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# THE WITNESS

## GOD & 'MOTHER RUSSIA'



Bill & Polly Spofford  
Paul Valliere  
Mary Lou Suhor  
And other Soviet  
sojourners . . .

# Letters

## What P.B. might have said

Here is what Bishop Browning *might* have said about homosexuality, in response to the Editorial Board of THE WITNESS (September issue):

### My Dear Friends:

Your Open Letter is particularly welcome to me because of its timeliness. As we all know, there are countless gay men and lesbians who are devout, responsible members of the church, a number of them in the clergy (including the episcopate) and in key lay roles.

Too little is still known about homosexuality. What part does it play in God's plan of creation? *Why* are there gay people? Clearly, to be gay goes far beyond "what one does in bed." There is a gay ethnicity, a gay sensibility, that can be traced through human history. What does it *mean*?

The majority culture has long consigned homosexuals to life inside a maligned ghetto. The majority culture has done the same thing to Blacks, Latinos, Asians and others, even as it has exacted from women a grim duty to follow prescribed roles if they would be admitted to positions of power by the established patriarchy, and on its own timetable.

No ghetto is healthy. Neither is a majority culture that consigns people to a ghetto.

The church has understood and taught that marriage is the norm of sexual expression. Yet, with half the marriages in various locations ending in divorce, and untold numbers of women and men living together outside of marriage (especially prior to marriage itself), clearly the church has a responsibility to address *these* people in a loving, nurturing, pastoral way. The biblical texts, which in selected passages seem to pass judgment on

pre-marital sex, adultery and homosexuality, do offer a basic expression of God's love, acceptance and redemption. Nor does the Bible condemn simply so-called "hot" sins; it speaks even more strongly against the so-called "cold" sins of self-righteousness and pharisaical condemnation of others on the basis of "spiritual legalities."

I hear you asking me for a pastoral response.

First, I believe that no one should presume or dare to stand between a person and Jesus. Who among us is, in any case, able to cast the first stone at another? We confront this reality within the Eucharist in the General Confession.

Second, I believe that the church must be a witness of reconciliation always, everywhere. Of course, one cannot speak lightly or glibly of reconciliation. Sometimes it is also necessary to witness prophetically to shatter a false peace, or an unjust system, as a very part of the process of reconciliation itself.

Third, I believe that Jesus' sacrifice for our sins puts our guilt and self-rejection within the healing presence of hope and grace. This places a severe yoke upon those, for example, who condemn gay people and act out that condemnation in hostility, coldness and rejection. If Jesus' sacrifice for our sins brings our self-rejection into the realm of hope and grace, it falls upon the church — claiming to be Christ's body — to offer an approximation of that same hope and grace without equivocation, lukewarmness or smugness.

The resolution concerning the ordination of homosexuals which was passed at the 1979 General Convention mistakenly dealt with procedure instead of the deeper question of inclusiveness. It is

tragic that a number of sincere women and men who have offered themselves to Jesus Christ in the form of church ministry since then have been — how shall I put it? clobbered — in the ordination process itself.

I look forward to growing more conversant with this issue, and will resolutely enter into dialogue with a number of gay and lesbian members of the church, both clergy and laity, in order to further the process of information, dialogue, and mutually growing closer together.

I pray that the process ahead will be conducted by the Holy Spirit working through us as instruments of God's will.

### Your Presiding Bishop

The above is my fantasy offering. I hope to be writing for THE WITNESS soon about related, real-world matters.

**Malcolm Boyd**  
**Santa Monica, Cal.**

*(Malcolm Boyd is writer-priest-in-residence at St. Augustine-by-the-Sea Episcopal Church. His 22nd book, Gay Priest: An Inner Journey, has just been published by St. Martin's Press. — Ed.)*

## Quote out of context

Bishop Browning in the September WITNESS quotes me as follows: "The Christian tradition over the centuries has affirmed the heterosexual, monogamous, faithful marital union as normative for the divinely given meaning of the intimate sexual relationship." The quotation is accurate, but in isolation from its context it has been misunderstood.

First, it was clearly intended to be a historical observation, not a moral judgment. As a matter of historical record, the Christian tradition over many centuries justified slavery, male superiority, divine right of kings, and many other beliefs and practices later reconsidered. To record such traditions is not to argue for them.

Second, the statement was preceded by a criticism of the kind of judgmentalism that often victimizes homosexual people.

Third, the statement was preceded by a sentence saying: "Christian judgments on human conduct are subject to change."

Fourth, the statement (first printed in 1969, then reprinted without my knowledge in 1980) called on Christians to look for "new sources of information and insight." If I were writing on the subject now, I would take account of new information and insights that have become available since I first wrote. But that is another task. For the moment I wish only to correct misunderstandings of the sentence that Bishop Browning quoted. I do not accuse him of distorting my meaning, but I have been shown how easily the sentence, in isolation, can be misunderstood.

**Roger L. Shinn**

**Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics  
Union Theological Seminary**

## Church needs purgation

I was surprised to read that Bishop Browning is "not familiar" and knows "no details" about my forced resignation from a North Carolina parish. One week following my resignation, I wrote him in vivid detail and included four newspaper accounts of the controversy.

Five weeks later, Bishop Browning replied to me, urging me to exercise "prudence" in any future ministry, and to seek "reconciliation" and a "pastoral relationship" with my North Carolina rector and bishop.

Bishop Browning, you and other bishops surrender your capacity to be pastors to me and other gay/lesbian clergy, because you have administrative control over parts of our lives and ministries. How in the world can lesbian/gay persons ever be ministered to by religious homophobes when parts of our basic selves are denied, ridiculed, considered to be evil and needing to be exorcised, or

even worse, hidden?

The church that demands us to lie, be nice cuddly curates and not advocate lesbian/gay rights is one in need of purgation, love and forgiveness.

**The Rev. Zalmon O. Sherwood  
Jackson, Mich.**

## Community impaired

I am one of the two people to whom the first lines of THE WITNESS' Open Letter refer. I want to make clear that the issue of ordination of open lesbians and gay men is larger than either Zal Sherwood's case or my own. Our particular situations are the result of a heterosexual and homophobic world/church which impacts heavily on the day-to-day lives of lesbians and gay men. Indeed, it is church tradition and teaching which too often is used to justify social policies which discriminate against us. Note, for instance, the recent Supreme Court decision on sodomy as well as the current AIDS phobia which permeates our lives.

In such a context, to fail to pursue proactive measures to rectify the injustices perpetrated against lesbians and gay men in the church is to continue to abide in a land of "fear and faithlessness."

I found Bishop Browning's points in response to the Editorial Board, while important, to contain some serious limitations.

If we are to foster relationship among ourselves, God, and Jesus, then that relationship must be, as Bishop Browning points out, guided by a ministry of compassion. But that compassion must entail a *passion with* — a standing with — those who are oppressed — in this particular case, lesbians and gay men. This requires a willingness on the part of the church to cease discriminatory actions and hold open the doors of the churches for the oppressed. A ministry of compassion ultimately fails if it does not include the presence of self-affirming lesbians and gay men in all aspects of the

church's ministry.

In exercising the ministry of compassion, Bishop Browning asserts that the church must "foster reconciliation." We are faced with the danger, though, of premature reconciliation in which by pursuing the *via media*, we avoid the painful confrontation of the issues. Reconciliation cannot take place in the presence of injustice. Without justice there can be no peace. In the same manner, the church cannot be a "community where love and grace abound" if lesbians and gay men are continually asked to hide who we are in order to be acceptable. Until General Convention endorses the acceptance, ordination, and deployment of qualified lesbians and gay men, our relationship to one another in the church community is seriously impaired. May we all become movers from the land of fear and faithlessness to the land of love and faithfulness.

**Anne Gilson**

**New York, N.Y.**

## 'Normative' code word

Bishop Browning was present, I believe, for the installation of Desmond Tutu as Archbishop of Capetown and heard the prophet say that "Many years ago we [Blacks] were thought to be human, but not quite as human as White people, for we lacked what seemed to be indispensable to that humanity, a particular skin color. Have things changed? Yes and no. I am sad to say that I believe that the fundamental attitude that 'Blacks are human, but . . .' has not changed. We do not express it with the same crudity, but it remains all the same."

As a gay person, as an ordained person, I read in Bishop Browning's September response to the WITNESS an attitude, perhaps not even conscious, that sees gay and lesbian people as somehow human, but not quite so. The humanity — the suffering humanity in specific in-

*Continued on page 24*

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# THE WITNESS



## Table of Contents

- 
- 6**     **Summer in the Soviet**  
Paul Valliere
- 
- 10**    **Building bridges twixt adversaries**  
Bill and Polly Spofford
- 
- 14**    **Soviet influence today**
- 
- 18**    **Mother Church/'Mother Russia': The double burden of peace**  
Mary Lou Suhor
- 
- 22**    **Human rights debated**  
John P. Burgess
- 
- 26**    **Vignettes from the U.S.S.R.**
- 

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## Baiting the Red bear

**R**onald Reagan returned empty-handed from the Reykjavik summit. Apparently he fervently believes, "The Lord is my Shepherd . . . but just in case . . . I'll keep Star Wars."

His failure to deal with Mikhail Gorbachev after the Soviets had offered a briefcase-full of creative motions toward peace affirms, sadly, what Sovietologist Marshal Shulman said earlier this year: When it comes to bargaining around nuclear arms control, the United States and the U.S.S.R are "out of sync."

"In the 40 years I have studied the Soviet Union, I have not seen a time when they were more interested in trying to negotiate with the United States," Shulman told 140 peace pilgrims prior to their departure for the U.S.S.R. under the aegis of the National Council of Churches. "But the United States is out of phase with

that. We have been preaching to them for a long time on the virtues of arms control. But now we are in a period of nationalism in our life, and as a result, nothing is coming of it."

In view of the recurring failures at the top, the U.S.-U.S.S.R. people to people visits such as those described in this issue become more and more vital to demystifying the Russian threat. In addition, these visits have unveiled a vital faith in that country, where Christians alone far outnumber the 19 million members of the Communist Party.

Further, a recent issue of *The Defense Monitor*, published by the Center for Defense Information, Washington, D.C. is most helpful in examining the role of fear and how it influences foreign policy: "Many Americans fear that Communist subversion and conquest are on the increase. The

opposite is the case. After World War II the Soviets had significant influence in 9% of the world's nations. They peaked at 15% in the late 1950s, dropping back to 11% today. Of the 164 other countries in the world, the Soviets have significant influence in 18." (See map pp. 14-15.)

In a speech following the summit, President Reagan said that he has always regarded the American people as "full participants" at the bargaining table.

It will take the best efforts of peace activists and other grass-roots citizens to say "Deal us out. We want no part of the Star Wars holdup."

