

RELIGION & DEMOCRACY

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Democracy: The Work Is Just Beginning

By Kent R. Hill

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1989 was a year of breathtaking change! The Berlin Wall collapsed, a Romanian tyrant and his wife were executed, the once-banned Solidarity now leads Poland, a dissident playwright is at the helm in Czechoslovakia. Country after country in Eastern Europe has moved away from a Communist monopoly of power. But in the USSR, true democracy is still but a distant dream. Problems with the economy and strife between nationalities threaten to play into the hands of hardliners.

Eradicating the influence of communism in Eastern Europe will not be easy. Nor will secure democratic institutions and structures automatically replace a suddenly retreating totalitarianism. If democratic systems with majority rule don't progress in guaranteeing minority rights, then the ethnic tensions which predate the rise of Marxism will spawn violence and anarchy. If this happens, the return of dictators is likely.

Steps away from injustice have been made elsewhere as well. South Africa continues to march slowly toward an end to apartheid; Chile is shaking off a dictatorship; El Salvador stretches painfully towards

IRD Executive Director Kent Hill says we must foster conditions which nurture democratic institutions and habits -- and their fruits of freedom and justice

democracy with an army not fully under civilian control; and Panama seeks stability now that Noriega has been chased out. In contrast, the tragic news from China has been of bloody repression.

For all but the most hardened ideologues, 1989 has revealed the dismal failure of Marxist communism to meet peoples' physical and spiritual needs. The post-World War II western policy of deterrence and containment saved many countries from the convulsions now shaking Eastern Europe.

Sadly, it is clear that those on the religious Left are not allowing recent events to reshape their convictions. Liberation theology, for example, which has since its inception been hostile to market economies and sympathetic to centralized economic control and Marxist analysis, is still very popular. Regrettably, the sympathies of many church leaders and staff for the governments of Cuba and Nicaragua, and the Marxist FMLN guerrillas in El Salvador, continue to put our church dollars and influence on the side of movements which have been rejected by the citizens of communist regimes.

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November celebration at Berlin Wall. (BP) Photo by Joanna Pinneo.

The IRD gave its
1989 Religious
Freedom Award
to Cardinal
Fresno, who
stood valiantly
for human rights
and worked for
consensus
among
democratic
forces in formerly
authoritarian
Chile

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presented the award, cited Cardinal Fresno's consistent defense of human rights and his careful fostering of consensus among democratic forces. In connection with the award, the IRD held a conference on "Chile, the Church, and the Restoration of Democracy." More than 80 religious leaders, public policy experts, and human rights activists attended this discussion of lessons to be drawn from Chilean churches' work for human rights and national reconciliation.

El Salvador -- where democracy is more embattled, and the churches less united in support of it -- drew particular concern by the IRD throughout this past year. In a *Religion & Democracy* article, interviews with newspaper and radio reporters, and testimony at the

Latin America: Rise of the Democratic Ideal

Over the past decade, Latin America has seen a stunning rise of the democratic ideal, and a significant growth of democratic practice. Latin American churches have often played an important part in this encouraging trend. Moreover, the survival of the Latin democracies may depend on putting down deep roots in religious values. The direction taken by movements within the churches -- liberation theology and evangelicalism, in particular -- will do much to determine the future of democracy throughout the continent.

On March 6 the IRD paid tribute to a model of responsible political involvement by a Latin church leader. In giving our 1989 Religious Freedom Award to Juan Francisco Cardinal Fresno Larrain, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Santiago, Chile, we honored his vital role in the rebuilding of Chilean democracy. IRD board member Bishop Rene Gracida, who

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly, IRD Research Director Alan Wisdom criticized the U.S. oldline churches for their one-sided campaign against aid to the democratically-elected Salvadoran government. He called attention to Salvadoran church leaders who took a more balanced approach, and joined them in advocating a peace based on respect for **human rights and democratic processes by all parties** in the Salvadoran civil war.

The IRD also dealt with the deeper, more theological issues affecting the commitment of Latin American churches to democratic values. Both IRD Executive Director Kent Hill and Alan Wisdom, in speeches and articles, delivered critiques of liberation theology. They urged liberationists to consider a more orthodox, modest approach to politics, and to acknowledge the democratic political structures which have proven themselves truly liberating. In addition, Wisdom wrote an article for *The San Diego Union* which discussed the growth of evangelical churches in Latin America -- a movement of almost unfathomed social and political effects.

