

RELIGION & DEMOCRACY



The Institute
on Religion &
Democracy

November 1992

Moral Struggles Challenge Democracy

In both Russia and America, according to IRD conference

Despite the tremendous relief at the Cold War's conclusion, these are sober moments for many Russians and Americans.

Russia is trying to overcome its past and build a democracy from scratch. America constantly is being tested because

of its diversity -- diversity expressed not only in racial and ethnic terms, but moral terms as well. Can the nation hold together? An Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) conference, "More Than Just a Constitution: The Future of Democracy in Russia and America," on October 6 in Washington, D.C., took a deeper look at both Russia and America, and what they have to learn from each other.

George Weigel, President of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, opened the conference with an address on the habits and values

necessary for democracy. Looking at Russia and Eastern Europe, Weigel said that we owe it to the victims and heroes to tell the truth about the revolutions against communism. They were not primarily about obtaining consumer goods like those in the West; rather, they were political revolutions made possible by the reconstruction of civil society undergirded by a moral revolution -- one that said "no" to communism and a "higher and more compelling yes" to God.

That "moral yes" is also required in America, according to Weigel. American democracy depends on a collective self-understanding -- "what we think we are doing" as a society. Yet, in answering that question, Weigel said that there is a division between those who believe in "rights and wrongs" and those who are preoccupied with "rights and laws." Threatened is the democratic civility upon which



Kay Cole James, an authority on urban and minority affairs, participated in a panel discussion at the October 6 IRD conference in Washington, D.C. Photo by Lonni Jackson.

pluralism is possible. Lacking is the "moral adventure of democratic culture." A panel discussion on Russia yielded many insights, as well as disagreements. Kent R. Hill, President of IRD, said that Russia's painful transition to political and economic freedom is hindered by several factors: an inadequate understanding of democracy, inter-religious and inter-confessional tensions, a pervasive fatalism among the people, and the temptation to look for a "white knight" to deliver the people from their economic and political difficulties.

Peter Reddaway a member of the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University, described why he believed Russia cannot be quickly transformed. The "old order," communism, was "not pregnant with a new order," Reddaway said. The old regime collapsed too suddenly and the economic "shock therapy" advised by the West has only encouraged social and political collapse and fragmentation. The transition must be slow, Reddaway said, because the political culture in Russia is one of dependency, first upon the czars and
→ see Conference, page 6

Religious Liberty Briefs: Peruvian church leader killed; crackdown in China; mixed signals in Vietnam -- Page 2

Reader Survey: A chance to give IRD feedback on *Religion & Democracy* and more -- Page 3

Quechua Leader Killed by Shining Path Guerrillas

A leader of the Quechua church in Peru was killed by left-wing terrorists on September 5 in a confrontation that also claimed the lives of three other family members, according to News Network International.

Romulo Saune, 39, was returning to the city of Ayacucho from a remote village when the vehicle he was riding in was stopped by some 100 members of the Shining Path revolutionary movement. Eyewitnesses who survived the attack said that the terrorists were checking identification documents of all male travelers when they suspected that a plainclothes policeman was among the group. In the ensuing confusion, the terrorists sprayed the group with machine-gun fire.

Religion & Democracy reported in September that Saune had been given World Evangelical Fellowship's first annual religious freedom award. The award recognized Saune's "consistent and courageous efforts" to be a witness of Jesus Christ amidst repression. The award also recognized the suffering of the Peruvian indigenous church, caught in a 12-year armed conflict between the government and the Shining Path (see "On Trial in Peru: Democracy, The Church," September 1992, *Religion & Democracy*).

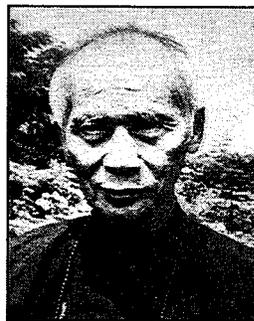
Parliamentarians Denied Visas to Vietnam

In September a delegation from the British Parliament was to have visited Vietnam and meet with Vietnamese Christians currently being held in prisons and labor camps. The delegation was responding to an

invitation issued by the Vietnamese government earlier in the year. With the help of IRD, the London-based Jubilee Campaign presented the members of Parliament with a list of prisoners with whom the members planned to meet. The list included Father Dominic Tran Dinh Thu, the 84-year-old Roman Catholic priest about whom IRD has reported several times in the past.

