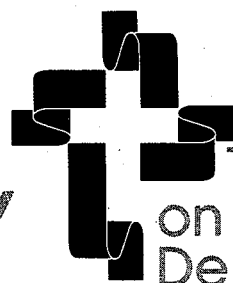


RELIGION & DEMOCRACY



The Institute
on Religion &
Democracy

March 1992



IRD President Kent R. Hill greets then-Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev last fall as part of Project Christian Bridge.

Mission in Moscow: Dialogue about Truth

Last fall, IRD President Kent R. Hill joined 18 evangelical leaders in a consultation with leaders in the Soviet Union called Project Christian Bridge. The purpose of the project can be found in the letter of invitation from the Supreme Soviet, which said: "We know the role which your Christian organizations are playing as you follow the great words of Christ: 'Faith without works is dead.'" The following excerpt of Philip Yancey's account of the trip sheds light on why Hill returned with his family to Russia -- part of the former Soviet Union -- last December. The story picks up at a meeting with professors at the Academy of Social Sciences in Moscow.

By Philip Yancey

In the midst of our discussion, one of the Marxist professors, a specialist in philosophy, asked for the floor. Blotches of red appeared on his face, and as soon as he began speaking, anger spilled out. Others in the room looked around anxiously, concerned that he was straying from the tone of mannerly dialogue. But there was no stopping this man. He had come to deliver a speech -- a

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European Parties Connect Democracy and Christianity

By Fredrick P. Jones

Are Christian beliefs consistent with the public advocacy of democracy, imperfections and all? Many, including those who helped form the Institute on Religion and Democracy, argue that the answer is yes. In Europe, a similar advocacy is expressed by some in a way that is rarely reported in the United States: Christian-labeled political parties (open parties, with no required Christian confession and free from institutional church control).

In the multi-party parliamentary systems of Europe, which tend to contain a wider range of ideological variation than the American two-party system, not only do Christian parties exist; they have frequently ruled in Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Italy. Many such parties have formed in the former Communist bloc as Christians and others have begun thinking afresh about how to exercise their public responsibility.

Though other Christian parties with both Protestant and Catholic roots date back to the 19th century, Luigi Sturzo, a Catholic priest, formed Europe's first Christian Democratic party in Italy in 1919. After going into exile from fascism in 1924, Sturzo set up an international group of Christian Democrats in Paris, which included another Italian, Alcide De Gasperi, Robert Schuman of France, and Konrad Adenauer

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Balance, coherence lacking in some United Methodist General Convention resolutions
-- page 2

German reunification tests the strength of Christian Democrats both East and West
-- page 5

Methodist General Conference Resolutions Struggle to Keep up with the Times



By Fredrick P. Jones

Cold Wars and other conflicts come and go, but some things don't change. As United Methodist delegates prepare to travel to Louisville in May for the quadrennial General Conference, the picture of the international scene they will receive from church agencies will look distressingly familiar.

1) The "New House of Europe" (United Methodism in a New Europe)

In this resolution, the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) did notice the fallen Berlin Wall, which, with gratitude, it called "the symbol of a new order." But with the exception of an acknowledgement that market economies were necessary in Eastern Europe, the resolution contains no significant analysis of the changes that have occurred nor the challenges ahead.

For example, a February issue of *Time* magazine reported on the Reagan administration's work with the Vatican to aid resistance to the communist regime in Poland, and how significant this was in the chain of events completed in the last few years. But in the GBCS resolution, we only learn that it was former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev who accelerated the process of change, providing room for the "liberation movements" that labored against political oppression. What kind of oppression? "Communism" is not named. "Liberation movements?" This is an odd reference to dissidents, especially since the common usage of the phrase is often tainted with the Marxist influences that most Eastern Europeans, but not all Methodist agencies, have rejected fiercely.

The view toward a new Europe in the resolution is qualified by the recognition that the "time is now" for Christians to recount past failures and successes "as we attempted to be faithful servants of Christ in a divided world." Yet only the successes are mentioned, some of which are dubious, such as the impact of the church human rights program associated with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

It is defensiveness, not a contrite spirit, that follows. The GBCS warns against scrapping contacts made by the church before the revolutions. Not only does the resolution fail to mention that some of these contacts may lack credibility in their own countries because of their collaboration with the communist regimes, but it goes on to assert the need for full church control over new contacts and mission giving. The

bureaucracy is clamping down, and independent groups such as the Mission Society for United Methodists appear to be the target.

