980s, interview by the author, Donetsk, August 1997.

21. See James Thrower, *Marxist-Leninist "Scientific Atheism" and the Study of Religion and Atheism in the USSR* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1983), esp. chap. 7, "'Scientific Atheism' and the 'Concrete' Sociological Study of Religion and Atheism in the USSR."

22. E.F., deputy director of the Institute for Scientific Atheism attached to Academy of Social Sciences of the Communist Party's Central Committee in 1980s, interview by the author, Moscow, May 1991.

23. Aleksandr Belov, ed., *Ateizm i religii: Voprosy i otvety* [Atheism and religion: Questions and answers] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1986), 34.

24. O.B., head of Department of Atheist Literature of Politizdat SSSR, interview by the author, Moscow, August 1988.

25. *Konkretnye Issledovaniia Sovremennykh Religioznykh Verovaniia: Metodika, Organizatsiia, Rezul'taty* [Specific Surveys of Contemporary Religious Believers] (Moscow: Mysl', 1967), 63–83.

26. William C. Fletcher, *Soviet Believers: The Religious Sector of the Population* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1981), 14–15, 211–13.

27. *Ibid.*, 69–70.

28. *Ibid.*, 211–13.

29. "Document 173, Council for Religious Affairs, Moscow, No. 134S, May 7, 1985, Copy No. 1," in *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader*, edited by Felix Corley (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 299–300, 302.

30. Olexander Bazchan and Yuri Danylyuk, *Viprobuвання вірою* [The trial by faith] (Kyiv: Institut Istorii Ukraini, 2000), 273.

31. See Lilian Voyer and Karel Dobbelaere, "Roman Catholicism: Universalism at Stake," in *Religions sans Frontières? Present and Future Trends of Migration, Culture, and Communication*, edited by Roberto Cipriani (Rome: Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Dipartimento per l'Informazione e l'Editoria, 1994), 83, 92.

32. Cristel Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union: A Sociological Study* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978), 44.

33. L. A. Prokovschenkov, *Osobennosti proiavlennia i sotsial'no-psikhologicheskie faktory sokhraneniia religioznosti sredi rabotaiushchei molodezhi* [The peculiarities of expression and social-psychological factors of preserving religiosity among young workers], dissertation abstract, candidate in the philosophical sciences, AON pri TSK KPSS, Moscow, 1979.

34. E. A. Filimonov, ed., *Aktual'nie Problemy Nauchno-Ateisticheskogo Vospitaniia Molodezhi* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1983), 68.

35. Sergei Averintsev, "Mi i nashi ierarkhi" [Our hierarchies and us], in *Sophia-Logos*, edited by Sergei Averintsev (Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 1999), 350.

36. Paul A. Lucey, "The Soviet Press on Religion and Youth," *Religion in Communist Lands* 10, no. 2 (1982): 206–9, citing *Molodoi Kommunist* ([Young Communist], no. 8 (1975): 193.

37. Ieromonah Nikon, "Vpechatleniia ochevidtsa" [An eyewitness's impression], *Vestnik RKhD* no. 132 (1980): 206–7.

38. H. L. Biddulph, "Religious Participation of Youth in the USSR," *Soviet Studies* 31, no. 3 (1979): 417–33.

39. Gerhard Simon, *Church, State and Opposition in the USSR* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 107.

40. Y.C., businessman, instructor to Kherson regional committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party in the 1980s, interview by the author, Moscow, May 1993.

41. I.B., Ukrainian diplomat, who in 1980 was an instructor in the Rivne Regional Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, interview by the author, Kyiv, September 1995.

42. Fr. A.Z., archpriest of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Moscow Patriarchate in the 1980s, who was a priest at Saint Makarios Church in Kyiv, interview by the author, Kyiv, January 1998.

43. V.S., staff member of the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commission for Spirituality and Culture, inspector for the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the Ukraine Republic Council of Ministers, and occasional lecturer at the Tovaristvo Znania (Knowledge Society) in the 1980s, interview by the author, Kyiv, February 1997.

44. "Ya viris u Tserkvi . . ." [I grew up in the Church . . .], *Lyudyna i Svit* 1 (1998): 34. From Mikhaïl Koltun, bishop of Zboriv Diocese, Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, interview by the author, 1998.

45. Petro Bondarchuk, "Religiyna povedinka pravoslavnih viruyuchih v Ukraini: Osoblivosti i tendetsii zmin (seredina 1940-h—seredina 1980-h rr)" [Religious behavior of Orthodox faithful in Ukraine: Peculiarities and tendencies of change, mid-1940s to mid-1980s], *Ukrainskyi istorichnyi zhurnal* no. 3 (2007): 143.

