

Religion & Democracy

A Newsletter of the Institute on Religion and Democracy

May 1982

Response to Moscow Peace Conference

Broad Coalition Petitions USSR for Religious Freedom

On April 29th almost a hundred clergy and lay leaders gathered in front of the somber Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C., to present a petition urging religious freedom in the Soviet Union. Their hope was that their concern -- endorsed by an impressive array of signers -- will be remembered when a high level delegation of American church leaders (among them the evangelist Billy Graham) visits Moscow during the week of May 10th for a Soviet-sponsored conference on peace and disarmament.

The petition affirms that in a time of crisis and danger men and women of religious conviction should seek dialogue -- "but not through prison walls." It charges that many religious leaders -- Christian, Jewish, and Moslem -- are held in Soviet prisons on account of their faiths, and it urges their release "in the name of God and humanity." A symbolic list of 27 Soviet religious prisoners was appended to the petition.

Soviet embassy officials usually show pointed indifference to such representations, but this time they granted two leaders of the petition campaign a thirty-five minute audience. The two -- Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, founding editor of Christianity Today and Rabbi Joshua Haberman of the Washington Hebrew Congregation -- reported that Soviet officials flatly denied that there is religious persecution and seemed angry that the issue was raised. But they also seemed impressed by the stature and diversity of the U.S. religious leaders who signed the petition. (See box on page 3.)

At a press conference following the vigil Mrs. Lydia Vins, a Russian Baptist, told of being imprisoned for three years at the age of 64 for her work as Chairman of the Council of Prisoners' Relatives, a group which helps Soviet religious prisoners and their families. She scoffed at Soviet denials of religious repression, and argued that "God has sent many of us to the West to tell you the truth about the Soviet Union."

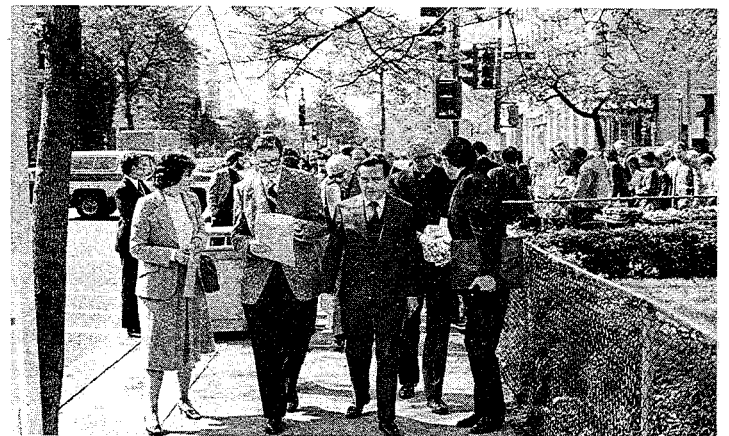
George Weigel, a Roman Catholic writer, noted that a distinguished group of Catholic figures had signed the petition. He argued that Catholic teaching -- as exemplified in the Pacem in Terris encyclical of Pope John XXIII -- holds that "the cause of peace and the cause of human rights are one. Those who divide them are friends of neither peace nor human rights."

When asked about the wisdom of church leaders attending the Moscow-managed peace conference, Dr. Henry asserted that "It should be

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Orthodox Christians sing choral music as a diverse group of witnesses assembles.



Dr. Carl F. H. Henry and Rabbi Joshua Haberman lead the crowd to the vigil - petition in hand.



To their surprise, Henry and Haberman are invited into the Soviet Embassy - to be told there is no religious persecution in the USSR.

Briefs

The IRD is sponsoring the second in a series of regional conferences June 22-23 at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The conference is designed to engage North Carolina religious leaders — from a variety of viewpoints — in a serious discussion of how our churches should engage in the debate over international political issues. Michael Novak will deliver the keynote address Tuesday evening, June 22 on "A Christian Responsibility: Democracy and Human Rights." The Wednesday lineup includes: Edmund W. Robb and David Jessup, "Crisis in the Churches: Departure from Democratic Values;" W. Scott Thompson, "Morality and Nuclear Weapons;" and Robert L. Wilson, "Substance, Structure and Accountability in the Mainline Churches." Vigorous dialogue is expected in responding panels and in several workshops. For more information, write the IRD office.