Then the United States can quickly forsake, with the U.S.S.R., this immoral nuclear arms buildup and get on with feeding a hungry world — both materially and spiritually. ■

# Summer in the Soviet

by Paul Valliere



**K**iev was an anxious city last summer. The streets were washed every morning to keep down the dust. Plastic sheets protected the merchandise in the better stores. Umbrellas were ubiquitous. Few bathers ventured onto the Dnieper beaches. Chernobyl was a constant topic of conversation and newspaper articles. Kiev also suffered from wounded pride. The Kievans were stung by the negative press, the bad jokes, the decline in visitors and the exodus of some of their fellow citizens. As for the Christians of Kiev, they were praying hard for the welfare of the city.

And so did we — the participants in an International Conference on the Millennium of the Baptism of Russia — hosted by the Russian Orthodox Church and chaired by Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev. The July conference featured scholarly papers and discussion concerning the baptism of Russia in 988 and its legacy, down to the present day. I was privileged

to attend as the representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury. A few other Westerners were there, too, but the majority came from the Soviet Union and other Eastern European or Eastern Orthodox lands.

The event was rewarding intellectually and also because of the opportunity it provided to celebrate the glorious ecclesiastical heritage of Kiev, where the Russian people under Prince Vladimir accepted baptism. It was moving to explore the subterranean network of tunnels and cells of the Kiev Caves Monastery, to view the remains of the saints who passed their lives there, and to reflect on the ironic security of the place in contrast to the anxiety above ground in the summer of Chernobyl. On another day, we had Sunday dinner at the Pokrovsky Convent, feasting on Ukrainian home-cooking and sampling tasty wines in copious portions. Thanks to Mikhail Gorbachev's campaign against alcoholism, "dry" meals are now standard in the Soviet Union. But nuns march to a different drummer.

Earlier in the summer I also had the good fortune to represent the Diocese of Indianapolis in a travel seminar in the Soviet Union sponsored by the National Council of the Churches of Christ. It was the fourth such seminar in as many years, although the first in which I participated. The seminars serve to forge ties between U.S. and Soviet Christians in the interest

of international peace and also to let U.S. Christians explore first-hand the questions they have about religion in the Soviet Union.

My first impressions of church and society in the Soviet Union today were much the same as during my earlier visits in the 1970s. I was impressed by the extraordinary fervor of the believers, especially in worship. The services are as long as ever (two to four hours), the attentiveness of the worshipers as sturdy, their chief complaint also the same: The priests "nowadays" abbreviate the services, which are "much too short!"

Again I was impressed by the social and cultural diversity of the Orthodox Church and by the religious diversity of the Soviet Union. Young and old, men and women, well-to-do and poor, sophisticated and simple, ascetics and worldly folk — one finds them all at church services. To be sure, there are regional differences. One sees a more balanced cross-section of the population in church in provincial centers such as Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, and Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine; less of a mix in Leningrad and Moscow, where at many services older women still form the large majority. One senses that Moscow especially is "up tight" religiously, as well as in other ways. The unrivaled center of a highly centralized society, Moscow runs the Soviet Union, and the Muscovites can't seem to forget it. They take the



**Dr. Paul Valliere** is dean of University College at Butler University and a member of Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis. He has traveled to the Soviet Union five times to do academic research and to participate in ecumenical seminars and conferences.

rules of their system very seriously and avoid public displays of frivolity or nonconformism — such as letting themselves, in a moment of forgetfulness, drop in to church.

And then, as always, I was impressed by the immensity and beauty of the Soviet Union and how conspicuously churches dot the landscape. Our group had the chance to admire the gold onion-cupolas of Moscow, the neoclassical domes of Leningrad on the edge of Scandinavia, and the gold cones of the churches in the mountainous, republics of Georgia and Armenia. Even so, we visited only three of the 15 republics of the Soviet Union. Our travels reminded us to be careful about making generalizations.

Still, the citizens of the Soviet Union, Christians included, are part of one system, and certain trends and moods were evident wherever we went. Some of these were new to me. Among Christians probably the most striking difference was in the level of confidence expressed about the place of the church in Soviet society and its prospects for the future. Clergy and laity, in private conversation and in public, directly and indirectly, put out a message that may be summarized as follows: "We Christians are getting stronger, not weaker. When we have the chance to do something, we do it well; we have a future here."

A scene that embodied the message in a poignant way remains in my mind from the day our group visited the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate at their new offices in the Danilov Monastery in Moscow. Shortly before he died, Leonid Brezhnev authorized the return of this monastery to the control of the church. The gesture was laden with symbolism, as the Danilov was the first monastery founded in Moscow in the early days of Russian Christianity. It now has the paradoxical status of being at one and the same time the oldest and newest monastery in

Moscow — a fitting witness to faith in the Living God, who makes all things new.

The property is a very large one, including many buildings and an elaborate surrounding wall, so its complete renovation is a project of years. We descended from our Intourist buses to find a group of monks in traditional habit awaiting us in the arch of the main gate. Above them, built into the gate, was a small church where the liturgy was being sung. Behind them through the gate we could see the monastery courtyard — a construction site heaped with bricks, piles of lumber and excavated dirt. The spectacle of ancient tradition standing against a background of new construction, of young monks directing the "hard hats," was one of the most hopeful sights I have ever seen.

The Orthodox Church hopes for the return of more of its secularized properties in the future. A cathedral dean, speaking at a plenary session of our group at the Leningrad Theological Academy, said: "Our architecture and singing bear witness to the word of God. We have always had a feeling of responsibility for how the word of God is spread. Those monuments will someday belong to us again." The assertiveness of his last sentence startled and encouraged us. So, too, the confession of a young woman curator who took us through the collection of religious art in the Tbilisi Art Museum, a state institution. During the tour her reverence for the objects in her care showed so plainly that one of our group was moved to ask her, "Are you a believer?" "Oh, yes, of course!" she answered. "Besides, everyone believes in something." These were not lines she learned in curator's school.

Another memorable example of ecclesiastical self-confidence came when, as a translator, I accompanied a group leader on a private call to Metropolitan David, Bishop of Tbilisi. We had occasion to walk a couple of blocks in the open air with the Metropolitan and were surprised

to see him "halt traffic" on the busy sidewalk as every third or fourth person stopped to receive a blessing. Afterwards, back in his apartment, he showed us souvenirs from a recent trip to the United States, among them the "key" to the city of Tulsa. We asked the Metropolitan whether there was a "key" to the city of Tbilisi. "I don't know," he replied. "I need no keys in this city." We believed him.

Soviet Christians' new spirit of confidence brightened our perception of their situation but did not close our eyes to its negative aspects. All the churches are still constrained to exist within extremely narrow limits by Western standards of religious freedom. Open worship is allowed, but almost all other activities are disallowed. Furthermore, worship is permitted only in registered houses of worship, and the number of these is kept artificially low as a matter of state policy. Then, too, not all religious denominations share equally in improvements. The smaller communions, such as the Lutherans, the Baptists and the Old Believers, have a sharper sense of vulnerability than the Russian Orthodox. The situation of religious Jews remains critical.

During our four-day visit to Armenia, we toured splendid monuments, ate with monks, met the Patriarch, but never got to church. The capital of Armenia, Yerevan, is a city of well over a million people with only five open churches. Four of us found one of them about a mile from our hotel on a back street in a humble neighborhood. We arrived about 7 p.m. in the hope of sharing in vespers. The priest was there, but unfortunately vespers had "just ended." The next evening we arrived at 6 p.m. Vespers again had "just ended." After the third try, at 5 p.m., we gave up. Still, even on those undistinguished expeditions "the beauty of holiness" surrounded us. It was pleasant to sit in the small, cool church and watch believers stop in on

their way home to light a candle and pray. We could hear the voices of neighborhood children playing in the churchyard. White doves roosted in the cupola. Walking back along the main avenue we could admire Mt. Ararat, its snowy cone hanging in the sky as if suspended from heaven rather than resting on the Armenian plain.

My summer in the Soviet Union ended with the Kiev Conference. The scholarly discussions were hard-hitting, particularly the debates among the Russian Orthodox themselves. This made the conference especially stimulating because it afforded insight into differences of approach within the Russian Orthodox community. While the debates may have appeared to be concerned only with the interpretation of events in Kievan Russia centuries ago, one had the strong sense that the interlocutors were also voicing their views on the issues facing the Russian Orthodox Church in their own day. The main antagonists could be characterized as "historical realists"

and "missionary idealists." The realists, always in good control of the historical facts and sources pertaining to their case, emphasized the distinctiveness, solidity, even self-sufficiency of Orthodoxy. Not too interested in ecumenical relations and at times a bit nationalistic, the realists saw in Kievan Russia an example of the Orthodox Church's capacity for being the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church" in a very public way, in integral association with state and society. Missionary idealists, on the other hand, saw in Kievan Russia an example of bold activism on the frontiers of church and society. Less interested in celebrating the solidity of Orthodoxy than the realists, they extolled an Orthodoxy that sought to transcend its customary limits and to open new fields of endeavor for the church.

The conference was planned to end July 28, the Feast of St. Vladimir. During the last two days we spent no fewer than 16 hours in liturgy. The services were especially splendid, as Vladi-

mir is the patron saint of Kiev's metropolitan cathedral. Again and again the choirs sang the hymn of the saint that we conferees, too, had sung at the start of each day's work:

*You are to be compared  
to the merchant who sought  
the pearl of great price  
glorious ruler Vladimir,  
seated on the high throne  
of the Mother of Cities, Kiev,  
protected of God.*

*Seeking to establish the Orthodox  
Faith you sent envoys to the  
Imperial City  
and you found the pearl of great  
price, the Christ.*

*He has chosen you to be a second  
Paul, and has shaken off your  
blindness in the holy font,  
blindness of soul and body.  
Therefore we as your people celebrate  
your sacred elevation.  
Pray for the salvation  
of your Russian state, its rulers,  
and the multitude of subjects. ■*

## Churches in the U.S.S.R.?

Most people express utter amazement that there are functioning churches, mosques and synagogues in the Soviet Union today. Actually, its borders encompass four major religious traditions — Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. The main branches of Christianity are represented:

- Some 40 million Russian Orthodox trace their history back to 988 when Prince Vladimir of Kiev was baptized and established the Greek Orthodox Church as the national religion.

The number of active, functioning Orthodox churches in the U.S.S.R. is much the same as about 20 years ago: 7,000 to 8,000. In 1939, most of the churches had been shut down; only a few hundred remained open. By 1949, after World War II, some 15,000 to 20,000

were functioning. Under Khrushchev's regime, however, these were cut to approximately half, to bring the figure to those which exist today. A small number of monasteries remain open and there are five seminaries with an enrollment of approximately 2,000. Since a priest cannot be ordained without being assigned to a parish, the number of seminarians are calibrated to church needs. The people support their own clergy. Secular priests and married clergy, however, are entitled to draw a pension from the state like other citizens, saving the church the financial burden of operating a pension fund.

