

# The Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR

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The declared aim of the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR is "to help believers to exercise their right of living in accordance with their convictions".<sup>1</sup> In performing this task, it is complementing and aiding the work of two other kinds of unofficial groups of Soviet citizens. It is continuing in greater depth one aspect of the work of human rights groups which have included a concern for religious believers in their work for human rights in general; and at the same time, it has been able to co-operate with committees and groups of various denominations of believers working to defend the rights of their own members.

Although the Christian Committee claims strong support and co-operation from members of other denominations, its initial membership was Orthodox. Its founding Declaration explained that since the Russian Orthodox Church had been the dominant religion in Russia for centuries, and had sometimes been guilty of persecuting non-Orthodox believers, the Committee's founding members felt a particular obligation to atone for the wrongs of their Church's past by doing what they could to help members of other denominations. There was also a practical reason for the Committee's unidenominational membership. In March 1978, in a conversation with a foreign visitor,<sup>2</sup> its members explained that they would have liked the Committee to be interdenominational, but that after a good deal of thought they had decided against this, chiefly because it would be difficult to keep up communications with various groups of believers over long distances.

Although its concern is interdenominational, the Christian Committee does in fact play a special role in the defence of Orthodox Christians, since it is the only body in the Soviet Union actively working on their behalf. Other sizeable denominations suffering persecution — the Reform Baptists, Pentecostals, True and Free Seventh-Day Adventists and Lithuanian Catholics — had already formed their own unofficial bodies to try to protect their members' interests. The Russian Orthodox Church, though far larger than any of them, had not previously adopted any comparable means of trying to defend its

members against injustice. There are two probable reasons for this. Firstly, although the Orthodox Church has been under very considerable state pressure, it has not been subjected to the dramatic forms of open persecution which the other denominations have suffered in recent years. Secondly, there is no tradition in the Orthodox Church of fighting for the civil rights of its members.

The Christian Committee was founded on 27 December 1976. It announced its existence at a press conference in Moscow, produced its Declaration explaining why it had been formed and what it intended to do, and immediately distributed three documents describing particular injustices suffered by different groups of religious believers, thus setting the pattern for its future work. Its founding Declaration is an admirably concise and clear statement of purpose. It points out that, though the Constitution of the USSR proclaims freedom of conscience, there is inevitably conflict between believers and a government whose declared aim is to construct a non-religious society, leading sometimes to "violation by the state administrative authorities of even those rights which believers legally possess". It might be objected that such matters are properly the concern of the Church's leaders, not of unofficial groups of believers acting on their own initiative. The Declaration has a reply to this:

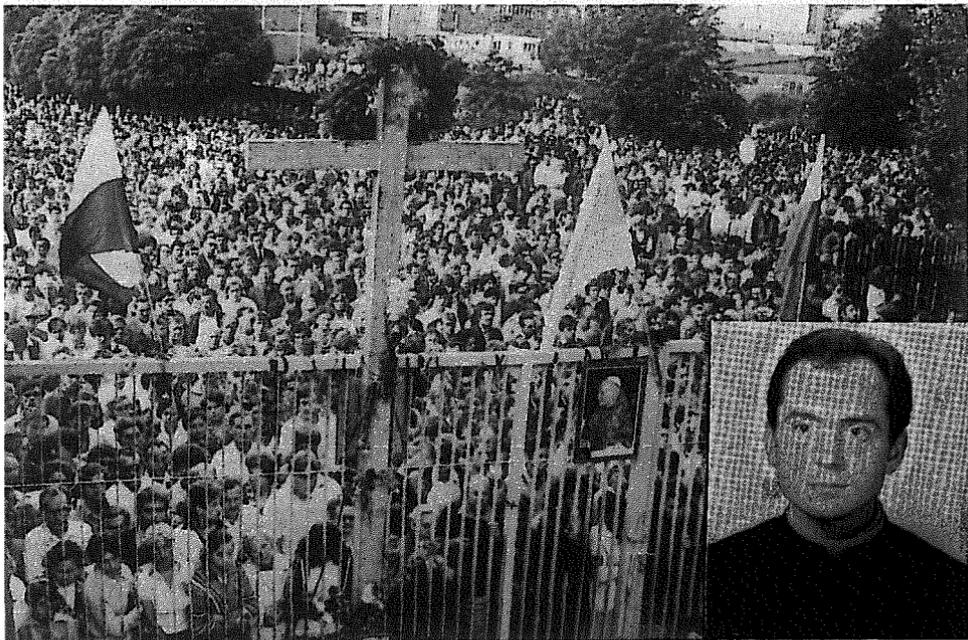
At present, the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church and the leaders of other religious organizations do not concern themselves with the defence of believers' rights, for a variety of reasons. In such circumstances, the Christian community has to make the legal defence of believers its own concern.