IMPACT, the political lobby of the mainline churches in Washington, D.C., could learn something about democracy from the recent Washington Insider Briefing of the National Association of Evangelicals. Unlike IMPACT's conferences — where the points of view represented cover the gamut from very liberal to far Left — the Washington Insider Briefing's panels always presented conservative as well as liberal spokesmen. The defense panel, for example, paired United Presbyterian evangelical Gene Dewey, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Refugee Affairs, and Rev. Dale Aukerman, author of Darkening Valley: A Biblical Perspective on Nuclear War. The New Right panel also permitted both points of view to be aired: Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus argued with John H. Buchanan of People for the American Way. For further information on the Washington Insider Briefings contact: National Association of Evangelicals,

1430 K Street, Washington, D.C. 20005.

CREED, the Christian Rescue Effort for the Emancipation of Dissidents, will hold a Washington briefing on international religious persecution May 26-27. The IRD's Michael Novak will give a talk "Religious Freedom and the War of Ideas". The briefing will feature a commentary by Bishop Basil of the Orthodox Church in America on an underground film produced by the Russian Orthodox religious dissident Makarenko. Other speakers will focus on religious persecution in Ethiopia, Egypt and Romania. For additional information on the briefing contact CREED at (703) 549-0047

The crisis in Central America has spawned a new Washington organization, the Central American Religious Study Group. Unfortunately, its beginning efforts lean more to advocacy than study. Its new release, headlined "What's Happening to the Miskito Indians," relies on information from a source in Nicaragua that supports the Sandinist government, with never a qualm or quibble. This source is something called the Nicaraguan Central American Historical Institute.

The Nicaraguan Institute interprets the Sandinist campaign against the Miskitos as an effort "to bring government to an area that, to a large extent, had only the churches as government." The reality is that, while the Moravian Church did play an important role in the lives of the Miskitos, they also had a well-developed system of democratic self-government. The Nicaraguan Institute has also joined the Sandinistas in denouncing the Nicaraguan Conference of Catholic Bishops, who have defended the Miskitos' demands for local self-government and cultural autonomy. Religious study of Central America might better begin with inquiry into what is happening to Nicaragua's churches.

The Council on Foundations, a trend-setting organization whose member foundations pass out

millions of dollars every year in grants, has a new President: Dr. James A. Joseph. Dr. Joseph has long argued that America's big foundations should coordinate their programs more closely with the churches. A recent report in The New York Times gave some clues on one form this might take.

"A number of foundations across the United States, perceiving a growing public anxiety about nuclear war, are shaping programs in support of arms control," the Times story began. The story noted that arms control and nuclear disarmament were "recurring themes" at a recent Council on Foundations meeting in Detroit, and that Dr. Joseph was pleased by the participants "liberated spirit and audacity to be provocative."

"Liberated spirit and the audacity to be provocative" would be a welcome response to the fear campaign that is turning an altogether justified concern about nuclear war into a mindless panic. Like a bad horror movie, this effort could readily lapse into parody, leaving us worse off than before. The IRI wishes Dr. Joseph and his fellow benefactors well — if they really mean to challenge the trend.

At a prayer breakfast on April 27th Rabbi Joshua Haberman presented the petition on religious freedom in the Soviet Union (see page 1) to Rev. Billy Graham, who is on his way to a conference on the nuclear threat in Moscow, sponsored by the Soviet government. Rev. Graham received the material with interest, and promised to study it. But Rabbi Haberman recounts that another figure present — Donald M. Kendall, Chairman of Pepsico, Inc. and a leading advocate of closer economic ties with the Soviet Union — was not at all supportive. "Before Rev. Graham could even answer me, Don Kendall burst into a strong reaction," Rabbi Haberman told us. "He said this was the most foolish idea he ever heard of. It could abort Rev. Graham's whole mission. It would ruin his efforts to build bridges."

Radical Feminism to Earth Motherhood:

United Methodist Women Move with the Times

Remember when church women were exhorted to show that we are every bit as rational and competent as men? To prove our equality? Well, times are changing. At the recent Assembly of United Methodist Women in Philadelphia, 9000 women heard a rather different message. Today, it's up with women's intuition, and vive la difference.

Dr. Helen Caldicott, a pediatrician and president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, argued that women's experience as mothers gives them unique insight into the problem of nuclear war. "We don't want to be

killed because the superpowers act like nine year old boys who are playing in the sandbox and can't settle their differences," she stated. "We have to take the toys away from the boys. We have to take away their bombs and slap their hands."

Dr. Caldicott invoked another female stereotype -- women as caretakers of the sick and the infirm -- in explaining Soviet behavior. She characterized Russian leaders as paranoid and fearful old men, who need understanding. "We trust them every day...you handle a paranoid patient, not by threatening, but by loving and understanding."

