

Religion & Democracy

A Newsletter of the Institute on Religion and Democracy

June 1982

American Clergys' Mission to Moscow

On May 10th a delegation of important Christian leaders from the United States and around the world journeyed to the Soviet Union to participate in discussions and pageantry organized by the Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow. The purpose of this conference, in the words of its title: "Saving the Sacred Gift of Life from Nuclear Catastrophe."

The record of the conference has been obscured by controversy about statements made, or alleged to have been made, by Dr. Billy Graham -- an "honored guest" -- concerning religious freedom in the U.S.S.R. But the record of the conference itself deserves attention -- especially because it was clearly intended as a stepping stone to the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament which opened in New York on June 7th.

"The American participants returned home with positive feelings," wrote J. Martin Bailey of *A.D. Magazine*, one of three U.S. church journalists who attended the Moscow event. Many American delegates evidently found satisfaction in a belief that they prevented the conference from issuing pronouncements laden with anti-American rhetoric.

They did manage to add a note or two of balance to the official statements. A document which praised the Soviet decision to stop increasing its force of 300 SS-20 missiles on the European front was amended to include a line about the promise of President Reagan's announcement of U.S. readiness to negotiate toward the reduction of strategic nuclear arms. Both the Soviet Union and the United States were urged by name to move more rapidly toward disarmament.

Conference Results: Pro-Soviet or Pro-Peace?



Patriarch Pimen of Moscow, Patriarch Nikolai of Alexandria, and Dr. Billy Graham at the opening of the controversial Moscow peace conference.

But when the substance of conference statements is analyzed in full, the result was clearly favorable to the Soviet Union, and probably harmful to the true interests of peace and disarmament.

Much of the content of the official documents is general and vague -- a quality that Western arms control negotiators and, increasingly, non-aligned leaders often criticize in official Soviet proposals. But where there are specifics, they are one-sided, aimed at challenging only the West.

*** Conference statements repeatedly endorse "a freeze of the manufacturing, development, testing and deployment of new or improved nuclear weapons." This version of the nuclear freeze proposal goes beyond that

advanced by the Western freeze movement to incorporate Secretary Brezhnev's strictures against "modernization". It is designed to prevent the NATO allies from taking any steps to offset the enormous build-up of Soviet weapons -- such as the SS-20 -- that now pose such a threat to Europe. As is the case with most freeze proposals, it rails against every possible cause of nuclear war but the one that today is most likely: a serious imbalance in strategic power favoring the Soviet Union.

*** The statements single out for criticism "specially anti-human weapons like the neutron bomb." The neutron bomb is a NATO weapon, requested by America's allies as a counterbalance to the massive build-up of Soviet conventional forces in offensive formations along the

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borders of Western Europe. The Moscow Conference made no reference to this conventional build-up, nor did it show any concern for the new Soviet missiles already in place in Europe, which have radically increased the destructive potential of nuclear weaponry in the region.

*** There is no mention of the need for nuclear powers to agree to reliable methods of verifying that their rivals are complying with arms control agreements. The statement calls for a comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons testing -- which cannot be verified unless seismic equipment (a "black box") is emplaced near potential test sites. This is something, as President Carter learned, that the Soviets will not permit. Nor will they permit on-site inspection at nuclear installations -- a necessity for an effective freeze.

*** Great concern is shown for removing nuclear weapons from Europe -- yet no note is made of the capability that the new Soviet SS-20 missile has for striking Europe from sites east of the Urals -- which are technically outside Europe.

*** Conference documents scorn the view that "people can buy private shelters which will protect them from a nuclear attack." But no mention is made of the serious, multi-billion dollar Soviet civil defense program designed primarily to protect Soviet leaders and industry in nuclear war. Civil defense, it would appear, is all right for socialism, but not for free enterprise.

*** The religious community is encouraged "to give active and enthusiastic support to genuine peace movements and anti-war demonstrations." Such events, of course, do not occur often in Communist police states, and never survive for long when they do.

*** The "powerful neighbor" of Angola and Namibia (South

Africa) is accused of "crossing borders and bombing and strafing defenseless people." There is not the slightest reference to what is happening to Afghanistan under the heel of its powerful neighbor.