The phrase "for a variety of reasons" covers the whole bitter and controversial debate about the continued silence of Soviet church leaders on the problems faced by their members as a result of state policies.

The Christian Committee lists five ways in which it intends to help believers attain their right "to live in accordance with their convictions":

1. To collect, study and distribute information on the situation of religious believers in the USSR.
2. To give legal advice to believers when their civil rights are infringed.
3. To appeal to state institutions concerning the defence of believers' rights.
4. To conduct research, as far as this is possible, to clarify the legal and factual position of religion in the USSR.
5. To assist in putting Soviet legislation on religion into practice.

## THE STRIKES IN POLAND



From the moment I arrived in Gdansk I felt at home. The whole atmosphere [in the shipyard] was one of regained freedom, celebration of truth and inner peace which I remember so well from the time of the Pope's visit to Poland. Again, there was no euphoria; instead I met with a deep sense of personal responsibility. Man is not called to be a slave, to see the fruit of his work wasted or turned against himself! He is called to become a child of God in creative freedom. . . . We cannot foresee the future but we know that our hope cannot lead us astray, for God's love fills our heart through the Holy Spirit."

From a reflection by Fr Stanisław Małkowski (*photograph inset above*).





The rear courtyard of Xian Great Mosque: parts of the Mosque are undergoing thorough renovation. See the article pp. 274-8.



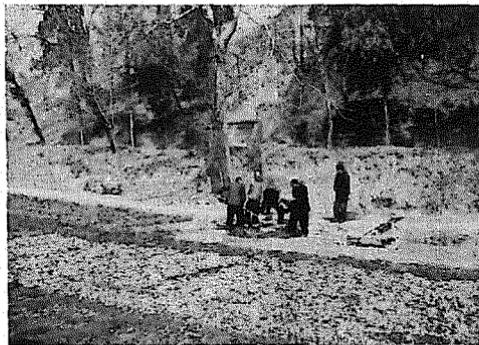
The Buddhist Monastery of Flourishing Doctrine near Xian.



The Buddhist Great Goose Pagoda in Xian.



Worshippers waiting for the start of the ceremony at Xian Great Mosque.



Monks from the Monastery of Flourishing Doctrine working in the fields.



The interior of the Great Goose Pagoda showing the altar decked for use.  
*(All photographs © P. W. Humphrey)*

The Committee has fulfilled its first and fourth aims by compiling and sending to the West a large number of documents. It has also fulfilled its third aim to some extent, since among these documents are some addressed to Soviet state institutions on particular problems. We have no way of knowing whether the Christian Committee has found it possible to realize its second and fifth aims.

The Christian Committee was fortunate in finding friends in the West who were willing to publish and circulate its documents promptly: the Washington Street Research Center in San Francisco. The Center has produced 11 volumes of Russian texts and one volume (Vol. 3) of selected English translations, under the title *Documents of the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in the USSR (DCCDBR)*.<sup>3</sup> So far 417 documents (2,891 pages) have appeared in this series (including Vol. 13). Another six documents have reached the West separately. At the time of writing, the last document received is dated 12 March 1980. The Christian Committee has signed 64 of these documents: 46 are concerned with denominational issues, eight are concerned with problems involved in the work of the Christian Committee, and ten discuss more general but substantial issues.