Shortly before the scheduled trip, the Vietnamese Embassy in London denied visas to the Parliamentarians, thereby cancelling the trip and adding to the mixed signals Hanoi has been sending in regard to human rights.

In July, the Vatican appointed a bishop for the Vinh Diocese in northern Vietnam. This event led many to believe that tensions between the Vatican and Vietnam were easing. In August, although 43 men were prepared for ordination, the Vietnamese government denied permission for the ordination of 23 of



Father Dominic Tran Dinh Thu

them, claiming that under state law resolution 297, only the government has the power to permit candidates to enter the seminary and be ordained.

More than 100 Christians, pastors, and laypersons are held in Vietnamese prison, labor and re-education camps. The members of Parliament presented to the government a list of 14 whom they wanted to visit, along with other religious liberty concerns. Vietnamese Ambassador Chau Phong responded, "Conditions have improved in Vietnam, but the West has to understand the problems the country still faces after the Vietnamese War with the United States. One of our major concerns is

the threat to internal security from those who oppose the regime."

Chinese Continue Church Crackdown

The Chinese government has announced that it will pursue economic reforms, leading to a more capitalist program. At the recent National Party Congress, top officials were replaced by a younger, more progressive leadership, with the military also having a greater role.

There is little evidence that this reform movement will reach any further than the economy. According to information shared at a Puebla Institute briefing, after a series of crackdowns since 1989 against the unregistered churches, several regional governments in recent months have begun persecuting the registered church as well. Sources in China have confirmed reports that registered Christians in Yunnan have been harassed, beaten, and illegally detained. Authorities beat a pastor to death. They also closed registered churches and denied permission to reopen them for worship. Church representatives from other regions have been denied access to the area to confirm the reports. Three registered pastors said this indicates a cover-up. Christian Solidarity International reports that more than 100 Christians are still being held in Henan Province following an attack on a house church meeting. In addition to beatings, their property has been confiscated. The prisoners have been denied visitors, food and additional clothing.

Police have the authority to impose a fine on Christian activities on the spot; the average fine is two months wages. Chinese authorities, especially having viewed the role of Christians in the downfall of communism elsewhere, continue to view Christian activity as "counter-revolutionary."

IRD READERS SURVEY

Please fill out the following survey; detach and return in the enclosed envelope.

1) Which ONE answer below best describes your reading of *Religion & Democracy*?

- I read all of the articles with interest
- I read most of the articles
- I read a few articles that interest me
- I rarely read *Religion & Democracy*

2) Which topics benefit you the most in *Religion & Democracy*? RANK ALL THAT APPLY, WITH "1" BEING THE MOST BENEFICIAL.

- religious persecution and other religious freedom problems around the world
- U.S. church activity on international issues
- the general health of churches, including analysis about their growth and/or decline
- international and public policy issues from a Christian perspective

3) How readable do you find *Religion & Democracy* to be? CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER, OR FILL IN YOUR OWN.

- most articles are the right length and easy to read
- articles frequently are too difficult for the average layperson to understand
- articles don't go far enough; they could be longer or more sophisticated
- _____

4) Which parts of the world are of most interest to you? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- the formerly communist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- the Middle East and Central Asia
- Africa, including South Africa
- East Asia, including China and other Pacific Rim countries
- Developed Western nations, such as Canada, the United States, Western Europe, Australia, etc.
- all areas relatively equally

5) Which issues concern you most, issues that you would like *Religion & Democracy* to address on a consistent basis? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- new democracies around the world struggling to get on their feet, and how they may be helped
- problems of religious minority groups in Islamic-dominated countries
- American leadership in the world after the Cold War
- inter-religious struggles, such as those that manifest themselves in Yugoslavia, Mexico, Russia, Sudan, etc.
- the "culture war" going on in the United States
- abuses of religious and political freedom around the world
- economic development and how to help the poor

6) What other resources could IRD provide that you would find useful? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- pamphlet-sized materials on current issues
- small-group study materials for churches or schools
- book-length, in-depth studies
- church bulletin inserts of condensed *Religion & Democracy* material
- speakers for church or college groups
- action alerts
- _____

7) Which view of the Institute on Religion and Democracy best fits with what you perceive to be the organization's unique strengths in the 1990s? RANK THE TOP TWO ANSWERS.

- a watchdog group that challenges churches to have a more balanced, credible public witness
- an information source and advocate for religious freedom around the world
- a reasonable Christian voice on international affairs
- an "ecumenical" group that can help build and repair difficult relations in the church world
- an educational institute devoted to publishing and teaching on Christian influence in the world

8) How might IRD better serve you?