Churches Fail to Keep Up with World Reform Spirit

Time magazine last May described the membership problem in traditional Protestantism as an "unprecedented hemorrhaging." While the article sang "Those Mainline Blues," the debate continued as to whether these churches were "mainline" still. IRD Executive Director Kent Hill wrote in *The Religion & Society Report* that "oldline" was more accurate, and was quoted in the *Time* article critiquing those social activists who have turned the faith into a "political agenda masked with a veneer of spirituality."

This institutional identity crisis, the IRD has maintained, is not just about the degree of these churches' influence in the broader culture; rather it reflects a declining grassroots confidence in the direction and leadership of these denominations.

The troubled oldline churches parallel the troubled ecumenical relations in the National Council of Churches. The IRD published two major articles in *Religion & Democracy* explaining the decline in NCC funding and its inadequate attempts at administrative reform. IRD Research Director Alan Wisdom also reviewed the NCC's 1989 mission study curriculum on the Philippines. The NCC study pegged the United States as the source of Filipino troubles while virtually ignoring the communist insurgency.

Highs: The NCC elected the Rev.

Leonid Kishkovsky as its president for 1990-91, a conciliatory leader with a strong commitment to religious liberty.

Lows: Essentially unchanged direction to NCC activities, despite attempts at organizational reform; the stormy resignation of NCC General Secretary Arie Brouwer last year exemplified the

disarray at New York headquarters.

Denominational Reform

The IRD continues to work with groups that, in their commitment to the integrity of the church, call it to account for its programs and public pronouncements. Accordingly, in 1989 the IRD hired Lawrence Adams, its first director for the Episcopal Committee on Religion and Freedom (ECRF). ECRF published a quarterly newsletter, *Anglican Opinion*, which was sent to more than 2,000

The embattled Arie Brouwer stepped aside as NCC General Secretary, adding insults to the NCC's self-inflicted injuries



Photo by John Goodwin, United Methodist General Conference

Episcopalians around the nation. A newly organized advisory board includes David Aikman of *Time* magazine, Fred Barnes of *The New Republic*, U.S. Senators Alan Simpson and Malcolm Wallop, and the Rt. Rev. Maurice M. Benitez, bishop of the Diocese of Texas.

Highs: The executive council of the Episcopal Church took modest steps toward implementing its religious liberty resolution, which was drafted by ECRF and adopted in the 1988 General Convention.

Lows: After denouncing abuses on both sides of the Nicaraguan conflict,

Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning and four other primates accused the Reagan administration of being prepared "to subject entire peoples to the ravages of war to pursue their economic interests and because of objections to the ideological complexion of their governments...."

Alan Wisdom, who serves on the advisory board of the independent Presbyterians for Democracy and Religious Freedom (PDRF), attended this year's Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly and monitored the church's Peacemaking and International Affairs Committee. In October, PDRF sponsored a debate on liberation theology in which Kent Hill was a participant.

Highs: The IRD supported PDRF's successful campaign to require the church to disclose grants made by

church agencies, and assisted PDRF in analyzing these grants; an open meetings policy also was adopted, though not all agencies have honored it; the IRD helped PDRF efforts to end Presbyterian support of pro-Sandinista groups in Nicaragua and to obtain a more balanced delegation of observers of the 1990 Nicaraguan elections.

Lows: The church was quick to denounce U.S. military aid to El Salvador both before and after the Salvadoran guerrilla offensive in November. The

church still calls for a coalition government including the rebels, though the rebels themselves conceded in early 1989 that they would have to compete in elections *before sharing power*.

IRD also worked with reformers in the United Methodist and Lutheran churches. The IRD provided research assistance to journalists who traveled with 31 Methodist bishops to Nicaragua in early 1989, and carried a report on the trip in *Religion & Democracy*. IRD Deputy Director Diane Knippers assisted with a workshop for United Methodist

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China: Oldline Quiet, Trinitarians Speak Out

For years, the National Council of Churches weighed in sympathetically with China's "permanent revolution." Even while expressing their genuine disgust over last spring's Tiananmen Square massacre, the NCC and oldline leaders still had little to say about the crackdown's context -- the communist system itself.

The knowledge that anti-democratic systems trample religious liberty and other human rights led the Trinitarian Fathers and the Puebla Institute to organize a fact-finding trip to China and Hong Kong in May. One of the major goals was to create a complete listing of religious prisoners. Just prior to the crackdown on the reform movement, the resulting list included seven Roman Catholic priests and bishops, and 12 Protestant church leaders. The IRD sponsored a press conference for the team to publicize the results.