These ten general documents report in depth on problems affecting the situation of the Churches as a whole, particularly the Russian Orthodox Church, as opposed to individual groups or believers. The first was a detailed commentary on the draft of the new Soviet Constitution, issued as a contribution to the public debate which was widely conducted throughout the USSR for several months before the Constitution was adopted on 7 October 1977.<sup>4</sup> The main contention was that the draft Constitution identified the ruling Communist Party and the Soviet State to an unacceptable extent. For the first time in Soviet history, the "building of a communist society" was declared in the law of the land to be the aim not only of the Communist Party but of the State itself, which made this aim legally binding upon all citizens. Although Soviet citizens' comments on the draft Constitution appeared in the Soviet press every day at that time, the Christian Committee's *Appeal* was not published, and its recommendations were not taken into consideration.

Two further general documents followed in 1977. The first concerned economic discrimination against church employees,<sup>5</sup> and the second was a commentary on foreign religious broadcasts, which form an extremely important source of both news and devotional material for Soviet believers.

On 11 April 1978 the Christian Committee wrote a letter to the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios,<sup>6</sup> appealing to him to come to the aid of the Russian Orthodox Church since the Russian bishops had abandoned their responsibility to defend oppressed Christians and the

flouted rights of the Church. "If the forces of ecumenical Orthodoxy, and its free voice, do not come to the aid of the captive Russian Church, then only divine intervention will be able to save us."

The next three general documents were addressed to the Pope. The first, to "the successor of Pope John Paul I", with a covering letter to three Cardinals, expressed the hope that the next Pope would wish to establish good relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, and that these relations would be based on a true understanding of the position of the Russian Orthodox Church and its relationship with the State. It must have been a great joy to the Christian Committee when the recipient of their letter was revealed to be a man with a lifetime's experience of relations between the Church and a communist State. The second letter, dated 22 November 1978, was addressed to Pope John Paul II and other Christian leaders, including the heads of Orthodox autocephalous churches, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and President Carter. It urges the adoption of an international "Pact on religious rights" or "Convention on the struggle against religious discrimination", analogous to international agreements on human rights. An international agreement of this kind should protect the internal life of religious communities against state interference, and should also decide upon a definition of the term "confession of a religion" which would make it impossible for a State to limit believers merely to the "performance of a cult". The third letter, to Pope John Paul II and dated 2 April 1979, gives evidence of the close relations between the Moscow Patriarchate's Department of External Church Relations and the official state body, the Council for Religious Affairs. It warns again of the danger of thinking that official bodies of the Russian Orthodox Church are free and representative entities.

Probably the most important of all the Christian Committee's documents to date is the "Report of Father Gleb Yakunin to the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR on the Current Situation of the Russian Orthodox Church and Perspectives for the Religious Revival in Russia", dated 15 August 1979.<sup>7</sup> The report is a detailed and comprehensive analysis of every aspect of the life of the Russian Orthodox Church, providing carefully assembled and argued evidence of the way in which the Church has been hemmed in and restricted by the State — both by legislation and by the extra-legal actions of state bodies — to the point where it has virtually no freedom of independent action left. However, although official church life is being stifled, Fr Yakunin points to a mounting interest in and commitment to Orthodoxy, particularly among young people. Arguing that the Moscow Patriarchate is in no condition to respond to this religious renaissance, he makes the original and controversial

proposal that the Orthodox Church should consider following the example of the Soviet Protestants and Catholics, who have formed unregistered communities which operate outside the control of state bodies. At the same time, however, such unregistered Orthodox communities should continue to acknowledge the Moscow Patriarchate and the officially registered communities as a complementary part of the same Church. It is important to note that Fr Yakunin is not advocating any kind of schism or split, but simply suggesting an administrative device to counter the problem of state domination of the Church. He uses an apt illustration to convey his meaning:

... the ideal form of existence for the Church in modern conditions should be a structure built on the principle of a schoolboy's physics experiment with two communicating vessels filled with liquid. The meaning of this visual aid is to demonstrate the changes of the level of the liquid in one vessel in relation to the change of the level in the other.