Methodists not only deserve a better resolution, they deserve one that is better written. Divine aid is needed to navigate the many obscure parts of "The New House of Europe."

2) The Middle East in the Aftermath of the Gulf War

It is inappropriate to feel good about any war, much less one that, one year later, accomplished less than many had hoped. But this General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) resolution displays quite clearly the disease of selective attention. The resolution rightly grieves over the continued sufferings of civilians in Iraq, but it treats war casualty figures as though there were no difference at all between the deaths of combatants and non-combatants. Calling the anti-Iraq allies to suspend sanctions in order to help civilians might be a reasonable policy alternative. Yet the GBGM gives no indication how to do this successfully -- making sure the benefits go to civilians and not to fund Saddam Hussein's oppressive grip on that country.

The only other suffering clearly imagined by the BOGM is that of Palestinians, who are characterized as victims of "gross human rights abuses" in Israel and persecution by angry, intolerant Kuwaitis. Such abuses have no defense; neither do the ones committed by Palestinians in the territories against each other, which the resolution fails to mention. Yet the resolution acknowledges no awareness that many Palestinians and their self-appointed leaders cheered Iraq's defiant imperialism in the Persian Gulf. It shows no awareness that Palestinian terrorism, not to mention Arab hostility (declared war, except in the case of Egypt) against Israel has plagued that democratic and relatively tolerant government since its inception. The GBGM would not have to bless everything Israel does in order to show even *some* sympathy for Israel's security.

The whole point of the resolution is to establish a moral parallel between Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and Israel's holding of the West Bank. The necessary response of the international community also is set in parallel: What was done for Kuwait should be done for Palestinians.

The legal certainty the resolution displays in its defense of this moral claim is, in reality, much more ambiguous. And while continued construction of Israeli settlements no doubt affects the course of negotiations on the future of the Middle East, treating the settlements and United States support for Israel as major impediments to justice does not

come close to presenting a balanced picture of the region's complexity. During a rare moment such as this when peace talks are being conducted, it would be difficult to find a resolution more out of tune with the realities on the discussion table.

The political plight of Arabs in historic Palestine is not the only problem in the Middle East. The fact that Lebanon was finally devoured by Syria in the shadow of the Gulf crisis is not mentioned. Neither are the tremendous human rights problems throughout the region, not to mention the lack of democracy. The GBGM seems to stand only for "self-determination," and only then for its special interests, not real democracy for everyone.

3) The Web of Apartheid: South Africa and the Destabilization of Its Neighbors

This GBGM resolution rejoices that South Africa is on the threshold of change. This metaphor should be corrected to note several thresholds that the resolution does not

Forty percent of all South Africans are unemployed; that figure jumps to as high as 80 percent in certain black areas.

Deepening suffering by blacks dilutes the moral strength of the resolution's call for a delay in sanctions removal until an interim government is in place. The resolution calls the church to "listen more attentively than ever to the churches and movements in the region." But its authors won't listen to the Rev. Stanley Mogoba, the presiding bishop of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa. On several occasions Mogoba has stated his disapproval of sanctions.

South Africa also highlights the perils of quadrennial resolutions. This month, a referendum in South Africa *could* affect the course of change greatly. One month after the General Conference, something similar could happen. Fearing the worst about reform in South Africa, the GBGM's resolution keeps the church's public statement well back from -- and nearly irrelevant to -- the cutting edge of change in that troubled country.