9) It would be helpful if you could provide us with some general information about yourself. PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY; ADD ANY THAT YOU DEEM RELEVANT.

- Christian layperson
- clergy
- frequently hold volunteer positions in the local church (teacher, committee member, etc.)
 - children's education
 - adult education
 - mission committee
 - social action committee
- hold position in denominational or ecumenical organization beyond the local church
which position and group? _____
- _____

10) OPTIONAL: Name _____

Address _____

Denomination _____

Russia, a Parable for the West

At the IRD's October 6 conference, "More Than Just a Constitution: The Future of Democracy in Russia and America," Dr. John Bernbaum, Executive Vice President of the Christian College Coalition, told stories from his experience earlier in the year in Russia which illustrated some things that the West has to learn from conditions there. What follows is an edited version of his remarks.

When I decided to spend a long awaited sabbatical teaching in Russia, I negotiated my assignment with Dr. Alexander Khokhlov, Rector of one of Russia's top universities in Nizhny Novgorod, formerly known as Gorky. Khokhlov, a young reformist rector and also a member of the Russian Congress of Peoples Deputies, did not make the choice of courses for me to teach that I expected. I had offered to teach a course in cold war diplomacy or nuclear arms control. But no, he asked me to teach a course on democracy and moral values, stressing to me the need to reconstruct the moral and spiritual foundation on which the institutions of the civil society could be built.



John Bernbaum

My class was held in the nicest classroom on campus. The room was jammed. One-third of my students were faculty members. The rest of the students were competitively chosen, based on their English language ability and their interest in modern democracy.

While there was much about which to be discouraged in Russia, the one sign of hope was the recognition by some that politics and the institutions of a civil society must be grounded in a moral and spiritual framework. American educators have an important lesson to learn from the crisis in Russia.

A second story. During my second week of teaching, I was asked by several young professors who were newspaper columnists on the side if I would write a column for a weekly newspaper for business people in Nizhny Novgorod, a city of two million people and Russia's third largest city. They said that they knew I was

a Christian and they wanted me to write about Christian ethics in the marketplace. Although my graduate training is in international relations, I decided I knew more about the free market system than they did and also more about Christian ethics, so why not? For the next ten weeks, my column discussed Christian ethics and economic life. I described the central factors necessary for economic growth, including respect for private property and the integrity of contractual relations; then I offered several examples of American corporations that operate with mission statements clearly grounded in moral and spiritual principles; and finally, I described the need for corporate social responsibility. Frankly, because of the economic chaos that Russians were experiencing during our three-and-a-half months there, and the fears concerning an economy dominated by Mafia (their term for crooks and unprincipled entrepreneurs), I thought the column would be of interest. I was told it was the most popular item in the newspaper. Herein lies a parable for the West; many American business leaders have an important message to learn from the interest in ethics by Russians.

A third and final story. Shortly before we left Russia my wife, Marge, and I were asked to appear on a popular talk show hosted by a famous Russian film star and media personality. This was a live talk show scheduled for prime time on Friday at 7:00 p.m. -- the Friday before Easter Sunday, Good Friday night. All during that week, the network had been showing the film "Jesus of Nazareth," and the last segment depicting Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection was to be shown that night at 9:30, immediately following our talk show.

After ten minutes of questions about our family, our host then asked us these questions: "What does freedom mean to you? How would you define it?" This gave us an opportunity to discuss the lessons of liberty, including religious freedom and political and economic freedom, and the responsibilities that freedom requires. We talked about the fact that freedom involves citizens' responsibility for the common good. I want you to know that it felt good to talk about this so publicly.

Then came a surprise. Our host said, "I often ask special guests of mine, 'What do you think love is? How would you describe love?'" I don't think either Marge or I were prepared for such a question to be asked, but we jumped right in. Marge talked about God's love for us and how it enables us to love each other. I talked of Jesus' love for us as sinners, and how we can love because He first loved us.