Do you have problems with your children? Dr. Caldicott thinks your problem might be the existence of nuclear weapons. For example, young people take drugs because they are hopeless about the future of mankind. She gave a graphic description of the results of nuclear attack -- who will be vaporized, whose eyes will melt, which insects would be most resistant to radiation. "What have we done to our children?" she implored.

Dr. Hazel Henderson, an independent futurist and author of The Politics of the Solar Age, brought the celebration of women
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USSR

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seen as a test. If the Western church leaders address the issue of religious liberty openly and vigorously, and if Soviet officials acknowledge the problem, the Americans will have accomplished something. If not, they will have failed."

Rabbi Haberman urged that an international religious commission might be formed to study the condition of religion in the Soviet Union, and to seek Soviet compliance with a recently adopted UN resolution on religious freedom. The acting coordinator of the petition campaign was the Rev. John Boyles, associate pastor of the National Presbyterian Church in Washington. Organizational support was provided by the National Association of Evangelicals, who turned out a large delegation for the vigil, and the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

PETITION SIGNERS

The petition campaign was initiated by Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman, Lutheran Pastor Richard John Neuhaus and the Catholic writer, Michael Novak. It has been endorsed by over 100 religious leaders, from which this small sampling is drawn. The full text of the petition and complete list of signers may be obtained by writing the IRD office.

Dr. Ben Armstrong
National Religious Broadcasters; United Presbyterian
Rev. Edward Bauman
Senior Minister, Foundry United Methodist Church

The Reverend William D. Borders
Archbishop of Baltimore; Roman Catholic
Dr. William Brink
Stated Clerk, Christian Reformed Church
Rev. R. C. Campbell
General Secretary, American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.
Rev. Robert P. Dugan
Director, Office of Public Affairs, National Association of Evangelicals; Baptist
Rev. Arthur E. Gay, Jr.
President, National Association of Evangelicals; Conservative Congregationalist Christian Conference
Rev. J. Bryan Hehir
Director, Office of International Justice and Peace, U.S. Catholic Conference
The Most Reverend James A. Hickey
Archbishop of Washington; Roman Catholic
Msgr. George C. Higgins
Adjunct Lecturer, Catholic University of America
Rev. Ray Hughes
General Overseer, Church of God
Dr. Kenneth S. Kantzer
Editor, Christianity Today; Evangelical Free Church
Rabbi Stanley Rabinowitz
Former President, Washington Rabbinical Association
Rev. Edmund W. Robb
Chairman of the Executive Committee, IRD; United Methodist
Rabbi David Saperstein
Washington Representative, Union of American Hebrew Congregations
William J. Petersen
Editor, Eternity magazine; Baptist
Dr. G. Aiken Taylor
Editor, The Presbyterian Journal

UM Women

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en's intuition to full pitch: "It is important for us to be comfortable with our reactions as emotional...Too often, we as women have been psyched out by numbers, experts and 'left brain'...We need a feeling of righteous indignation if we are going to leave the old macho industrialized rationalism."

"Women as nurturers are in touch with the planet," Dr. Henderson proclaimed in a keynote address. Henderson did not invoke Christian teaching, but Gaia, the Greek goddess of the earth: "The biosphere has been managing herself for all these years." We aren't stewards of the earth, we are embedded in it. "The dawn of the Solar Age" means the end of the era of science, rationalism, patriarchalism.

So it went. Consciousness-raising is now out -- instinct-raising is in. Female equality is out -- femininity is in. ERA is forgotten -- motherhood is back. Make way for the new Methodist women.

— Diane Knippers

Religion and Democracy is published by the Institute on Religion and Democracy.
1000 16th Street N.W.
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Washington, D.C. 20036



Rev. William J. Sullivan, S.J., the President of Seattle University, makes a point to the audience at an IRD conference on Religion, Democracy, and World Affairs held in Seattle, Washington on April 14th. Some 150 clergy and lay leaders attended the lively discussion — pictured here in his collar is the Rt. Rev. Robert H. Cochrane, the Episcopal Bishop of Olympia.

The following publications are available from the IRD office (enclose check with order):

Christianity and Democracy (\$1.50) -- the IRD statement of principles.

The Catholic Church in El Salvador (\$1.50)

Nicaragua: A Revolution

Against the Church (\$1.50)

Must Walls Confuse? (\$1.50) -- a critical review of the 1982 mission study material.

Dialogue on Christianity and Democracy (\$2.00) -- leaders of IRD and the National Council of Churches discuss democratic values and the churches.

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Washington, D.C. 20036

Review
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