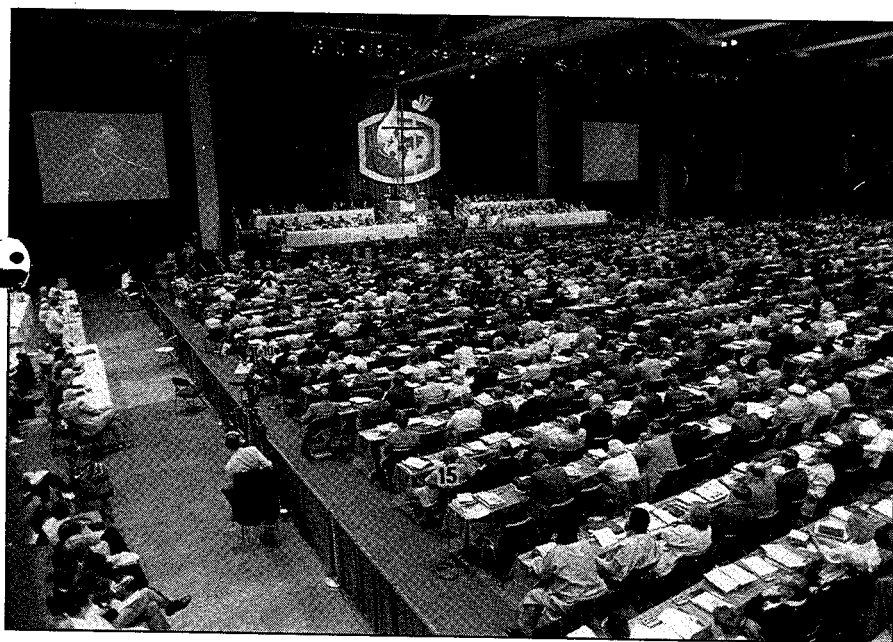
More Still

Not everything in the resolutions submitted by church agencies on international affairs is bad. It should be noted that many of the concerns expressed sound genuine and reflect real problems requiring attention at several levels. But when the church paints its picture of thorough "structural" change, its analysis and recommendations become especially fuzzy.

Is the church ready and equipped -- and should it be -- to fix the all the world's evils (or at least identify the chief villains)? A GBCS resolution on the U.S.-Mexico border aims to "eliminate the root causes" of what surely are some difficult conditions in that area. The resolution moves to a conclusion by urging the church to "continue its support of the U.S.-Mexico Border Advisory

Committee within the General Board of Global Ministries to provide coordination and facilitate a wholistic approach to addressing the structural causes of problems in this region." That must be an incredible committee.

"Central America: Peace and Just Life," "Toward a New Beginning Beyond 1992," and "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation," "Environmental Racism," and "Environmental Justice for a Sustainable Future" also make the list of problematic resolutions. For a more complete report on the internationally-related resolutions and plans to encourage careful reflection on them at the General Conference, please write to: IRD, 1331 H Street, NW, #900, Washington, DC, 20005.



The 1988 United Methodist General Conference. Photo: John C. Goodwin

recognize, especially regarding the legal structure of apartheid, which has been removed.

This resolution appears in many ways to have been dusted off from the past. Thus, it misses on one of its main points: South Africa's horrid destabilizing role in the region (particularly in Mozambique and Angola). No evidence is cited showing that this policy continues, though, especially in the case of Angola, there are many reasons to think South Africa's policy has changed.

Finally, the resolution remains stuck on economic sanctions, despite the lack of unified voices from South African blacks on the matter. It is not just racism, but an economic crisis, that contributes to violence in South Africa.

Christian Democracy, from page 1
of Germany.

For their leadership in the recovery from World War II, these men were often referred to as "Europeans of the first hour" as they worked, consistent with the Vatican's teaching, to create a united, democratic Europe. Christian Democratic parties ruled the six nations that formed the European Community (to which only democracies may apply), though Christians and others from other parties contributed significantly to the vision of a Europe that would become too integrated to fight another brutal war.

What, then, does the "Christian" part of the Christian Democracy mean? Because Christian Democrat forms a broad umbrella, the "C" for some can mean quite little. "Christian Democrats have not always presented themselves as working for high ideals," said Sir William Nicoll, a former official in the European Community. In fact, those from Christian Democratic parties working together in the Community's parliament couldn't agree to put "Christian" in the name; it is called the European People's Party (EPP).

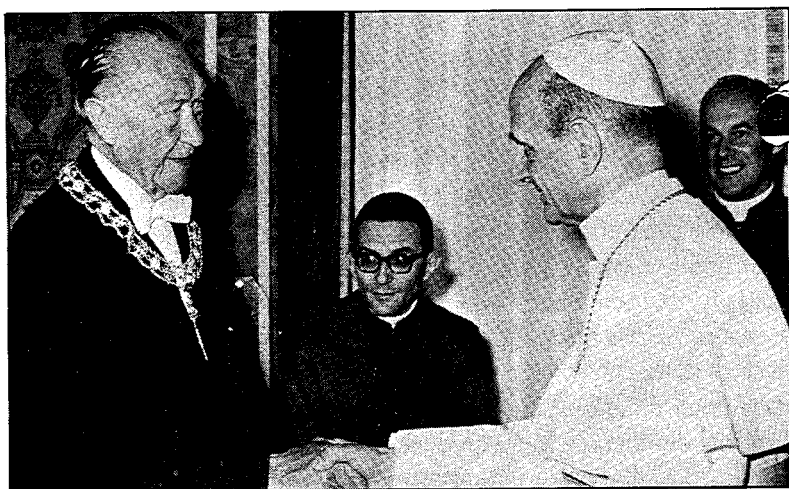
Sometimes the issue is framed as: Will Christian Democrats occupy a richly-defined, principled center on the political spectrum, as the progressive Dutch advocate? Or will they rest on the thinly-defined core ideas of the movement's past and follow the more pragmatic course charted by the German Christian Democratic Union?