- Two other ancient churches with large memberships are the Armenian Oriental Orthodox Church and the Georgian Orthodox Church. Armenia

was the first Christian nation, isolated from both Byzantium and the Western churches by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The history of the Armenian people and churches is marred by the genocide of some half million Armenians in the early 1900s. The Georgian Orthodox Church is Byzantine in tradition and recently celebrated its 1500th anniversary. St. John Chrysostom's relics are retained by this church. His liturgy is celebrated in all Eastern Orthodox churches today. Counting heads in these ancient churches is often deemed superfluous. Armenia adopted Christianity in the year 301; some say that to be Armenian is to be a Christian. As a government tour guide in Georgia remarked, "Even the atheists say this is a Christian nation."

- Some 2 to 3 million Roman Cath-





olics are found mostly in the Baltic republics, principally Lithuania and in the Western Ukraine.

- Baptists are the largest group of Protestants in the U.S.S.R., the official figure listed as 500,000, but it is suggested unofficially that the actual figure is closer to 2 to 3 million. They trace their origins to the German Baptists in the 19th century and also to English influence in St. Petersburg in the early 1870s.

- 1 million Lutherans are second largest of the Protestant bodies, chiefly in Estonia and Latvia.

Other groups of Protestants include Mennonites, Methodists, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and a Hungarian church of the Reformed tradition. The Old Believers, begun by a schism in the Russian Orthodox Church in the 17th century, is solely of Russian origin.

The Jewish and Muslim communities have been visited by NCC delegations to demonstrate respect and concern for their situations. To authorities, Soviet Jews are considered a nationality. Almost 2 million Jews live in the U.S.S.R., the majority Ashkenazim who moved eastward from Central Europe in the Middle Ages. Smaller communities are in the Caucasian mountains in Georgia, where they speak in an Iranian dialect, and in

Central Asia. During the '70s, some 260,000 Jews were allowed to leave, but emigration was severely curtailed in 1980, after the invasion of Afghanistan. The lack of available Hebrew language study remains a severe restriction in Jewish religious life.

Approximately 40 million Moslems live in Central Asia, European Russia and Siberia, Ciscaucasia and Transcaucasia. By the year 2000 some dramatic shifts in the Soviet population could occur. Rising birthrates show that the Turkic and other traditionally Islamic Central Asian peoples could comprise as much as 25% of the population in less than 15 years.

Buddhists, organized under a lama, live in the autonomous republic of the Buryat-Mongols, in Kalmyk and Tuva, and around Chita and Irkutsk.

Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution states that "the church in the U.S.S.R. is separate from the state," and that "freedom of worship is recognized for all citizens." While the legal system proclaims this, it hardly means that discrimination has disappeared from the lives of the populace. The most optimistic interpretation is that the U.S.S.R. is in good faith but hasn't been able to flush oppression out of its system, much as in the United States, Civil Rights laws have not

been able to eliminate racism against minorities. What Soviets call "democratization" of the country is an on-going process, and their revolution is only 70 years old, they point out. The Council of Religious Affairs handles all matters related to the churches.

Clearly, being Christian does not enhance one's career. But there are today more Christians with more responsibility in the government. As one NCC official put it, "It would be dangerous to assume too much from this, but uninformed not to assume anything."

And Jim Forest, peace activist/editor has pointed out that "The churches, even when reduced to museums like St. Basil's in Moscow, remain a kind of sacrament. They are architectural channels of grace, wordless but articulate evangelists... More important than the outer shape are the icons within. Often every surface but the floor is covered with them. Entering one of the Kremlin's cathedrals, you pass under a newly restored icon of the Last Judgment, a solemn reminder that a final weighing of hearts awaits us, but only at the end of time, when the final consequences of every life, for good or ill, can be known. The church is dedicated to the summoner of judgment, the Archangel Michael, and inside, many of the Czars, including Ivan the Terrible, await the great trumpet blast in their stone boxes."

— M.L.S.

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# Bridge-building twixt adversaries

by Bill and Polly Spofford

*Bill and Polly Spofford were among adults accompanying 28 high school students commissioned from the Washington National Cathedral by Bishop John Walker as a peace delegation to the U.S.S.R. this summer. They took sections of the Peace Ribbon which had hung around both the National Cathedral and the Pentagon, as well as materials from the Boise Peace quilters, Ploughshare lapel pins, and the new Russian language edition of "What of the Children" by the Parents and Teachers for Social Responsibility of Vermont. In the following pages are impressions of the trip by the Spoffords and two students, Jennifer Wilder and David Hutchinson (see vignettes).*

**T**here is a Russian proverb which has often proved true historically, militarily, and politically: *Space is our enemy, space is our friend.*

Visiting four major metropolitan centers hardly qualifies as more than an appetite-whetting exercise in a landmass as broad and culturally diverse as the Soviet Union. Except for a brief visit to Zagorsk, the heart of Russian Orthodoxy through the centuries, we visited no rural or farming communities. We were in three different Soviet republics but there are 12 more we never touched.

Even with the efficient, ever-present service of U.S.S.R. Intourist guides, it is always difficult to travel to cultures where one does not know the languages, the in-depth history of the people, their diets, the essence of their philosophies and religions, and their mechanisms of social process, education and control. It was to "feel" into these that we went to the Soviet Union, and, in a modest way, to be bridge-builders between peoples and in current terms, between adversaries.

Our trip was pastoral rather than political, educational as opposed to polemical. It was limited in coverage and, at the end, one is left with impressions rather than with great knowledge. It is as though a Soviet citizen should visit New York City, Washington, Tampa and Tucson briefly and claim that the U.S. people, culture and history are known.

On Oct. 1, 1939, Winston Churchill uttered his famous commentary: "I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It

is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma, but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest." There seems to be still much truth in this observation. But it also applies to all nation-states, whether one is referring to the U.S.S.R., the United States, or developing countries in the Third World.

Of course, the human and physical devastation of what the Soviets call The Great Patriotic War is a living and vital memory in the present and a component of their anxiety about the future. All cities which we visited are officially designated Hero Cities, each having parks and monuments with "living flames" for the more than 20 million who suffered and died. For us, the most moving was in Leningrad, seen from our modern hotel room, since it was located a stone's throw from the frontline bunkers in the siege of that city.

We had uncomfortable feelings as we passed through an Orwellian "mirror" where, in our conversations and lectures, we were graciously treated but often seen as citizens of the Evil Empire. In Moscow, it was strange, living in the mammoth 6,000 resident hotel next to the Kremlin, to realize that most of the other people there were from Arab/Islamic nations, southeast Asia and African countries, along with some western Europeans and many Scandinavians. Their lives whirled on a different axis than ours. They, too, had cameras, funny hats and lapel pins which revealed that holidays provide an essence of human community that is beyond ideology. Each morning, black limousines picked up some hotel residents and sped off to various conclaves and trade negotiations as we, tourists, waited for our bus — exactly like Washington, D.C.

At times, it was difficult to make any real contact or to empathize, since the nature of our official meetings were with adults (although the approved plans had called for contact

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**The Rt. Rev. William B. Spofford**, retired Bishop of Eastern Oregon, was assistant to the Rt. Rev. John T. Walker in the Diocese of Washington from 1980-1985. **Pauline Spofford** is a teacher and tutor, working with learning-disabled children and adults.



with teenagers). Whether they were ecclesiastics or community persons, they often seemed to be puzzled by the challenging openness of U.S. students and, generally, the students had a strong sense of being "talked down to." The official style was to "talk at" rather than to dialogue. Indeed, the most angry exchanges we had were with the official peace committee in Odessa, which we are sure did little for peace-making and understanding. As Sydney Smith, the English cleric-wit, wrote years ago: "We were like two neighbors arguing across their common fence . . . we were arguing from different premises!" It was always hard to get the premises clarified. But in the effort, we pray, will be the victory of understanding.

Their reference points seemed to be the past, symbolized by churches, monasteries and museums, and the future which, if there could be peace, might be built. Except in novels, we felt that Russians don't appear very existential. In novels, and they are a reading people, they make up for it.

Everywhere, the present was obviously better than the immediate past and there was a great deal of building and expansion planned and in process. The totally devastated Leningrad has been, and continues to be, restored, with the result that the Venice of the North, with its many canals and the Neva River, has to be one of the planet's most beautiful cities. (To read of the devastation, we commend the chilling account of their siege, *900 Days*, by Harrison Salisbury.) In 1986 alone, Leningrad is expected to complete 60,000 apartments, complete with medical units, day-care centers, schools and shopping centers. These mini-cities, in expanding suburbs, are significantly more attractive than developments post-World War II and we were told that, given peace and reduction in military security needs, plans could move ahead significantly. The people invariably seemed proud of how far they had come but concerned as to where the future would lead.

At the same time, in conversations, history is repressed and distorted. We heard, for instance, no mention of Afghanistan or Angola. We heard nothing of dissenters or resisters. But there were strong feelings expressed on the day that the U.S. Congress voted \$100 million in aid to the Contras in Central

America. This action was known to everybody, it seems. We heard the name Stalin once, in a negative context, and never heard the names Brezhnev, Khrushchev and others, indicating their flexible view of history.

We were shown the gracious parts of communities, complete with some good statuary, splendid fountains, restored palaces and gardens. We participated in several Orthodox church services, and viewed "museum" churches. The students felt that we weren't being shown negative sides of life. However, how often do Washington tour buses head to the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials via the pain and sordidness of the 14th Street corridor? Never, we imagine, do nightmares mix well with dreams and ideals. Whatever the culture, dirty laundry is seldom hung in public view.

The active churches we visited seemed reasonably lively. They were totally male-dominated as to liturgical officiating, which for Washingtonians was off-putting. Of course, services were precise and sensually beautiful, especially musically. The power of iconography, so seminal in Orthodox spirituality, was obvious, although on occasion one wished to see just one good icon, well-presented and lit. In churches, as well as in museums such as The Hermitage, one saw much "forest," but it was hard to enjoy the "trees."

For the most part, the numerous worshipers were older — we saw no children — and they actively participated in singing the lay parts of the liturgies. We were always hosted graciously, especially in churches, monasteries and seminaries.

The three monasteries and seminaries we visited had student bodies of 300 to 400 and each contained rich cathedrals and museums. In Odessa, the seminary museum had a comprehensive ecumenical room, featuring many meetings of the World Council of Churches and other conclaves; pictures of various Archbishops of Canterbury and significant leaders of the ecumenical movement post-W.W. II, and various exchange gifts which had been shared as tokens towards Christian unity. We were also informed that the churches, whether congregationally active or redundant as museums, received large grants for the restoration of buildings and their interiors. It seemed that when active churches had money for this, it



was a matter of some speculation, if not suspicion. One seminary dean said that active churches raised all their own money but, for historic reasons, governmental grants were offered to places such as Zagorsk as part of the Russian heritage.

Despite the words of human equality, Black members of our party felt an incipient racism in commercial and other settings. They were not significantly aware of it in ecclesiastical settings, although one Baptist pastor was obvious in his refusal to acknowledge the Rev. Gayle Harris as priest, always calling her "the teacher." No Orthodox cleric appeared disturbed by relating to an Episcopal female priest.