Making people aware of the problems suffered by religious believers in closed societies has been a major project of the Trinitarians. 1989 marks the second year of this work, which is led by Fr. Stan DeBoe and done in close connection with the IRD. Last year, Fr. Stan gave more than 65 lectures to students from kindergarten through graduate school and seminary, and to many church and civic organizations in the U.S., Canada and England. An article by Fr. Stan on China appeared in the July/August *Freedom At Issue*.

Keston, USA, sponsored part of Fr. Stan's speaking, which was aimed not only at educating people but urging them to act for Christians who are persecuted. As a result, many

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organizations adopted prisoners of conscience, started Bible mailings, or are considering other projects to help persecuted believers.

IRD Draws Attention of Media, Critics

When news reporters look for an alternative to the one-sided perspectives of many church leaders, they frequently turn to the IRD. Our public exposure in 1989 included:

- National/international broadcast interviews with the CBS Evening News, the Voice of America, UPI Radio, International Media Services, Marlin Maddoux's "Point of View," Moody Radio, SOS Radio Network, and James Kennedy.
- Regional radio interviews in dozens of cities, including Atlanta, Detroit, Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington.
- A prominent interview with IRD Director Kent Hill in *USA Today*, as well as more than 100 other print publications, including *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Time* magazine, *The Washington Post*, *The Arizona Republic*, *Christianity Today*, *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *World*, *The National Catholic Reporter*, *Crisis*, and *Diario las Americas*.
- IRD Deputy Director Diane Knippers' weekly radio commentary, which was distributed to between 100 and 250 Christian radio stations across the country.
- Dozens of reviews and references to Hill's *The Puzzle of the Soviet Church: An Inside Look at Christianity and Glasnost*, which was suggested as highly recommended

reading by many religious book reviewers; *The Puzzle* was the Evangelical Book Club's November selection of the month.

With few opportunities for open discussion of controversial church programs within official church structures, much of the debate over them takes place in the public media. As a result, several attacks on the IRD appeared in the press:

- *The Washington Post* in August reported the release of *The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion* by radical activists, who singled out the IRD among other so-called "heretics." The *Post* carried a reply letter from Kent Hill.
- *Christianity & Crisis* and *Convergence* (The Christic Institute) printed articles responding to IRD critiques.

Some Significant Articles by IRD Staff in 1989

- "The Dark Side of *Glasnost*," by Kent Hill. *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 11.
- "The Discipline of Discernment: Liberation Theology Reconsidered," by Kent Hill. *Public Eye*, Summer.
- "Church council's board is a whale on the beach," by Lawrence Adams. *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 10.
- "Zimbabwe's New Order: Where Do the Churches Fit?" by Walter Kansteiner. *Public Eye*, Summer.
- "Polish dissident movement stresses both freedom and peace," by Diane Knippers. *Religious News Service*, April 24.
- "Partial account of reality," by Alan Wisdom. *The Washington Times*, August 8.
- "Evangelicals find reception warm in Latin America," by Alan Wisdom. *The San Diego Union*, August 13.

Soviet Grip on Freedom Loosened in East

The people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have been calling their governments to account for their rule, and it is clear they want more than food on the shelves. They want the freedom to worship and educate their children in accordance with their religious faiths, as well as to shape public life via political parties, self-run business enterprises and labor unions.

Since its inception, the IRD has labored to support such aspirations, and has worked particularly to secure for oppressed people freedom for faith and conscience, as the basis for other human rights. Our efforts last year toward freedom in Soviet-dominated areas were specially pointed toward helping American Christians grasp the isolation of fellow believers in totalitarian lands. The IRD's ongoing work to educate the church on religious liberty worldwide fills a noticeable gap left by many oldline churches.

Prayerful solidarity among believers worldwide, along with public pressure for change, are ways that American Christians can help fellow believers. To illuminate this need, *The Puzzle of the Soviet Church: An Inside Look at Christianity and Glasnost*, by IRD Executive Director Kent R. Hill, was released in July. It has drawn consistently outstanding reviews. Throughout the year Hill has been sought for comment by media outlets ranging from the CBS Evening News to *USA Today*. What Hill saw in a trip to Moscow in September reinforced one of the main points of his book: that the great hunger for religion in Soviet citizens is being fed by greater freedoms, but that conditions under *glasnost* still have not produced the legal changes necessary to make Soviet believers fully confident about their future. While not long ago change in Eastern Europe lagged behind the Soviet Union, now the situation has reversed.

To evaluate the degree of *glasnost* for religion in the USSR, the IRD co-sponsored a conference in September with the Ethics and Public Policy Center, the James Madison Foundation and the National Association of Evangelicals. Panel speakers traced the condition of



Kent Hill with Alexander Ogorodnikov in Moscow; photo taken by Sergei Savchenko, a Soviet Christian whose death in October remains suspicious.

various religious groups, and workshop participants explained how people may be involved in distributing literature to the Soviet Union and helping resettle refugees in the West.