"We have to define what we are before we know what we're trying to sell," a Dutch Christian Democrat told *The New York Times* in 1990. "There is tension between those who believe we should stick close to our principles and those who think we can roam the political spectrum to win supporters."

According to Nicoll, part of the common core among the diverse Christian Democratic parties is the advocacy of a social market economy. Even the more conservative Christian Democrats, such as those in Germany, do not question the welfare state, much less the need for strong government. Many parties have their own ties with labor, something largely unheard of among conservatives in the United States. But to a far greater degree than the Social Democrats, the Christian Democrats believe in markets and clear limits to government engineering of the economy.

Christians Squeezed by Secular Ideologies

If none of that sounds too obviously or distinctly Christian, more history might help. According to James W. Skillen, director of the Center for Public Justice in Washington, Christians became isolated in Europe after the French Revolution in ways that did not happen in America. The separation of church and state here was accomplished



VATICAN CITY — In 1963, Pope Paul VI meets with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Adenauer, a Christian Democrat and a Roman Catholic, led his party and his country for almost 15 years until his resignation that same year.

"with the confidence that the country had maintained the continuity of its Christian convictions," said Skillen. Yet the strongly anti-monarchical, anti-clerical French Revolution that began in 1789 sent shock waves through Europe with its secular "liberal" individualist philosophy. By the time of the socialist revolution, "it was clear that Christians were the odd men out."

By the 1890s, with the industrial revolution in full swing, Pope Leo XIII had written *Rerum Novarum*, which set Roman Catholicism clearly on a track in support of free associations and democracy, something the church previously had resisted. At the same time, Abraham Kuyper, a Protestant journalist and theologian (and later prime minister) of the Netherlands, articulated a strong Christian and "anti-revolutionary" (but not conservative in the old European sense) critique that also called for limits to the state's power and distinguished his party from the socialists. These reactions to the polar evils of individualism and collectivism set the stage for the moderate, centrist Christian Democratic parties that followed after.

Clarifying the "C"

While on one hand the "C" would seem to evoke the sentiments of the old Christian Europe, the history of the Christian Democratic parties is, in contrast, progressive. It is a political position that stands clearly against the intolerant and atheistic orientations of the extremes that have at times wielded power in modern Europe. Nicoll said Europeans, particularly the Christian Democrats with their strong commitment to a European identity, remember also the human suffering caused by the religious wars of Europe's past: "This is a lesson that was burned into them."

Christian Democratic thought, exemplified in the writings of the Roman Catholic Jacques Maritain, has held clearly to the dignity of all human persons. This dignity is recognized as coming from a transcendent God and is

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German Reunification Tests Christian Democrats

By McKendree R. Langley

In November 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. In October 1990, the two Germanies were united, and in December 1990 the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) was victorious in four of the five eastern German provinces while also holding on to the national government under Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Thus, the CDU bears chief responsibility for reunification, which for many symbolizes a world in which West and East can work together.

The German CDU is completing the work of its post-war leader, Konrad Adenauer, who ruled West Germany after Hitler and envisioned an eventual reunification only after the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist East. Succeeding at reunification does not guarantee popularity; the dominance of the CDU, in fact, has left it open to criticism from all sides. With the country under the stress of reunification, for example, Kohl's party lost a series of elections in the Western provinces last year.

Now the Cold War is over, and the eastern and western wings of the party have merged. The story to watch -- though the secular media seem largely oblivious to it -- is how the "C" will influence the shape of the CDU as Germany asserts greater leadership in world affairs and as it works to rehabilitate the eastern provinces.

Two key players in these momentous events were Kohl and Lothar de Maiziere, the popularly-elected last prime minister of the former East Germany; both are Christian Democrats. De Maiziere served as Kohl's deputy in both the government and the CDU after the unification, though he resigned both his government and party posts as a protest against western German press charges that he had been a Stasi (secret police) informer under the old communist regime (the German government cleared him of criminal charges more than a year ago).