In the church structure, built in an analogous manner, the two communicating vessels would be two church organizations: one official, registered by the State, and the other unofficial and unregistered.

Such a dynamic structure would permit the Church to bear the heaviest pressure from the State, since pressure on the official part of the Church would only increase and strengthen the unregistered Church and raise the level of religious life in it.

An undated "Appeal to Christians of the whole world"<sup>8</sup> was signed jointly by the Christian Committee and members of the Christian Seminar on Problems of the Religious Renaissance.<sup>9</sup> It spoke of the urgent need for Christian literature in Russia and appealed to Christians to do all they could to provide the means to send Christian books to Russia. Tourists were urged to help: "Let everyone who travels to Russia take with them at least one Bible and one prayer book, which are permitted to be taken through Soviet customs."

The overwhelming majority of the documents issued by the Christian Committee are concerned with specific cases of violations of believers' rights. They are characterized by an evident desire to achieve accuracy, provide as many factual details as possible, and avoid any histrionics and sensationalism, even when recounting incidents causing great distress to the victims. Believers who were themselves involved in these incidents, or denominational bodies representing them, have written 359 of these documents, and a further 46 are signed by the Christian Committee, often in support of denominational reports describing particular incidents.<sup>10</sup>

Of those documents which deal with incidents concerning Orthodox believers, very few have reached the West independently of the Christian Committee. They have furnished a valuable source of previously unobtainable information about problems of Orthodox parish life. Since controversial reforms were foisted on the Orthodox Church in 1961, parish councils or executive committees can easily fall into the control of unbelievers. The parish of the Church of the Dormition (*Uspeniye*) in Pavlograd, Ukraine, provides a vivid and sad example of this. The parish's executive committee had held drinking sessions at the expense of the church and had refused to allow necessary redecoration of the church to be carried out. In order to voice their complaints effectively, some parishioners decided to join the *dvadtsatka* ("council of twenty"), the group of people which must be formed before a religious association can be registered under Soviet law. They ascertained from Vladimir Sergeyevich Shendrik, the local representative of the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA), that Soviet legislation on religion made it possible for them to join the *dvadtsatka* at any time after the registration of the religious association, and to enjoy equal rights with the original 20 members. However, Shendrik refused to allow them to join, and he and Stanishevskaya, the secretary of the City Executive Committee, put endless obstacles in their way. During several interviews with the parishioners, Shendrik was abusive and rude, and made it clear that the mismanagement and abuses in the parish suited his purposes very well. The parishioners made two journeys to Moscow to consult officials of the CRA there, but they were equally obstructive. The CRA is supposed to ensure that legislation on religion is obeyed and oversee relations between Church and State, but in these Orthodox documents we see that time and again representatives of the CRA prevented believers from exercising their legal rights. The Pavlograd believers also went to see their diocesan bishop, Archbishop Leonti of Crimea and Simferopol, who received them sympathetically and gave them good advice. But later, in 1978, he unexpectedly suspended the five parishioners who had been most active in the affair from Holy Communion for three years. The parishioners are convinced that the Archbishop was pressured into this action by the State.

The "Pavlograd affair", as the documents call it, vividly illustrates a number of problems of parish life: the difficulty believers have in making Christian counsels prevail in parish affairs; problems over decoration and maintenance of buildings; active hostility from representatives of the CRA and "parishioners" who are under their influence; and the knowledge that they cannot rely on their own priests and bishops to protect them. Many of the Orthodox documents relate parishioners' attempts to have churches re-opened which were closed

during Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign in the early 1960s. The parishioners' story is one of sad and fruitless pilgrimage around endless government offices, and of hard-won interviews with a series of at best indifferent and at worst hostile officials. None of the parishes mentioned has succeeded in having a church re-opened for worship.<sup>11</sup> Some Orthodox parishes are plagued by the problem of morally dissolute priests. In Osh, Kirgizia, to give just one example, a known drunkard and womanizer was maintained in his position as a parish priest by the local authorities despite the vociferous protests of parishioners — a simple and effective means of undermining and humiliating the Church.