On occasion, out of ignorance or youthful enthusiasm, we are sure that we came across as "ugly Americans" but that is hard to overcome in a culture that lives much by form, protocol and precedence.

We had all learned at least one word in Russian, *nyet*, to say to the street people (youthful or otherwise) who wanted to

exchange rubles for hard currency, or our clothing or jewelry — an illegal act in the U.S.S.R. The subsequent case of correspondent Nick Daniloff, highlights the wisdom of our learning that word and, most often, the simple "no" did the trick.

We were impressed with the Moscow Museum of Aeronautics and Space, which is fully as rich and powerful as ours at the Smithsonian, and noticed how, as with Lenin, Yuri Gagarin's pictures, statues and monuments are, shall we say, "divinized." Space, that proverbial enemy and friend, seemed part of their present and future in a real way.

Everywhere, especially in Odessa, persons referred to "this summer of crisis," by which they meant the disaster at Chernobyl. The pioneer camp we visited was filled with children from the Kiev area and the director told us that 250,000 children from the most afflicted area had been moved to such camps, at least for the summer months. He reported that physical examinations indicated that there was

## Peace from bottom up

by Jennifer Wilder

**T**he first step in achieving a lasting peace between the United States and the Soviet Union is to have the people of each of these great nations understand one another. This summer, I was part of a youth tour of the Soviet Union, sponsored by the Diocese of Washington. The trip was aimed at educating high school students about the USSR. We were given the chance to meet Soviet people so that we might gain a better understanding of those we have come to call "our enemies." We had hoped that this trip would allow us to discover the real Soviet Union.

We went with the idea that the Soviet people must be normal and friendly, even if their government does oppose our beliefs about freedom. As we toured Moscow, Odessa, Leningrad, and Tallinn, visiting museums, shops, churches, and even the beach, we found some of our stereotypes confirmed and others disproven. In general, we found that the Soviet people are very much like us, and becoming friends with them might not be so difficult after all.

The most memorable experiences I had were those with the Soviet churches. The magnificent Russian Orthodox cathedrals with their golden domes, ancient icons, and musky incense were breathtaking, but even more inspiring were the believers who worshipped in those churches. We saw many young people, single men and women, or families who had given up their chances of getting top government jobs by worshipping openly. However, the majority of believers in the Orthodox churches were

the old, wrinkled widows, called babushki, who, although toothless and hunched over with age, could remain standing devoutly throughout a four-hour service when our young, healthy group felt faint after an hour. Their friendly smiles were the warmest I had ever received, as they welcomed us and thanked us for coming to visit.

Although most of our personal encounters with Soviet citizens were positive, we did find ourselves in some unpleasant situations. In one incident, we were supposed to have met with a group of Soviet young people at a Peace Commission in Odessa. We were met instead by two older men, and ended up debating government policy rather than discussing person-to-person understanding. We also had some frightening encounters with "the system." The schedule imposed on us by Intourist (the government tourism agency) was grueling, and the military guards stationed at our hotel in Moscow were intimidating. Many mem-



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no extraordinary elevation in radioactivity in their systems. But most obviously there was concern about the accident.

Before the flight home, we assessed the two-week trip as 70% positive. It was obvious, in Lutheran Estonia, as in Orthodox Moscow, Leningrad and Odessa, that the people wanted and needed peace. Our small group, consisting mostly of future decision-makers and educators, had the privilege of looking at things through some Soviet contacts, eyes and persons. Most recognized that, although nuclear and other armaments are the negotiating issues, the real concerns, built on mutual fear and hope, are ideological and historical. As such they are related to communication, trust-building, increasing honesty and deeper empathy.

Throughout we were aware of being in a controlled and noncommunicative society. Early in what the Soviets reminded us was the third Russian Revolution, Lenin wrote: "Soviet power is a new type of state in which there is no bureaucracy, no police, no standing army." Obviously, his-

toric events, combined with what Christians name sin, now make this a failed dream. But, the persons we met, in churches, on the streets, in the markets, in formal and informal settings, were concerned with what they call *mir*, and we call peace or shalom. Knowing that we were Americans, they surfaced the topic on all occasions and at every opportunity. We also saw it proclaimed on every city's billboards and buildings.

We landed at Kennedy airport July 6, just as the celebration of Miss Liberty's 100th birthday was ending. There it was confusion, bustle, exuberance and New York *chutzpa*. It felt good. In fact, on a human level, it didn't feel too different from the people in the open market in Odessa or along the flower stalls in medieval Tallinn or, particularly, the vibrant crowds on Leningrad's Nevsky Prospekt during the White Nights of early summer.

Maybe, with such small steps by church folk, and others, the longer journey will continue. ■

bers of our group had luggage searched at Customs, or their visas scrutinized by stone-faced guards trying to verify that we were who we said we were. However, these tense experiences were over quickly and left us with only a taste of the rigidity we associate with Communism.

The most personal encounter I had in the USSR was with a college student named Alexander. He is a student at a university in Leningrad, and was taking an English course. His professor had encouraged him to go out and find some American or English tourists, so that he could practice his English, and he had found me and two of my friends from the trip. He told us about the American literature he was supposed to study. Unfortunately, he had searched everywhere for the books he needed, but they were not available. He asked if we had brought any with us. I wish I had packed some popular American paperbacks. We also discussed world travel. While my friends and I were free to travel anywhere we wished, even to the USSR, he would never be allowed out of his homeland. He explained that seeing the world was like a dream to him. I could not imagine learn-

ing about foreign countries all my life without ever having the opportunity to see them.

The main message that the Soviet people we met asked us to carry home to our churches and peers is the fact that the Soviet Union wants peace, too. The memory of World War II, when hundreds of cities were destroyed and a generation of men was killed, is still alive and vivid in every family of the USSR. They never want to live through an experience like that again, and will do anything to avoid a World War III, particularly a nuclear holocaust. Every person we talked to made it clear that he or she was ready to improve relations between our two countries to insure peace and an end to the threat of nuclear war.

Although my two weeks in the Soviet Union were a priceless learning experience, I was very happy to be on my way home. Seeing a country without democracy or capitalism had made me realize how much I take America and its ideals for granted. During our Fourth of July party in Tallinn, the day before we left the USSR, the entire group reflected these feelings as we sang, drank cham-

pagne, and stuck one another with red-white-and-blue band-aids.

Now that the trip is over, each of us has been asked to share our experiences and impressions, in hopes that what we learned during our two weeks in the Soviet Union will help others gain a better understanding of our "rivals" in the USSR and eventually provide basis for a lasting peace.

Although I would love to go back to the USSR again, to meet more people and visit more places, this trip has given me a better perspective of the Soviet Union. I was pleased by the good experiences we had with friendly people who welcomed us to their home. The negative experiences left me feeling disappointed, but they did bring me to realize that our governments may never see eye to eye, so the best way to bring about better relations is to start from the bottom up, with personal friendships. When the people of the Soviet Union and the people of the United States have become friends, our governments will find it much more difficult to disagree. World peace may depend on friendships between the ordinary citizens of our two nations. ■

## Top Recipients of Soviet Arms

1955-85

Syria	\$16.3 Billion
Iraq	\$15.4
Libya	\$11.2
Vietnam	\$9.0
India	\$8.2
East Germany	\$6.5
Cuba	\$6.0
Algeria	\$5.6
Poland	\$5.0
Ethiopia	\$4.1

1980-85

Syria	\$10.3 Billion
Iraq	\$8.2
Libya	\$5.8
Vietnam	\$4.9
India	\$4.8
Cuba	\$3.9
Algeria	\$3.6
Angola	\$2.8
Ethiopia	\$2.6
East Germany	\$2.5

Note: All figures are deliveries in current dollars (Billions).

Sources: CIA, DIA, DoD, ACDA, CDI.

Chart prepared by the Center for Defense Information.

## Soviet Military Advisors in The Third World

Cuba	5,600
Syria	4,000
Vietnam	2,500
Libya	2,000
Ethiopia	1,700
South Yemen	1,500*
Angola	1,000
Iraq	1,000
Mozambique	850
Algeria	800
Laos	500
North Yemen	500
India	200
Others	500**
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,650</b>

\* Reportedly declined to 600 during January 1986 upheaval.

\*\* Includes: Peru (125-150); Congo (100); Madagascar (100); Nicaragua (50-70); Seychelles (10); Benin; Cape Verde; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Mali; Nigeria; Sao Tome and Principe; Tanzania; Zambia.

Note: Not listed are 118,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan and 75,000 troops in Mongolia.

Sources: DoD, State Dept., CDI.

Chart prepared by the Center for Defense Information.

SOVIET INFLUE

### Soviet Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation

*Egypt* (5-27-71, abrogated 3-15-76)  
*India* (8-9-71)  
*Iraq* (4-9-72)  
*Somalia* (7-11-74, abrogated 11-13-77)  
  
*Angola* (10-8-76)  
*Mozambique* (3-31-77)  
*Vietnam* (11-3-78)  
*Ethiopia* (11-20-78)  
*Afghanistan* (12-5-78)  
*South Yemen* (10-25-79)  
*Syria* (10-8-80)  
*Congo* (5-13-81)

### Soviet Defense Treaties




*Albania* (abrogated 1968)  
*Bulgaria*  
*China* (expired 1980)  
*Czechoslovakia*  
*East Germany*  
*Hungary*  
*North Korea*  
*Mongolia*  
*Poland*

### Members of COMECON

The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (also known as COMECON or CMEA) is the economic alliance created by the U.S.S.R. and East European nations.

*Albania* (dropped out in 1961)  
*Bulgaria*  
*Czechoslovakia*  
*East Germany*  
*Hungary*  
*Poland*  
*Romania*  
*Soviet Union*  
*Mongolia* (since 1962)  
*Cuba* (since 1972)  
*Vietnam* (since 1978)

### KEY

 Soviet Union  
 Significant Soviet Influence  
 (Afghanistan, Angola, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, East Germany, Hungary, Laos, Libya, Mongolia, Mozambique, Poland, Romania, Syria, Vietnam, South Yemen)  
 Other Countries

# Short Takes

## Fear youth's #1 enemy

- U.S. children are being fingerprinted because of the fear of kidnapping.

- Thirty-nine states indicate an increase in reports of child abuse.

- 22% of U.S. youth under 18 live in poverty.

- Suicides among U.S. youth (ages 15-24) have increased 300% in the last two decades.

- The ultimate form of child abuse is war. From World War I to the present, civilian casualties from warfare have risen from 5% to 97% — mostly women and children. Of the 25-30 million refugees worldwide, 15 million are children — mostly from the Third World.

- One in three U.S. teenagers fears a nuclear war will take place in their lifetime, according to Dr. John E. Mack, chairperson of Harvard Medical School's Psychiatry Department. He says: "They feel alone with their fears and abandoned, isolated and unprotected by the adult generation, including the nation's leaders."