On October 1, 1990, the first united CDU party congress took place in Hamburg with both leaders expressing complimentary views. Kohl denounced the communist dictatorship of the East German Socialist Unity Party and outlined the three main tasks for the new Germany: 1) the introduction of a social market economy in the former East Germany, 2) the completion of the united states of Europe, and 3) Germany's contribution to the world of the future.

According to Kohl, within the CDU as within the nation, there would no longer be East and West Germans. Nationalism would not be allowed to get out of hand: "We are German patriots at the same time that we are convinced Europeans," he declared.

The chancellor, a convinced Catholic, said the CDU

occupies a "great" middle position bringing together people from different regions and socio-economic levels. "We have a reliable compass in our Christian view of man and the creation," Kohl added. The confession of the "C" in CDU is a source of strength for the party and the basis for cooperation with both people and nations. Immaterial things such as personal freedom matter more than things measured by money, he said.

De Maiziere's speech centered on the fact that after more than 40 years the two parties and two Germanies were finally united. During the decades of communist rule in East Germany, he said that the eastern CDU was split into two factions. The corrupt leadership was controlled by the communist Socialist Unity Party, but at the grassroots level there were party members who felt they could be active without compromising with the communists. Among the grassroots, De Maiziere said, "those who became active in the CDU risked oppression, being considered suspicious and being persecuted." For them, the CDU was the only way they could act with Christian responsibility in society. When the East German government began to collapse, De Maiziere said, the ethical aspect of the "C" attracted people. "Many people who participated in this revolution had the feeling that we were acting in God's hand," the Lutheran emphasized.

The eastern CDU was not the only party tainted by association with East Germany's long-time communist regime under Erich Honecker. The CDU's main current challenger, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), joined Honecker's Socialist Unity Party, while CDU leader Gerald Gotting served as vice-premier. Today the CDU tends to be the centrist party favoring the middle and upper classes while the SPD tends to be a more progressive party finding support among the lower and middle classes.

The CDU is criticized from all sides: from "Wessies," or westerners, who perceive that their resources are being drained to help reunify the country; from "Ossies," or easterners, who are struggling to make ends meet and receive wage and benefit levels lower than in the West. Further, some Ossies perceive an arrogant, know-it-all attitude by the West. Some of this is related to the Bonn government's attempts at removing communist collaborators from positions of authority.

Still, most Ossies know that parity with the west will take time and that they are better off than the citizens of any other former communist country in the region. Many of them support the CDU because it is strong, stable, and pro-market. Though the vague Christian basis of the CDU -- most often expressed in the terms of "ethics" -- may weaken under stress, many Ossies now cling to the "C" because it indicates a belief in values that they believe are desperately needed after four decades of communism.

McKendree R. Langley is a freelance writer.

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embedded in community solidarity. Such ideas had been virtually obliterated in European politics by fascism.

Theo Brinkel, a Dutch Christian Democrat, wrote in a paper for the European People's Party in 1991 that this view of human dignity, often labeled "personalism," connects with other key ingredients: 1) a "responsible society" that attaches great importance to non-political communities, and 2) the "just state," which works to guarantee civil rights, create necessary material conditions, and mediate conflicting societal interests. This is not a utopian ideal, Brinkel stressed. Christian Democrats, he said, "are convinced that politics cannot bring salvation to human beings, although politics should make important contributions to the structure of human society." As put differently by Thomas Jansen in a lecture last December discussing Central and Eastern Europe: "Christian Democrats are not the slaves of an ideology which claims to have answers to all problems. They know that no man is perfect, and in particular they know that Christian Democrats are not perfect."

According to Skillen, many of the Christian Democratic parties, which often have ruled key countries in Europe (and also at times in Latin America), have invested more energy working out the pragmatics of governing than in deepening their philosophical grounding. The conditions of parliamentary politics, with its coalition building among parties, tends to remove incentives for the development of a more sophisticated Christian perspective.

The more distinctly Christian the platform, some fear, the more difficult it can be to develop a numbers-based power bloc in the system. The Dutch Christian Democrats in the European Parliament want the freedom to form ad hoc parliamentary coalitions across the political spectrum, depending on the issue. Others, such as the Germans, prefer strictly center-right coalitions, which would secure a large, stable, anti-socialist voting block. Toward such an end, the British Conservatives in the European Parliament joined a coalition with the EPP last month.