As well as providing information about these otherwise unknown incidents and events, the Christian Committee documents have also added a great deal to our knowledge of the affairs of the Christian Seminar on Problems of the Religious Renaissance and of the arrests, trials and imprisonment of individual Orthodox believers.

To what extent has the Christian Committee made available information which would not otherwise have reached the West on non-Orthodox denominations? In the case of the Protestant denominations (Reform Baptist, Pentecostal and Seventh-Day Adventist), about half the 177 documents sent out by the Christian Committee had already reached the West by other routes. Of the rest, some reached the West by other routes later than the copies sent by the Christian Committee, but many did not, and are available to us only because the Christian Committee sent them out. Of the 49 Catholic documents forwarded by the Christian Committee, almost all have reached the West through other channels as well, chiefly through the *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*.<sup>12</sup> However, in many cases copies sent by the Christian Committee reached the West first, and in some cases the Christian Committee has provided the West with its only Russian (as opposed to Lithuanian) text. It seems, then, that the Christian Committee's chief contribution to these already established denominational groups has been to provide additional, faster channels for getting information to the West, due to the fact that it is based in Moscow, where contact with foreigners, especially western newspaper correspondents, is easier than anywhere else in the country.

Although the Christian Committee claims to aim to defend all religious believers in the USSR, only two of its documents have concerned non-Christian religions. Both these documents concern Iosif Begun, a Jewish believer who was sentenced to a term of internal exile for giving private lessons in Hebrew.<sup>13</sup> The Christian Committee cannot fairly be accused of pro-Christian bias, however. At present, there appears to be no non-Christian religious cause which it could sensibly have included in its programme. Certainly Soviet Jews are

enduring all kinds of hardship, but these are overwhelmingly concerned with their racial, not their religious, status. The current major preoccupation of Soviet Jewry is the right to emigrate, and this is not a purely religious concern. Iosif Begun's case was connected with his religious beliefs, and the Christian Committee was quick to take it up. Soviet Islam is under close state control like all religions in the USSR, but there is little evidence of violation of specific legal rights of Muslim believers. Two Islamic peoples, the Crimean Tatars and the Meskhi, are currently being refused permission to return to their homelands from which they were deported to other parts of the USSR in 1944; but this again is because of their national rather than their religious origins. A Christian Committee report on Soviet Buddhists would certainly be welcome, but apparently the Committee has not yet found a satisfactory means of obtaining information from the Buryat ASSR where most Buddhists live. We should also note that little or no information on violations of rights of Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist believers has reached the West from any other sources during the period in which the Christian Committee has been active.

The Christian Committee has won the support and the respect of Roman Catholic, Reform Baptist, Pentecostal and Adventist activists, and must be credited with being at the forefront of a highly practical ecumenical venture which is something quite new for the Soviet Union. After the arrest of Fr Gleb Yakunin, one of the Christian Committee's founders, statements in his defence were issued by members of several denominations. Since there is very little ecumenical tradition in Russia, such statements are a tribute to the extent to which the Christian Committee has been able to break new ground.<sup>14</sup> However, the interdenominational co-operation appears to be on a purely practical, rather than a theological, basis and takes place between the Christian Committee and the denominational groups concerned, rather than among the denominational groups themselves. It is all focused on Moscow, with the obvious practical aim of getting documentation sent to the West.

The Christian Committee's example has already inspired others to follow suit. In November 1978 the Catholic Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights was formed in Lithuania. When it announced its formation, it stated its intention of working in close co-operation with the Christian Committee, which in fact organized the press conference in Moscow at which the Catholic Committee made its announcement. Many of the Catholic documents subsequently sent to the West by the Christian Committee were compiled and signed by the Catholic Committee. In 1978 a similar committee was formed in Romania: the Christian Committee for the Defence of Religious Freedom and Freedom of Conscience (ALRC).<sup>15</sup> The

founders of ALRC apparently heard of the existence of the Moscow Christian Committee on foreign radio broadcasts, and were inspired to follow its example.