**Children of War flyer**  
**Religious Task Force**

## Quote of note

To be moderate in matters of love is simply not to love. To be moderate in matters of justice is to be simply unjust.

**John Howard Griffin**  
**The Hermitage Journals**

## 1st in feminist theology

For the first time in theological education, a doctoral level degree is being offered in Feminist Liberation Theology and Ministry at Episcopal Divinity School.

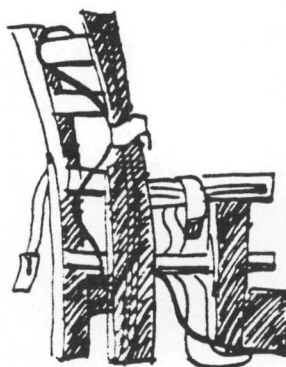
Ecumenical in vision, the FLTM program provides an opportunity to

- reflect on the experience of marginalized people as a starting point for doing theology,

- discuss the genealogy of race, sex, and class oppression,

- explore different directions in feminist studies and theology, and their implications for ministry today.

For information write EDS, 99 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.



## Death penalty facts

- Each year since 1975 at least one country has abolished the death penalty.

- Iran, Iraq, China, South Africa, the Soviet Union and the United States are now the chief countries where the death penalty is imposed.

- Georgia has the highest execution rate of any state — and the highest murder rate of any state.

- Since Florida has resumed executions, the murder rate has gone up. It jumped 14% in the first six months after the death penalty was reinstated.

- For 13 out of 14 years, Illinois, with the death penalty has had a higher murder rate than Michigan without the death penalty.

**Newsletter, Church of the Incarnation**  
**Ann Arbor, Mich.**

## Bishops defer to women

Roman Catholic bishops have abandoned their plans to issue a pastoral letter on women. Instead they will issue a "pastoral response" on the subject next year. The change appears to reflect the will of women who told the bishops early on that they didn't care to be studied as a problem.

**Inside the American**  
**Religion Scene (RNS Newsletter)**

## 700 B.C. advice

Go to the people. Live with them. Learn from them. Love them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. With the best leaders when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say, "We have done this ourselves."

**Lao Tsu (China, 700 B.C.)**

## Shades of Chernobyl

At the Fernauld uranium processing plant near Cincinnati, local residents learned in 1985 that drinking water supplies were contaminated with radiation 15 times higher than EPA guidelines. The government and Fernauld management knew about the contamination for four years before alerting the citizens affected by it.

Recent revelations also show that Fernauld has pumped at least 215,000 pounds of uranium dust into the air and 170,000 pounds of uranium into the water over its 30-year history. For years the secrecy was so great around the facility that even local residents thought the weapons production center was a cattle food production plant.

In January, 1986, after an accidental release of uranium gas had killed one worker at the Kerr-McGee processing facility in Oklahoma, the government permitted release of the remaining radioactive gases. The cloud floated over houses and an elementary school within miles of the facility. No one from the company or the government warned the residents. Only after a worker made an anonymous call did anyone know of the release.

Hiding the truth from people in Oklahoma or Cincinnati is the same as hiding it from those in Kiev.

**Billie Garde and Tom Devine**  
**Providence New Paper**  
**Utne Reader 9/86**

## Facts about PACs

Our system of government is under threat by the millions of dollars political action committees (PACs) are pouring into congressional races every year. In the 1984 election, PACs contributed more than \$100,000,000 to congressional candidates. And those PAC contributions will pay off in billions of dollars worth of government favors for the corporations and other special interest groups that are making them. "There's always been some corruption in American politics. What has happened with political action committees is we've institutionalized that corruption," said former U.S. Rep. John Cavanaugh.

**Common Cause flyer**





## The 'Mind of the House'

A troublesome resolution concerning the election and consecration of women to the episcopate emerged from the recent interim meeting of the House of Bishops in San Antonio. Even more troublesome were the discussions that led to its adoption, raising more questions than answers, both for those "pro" and "con" women bishops.

While reaffirming the action taken at the 1985 General Convention (advising that the House "would not withhold consent to the consecration of any person as bishop on the grounds of gender alone") a subsequent clause in the new resolution seems to take a step back from that significant pronouncement. It reads: "Be it further resolved that while recognizing the right of any diocese to proceed with episcopal elections, the House of Bishops does acknowledge the concern of the Primates for restraint in proceeding to the consecration of a woman as a bishop before the 1988 Lambeth Conference." The final resolve, "that this action is in no way intended to imply that any Lambeth Conference could decide such a matter for any autonomous province," is not very helpful since the prior clause sends a decided and dangerous signal for delay.

With, of course, no presbyters or laity involved in the debate, an immediate question is: What chilling effect might the resolution have on diocesan Standing Committees, a majority of which also

must consent to the election and consecration of any bishop? If such consent is withheld, could this, in turn, lead to an "irregular consecration" reminiscent of the 1974 ordinations of the Philadelphia 11 to priesthood? Further, what new or strengthened diocesan canons might emerge to "protect" local autonomy and jurisdiction?

Beyond these procedural questions lie some emotional issues that could again so consume the mind and energy of the church as to push the consecration of any women, if not their election, well beyond Lambeth '88. Some indication of this was seen in the fact that permeating the small group discussions in the House was the "pain and agony" of the "Fond du Lac 16" — some factious fathers in God who have gone on record as being unable to live with the prospect of "mitered mommas."

A sampling of the questions raised included: Would bishops who consecrated women be out of communion with other bishops such as the above or those in other provinces of the church who feel that apostolic succession has been despoiled already by admission of women to the priesthood? What would happen if a person ordained by a woman moved to another diocese whose bishop did not acknowledge her consecration? But most prevalent was the question, How can the House and church *accommodate* bishops and those in their dioceses who cannot

accept women in the episcopate?

With regard to the latter, at least one discussion group asked if the present "conscience clause" (which permits bishops to deny women ordination to priesthood solely on the basis of gender) does not already provide for their concern? If, indeed, it does, then a frightening situation arises for the whole church. How can you have a conscience clause with regard to a *bishop*. If a bishop can be rejected by bishops, then certainly presbyters and laity are in no way constrained to accept that person or the sacramental acts of their office, such as Confirmation.

As might be expected, missing from most of the discussions, or at least what was reported of the discussions, was any real mention of the *women* who will be affected by all this. And, of course, no women were invited to share their perspectives or their feelings on the matter. All of which leads me to answer one important question that was not asked. When we do "see the day come 'round" on which the first woman is admitted to that august body, what survival instincts will she need? Answer: a high tolerance for indecisiveness, an inordinate amount of patience with unimaginative leadership, a low level of frustration at the penchant for preserving the collegiality of the "club" at all costs and an appetite for ambiguity. Lacking a cast iron backside, she might well have her cope and miter lined with rhino hide as a hedge against insensitivity. ■

## Mother Church, Mother Russia

# The double burden of peace

by Mary Lou Suhor

**T**ake a country two and a half times larger than the United States. It encompasses 170 ethnic groups, 130 languages, and 100 distinct nationalities. What do you call it?

Well, Ronald Reagan calls it the Evil Empire and says only a Star Wars system can protect us from it. And some people say Russia, which is closer, but misleading. Russians comprise only 52% of the population. More properly, it's the Soviet Union, which also contains within its borders Georgians, Armenians, Ukrainians, and Central Asian Uzbeks — all proud of their identity. It's a layered society (the onion domes of its churches are an apt symbol) informed by a complex history going back hundreds and hundreds of years.

Russian is the dominant language, taught in schools to foster communication, which would otherwise be a problem. For example, the Slavs use the Cyrillic alphabet (St. Cyril devised it); the Georgians and Armenians have kept their old Japhetic alphabets derived from Aramaic and Greek script; and Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians have retained Latin script. One has to marvel how the Politburo makes the gosh darn country work.

From that introduction, I betray the fact that as a journalist, I am intrigued by language and the complexities it offers. But the concept which puzzled me most during my summer trip to the Soviet Union with the National Council of Churches was *Mother Russia*.

To be sure, the Politburo has no women in its ranks, and the Russian Orthodox Church remains rigidly patriarchal. Yet there is an almost mystical veneration for the word "mother." We came upon heroic statues called "Mother Georgia" and "Mother Armenia." A sculpture called "Motherland" dominates the memorial ensemble in the Piskarevskoye Cemetery in Leningrad, where more civilian victims of World War II are buried — mostly women and children — than *all* our WWII military casualties. I also recalled reading histories



**Motherland  
Piskarevskoye Cemetery  
Leningrad**

and novels in which protagonists were motivated to act "for Mother Church and Mother Russia."

In contrast, the United States is portrayed in masculine images: Uncle Sam, the Founding Fathers, today's Rambo-mania and a macho President who plays out High Noon in foreign policy. In Leningrad, Motherland stands in vigil over those who died in the struggle against Hitler's "Fatherland" of the Third Reich. Were we headed in a Fascist direction with these macho thrusts?

I filed this data to be explored at the end of our visit during a dialogue with women from U.S.S.R. churches, for which I had been asked to be co-facilitator.

Before we left home, our advisor, feminist-activist Sister Marjorie Tuite of Church Women United, had sketched out parameters for our discussion during orientation sessions:

*"The women's struggle for equality and justice takes place within a worldview of militarism which is acted out daily in a culture of violence against women . . . Militarism is rooted in patriarchy; that is, a pervasive pattern of ideological assumptions and social structures that validate and enforce the subjugation of female to male, of colonized peoples to racial overlords, of the whole People of God to male religious leaders.*

*"A second factor is that the daily reality for millions of women is a struggle for economic survival. Within this framework, women of faith are seeking to formulate a theology based on their experience which will reach beyond patriarchal traditions of existing social and religious institutions."*

As Providence would decree, Marjorie fell ill and was to die in the United States before we returned, the news leaving us stunned and bereaved when announced in Frankfurt. But her words had remained in my head as her memory will ever in my heart when 19 of us met in Moscow to dialogue with 10 Soviet churchwomen.

We did not know quite what to expect. Our previous meetings with patriarchs, archimandrites, monks, seminarians too often had been characterized by long, formal presentations allowing little time for questions, making for limited and reserved exchanges. At worst, this was interpreted as church people frustratingly dodging the opportunity to dialogue on important issues; at best, it was interpreted as Soviet "style," complicated by a long history.

Natalia Chernyh, a knowledgeable ecumenist, explained it this way: "Suppose you had two books, one a 200-page history of the United States, and another the history of the U.S.S.R., of 1,000 pages. Can you imagine spreading out 200 pages at once to try to find an answer to a question? Even that would be difficult. Now imagine consulting 1,000 pages. If we hesitate in response to a question perhaps it is because we are simply trying to determine what page to consult, seeking the most precise answer. I invite you to be tolerant."

Against former experiences, the women's dialogue turned out to be remarkably free of rhetoric. Ironically, the sign on the Intourist bus which transported us to the meeting illustrated one recurring theme which we dealt with: The sign read *Women Problems*, and some U.S. men were heard to say that they wished their wives were on that bus. The sign was quickly edited to *Women's Concerns*.