46. In the mid-1980s, 56 percent of all religious organizations in Ukraine were located in seven western regions that were not part of the USSR before the World War II, compared with less than 2 percent in the most populous Donbass region. One of the most crucial factors explaining this disparity is that the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches played a salient role in the process of national identity formation for Ukrainians under Habsburg, Polish, Czech, and Hungarian rule, whereas the Orthodox Church in the Russian Empire, as a pillar of a common Ukrainian-Russian identity, could not play such a role. Comparative surveys of religiosity in Central and Eastern Ukraine show

direct correlations between the role of religious institutions in nation building and religious behavior. The more salient this role is, the more consistent religious behavior is.

47. Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchych orhaniv vlady ta upravlinnia Ukrainy, known as TsDAVO), f 4648, op. 1, sprava 433, ark. 1.

48. Nadezhda Beliakova, "Iz istorii registratsii religioznykh ob'edinenii v Ukraine i Belorussii v 1976–1986 godakh" [On the history of registration of religious communities in Ukraine and Belorussia in 1976–1986], *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 3 (2008): 120–34.

49. *Ibid.*, 129.

50. Novodevichy Convent was returned to the Moscow Eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2010.

51. Vladimir Kuroedov, head of the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the USSR Council of Ministers, interview by the author, Moscow, December 1991.

52. See *Aktual'nye problemy ateisticheskoi kontrpropagandy, DSP* [Current problems of atheist counterpropaganda, for service use only], no. 3 (Kyiv: Politzdat Ukrainy, 1985), 5–32; *Aktual'nye problemy ateisticheskoi kontrpropagandy, DSP* [Current problems of atheist counterpropaganda, for service use only], no. 4 (Kyiv: Politzdat Ukrainy, 1987), 5–28.

53. *Aktual'nye problemy ateisticheskoi kontrpropagandy*, no. 4, 7.

54. O.B., interview.

55. V.S., interview.

56. Here is an example of the type of joke that was inspired by such paradoxical perspectives: An Orthodox bishop and the secretary of the regional committee of Communist Party shared the compartment of a railway carriage. Both had a meal. Surprised that the bishop's meal was more expensive and less common than his, the secretary asked the bishop how he had managed to get hold of such rare commodities. It would be easy for you also, the bishop replied, if your Communist Party had managed to separate itself from the state.

57. Yu.E., associate professor at the Kyiv Pedagogical University in the 1970s and 1980s, interview by the author, Kyiv, December 1994.

58. "Xenia Kasyanova" is a pseudonym for the prominent Russian sociologist Valentina Chesnokova (1934–2010). The political circumstances of the 1970s forced her to conduct her survey on Russian national psychology secretly. However, some young, and now well-known, sociologists and mathematicians voluntarily helped her with the processing of questionnaires that contained hundreds of questions.

59. Ksenia Kasianova, *Osobennosti russkogo natsional'nogo kharaktera* [The peculiarities of the Russian national character] (Moscow: Institute of the National Model of Economics, 1994), 238.

60. "Khronika Katolicheskoi Tserkvi na Ukraine" [Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Ukraine], *Radio Liberty*, January 3, 1985.

61. E.g., in the mid-1980s Western Ukrainians constituted more than a half of all students of Leningrad Theological seminary. See S. N. Pavlov, "O sovremennom sostoianii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi" [On the current state of the Russian Orthodox Church], *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 4 (1987): 42. The same author noted that numerous Western Ukrainian students came almost exclusively from rural areas and argued that in Western Ukrainian cities, especially among the intelligentsia, people were

more devoted to the Greek Catholic Church. Hegumen Innokentii Pavlov, "Prisutstvie Moskovskoi Patriarkhii v Galitsii: Istoriia i itogi" (The presence of Moscow Patriarchate in Galicia: History and outcome), in *Ukrainskaia Greko-Katolicheskaia Tserkov': Preodolenie mifa* [The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church: The overcoming of myths] (Moscow: Institut izuchenia religii v stranakh SNG i Baltii, 2002), 69.

62. Nikolai Mitrokhin and Sofia Timofeeva, *Episkopy i eparkhii Russkoi pravoslavnoi Tserkvi* [The bishops and dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church] (Moscow: Panorama, 1997), 15–19.

63. See *Stanovlennya i rozvitok masovoho ateizmu v zahidnih oblastyakh Ukrainy'skoi SSR* (Formation and development of mass atheism in the western regions of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) (Kyiv: Naukova Dymka, 1981), 183–84.