The Christian Democrat International had been lending support to emerging parties in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Many such groups are claiming the Christian Democrat mantle, though some "without any proof that they share our vision of democracy," Bryan Palmer, the international's secretary general told *The New York Times*.

Though most Christian Democratic support had come in largely Roman Catholic countries, parties also have emerged in the last two decades in predominately Protestant Scandinavia. William Harper, writing in the *Public Justice Report* last April, said that their political activity was primarily "a morality play starring three actors: abortion, alcohol abuse, and divorce." Against the backdrop of a "post-Christian world" that "arrived with brutal swiftness and

efficiency," Harper said the Christian Democrats in Sweden broadened their agenda by the mid-1980s to include educational, foreign policy and environmental concerns.

One thing that will challenge Christian Democrats in the future is the growing presence of Muslims in Europe and the seemingly permanent proximity of an intolerant Islam, according to Nicoll. Several widely-reported incidents of conflicts involving Muslims, along with the application by a secular, democratic government in Turkey (a predominantly Muslim country) to the European Community, have led to a reconsideration "of whether one factor contributing to European integration is the common heritage of Christianity," he said.

Nicoll said that presence of Islam has helped raise anew the question, "What is Europe supposed to be?" If they stay true to their foundations, Christian Democrats will not look for an answer in the old, pre-democratic concepts of Christendom from Europe's dangerous, divisive past. Neither will they look to the secular individualist and collectivist ideologies that threatened to push Christians to



MILAN — Premier Alcide De Gasperi of Italy (behind microphone) addresses a crowd estimated at 100,000 gathered in Duomo Square several days before crucial national elections in 1948. De Gasperi's party, the Christian Democrats, resoundingly defeated the communists. Religious News Service Photo.

the margins of public life. Instead, the chief reservoir for Christian Democrats, who unite under a broad, centrist umbrella in linking their religious tradition to their politics, will be the lessons from this century's battles against fascism and communism. Budding parties in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States are watching, looking for clues to the future amidst the moral and political vacuum left by the collapse of their old totalitarian regimes.

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diatribe, really -- not to exchange pleasantries with the enemy.

The academy translator struggled valiantly to keep pace for a while, waving for the professor to slow down, then finally gave up entirely. Russian-speakers in our group did their best to fill in, but the philosopher never paused.

We managed to hear enough to get the drift of his argument. "We need not have God to have morality!" he said. "Erich Fromm developed a fine morality based on Man with a capital M. God is not necessary. Why pretend there is a God?"

The philosopher's volume rose, and his face grew even more flushed. He punctuated the air with his finger as he made each point, and I thought of the paintings of Lenin addressing the workers. I thought, too, of stump preachers in the South where I had grown up. Of course! This man was a fanatic evangelist, the last true-blue, dyed-in-the wool Marxist in Moscow. He was out to gain converts, and it mattered not at all if he was the last person in the world to believe these things. He was a bitter, wounded atheist, and he seized the chance to strike back at the unbelievers.

"Marxism has not failed!" he shouted. "Yes, Stalin made mistakes. Yes, even our beloved Lenin made mistakes.

Perhaps even Marx made mistakes. But go back to the young Marx, not the old Marx. There you will find the purity of the socialist vision. There you will find a morality based on Man with the capital M. That is what we need. As for Christianity, we have tried that in Russia -- for one thousand years we tried it."

We members of Project Christian Bridge were fidgeting in our seats. Being yelled at by a fanatic is not a pleasant sensation, I realized, and I tucked away the thought for further reflection. A few members of our group were whispering to their seatmates, and still others were clearing their throats, ready to jump in with a rebuttal.

The philosopher went on for 10 or 15 minutes until finally the emcee forced him to stop. I sensed in the atmosphere of the room an odd mixture of revenge and embarrassment. The professors waited for us to respond, and I cringed at the possibilities. Some of us weren't far removed from stump preachers ourselves, I knew, and the last thing the academy needed was a wounded evangelical doing battle with wounded atheist. By the providence of God, it was Kent Hill, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, who got the floor.

Kent Hill looks more professorial than the professors. He wears glasses, has a scholarly demeanor, and speaks in soft, measured tones, the epitome of rational discourse. He also has a Ph.D. in Russian studies. I did not envy him the spotlight he had just stepped into, but I could not imagine a finer representative to respond on our behalf.