Until recently there have only been six members of the Christian Committee, and no more than four at any one time. The three founder-members were Fr Gleb Yakunin, Hierodeacon Varsonofi Khaibulin and Viktor Kapitanchuk, the Committee's secretary. On 29 December 1977 it was announced that a second layman, Vadim Shcheglov, had joined the Committee. If any of the three founder-members were arrested, there were other people ready to take their places, and Shcheglov's function would be to reveal their names. Shortly after this Khaibulin left the Committee. He was attached to a parish in Vladimir region, and communication between him and the other Committee members in Moscow was known to be difficult. In May 1979 Fr Vasili Fonchenkov joined the Committee. On 1 November 1979 Fr Yakunin was arrested, and shortly afterwards it was announced that his place would be taken by Fr Nikolai Gainov. On 12 March 1980 Viktor Kapitanchuk was also arrested. At the time of writing, therefore, the Christian Committee consists of Fr Nikolai Gainov, Fr Vasili Fonchenkov and Vadim Shcheglov. Another ten people had apparently joined the Christian Committee after the arrests, but were not prepared to reveal their identities because of inevitable KGB pressure if they did so.<sup>16</sup> Stanislav Zherdev, a Pentecostal who emigrated to the West on 5 August 1980, subsequently announced that he was one of the "secret" members.<sup>17</sup>

Fr Yakunin, aged 46, is the best known of the members of the Christian Committee, and appears to have been the driving force behind it. He has a long history of public activity aimed at improving the state of affairs within the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1965, together with Fr Nikolai Eshliman, he wrote an Open Letter to the Patriarch, begging him to take a stronger line in the face of state encroachment on church life. Both priests were banned from exercising their ministry, though they were not defrocked. In the '70s Fr Yakunin became known as the author of a series of documents criticizing specific injustices within the Orthodox Church, some of them co-authored with Lev Regelson.<sup>18</sup> The best known of these was their *Appeal to Delegates of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, which provoked the WCC's first-ever public debate on persecution of religion in the USSR.<sup>19</sup>

Viktor Kapitanchuk, aged 35, is a chemist. He retained his post in an institution which restored works of art throughout the period of his membership of the Christian Committee until his arrest. This is unusual, since involvement in such public activity in the USSR nearly always leads to dismissal from work. Before joining the Christian

Committee, Kapitanchuk had signed several *samizdat* documents on religious and human rights issues. Chief of these was a document addressed to the 1971 *Sobor* (Council) of the Russian Orthodox Church, co-signed by Fr Gainov, Felix Karelin and Lev Regelson, which asked the *Sobor* to examine carefully the teachings of the then Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad as being too closely allied with Soviet policy.

Vadim Shcheglov, aged 48, a mathematician working in the Ministry of Health, has been a Christian for only six years. He was converted after reading a book by Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh.

Hierodeacon Varsonofi Khaibulin, a Tatar, had signed several *samizdat* documents on Russian Orthodox affairs before joining the Christian Committee.

The most unexpected members of the Christian Committee are Fr Fonchenkov, who had no previous public involvement in the defence of believers' rights, and Fr Gainov, who had very little. Both held official positions within the Russian Orthodox Church and they must have realized that these would be put in jeopardy by their membership of the Christian Committee. Fr Vasili Fonchenkov, aged 48, was baptized at the age of 18. He graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy at Zagorsk in 1972, and was appointed a lecturer there, as well as occupying a post in the Department of External Church Relations in Moscow. From 1976 to 1977 he was incumbent of the Church of St Sergi in East Berlin, and edited the journal of the Central European Exarchate of the Moscow Patriarchate, *Stimme der Orthodoxie (The Voice of Orthodoxy)*.<sup>20</sup>

On joining the Christian Committee, Fr Fonchenkov issued a statement<sup>21</sup> in which he pointed out that the Moscow Patriarchate had never condemned the activities of the Christian Committee, and hoped that his own membership of the Committee would not attract condemnation either. So far it has not done so, and at the time of writing he is still lecturing at the Moscow Theological Schools.