We noted that our official Soviet guides waited outside as the five dialogues took place, the Orthodox church having provided translators for the discussions on peace and disarmament, youth, liturgy, and human rights, in addition to ours.

Brief introductions indicated that our 19-member U.S. delegation ranged in age from 29 to over 60, and included widows, married women, divorced and single women from various states. Some were grandmothers, some great-grand-

mothers. Working professions included teachers, journalists, counsellors, homemakers, interior decorators, clergy, church-workers, and a speech therapist, computer programmer, hotel administrator, songwriter. One woman, unemployed, was job-hunting.

Half our size, the Soviet delegation represented an impressive array of Orthodox and Baptist women from Moscow and Leningrad and included educators, translators, church-workers, ecumenists, and a chemist — some married, some divorced, some grandmothers. Nina Bobrova, co-facilitator for the Soviet side in welcoming us outlined our commonalities: We were all sisters-in-Christ, seeking peace while threatened by nuclear war, fearful of a future which endangered the lives of our children and the ecology of the planet.

From there on the accent was on sharing, as we exchanged ideas, analysis, and anecdotes from our lives. Discussion centered around marriage and the family, justice and economic issues (including women and their work roles); peace education, ecumenism, and how women provide Christian witness in church and society.

Both U.S. and U.S.S.R. participants were acutely aware that no grave social problem — whether related to war or peace, poverty and hunger, marriage and the family, etc. — is the exclusive concern of women. These are human problems, and need the best efforts of humankind to resolve them. The women's dialogue focused on *human* problems from a *woman's* point of view. At the same time we were painfully sensitive to the fact that there is no justice issue which does not touch women's lives, that often women are the victims of global injustice. Since we represented many Christian denominations from both countries, the very fact of ecumenism was important in broadening our perspectives.

Natalia Chernyh of Moscow said that thinking in ecu-

Nina Bobrova, Soviet facilitator, opens the U.S.-U.S.S.R. women's dialogue sponsored by the National Council of Churches as part of its '86 peace pilgrimage. Left to right are Ludmilla Gibbons of Los Angeles; Donna Porter, Kansas City, Mo.; Mildred Moser, Altadena, Cal.; Tatjana Orlova, Moscow; Bobrova, and Mary Lou Suhor, editor of *THE WITNESS*.





menical terms made her feel less of an outsider. Many perceive her country, she said, as an atheistic, socialist state. (And U.S. participants might add that the United States is perceived as a capitalist state.) Chernyh cited the World Council of Churches' new program thrust, "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" as helpful for breaking through stereotypes and making connections. The greater the realization that we belong to the same planet and share its destiny, the better we can work towards global unity and avoid the destruction of creation, she said.

She also said that her work makes her think of life in ecumenical terms as well, and this moves her more and more to look into the social process which goes on in her own country.

A Baptist woman, Claudia Pillipuk, reflecting on that process, noted that the Socialist society places a high value on work, the right to work, and equal pay for equal work. A common theme proved to be how work in the U.S.S.R. and the United States helps women to realize their potential and best capabilities.

The discussion evinced that the role of mother is deeply respected in Soviet society, and maternity has become a

theme of social importance and value. Soviet working women benefit from maternity leaves with pay, but home responsibilities are still a problem. Unlike Socialist Cuba, the U.S.S.R. has no family code which cites that husbands must help wives with housework when both study or work. Women are hoping that the new Soviet 5-year plan will ease these tensions. Meanwhile, they are still chiefly responsible for work in the home.

Soviet women expressed grave concern about divorce. At first, they said, the war "divorced" most women, who lost their husbands. (Statistics show that in 1970 there were 1,170 females for every thousand males in the U.S.S.R., the highest recorded imbalance in the world.) But now one in three marriages ends in divorce, and every fifth woman is not married. Divorced women in the U.S.S.R. lead fragmented lives, torn in priorities between their work and family, and frequently lack a sense of dignity, they said. This sounded familiar to U.S. participants.

U.S. delegates explained Social Security, welfare benefits and public assistance based on income, and how the process of applying for assistance is sometimes difficult. They also explained how churches pitch in with day care and other

## Soviet women yesterday and today

- In 1908 a Russian newspaper estimated that it would take at least 280 years for every woman in the country to be able to read and write. Before the 1917 Socialist Revolution, 85% of the women were illiterate. By 1950, illiteracy had been almost eliminated.

- Before the Revolution, illiteracy was practically universal among Central Asians in the U.S.S.R. In 1920 only 25 or so Turkmen women were able to read. Today literacy is universal and a substantial proportion of the population has been through higher education as well.

- Today the position of Soviet women is expressed in Article 35 of the Constitution:

*"Women and men have equal rights in the U.S.S.R. Exercising these rights is insured by according women equal access with men to education and vocational and professional training, and in social and political and cultural activity, and by special labor and health protection measures for women; by providing conditions enabling*

*mothers to work; by legal protection and material and moral support for mothers and children, including paid leaves and other benefits for expectant mothers, and gradual reduction of working time for mothers with small children."*

- Three out of every four Soviet physicians and teachers are women; every third engineer and lawyer, every other technician and designer is a woman. Some 40% of all Soviet scientific workers are women. The first woman in space was a Soviet woman — Valentina Tereshkova — in 1963.

- About 500 women (some 1/3 of the membership) are deputies to the Supreme Soviet, the national parliament. In 1980, half of all those elected to local government bodies were women.

- The predominant methods of birth control are "the pill" and "the loop." Abortion is common, although prohibited by the church. Characteristically Russian families have only one or two children. On the other hand, Central Asian Moslem women have a staggeringly

high birthrate. This is partially due to better medical facilities and the consequent decline in infant mortality, together with better nutrition and health care, but also to the survival of the tradition of large families. As a result, Central Asians are growing four times faster than the rest of the population and soon 1/3 of the Soviet military will be Moslem.

- More than 90% of adult women in the U.S.S.R. either work or study. Women constitute 51% of all those employed in the national economy. It is rare, however, for a Central Asian woman to pursue a career.

- Young women constitute more than half of all students at secondary technical schools and one half of all students at institutions of higher learning.

- The pensionable age is 60 for working men and 55 for women; 50 for women with five or more children. Pensionable age for farming men is 65, for women, 60.

Resources: Fodor's *Soviet Union* 1986; Soviet Women's Committee, 1981; *Update U.S.S.R.* February/March 1986.



programs for women, and for unemployed youth.

Our deliberations stressed that the pursuit of justice is intimately tied to the works of peace. We were mutually concerned about the equal distribution of the world's goods, about who has the power of decision-making in our families, in our nation, and globally.

At the dialogue's end, Nina Bobrova, reflecting on the suffering which took 20 million Soviet lives during World War II, told U.S. women: "We have witnessed how horrible war is. We don't want you in the United States to have that experience. We feel a double responsibility for peace since we have lived through war — a responsibility for us and for you, that you never have to go through that."

The U.S. women made a Christian commitment that their Soviet sisters would never stand alone in shouldering that double burden again.

Were Marjorie Tuite alive, she would want an accounting of how her analysis stood up in the women's dialogue. Marge would never send you across town for a meeting without wanting a report — much less across the world. "Well, how did it go?" she would ask gravely. Then, "And this better be good!" as her six foot frame would rock with laughter. Here goes:

- The feminist analysis was right on target, Marge, but a bit heavy for this meeting. One got the feeling that it's hard enough to be a Christian in this society much less a feminist Christian. Having experienced repression under Stalin and Khrushchev, people in the churches walk a tightrope between what has been described as "discretion and valor."

- The church venerates many women saints, notably St. Nena and St. Hripsime. These were strong women of ancient times. Georgia even had a woman ruler — King Tamara, who ruled wisely for 29 years. Somewhere we lost it — the decision-making role — to the extent that in Georgia women in our group were admonished by the tour guide not to go out at night unaccompanied by a man. Not for reasons of safety, but, "please, it is the custom."

- The political views of people in the churches seem to be shaped by having lived through a violent history over the past 70 years — two world wars, a Revolution, a civil war — rather than by any Marxist-Lenist analysis (although their perspectives do not exclude the latter). The U.S.S.R. has "institutionalized" peace in the Soviet process, in its political structures, in education. Peace efforts in the United States are largely the burden of social activists, many involved in civil disobedience.

- Holy Mother Church and Holy Mother Russia — a paradox, indeed. "Mother Russia" while it falls far short on providing political rights, has to be given credit for its economic advances. This atheistic Communist state has fed and

clothed its millions, constructed housing, provided for the widow and the orphan — in short, accomplished tasks traditionally considered a mandate for Christians. And women play a vital role in that process. (See box.) Holy Mother Church, is, more aptly, Holy Father Church. Although Orthodoxy emphasizes wholeness, it is male-dominated, prohibits women behind the iconostasis. The highest role it allows a woman is choir director. Women seem to enjoy a more "liberated" role in the secular society. This in turn may influence the church, as indeed, the spiritual dimension of the church may influence the future of Soviet society.

One National Council of Churches training manual for our trip contains a statement: "The Message of the Gospel is not confined to any particular culture, ideology or economic system." We must now struggle to add, "or sex" to that incomplete sentence. Rest, Marjorie. ■

### For Sister Marjorie Tuite, June 28, 1986

A thin New York rain  
on your coffin.  
The Dominicans follow,  
forty years of catching up.  
So you are still,  
a last ride across  
Manhattan's black mirror streets.  
Ada Marie pokes  
a fist into the weeping air,  
shouting your name,  
and we all cry "Presente!"  
again and again,  
until the hearse,  
like a low rider chariot,  
carries you to fire.  
One consummation  
before the freeing.  
Then, *compa*, you are  
light as breath,  
and can fall, as you wished,  
on Nicaragua's soil.  
To lie in the grainy arms  
of a thousand mothers,  
the holy embrace of martyrs,  
with Luisa Amanda Espinoza,  
with Sandino.  
A gringa, a nun  
dug into an earth  
that hums beneath banana trees,  
under the almond groves,  
below Lake Managua floating white herons,  
harmonizing with the frog —  
song of the rivers,  
their monotone glory:  
everything lives,  
everything lives.  
Oh you who never rested,  
now in the dust  
of mango groves,  
rest in peace.

Ada says your solidarity was  
clear as blue sweetwater lagoons,

because you were never  
too tired for El Pueblo,  
for las hermanas,  
for the bag-ladies, for the folks.  
But I think you were  
too tired, destructively tired,  
tired almost  
to incomprehension.  
But then I'd see you  
drag that tiredness  
one more step.  
You'd move up to the line,  
and one, exquisite, seemingly  
last time, you'd step  
over it. Hurrah!  
She did it again! Viva!

So Marjorie, adelante.  
Right now  
we are stepping up  
to their lines.  
Watch us.