*** The alleged crimes of Israel are pointedly referred to, and there is a call for the "liberation" of occupied Jerusalem. There is no mention of the plight of Poland.

*** The Helsinki Act is invoked -- but only as an arms control agreement. The Helsinki Review Conference in Madrid was recessed last year because democratic governments refused to accede to Soviet insistence that negotiations on disarmament go forward despite massive Soviet violations of the Act's human rights provisions. In the Western view of the Helsinki Agreements, human rights and disarmament are bound together. Not so in Moscow.

*** A call is issued "to conclude, ratify and implement an enforceable international convention to ban all chemical and climatological weapons." Perhaps the absence of a reference to biological weapons in the Moscow documents is explained by the Soviet's use of yellow rain in Afghanistan and Cambodia -- a violation of an existing arms control treaty which one would think might trouble church leaders.

Perhaps Christian leaders who worked to tone down the intemperate language of its communique's did help to make the Moscow peace conference a success. The question, considering the substance of what remained, is -- a success for whom?

Only one American delegate, Dr. Paul L. Brndjar of the Lutheran Church in America, has spoken unfavorably of the results of the event. It was, he said "unfortunate and disappointing that a significant and urgent concern for world peace and disarmament" was "so often submerged in overtly uneven political considerations." ●

"Judenrein"

The word, a favorite with a German political movement of the not so distant past, means "cleansed of Jews." It could also describe last month's Moscow Peace Conference.

Conference documents boast that it had "all-round support in the religious circles of the whole world", -- Christians, Moslems, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Baha'is etc. They even make explicit claims that Jews were involved in the proceedings. But one searches in vain among the ample listings of participants for the name of one real life Jewish representative. Perhaps one of Moscow's official Rabbis belatedly could be produced to testify that he was there, but authentic Jewish leaders clearly were not there.

According to our research, no American Jewish leaders were even invited, although many Jewish organizations -- including the umbrella Synagogue Council of America -- have endorsed the nuclear freeze. Religious News Service reports that Russian church leaders "requested and received assistance from knowledgeable leaders in the U.S. and elsewhere in developing the invitations list." A question to such church leaders: what happened to the Jews?

Several Western church figures did admit to some unhappiness about several "less than evenhanded" statements from the conference on the Middle East issue. But, as the press release from one American denominational headquarters put it, "in the consensus style of the conference -- votes were never taken -- the paragraphs remained."

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Methodists Funds Nicaraguan Center:

There's More Than Meets the Eye

On March 31, the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church voted a \$30,000 contribution to an "Institute on Economic and Social Research, Central America," based in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan Institute was described by the Board as embodying "a commitment to the process of national and regional liberation and social transformation."

Someone at the IRD had the presumption to describe this august enterprise as a "think tank supportive of revolutions in the Nicaraguan-Cuban model." That characterization, put forward in a bulletin to United Methodist members of the IRD, brought angry reproach from staff members at the Methodist mission agency. The story warrants further clarification.

Mr. Charles Germany of the Board of Global Ministries staff World Newscope, an official publication of United Methodism, that the IRD's description was maliciously false. "The Institute will have no structural relation with the Nicaraguan government," he declared. "It

will be related to the University of Austin (Texas)."

We realized he was talking about the University of Texas at Austin, home of the distinguished Institute of Latin American Studies. So we called its Director, Dr. William Glade, who was most informative.

According to Dr. Glade, some months back a Father Xavier Gorostiaga, a Jesuit priest living in Nicaragua, visited him in Austin to request permission to microfilm at the University's library. Nothing more than that. Dr. Glade said of course -- "anybody can come here and film the collection because there are no restrictions on it." Dr. Glade added that "they didn't at any point invite the participation of the Institute of Latin American Studies in their program."

We asked Dr. Glade if the Nicaraguan Institute appeared to be connected to the Nicaraguan government. Dr. Glade said yes -- at the time of Fr. Gorostiaga's visit he was "working for the Nicaraguan planning agency, so this sort of thing would be fairly

clearly a governmental or at least a government-backed institution." Dr. Glade even characterized the Institute as appearing to relate to the Nicaraguan government in the same way as the Soviet Academy of Science does to its government.