A special guest at the conference was Alexander Ogorodnikov, the founder of the Christian Seminar movement and the newly formed Christian

Democratic Union in the Soviet Union. Ogorodnikov, who spent years in labor camps for his Christian activities, attributed his release not to Mikhail Gorbachev but to "world Christian opinion."

On December 15, an article by Hill appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor* noting the sinister limits of Soviet *glasnost*. In it he revealed the continuing persecution being faced by Ogorodnikov and the Christian Democratic Union, including the suspicious death of a devout Christian and photographer linked to the party.

Also visiting the IRD in 1989 were Fathers Gleb Yakunin and Georgi Edelshtein. Yakunin confronted his church hierarchy in 1965 for its passivity under repression. He was stripped of his parish, and after continuing to expose state repression, he was sent in 1979 to labor camp and then exile before being released in

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Under *glasnost*,
dissidents for
democracy in
the Soviet
Union still face
harassment,
and Christians
remain fearful
about losing
precious
advances in
religious
freedom

Economic Reform Moves to the Front Burner

By the end of 1989, the only question remaining about widely discredited socialist planning was whether its

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East Europeans
turn to
markets;
"Damascus"
theologians
turn
away

demise should be sudden -- by "shock therapy" -- or gradual. Mikhail Gorbachev's reformist and thus-far unsuccessful economic *perestroika* in the Soviet Union has been superseded by the more radical attempts in Eastern Europe, and even Latin America, to free enterprises from state control.

These moves toward economic liberalization parallel, not by coincidence, actions supportive of human rights and religious freedom. The IRD's

Economic Studies Program, through the *The Religion & Economics Report*, has presented to the religious community evidence of a correlation between decentralized economies and constitutionally based human rights.

Specifically, *The Religion & Economics Report* covered churches' activities and pronouncements on economic matters. Oldline denominations, for example, continue to focus their efforts on outmoded and ineffective means to obtain economic justice -- means that can hurt, not help, the poor. *The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion* and several other religious pronouncements that condemned the global market system in particular were critiqued in the *The Report*. Such economic pastorals consistently ignore the practical crisis of socialism in Eastern European, Latin American and African states, and the denial of human rights frequently prevalent in the same states.

More disturbing is that some documents make economics a "confessional," litmus-test issue by which heretics may be clearly identified. *The Road to Damascus*, for example, excludes any alternative understanding of economic and political realities. Disagreement with such contextual/liberation theology is not allowed, according to the document's signatories -- especially not from so-called "right-wing," First World Christians. IRD's Economic Studies Program counters this type of theological reflection, which so badly serves the poor it claims to uphold.

In addition to the usual demands for boycott and government sanctions, the churches have renewed their promotion of "socially responsible investing." The criteria for determining divestment from corporations have grown to include: connections to defense

industries, a poor environmental record, unsatisfactory minority hiring practices, indirect ties to a company doing business in South Africa -- and the list goes on. Also gathering steam are codes of conduct for multinational corporations, some of which are voluntary, some of which being pushed in federal legislation.



Dina Mabudafhasi of Operation Hunger shows IRD Office Manager Kendrick Smith crafts made for export. Photo by Lonni Jackson.

Hope for Peaceful Change Gets a Boost in Southern Africa

Violence seemed at least partially exhausted as a way to face conflict in Southern Africa in 1989. There have been cease fires and

negotiations in Angola, and elections in Namibia. South Africa's new president appeared as more than just a new face on one side of the deadlock, and Nelson Mandela found negotiations with the government possible.

Signs of hope emerged for the courageous few laboring to unite blacks and whites in South Africa. As articulated in former IRD staff member Walter Kansteiner's 1988 book, *South Africa: Reconciliation or Revolution?*, the path between acquiescence to apartheid's status quo and violent revolt against it is difficult to navigate -- but necessary for those committed to peace and justice. In 1989, the IRD co-published

with Bristol Books the second edition of Kansteiner's book, which is now available from the IRD for \$8.95.

Key to the IRD's contribution is the Building a New South Africa Program (BANSAs), which directs support to groups working for reconciliation and economic empowerment of impoverished South Africans. Kent Hill and Kansteiner traveled to South Africa in May and developed contacts for the BANSAs program.