We expected it to end there, but the host turned to us and said: "What's more important, God's love for us or our love for God?" This was another opportunity for the
→ see *Parable*, page 8

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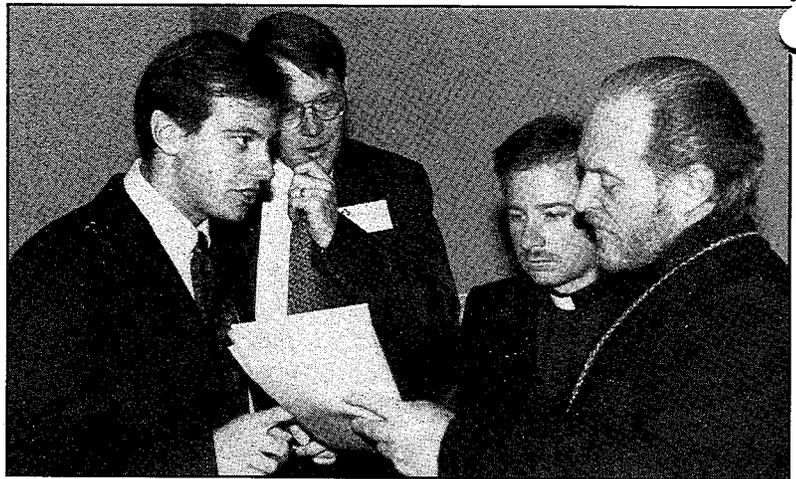
Out Of
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Conference, from page 1

then upon the Communist Party. Further, the people always have resisted entrepreneurship, the formal application of laws, and political parties as institutions. As a result of the struggle to change, Reddaway said he feared a rise in "mutual recriminations between Russians and the West." More Russians across

the political spectrum are blaming the West for shock therapy, and more in the West are blaming Russians for being ungrateful for economic aid.

The Rev. Gleb Yakunin, a Russian Orthodox priest, former prisoner of conscience and now a Russian parliamentarian, disagreed with Reddaway about the pace of change. The Russian people have been enduring difficulty for a long time, Yakunin said. He likened the current situation to a surgeon removing a tooth without anesthesia -- it has to be done as quickly as possible. Yakunin stressed urgency also because the communist idea has not been put to rest fully in Russia. The remnants of evil must be cleaned out, he said, and communism itself must be put on trial and outlawed. About this Yakunin said he has been consulting with representatives of various Christian Democratic movements across the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Yakunin said a Christian philosophy was necessary both to expose communism and to counter the danger of nationalism. "We can't manage these endeavors without the help of the West," he added.



The Rev. Gleb Yakunin, right, discusses information from KGB archives with Stan De Boe and Kent Hill of IRD and Constantine Muravnik of Georgetown University (shown right to left). Photo by Lonni Jackson

In the subsequent discussion, panelists responded to Yakunin's comments about outlawing communism. Reddaway said that the crimes of the Party should be put on trial and the former communist institutions should be condemned, but that the civil rights of former officials deserve protection. Hill said that while the old ruling Party should be banned, the ideas should not; Marxist and socialist ideas should be permitted to find expression through new institutions, but that those carrying the ideas must play by the rules of democracy, as in Western Europe.

As a bridge to the discussion on America, John Bernbaum, Executive Vice President of the Christian College Coalition, told stories of his three-month experience in Russia earlier this year. There he was asked to teach a course on democracy and moral values, he was asked to write a weekly newspaper column on ethics in the

Yakunin Receives IRD's 1992 Religious Freedom Award



The Rev. Gleb Yakunin, after the presentation of the award by Dr. Edmund Robb, the Chairman of IRD's Board of Directors. Photo by Lonni Jackson.

The Rev. Gleb Yakunin was presented with IRD's 1992 Religious Freedom Award during a luncheon at the October 6 conference, "More Than Just a Constitution: The Future of Democracy in Russia and America." Yakunin was praised for speaking out on persecution under totalitarianism, including the collaboration between his own church and the KGB. With the fall of communism, he has served as one of the architects of a new legal foundation for religious rights in Russia. In the past he was imprisoned and exiled, and now he still is the subject of accusations from those whose power is being threatened by change. In accepting the award, Yakunin continued to express concern about the lack of repentance in the Russian Orthodox Church and its inability to break with the past.

marketplace, and was interviewed on a major Russian talk show. On that show, Bernbaum and his wife, Marge, were encouraged to talk openly about their faith. After the show, the director embraced them enthusiastically and invited them back. "Can you imagine this happening at NBC or CBS?" Bernbaum asked. These stories about the hunger in Russia for meaning and values, he said, are parables from which America can learn.