"First, I want to affirm your right to your beliefs," Kent began, and waited respectfully for the translator to plug in his microphone and resume his work. "I am concerned about intolerance in the Soviet Union today -- intolerance of atheists. I recently learned of an incident where a group allowed a Christian to speak, but shouted down an atheist. We have not come in that spirit. We support freedom of religion, and that includes freedom for those who do not believe in God."

Tension rushed from the room as if someone had opened an air lock. The professors nodded their approval, and even the philosopher gave a curt nod. Kent continued.

"The issues you have raised tonight, sir, are important. In fact, I cannot think of more important issues to discuss. You have touched on questions of ultimate meaning for

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humanity and for the universe. Our group has thought long and hard about these questions. We have reached some conclusions, and we would love to discuss those with you. But one night's discussion would hardly do justice to these issues. Could I make a suggestion? My family and I are moving to Moscow in December, and I will be teaching a course in Christian apologetics at Moscow State University. I will gladly return to your academy with Christian friends and set up a forum in which we can consider these very important matters."

Again, nods of approval all around. Kent resumed, "But since I have the floor, I would like to mention why I believe the way I do." At this point, Kent shifted into fluent Russian. The professors, some with looks of astonishment on their face, removed their headphones, and now we Americans were the ones listening to the simultaneous translation.

Kent told of a time of doubt in his life when he was tempted to abandon his Christian beliefs. He began reading Dostoevsky's great novel *The Brothers Karamazov* -- at this mention, more nods -- which deals with many of the issues raised by the academy philosopher.

"At first I found myself attracted to Ivan, the agnostic. His arguments against God were powerful, especially those concerning the problem of evil. I sensed in him a sincerity and a brilliant mind. As I read Dostoevsky's book, I found
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Trinitarians Campaign on Behalf of Imprisoned Vietnamese Priest

In April, 1991, *Religion & Democracy* reported both on improvements and continuing problems for religious believers in Vietnam. Since then, three Protestant house church leaders have been arrested and dozens of other Protestant and Catholic clergy and laypersons continue to be held in Vietnamese prisons. The case of Father Dominic Tran Dinh Thu, the ailing 85-year-old Catholic priest serving a 20-year sentence for practicing his faith, remains unresolved.

A postcard campaign begun by the Trinitarian Fathers appealing for Father Dominic's release began more than two years ago and continues. If you would like to demonstrate your support by joining the appeal, pre-printed postcards are available from IRD upon request. They are directed to His Excellency Trin Uan Lang, the Vietnamese ambassador to the United Nations in New York.



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myself gradually losing faith. But to my surprise, I was eventually won over by the love shown by Ivan's brother Alyosha. Ivan had fine arguments, but he had no love. He could reason his way to a morality, but he could not create the love necessary to fulfill it. I came to believe in Christ because I found in him a source for that love."

With that, Kent Hill sat down, and our meeting with the Academy of Social Sciences was transformed.

It occurred to me as we drove away from the ghostly marble buildings that Kent Hill had done far more than defuse one awkward confrontation. He had given us a model of evangelism for the Soviet Union, perhaps the only model that will authentically work. First, he had begun with a genuine respect for their own beliefs, even those diametrically opposed to his own. Unlike the philosophy professor, he had listened with courtesy and compassion before speaking.

Next, by moving to Moscow, Kent had committed himself to incarnational ministry. No groups of evangelicals visiting the Soviet Union for a week or 10 days or a month will bring long-term change to the country. But a sprinkling of dedicated people who share the hardships and the turmoil, people willing to stand in bread lines every day, could perhaps become the salt that savors the whole society.

Finally, Kent pointed to the source of truth latent in the Russian culture itself. His use of the Russian language and his reference to Dostoevsky communicated far more to that audience than if he had quoted an entire epistle from the New Testament.

From the book Praying with the KGB by Philip Yancey, copyright 1992 by Philip Yancey. Published by Multnomah Press, Portland, Oregon 97266. Used by permission.

P.S. Kent Hill, his wife Janice, and their two children, plan to remain in Moscow until mid-July. They are living in two rooms and cooking with a hot plate and toaster oven. In mid-February, Jan had emergency surgery at one of the better Kremlin hospitals. As this goes to press, she is recovering well. Kent's teaching and consulting work is being well received. He reports a real eagerness, particularly among young people, to discuss democracy, church/state relations, and questions of ethics and values. Please remember the Hill family in your prayers.