64. Anatolii Levitin-Krasnov, "V oboroni Ukrainskoyi Katolitskoi Tserkvi" [Defending the Ukrainian Catholic Church], *Suchasnist'*, no. 1 (1975): 108.

65. Valentyn Moroz, *A Chronicle of Resistance in Ukraine* (Baltimore: Smoloskyp, 1970), 2, 5.

66. Sergei Ivanenko, *O liudyakh, nikogda ne rasstaiushchikhsia s Bibliiei* [On people who never part with the Bible] (Moscow: Respublika, 1999), 242–48.

67. D. Kovalewsky, "Religious Belief in the Brezhnev Era: Renaissance, Resistance and Realpolitik," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 19, no. 3 (September 1980): 284.

68. See "Open Letter to the President of the USA, Mr. Jimmy Carter, from the Christians of Evangelical Faith, Pentecostals and Baptists Whom Soviet Officials Refuse the Right to Emigrate," September 1979, <http://www.memo.ru/history/diss/carter/files/14-eng.doc>. See also Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007), 1, 90–94.

69. Even during perestroika, Protestant leaders admitted the presence of sectarian features in their congregations. "Nowadays, the days of blessed opportunities and changes, it is especially hurtful to realize that certain sectarian manifestations in our church hinder it from accomplishing its ministry to the fullest," wrote an Adventist. O. Senin, in "Sakta ili Tserkov'?" (Sect or Church?), *Tserkov' ostatka*, no. 2 (1988). These sentiments were echoed by a Baptist, who wrote, "It is evident we will need a great deal of time before we are ready to admit that the traditions formed in the local churches and the spirit of evangelical teaching are not identical concepts, as a Baptist theologian thinks. No Christian denomination has escaped various traditional developments. Sad faces, secluded lives, neglected ethics, the rejection of cultural heritage—all of this is a serious obstacle for many truth seekers." G. Serhienko, "Vy budete mne svideteliami" [You shall be my witnesses], *Bratskii vestnik* 6 (1988): 65.

70. The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, February 14–26, 1956, is famous for Nikita Khrushchev's "Secret Speech," which denounced Joseph Stalin and his "cult of personality" and condemned the repressions of the 1930s and 1940s. The Khrushchev Thaw is the period from the middle 1950s to the early 1960s when repression in the Soviet Union was reversed. Millions of Soviet political prisoners were released due to Khrushchev's policies of de-Stalinization.

71. The line is from Bulat Okudzhava's lyrics for "Sentimental March." The idealization of "the Commissars in Dusty Helmets" as true Leninists, as knights without fear and above reproach, who later became victims of Stalinist repression, became a necessary element in the mythology of the liberal wing of the Soviet intelligentsia in the

late 1950s and 1960s. See, e.g., Andrei Piontkowsky, “The Russian Sphinx: Hope and Despair,” in *Spring in Winter: The 1989 Revolutions*, edited by Gwyn Prins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 174.

72. Valerii Marchenko was first arrested in 1973 and was sentenced to six years imprisonment and two years exile. He was arrested for a second time in 1983.

73. Marchenko Valerii, *Listi materi z nevoli* [Letters to mother from captivity] (Kyiv: Olzhich Foundation, 1994), 374.

74. Levko Lukyanenko, “Marksists’ka teoriya nespromozchna vytysnity viry v Boga, zayavlyae Luk’yanenko u Zvernenni do ateistiv” [Marxist theory is incapable of banishing faith in God, states Lukyanenko in his appeal to atheists], *Svoboda*, September 20, 1977, 8.

75. Fr. Vladimir Zelinskii, “Pravoslavie i Globalizatsiia: Vzgliad iz zapada” [Orthodoxy and globalization: The view from the West], 2001, [http://www.Kyiv-orthodox.org/culture/modern/zelinsky\\_global.htm](http://www.Kyiv-orthodox.org/culture/modern/zelinsky_global.htm).

76. Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock, “Cosmic Enlightenment: Cosmonauts and the Conquest of Space in Soviet Atheist Education,” in *Into the Cosmos: Space Exploration and Soviet Culture*, edited by James T. Andrews and Asif A. Siddiqi (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

77. “In the mid-1980s, I was routinely asked during my lectures, ‘Why can’t the state leave believers in peace? Why must the Communist Party try to reeducate people who are good citizens and productive in their workplace? Why is trust in communism incompatible with trust in God?’” From V.S., interview.