— Renny Golden



Marjorie Tuite

# Human rights debated

*The 1986 travel seminar to the U.S.S.R. sponsored by the National Council of Churches this summer featured five dialogues with Soviet churchpeople: Human rights, women, peace and disarmament, youth, and liturgy. John P. Burgess, of Doane College, Crete, Neb., who spent the 1984-85 academic year in East Berlin, presented the account below on the human rights session. Other reports can be obtained from NCC, Room 880, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, N.Y. 10115.*

**T**he human rights discussion took place at the publishing headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Church. Twenty-five Americans and 12 Soviets were in attendance.

I began with a brief overview of the question. First, different conceptions of human rights are emphasized in East and West. Political rights (such as freedom of press and assembly) stand at the forefront in the West. Economic rights (such as right to work and housing) receive more emphasis in the East. From another angle, human rights can be defined as individual or communal. In the West, political rights protect the individual from state interference. In the East, political rights provide for the participation and integration of the individual in society. It is important to note, however, that both political traditions make a claim to provide for both political and economic rights and for both individual and communal rights.

Second, the common Christian commitment to greater contact, conversation, and justice in East-West relations depends on a common commitment to human rights. During our brief stay in the USSR, we Americans were struck by the state's accomplishments in providing housing, health care, and food for all its citizens. These accomplishments are particularly impressive, given the vast destruction which the nation suffered during World War II. We have also been struck by the sense of openness under Gorbachev, particularly in the area of arms negotiations. Yet, other factors in the Soviet system have disturbed us. In

order for Christians from East and West to come to greater mutual understanding, we believe that there must be a greater flow of information between our lands, more opportunities for travel to each other's nations, and more contact with a diversity of people in both countries.

Third, we Americans came to this dialogue not to ask about restrictions on the church, but to learn of the church's possibilities in its society. We wanted to share our vision of the role of the church in the United States too.

Bishop Clement, the Soviet co-moderator, who heads the Partiarcal Parishes in the United States and Canada, asked the Rev. Vitally Borovoy to respond. He emphasized the different historical development in the two nations. There are historical roots for the different priorities in the discussion of human rights. The top priority, however, must be the right to life, including but not limited to economic rights. Borovoy asserted that the guarantee of the right to life would require great changes in capitalist society.

The two delegations then had the opportunity to pose questions to each other. Often we could do no more than express our concerns, as the time was too limited for a full discussion of each point. The dialogue was open and candid — diplomatic language by which to acknowledge that the conversation was sometimes emotional; differences of opinion were apparent, yet a common commitment to continuing discussion held sway.

As was often the case in our conversations with Soviet church leaders, I could

not always gauge the spirit in which the Soviets made their remarks. For example, Dr. Osipov of the Moscow Theological Seminary questioned how the church could survive in a society which rests on freedom. In the United States freedom for freedom's sake has created a materialistic, pagan society. Several Americans responded that the individual must learn to use freedom responsibly. To limit freedom, however, is to limit the power of the Holy Spirit. The Soviets answered that our American concept of freedom rested on Enlightenment presuppositions. Christians believe, however, that the soul is not essentially good, but a battleground between good and evil forces. Society must limit and define freedom for the sake of guaranteeing a full life. Some Soviets questioned Osipov's position; it seems to me that the Soviet understanding of freedom lacked a great deal of nuance, and seemed more like an accusation than a question. (I do not believe that it helps to say that the Soviets or the Russian Orthodox simply have a different concept of freedom. Dostoyevsky, for example, offers a sensitive and nuanced discussion of the complexity of freedom in *The Brothers Karamazov*.)

I fear that the way we Americans brought up the question of the status of Jews must have seemed more like an accusation than a question to the Soviets. Their answers were defensive and, at least to my ears, quite troubling. We were told that the Soviet Union is a vast, diverse country in which the key issue is how to unify different peoples and give them a sense of equality. The Russian

Orthodox Church has always been the spiritual and moral force of the nation. It was the church which brought peace to medieval Russia by encouraging warring princes to lay down their arms and to unite their forces. It is the church which today strives to bring peace and unity to the Soviet nation. Some Jews, however, still think of themselves as the chosen people. They are to blame for the consequences if they do not wish to integrate themselves into Soviet society. We were told that the problem could be seen not as oppression of Jews, but as oppression of Russians. Jews constitute only 0.7 percent of the population, yet they had 10 to 20% of the top positions in the Soviet economy. Finally, we were told that the West has overemphasized problems of Jewish emigration. When Jews are not allowed to leave, it is because they know

state secrets. When this knowledge becomes obsolete, they will be allowed to emigrate.

As the discussion proceeded along these lines, I sought to put the question of the status of Jews in a larger context. In the United States, I said, there are people who sometimes find themselves on the outside because they experience discrimination or hardship. The American churches have attempted to reach out to these people. How, I asked, do the Soviet churches reach out to people who find themselves on the outside of their society? I never received an answer more concrete than "prayer and service."

The Soviets emphasized that individual rights exist for the benefit of society. No right may take precedence over the right to life, hence the Soviet concern not only to guarantee economic rights, but to

preserve peace.

Future discussions of human rights must attend to this central concern. The right to life raises a profoundly theological question: what constitutes the full life? Attention to human rights can help contribute the answer. Life in the fullest sense, depends on both political and economic rights, individual and communal rights. Life depends on physical preservation, but physical preservation alone does not constitute the full life. The freedom to develop individual personality is also crucial. Both American and Soviet Christians can celebrate the sacred gift of life, the image of the God in whom we have our being. Future dialogue should explore a definition of the full life, lived finally for the sake of neither society nor the individual alone, but in service to God. (From NCC Newsletter MIRror).

## A STUDY PACKET

# THE CASE FOR DIVESTMENT

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**The Rt. Rev. Desmond Tutu**

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stances of Zal Sherwood and Anne Gilson is shunted aside, out of his pastoral purview — and what is affirmed instead of them is “tradition . . . heterosexual, monogamous, faithful marital union as normative for the divinely given meaning of the intimate sexual relationship.” *Normative* is a code-word for fully, truly human. It is a fairly new name, actually, for heterosexualism, but its effect is to marginalize or demote to less-than-fully-human the lives and loves of lesbian and gay persons.

It is odd that no one notices that Jesus’ own sexuality is by this definition meaningless. Whether he engaged in intimate sexual relationships cannot be known to us. But we do know that the apostolic witnesses record that he loved persons of his own sex — Lazarus, and the disciple John — in a special way, and that he had relationships, unique for his time, but quite common today for gay men, with women whose meaning for him was not found in marital union nor in the males they were related to through patriarchal institutions.

To faffle about “many exegetical approaches” and “diverse professional opinion” is to speak as the scribes, and not with the authority of the liberating gospel of God. The privatizing, the reduction of the gay experience to a “pastoral ministry which brings people to Jesus” while ignoring the most significant fact about the lesbian and gay movement in our time — that God has raised up a community, a gentle, loving people who are fighting for our lives — is one-dimensional, to say the least, a total failure of insight to say somewhat more.

The Presiding Bishop can begin anew his dialogue with the gay and lesbian community by changing his language about us. “Homosexuals” as a noun is an unacceptable clinicism. We are gay and lesbian people, just as “Negroes” and such terms are no longer acceptable when speaking or writing of the Black community. Begin, brother Edmond, by recognizing the full humanity of us all. Our lives are “normative” and our sexu-

ality is quite human, quite “normal.” Take another look at Jesus when you use such words.

**The Rev. Grant M. Gallup**  
Chicago, Ill.

## Issue sidestepped

I have read the Presiding Bishop’s statements in *THE WITNESS* over and over again and they continue to make little sense. All that I can derive from them is that a man who should, by virtue of his position, have detailed knowledge of, and openness to, the sufferings of 10% of his sisters and brothers lacks current information on homosexuality, is uninformed on how the sin of homophobia operates within church structures, and is unwilling to use even the power of a sympathetic statement on his part to do justice to the oppressed homosexual members of the Body of Christ.

As nearly as I can make out, he is sensitive to the presumed feelings of Diocesan Commissions on Ministry. But he is not responsive to the suffering of gay and lesbian people who are trying to live out their call to ordination. The Presiding Bishop hopes that his letter will enhance “reasoned reflection and discussion.” All it has done for me is to provide occasion for marveling at his ignorance of the growing body of knowledge about the nature and irreversibility of sexual orientation. I was prompted to reread *James 2:14-16*, for an example of a man of presumed good will appearing to address an issue while deliberately sidestepping it.

**The Rev. Dr. Anne C. Garrison**  
Assistant to the Bishop of Michigan  
E. Lansing, Mich.

## Foot-dragging appalling

I am appalled by the Presiding Bishop’s ambivalence, expressed in his reply to your open letter. His response surely shows the power of rhetorical double talk. He is trying desperately to straddle the fence — not to offend any side of the issue. He is not proving himself to be the champion of a cause which at present he obviously feels still lacks enough evi-

dence and sufficient popular appeal to pursue. Where is this great wave of “compassion” upon which he came riding in to the post he holds?

“I do not believe the issue will be resolved quickly,” he states. His “foot-dragging” here will be one very important reason why.

**John Manola**  
Wilmington, Del.

## Church sexual ghetto

Dear Presiding Bishop: God says as She makes the plumbing, “I love you.” How can Genesis confuse you and choke you with so many polysyllables?

The unhealthiest sexual ghetto I visit is the church. Women and men like me serve at altars everywhere, but usually we must bow to hetero idols.

You beg for time and point to the church’s ignorance. The church’s ignorance threatens far less than the church’s pride. In an instant the church could humble itself, could again become a place comfortable for Jesus.

**Louie Crew**  
Hong Kong

## From ‘healed’ lesbian

As a Canadian, I rejoiced upon hearing about the election of a liberal Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, USA. Bishop Browning’s subsequent statements on Nicaragua, the bombing of Libya, and his *WITNESS* interview showed him to be sensitive and alert to justice issues. I am disappointed that his response to your correspondence was so atypically uncourageous when it came to affirming gay and lesbian rights. As a longtime victim of sexual oppression, I want to share my story with you.

The church and the world condoned my violent marriage because it was heterosexual and told me I should have stayed in it. I have been accused by people of having a “pattern of running away” from situations because I ran away from a violent childhood, and then from an even more violent marriage, to freedom and life. Yet those same people condemn lesbian relationships like the one I thrive



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## THE WITNESS

and grow in at present, and tell me I should run from it.

It saddens me to hear people pervert the Gospel of love and tell us we are in a "sinful relationship," that being lesbian is "sick" and that we "need healing." Our experience has been the opposite; it is within our relationship that we experience healing. And we are better ministers — with more energy, compassion and care to give to others because of what we have together. Why should we seek to be "healed" from wholeness and love?

I am saddened that my partner and I cannot openly celebrate our love. And it saddens me as well that I am forced to write this without adding my name. To

share my identity would jeopardize the ministry to which God called both of us. That is where we are unlike other oppressed groups who can fight openly for their liberation. We dare not, or we will be doubly oppressed. That is the reality with which we are faced daily. One day perhaps we will be strong enough to face the crucifixion the church offers. But not yet. However, I did want you to hear the other side — not the story of a heterosexual "healed" from some homosexual experience; but the story of one lesbian's struggle from exile and brokenness, to the promised land of love and wholeness. I am truly a healed homosexual and I have been richly blessed.