Linda Chavez of the Manhattan Institute then raised issues related to the increasing demographic diversity in America. She said the assimilation of European immigrants earlier in the century was important, though not accomplished without difficulty. Today, however, those in the culture who once would have helped facilitate the assimilation of immigrants now encourage them to maintain their separateness without a concern for national identity and ideals. Public policies, especially regarding civil rights, have encouraged this desire for racial and ethnic separateness. What is breaking down and needs to be recovered, Chavez said, is "a sense of national identity based on values and principles."

Problems with America loosing its moorings are not due



George Weigel

What America is lacking, Weigel said, is the "moral adventure of democratic culture."

to the improper function of representative democracy, according to Ervin Duggan, a member of the Federal Communications Commission. We are getting the leaders we deserve. The problem is what we want, and the culture that shapes what we want. The media "package brilliantly a total misunderstanding of freedom -- freedom as license," Duggan said. The opposite is responsibility, freedom to be stewards and trustees of our common life together. To counter this and the relativism that permeates other institutions such as America's schools, another great Christian awakening will be necessary. Further, the age requires that those in positions of leadership actually lead with the moral guidance necessary to sustain democracy.

Finally, Kay Coles James, an authority on urban and minority affairs, focused on the decaying urban environment, which she said has become completely detached from the values and habits that created the American experiment. She said she has been studying the

lives of reconstruction-era African-Americans to find out how so many in previous generations have succeeded in becoming real participants in American society. While many freed slaves felt unprepared for their freedom, they were able to draw on their faith, their belief in human dignity, and their sense of the value of freedom and democracy. James said that in a recent trip to Russia she found people drawing on similar things to rebuild their institutions, such as the family. Perhaps, she said, rather than sending so many Americans over to Russia for a look at change, we should be bringing more Russians here to teach us. "The wake up call has gone out in Russia, but it hasn't gone out here."

Russian General Stolyarov Visits IRD

On October 15, Major General Nikolai Stolyarov -- the pilot who flew Mikhail Gorbachev out of the Crimea following the abortive coup in August of last year -- came to IRD to meet with a group of scholars and officials interested in the moral and ethical foundations of military life. IRD President Kent Hill met Stolyarov in November 1991, in KGB headquarters in Moscow during the historic visit of evangelical leaders to Russia arranged by the group Christian Bridge. At that time, Stolyarov was a Deputy Chairman of the KGB.

Stolyarov is an impressive, dynamic man. He had risen to near the top of the Communist Party, before he lost faith in the doctrines of Marxism. Though he does not claim to be a Christian, Stolyarov is extremely open to the Christian faith. In fact, his new army post puts him in charge of all education for the army. One of his first goals: provide every soldier with a New Testament.

In addition, Stolyarov is the rector of a recently founded President's University designed to help military officers make the transition to civilian life. John Bernbaum, Executive Vice President of the Washington-based Christian College Coalition, helped arrange Stolyarov's Washington appointments. Stolyarov said he would like to cooperate with the Coalition in utilizing curriculum written from a Christian perspective.

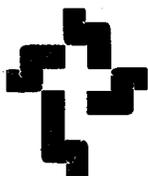
Stolyarov acknowledges that there are major obstacles preventing a quick adoption of democracy in Russia, but he is hopeful that positive steps can be taken in that direction. Furthermore, he insists that moral and spiritual renewal are indispensable components in the recovery of Russian culture and in progressing towards a democratic future.

Parable, from page 5

three of us to talk about the character of God's love and Christ's shed blood.

Directly in front of us was the TV control room. As soon as the lights went on, the program director leaped out of her chair, clapped her hands, and ran to embrace us. "This is what we need so desperately in our country. What you said about God's love is what we need. Thanks for what you had said. Please come back anytime to appear on our show," she said. A thought flashed through my mind when I saw her wildly applauding on the stage. Can you imagine this happening at NBC or CBS? Herein lies the parable for the West. American media leaders have much to learn from the crisis in Russia.

Do we have the eyes to see what happens to a society when it is stripped of religious and moral values? There is a parable here. Have we forgotten how to understand parables?

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1331 H Street, N.W., Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20005-4706
(202) 393-3200

Kent R. Hill

President and Editor

Diane L. Knippers

Executive Vice President

Lawrence E. Adams

Director of Policy Studies

Alan F. Wisdom

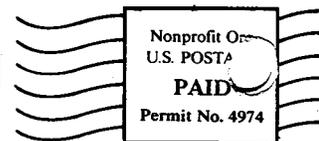
Senior Research Associate

Fredrick P. Jones

Research Associate and Managing Editor

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