We then read Dr. Glade -- one of our country's eminent authorities on Latin America -- the materials from the U.M. Board meeting which described the purposes of the Nicaraguan Institute. What did they mean -- seeking social "alternatives" that would "embody a commitment to the process of national and regional liberation and social transformation."

Dr. Glade replied, "What they mean by that, as they said explicitly, is the alternative strategy -- the transformation to socialism. And they put it that way."

When we called the U.M. Board to ask for some further explanation of all this, Charles Germany and Nora Boots told us that in the future they will only consider answering questions presented to them in writing.

We think we can understand why.

American Participants in "Moscow Peace Conference"*

Mr. Martin Bailey
AD Magazine, United Presbyterian Church
Dr. Paul Brndjar
Lutheran Church in America
Dr. Arie Brouwer
Reformed Church in America
Rev. Robert C. Campbell
General Secretary, American Baptist Churches
in the U.S.A.
Mr. H. Lamar Gible
Church of Brethren
Dr. Billy Graham
Ms. JoAnn Kagivada
Director for International Affairs, Christian
Church (Disciples of Christ)
Rev. Gerhard Claas
General Secretary, Baptist World Alliance
Dr. Karl Mau
Executive Secretary, Lutheran World
Federation
(based in Geneva, Switzerland)
Pastor Richard Moreford
(affiliation unknown)

Ms. Carol Pendell
President, Women's International League for
Peace and Freedom
Dr. Avery Post
President, United Church of Christ
Dr. David W. Preus
Presiding Bishop, American Lutheran Church
Dr. Bruce Rigdon
McCormick Theological Seminary
Rev. D. Robinson
Presbyterian
Dr. K. Soul
(affiliation unknown)
Mr. William P. Thompson
Stated Clerk, United Presbyterian Church
Mr. Ellis Weimar
Director, San Leonardo, California, YWCA
Dr. James Will
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

* An official list of American participants was not available. This list has been compiled by the IRD from a variety of sources.

Briefs

There is still time for church leaders in the Southeast to register for the IRD-sponsored conference scheduled for June 22-23 at Wake Forrest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Addresses by Michael Novak, Edmund Robb, and David Jessup will deal with issues such as human rights, democratic values, and nuclear weapons. Robert L. Wilson of Duke University will discuss church structure and accountability. Panel respondents will include Sister Evelyn Mattern of North Carolina Council of Churches and Rev. W. W. Finlator of Raleigh. A special seminar on religious

liberty will be offered by Dr. Ernest Gordon, president of the Christian Rescue Effort for the Emancipation of Dissidents (CREED). Bishop William R. Cannon, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council, will offer the invocation.

The conference is designed to provide a forum for religious leaders to explore how our churches should be involved in international political issues. Vigorous dialogue and discussion is anticipated throughout the event. On-campus housing and meals are available. For more information, or to register, write or call the IRD office (202-822-8627).

The April news bulletin of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia reports that the anti-religious

drive in Czech schools is being stepped up. Believers in that predominately Catholic nation increasingly are being discriminated against in jobs. Meanwhile, the state is putting up increased pressure on Christians to collaborate with its dummy religious fronts. The Catholic weekly *Katolicke' Noviny* has been turned into an instrument of state propaganda. Priests are being coerced into joining the state-run *Pacem in Terris*, the organization of so-called "peace priests." A grim fate awaits those who refuse to cooperate. Father Jaroslav Duka, a member of the banned Dominican Order earning his living as a worker, was sentenced in December to 15 months in prison. The list of his crimes is instructive: saying mass without state approval, copying religious texts, and attempting to revive the Dominican Order.

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

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

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

The Catholic Church in El Salvador (\$1.50)

Nicaragua: A Revolution Against the Church (\$1.50)

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

The Nuclear Freeze (\$2.50) -- a study guide for Churches prepared by the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

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SPECIAL NOTE

The IRD's new study guide for churches on the nuclear freeze has just arrived from the printer. This 63 page document includes a balance of informative articles and documents by authorities ranging from the National Nuclear Weapons Clearing House to the U.S. Department of State, along with a step-by-step analysis of this complex issue.

Available from the IRD for \$2.50. Ideal for use in the church or classroom.