This account is my own way of "singing the Lord's song in a strange land," to a strange people, that you might know that this land is my land, too!

**A Canadian minister  
Name withheld upon request**

### More to come

Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning's openness to dialogue on the subject of homosexuality in the September WITNESS has elicited a broad range of response by way of Letters to the Editor. The dialogue will continue in next month's pages. — Ed.

# Vignettes from the U.S.S.R.

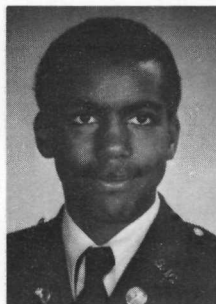
## Media image distorted

My trip to the Soviet Union was one of the most memorable times in my life. The experience made me see things in a different light. I used to think of the people as being hard to talk with and not wanting to lend a hand to anyone in need of help. Another of my stereotypes was that the Soviets believed that they were the best people in the world and thought very highly of themselves. But when I saw the reality, I felt bad about how I had assumed these people were so terrible when they really aren't.

I learned that the Soviets are just like other human beings, and that they are doing basically the same things we are to promote peace. I also realized that our media has only shown us the faults of the U.S.S.R. and I went on this trip believing what the media had told us. I believe the trip has shown everyone a new side of the Soviet Union, a positive side.

However, we were disappointed that we never got to meet young people our age. Those we met with were at least 20-30 years of age. When we questioned this we were told that people there are considered to be young adults or youth until the age of 30. The only time we came in contact with children or teenagers was at the Pioneer camp we visited. Even then we really didn't talk, but sat around as they sang songs, and later we sang for them. One thing I noticed about the children is that they never smiled. The only kids that smiled were the younger ones ranging in age from 5 to 11.

The group that I traveled with became so close that I thought of them as family. If there was a member in the group who had a problem, he or she could share openly with anyone. We would even lend each other money. Except for minor disagreements, the group had no problem living together for two weeks. There was never any racial incident. The Russians seemed curious about our racially integrated group. They tend to think that America still has the racial problems it had many years ago. But the



Russians were very accepting of the blacks as well as the whites.

We spent much time defending our country from vicious attacks about us not wanting peace. Many members of the group felt that young Russians are just as we are, but the older ones don't care about Americans, and are influenced by communist propaganda.

I sometimes wonder about the impression we left. We were a little more hyperactive than some other kids, and most of us were visiting a foreign country for the first time. Some members of the group believe that we were seen as ugly Americans because of the way we would chew gum, wear lots of jewelry and run around in the streets. I believe that while we did many of these things we also did some things to show that we were growing into mature young adults.

I hope to have another experience like this, so I can see other countries as they really are and not only the way our media depicts them.

— David Hutchinson  
St. John's College High School  
Washington, D.C.  
National Cathedral Trip

## The bell nobody heard

Upon entering the walled Danilov Monastery in Moscow we were greeted by some of the 15 resident monks and escorted to the church over the gate to witness a portion of the on-going liturgy. The church was so small that our group of 25 filled it, hardly leaving room for the worshippers, most of whom were *babushki* of indeterminate age. While listening to the chanting, I distinctly heard a bell sound. The sound was familiar. It reminded me of long ago when, as a child, I once heard the Liberty Bell struck softly. This steeple bell, too, seemed to have a crack in it.

Wondering at the similarity in sound, I asked the Moscow seminary student travelling with us if he knew the origin of the bells in the church tower. He asked how I knew there were bells in the tower as we had not seen them yet. I told him I had heard one strike softly and I wondered at their origin. Were they cast in the Soviet Union? He didn't know, but said he would ask during the time we were there. I heard nothing from him until we boarded our buses later in

the day. He then announced over the bus microphone that the bells had been a gift from Howard University in Washington, D.C. He asked if anyone else had heard the bell. No one had. As the impact of this small miracle of the bell manifested itself, I was overwhelmed with the awesomeness of our journey.

— Mildred Stafford  
Calvary Episcopal Church, Cincinnati  
NCC Trip

## Partaking of Agape bread

It is Saturday evening before Pentecost in Moscow's lovely old St. Pimen's Russian Orthodox Church: we have listened reverently to the priests and choir as they've intoned with chant and song the words of the thousand-year-old Divine Liturgy. There is a separating sadness though, in knowing that we non-members will not be allowed to participate in the climax of the Eucharist—taking to ourselves the bread and wine.

But what is this? We are being directed toward a priest standing at the side of the sanctuary holding a basket of communion biscuits. Word is whispered down the line that, although this is not the actual Eucharist bread, it is not just any bread either; it has been given a special blessing for us, the visiting Christians from America. This heart-warming gesture expressed for me the thoughtful and genuine cordiality with which the 138 members of our National Council of Churches Travel Seminar, representing 18 denominations from 30 states, were received by both Protestant and Orthodox Churches last June in the Soviet Union.

Among the traveling group were eight Episcopalians from the Diocese of Los Angeles: the Rev. Canon Harold G. Hultgren of the Diocesan staff; Ludmila Gibbons and Ted Hollis, Jr. from All Saints, Beverly Hills; Gwen Felton from St. Michael and All Angels, Corona del Mar; with July Felton, Mildred Moser, Cheryl Stilwell and myself from All Saints, Pasadena.



Our experiences were varied as we divided into small groups. All of us, however, went to Leningrad, Moscow, Zagorsk, and at least two other cities (seven of our local group taking in Odessa, Kishinev, and Rostov on Don, while Ted Hollis saw Tbilisi and Yerevan), visiting at least a dozen functioning churches, monasteries and theological academies.

— Dorothy Kilian  
All Saints, Pasadena  
NCC Trip

### 'Ethics of survival' needed

The major problem in U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations is to find a new social and political base for detente, Andrei Kortunov, head of the Foreign Policy Division of the U.S.-Canada Institute, told a visiting delegation from the National Council of Churches in July.

"The present state is not normal," he said. "We need to find some new principles and perceptions. Parity does not provide stability."

Kortunov emphasized that the ethics of survival must first be developed — no genocide, no nuclear war. Then the two countries can move to the ethics of cooperation. International law cannot be the basis of relationship, because treaties are not interpreted uniformly, he said. It is only a minimum standard.

The U.S.-Canada Institute, academic in character, is a think tank with a staff of about 350 persons, (200 scholars, 150 staff). It is headed by Dr. Georgi Arbatov, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, who frequently appears on U.S. television.

The Institute, founded in 1968, focuses its research on the United States and Canada. Its departments include foreign policy, politics, economics, American management, agriculture, sociology and public opinion. The U.S.S.R. is interested in public opinion in the United States, Kortunov said. The fact that Reagan and Gorbachev spoke

to each other's nations on TV this year was a real breakthrough.

Kortunov said that there are two different visions of the United States in the U.S.S.R. One is that the United States is gloomy, jobless, full of organized crime, military-industrial complex-dominated, and those who believe this wonder, how the country can survive. The second is that America is ideal: everything is good, people are rich, all social problems are solved.

The Institute publishes 20 to 25 books a year, in printings of 100,000, and produces a magazine on U.S. policy, economics and society. Members lecture and write fre-

quently for *Pravda*.

Although they receive the major newspapers such as the *New York Times*, they have little access to provincial publications. They read the *Congressional Record* and only know provincial news from inserts in the *Record*. The woman who is senior researcher on the U.S. Peace Movement and Women's Movement gets only four major publications, and made her address available to us.

— Lynn McGuire  
First Parish Church  
Brunswick, Maine  
NCC Trip

### Music hath charm

In addition to common bonds of love and a burning desire for peace, we shared something else with the Soviet people — a deep appreciation for music and its power to sustain and lift the human spirit. I have never experienced a more angelic sound than that of the women's choir of Tbilisi, singing antiphonally with a male choir, their pure tones inviting the worshiper into "liturgical transformation." There is a saying about Orthodox liturgy: The first hour you will feel only your aching feet; the second hour you will feel nothing; the third you will have wings.

Early on in our visit, the Orthodox Church publishing house in Moscow presented a program featuring 12 men and women singing music from the 12th century to modern times. Acknowledging our thunderous applause, Archimandrite Alexander told us, "We are sure that on our planet, the greatest thing after love is music. The time will come when music will be looked upon the same way that icons are looked upon."

After those heady words, we unveiled our modest secret. Before we left the United States, Michael Roshak, a deacon in the Orthodox Church and an outstanding tenor, had taught us to sing *Mnogaya Leta*, "God grant you many years," well known throughout the U.S.S.R. Now Michael strode forward, gave us our three-note cue, and 138 of us belted out our debut in Russian and English. As we accepted their enthusiastic applause, tears flowed freely. Even our Intourist guide, Natasha, until then unflappable and serious in demeanor, told those of us around her, "That was beautiful! Who trained you? Look," she pointed to her arm. "Goose bumps" did not translate easily from Russian to English.



Orthodox guide, Zagorsk,  
Intourist's Natasha, right

Our shining hour came after we had split into smaller groups, at Gegard, a 13th century cave-monastery in Armenia. A priest-guide had shown us through the noted spiritual center, with its cavelike monk cells and *khachkars* (stone crosses), and we ended up in the main Cathedral hewn out of rock. To demonstrate its remarkable acoustics, he chanted a psalm. We were mesmerized by his voice, the "stereophonic" ambience. Then all of us seemed to have the same idea at once, as Lynn McGuire, our best vocalist, lifted her hand, hummed our harmony cues, and 25 of us burst into *Mnogaya Leta*. In that setting, we sounded like the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

We were so impressed with ourselves that Lynn led us into *Dona nobis pacem* and other selections we had learned. Our guide practically had to tug sleeves to move us to an assembly room where the monks were waiting to serve refreshments.

— Mary Lou Suhor  
NCC Trip

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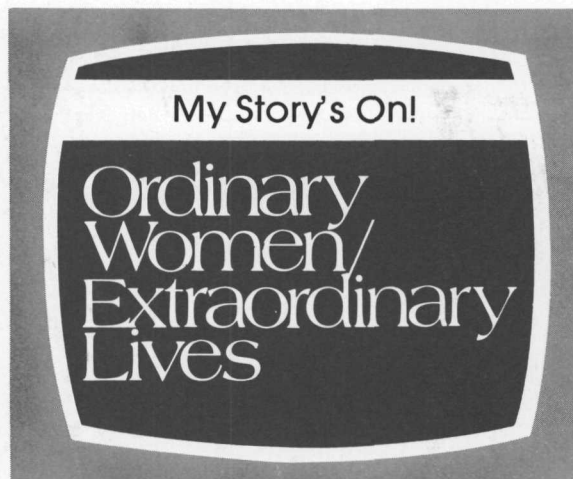
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