In April and October, the IRD hosted Ina Perlman of Operation Hunger, which provides hunger relief and malnutrition prevention, as well as self-help development projects. Perlman testified to the worsening of conditions for the poor under foreign sanctions against South Africa, which have led to the creation of what she called a "siege economy." Operation Hunger is one of the organizations recommended through BANSAs.

Hill, from page 1

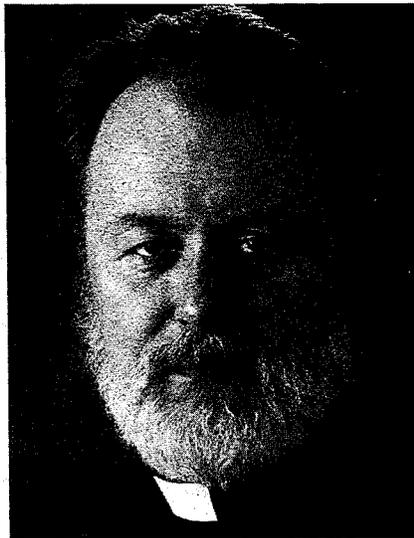
1989 was another banner year for the IRD. We continued to work for religious freedom around the world by giving our Religious Liberty Award to Cardinal Fresno who has led the struggle for democracy in Chile against a dictatorship on the right. We produced with Multnomah Press a book on the impact of *glasnost* on religion in the USSR, with specific suggestions on what Western Christians can do to help. We continued to press the argument that democracy is the best system available to advance the Christian commitment to human dignity, religious freedom, and economic security for the peoples of the world. We persevered in challenging church policies which neglect the spiritual message of the church in favor of unwise politics, and yet we insisted on the importance of a prudent and effective social witness for the church. We have sought to support reform movements in a variety of denominations.

Never in the history of the IRD has our work been more important. The task of building democracy involves much more than simply struggling against communism and other oppressive political systems. We must foster conditions which nurture democratic institutions and habits -- and their fruits of freedom and justice.

I believe you are going to be impressed with what we have accomplished in 1989. We are very grateful to our growing number of supporters, and request your continued prayers and financial help.

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Women concerned about renewal and reform. Kent Hill, while speaking at Minneapolis/St. Paul-area colleges on religion in the U.S.S.R., met with



Grady Clark Photography

The Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky's two years as NCC President promise a refreshing devotion to religious liberty around the world

church reform activists from various denominations, including Lutherans for Religious and Political Freedom. Hill's comments on reform were reported in a Religious News Service story that was released nationally.

Ecumenical Evangelicals

IRD staff met with leaders of the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) and advised them regarding the development of WEF's Commission on Religious Freedom. In September, WEF formally established the commission, and named the IRD as a consultant. This is a major step in institutionalizing a concern for religious liberty in an international church body.

Kent Hill continues to serve as an advisor to the National Association of Evangelicals' "Peace, Freedom, and Security Studies Program." He spoke several times on behalf of the program at John Brown University in November. Hill, Larry Adams, and Alan Wisdom instructed students

participating in the American Studies Program, an affiliate of the Christian College Coalition.

The IRD assisted reform-minded activists in all of the oldline churches in 1989 (including several not mentioned thus far, such as the Disciples of Christ, the United Church of Christ, and the American Baptist Church). Requests for assistance from individuals and local groups continued to rise last year, further confirming what more religion reporters caught onto in 1989: that the oldline is not healthy, and that its leaders still have not grasped why.

Freedom, from page 5

1987. A "window of opportunity" exists for evangelism in the Soviet Union, Yakunin said, though he feared a China-style crackdown in the future on religion and other new freedoms should *perestroika* turn to chaos. The priests briefed the media at an August 4 IRD press conference before meeting with officials at the White House.

Hill continues to chair the Coalition for Solidarity with Christians in the USSR, a group that coordinates 18 diverse organizations working for religious liberty in the Soviet Union. Fr. Stan DeBoe, a Trinitarian priest who works as a religious liberty associate of the IRD, assists in coordinating Coalition activities. In September, Fr. Stan discussed opportunities for strengthening the church in Eastern Europe at an international consultation on the church under persecution in Colorado Springs.

In 1989, the IRD shared in the celebration over newly found freedom for religion in the Eastern Bloc. Clearly, however, much remains to be done to reinforce the positive directions of dramatic changes already set in motion.



Photo by Lonni Jackson

IRD Staff: Upper Left -- Karen Mabeus, Paula Pulver, Kendrick Smith, Dana Preusch, Alan Wisdom;
Lower Left -- Fr. Stan Deboe, Kent Hill, Steve Beard, Fred Jones, Lonni Jackson, Diane Knippers, Larry Adams.



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