Fr Nikolai Gainov, aged 45, entered the Moscow Theological Seminary in 1960 and was ordained in 1964. He served in various villages and towns in the Moscow region. He was one of four signatories of an appeal to the *Sobor* of 1971 (see above), as a result of which he lost his job as a parish priest. However, at the time when he joined the Christian Committee in November 1979, he was a priest in the village of Tsarevo, Moscow region. As far as is known, he still holds this position.<sup>22</sup>

Despite a clear statement by the Committee in its founding Declaration that it had no political aims and was loyal to Soviet laws, the KGB soon began to take an interest in its activities. In April 1977 an article

attacking Fr Yakunin and three other Orthodox Christians appeared in the leading Soviet weekly *Literaturnaya gazeta*.<sup>23</sup> Articles of this type in the Soviet press are tantamount to a declaration of intent to arrest those attacked. It is therefore curious that the KGB stayed its hand so long, especially as a wave of arrests during 1977 swept many members of Helsinki Monitoring Groups into the KGB's prisons. On 16 December 1977 Yakunin and Kapitanchuk were warned that they would be brought to trial if they did not abandon their activities. Yakunin was reportedly offered the alternative of emigrating to the West, which he declined. This is a clear indication that the Soviet authorities regard the members of the Christian Committee as an embarrassment rather than as law-breakers. Further warnings, interrogations and house-searches followed before the eventual arrests of Yakunin and Kapitanchuk.

Fr Yakunin was held for slightly longer than the maximum of nine months' pre-trial detention permitted under Soviet law before his trial began on 25 August 1980. He was charged with "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" (Art. 70 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR). On 29 August the sentence was announced: five years' imprisonment followed by five years' internal exile, only two years less than the maximum sentence permitted under Art. 70. A detailed account of the trial is not available at the time of writing, though some reports of evidence given by witnesses have reached the West, relayed by Fr Yakunin's wife, the only person from among his family and friends allowed into the courtroom.<sup>24</sup> Conflicting reports about the evidence given by Lev Regelson and Viktor Kapitanchuk have been received. According to Radio Moscow's English-language broadcasts, both testified against Yakunin, and Yakunin himself said that he repented of his former activities. However, these allegations are denied by Mrs Yakunin. It is not known when Viktor Kapitanchuk's trial will take place,<sup>25</sup> but it seems likely that it will follow soon after that of Fr Yakunin.

The Christian Committee has issued a number of documents since the arrest of Fr Yakunin, and intends to continue its work. The position of Fr Gainov and Fr Fonchenkov is now of particular interest. In the first place, their membership of the Committee is an indication that some Orthodox not previously involved in independent public activity now take the Christian Committee seriously. When it was first formed the absence of public support from other well-known Orthodox dissenters raised the question of how broad the base of its support was. It is known that some Orthodox were disturbed because the membership of the Committee was exclusively Orthodox, while others did not approve of what they saw as agitation about "rights" because they believed that the Church always possesses true freedom

independent of external pressures upon it.<sup>25</sup> However, if Fr Fonchenkov and Fr Gainov had been giving unpublicized support to the Christian Committee, then it is likely that other Orthodox are doing so now. In the second place, both these priests occupy responsible positions in the Russian Orthodox Church. They wish to continue serving their Church in those positions as well as serving on a Committee which declares itself loyal to Soviet laws and proclaims as one of its aims "to assist in putting Soviet legislation on religion into practice". Whether they will be permitted to do so will serve as a test of the Soviet regime's willingness to permit independent activity within the framework of Soviet legislation on religion. The fate of Fr Dimitri Dudko, a parish priest engaged in just such legal but independent activity, does not augur well for them in the long term.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the length of time which Fr Dudko and also Fr Yakunin and Viktor Kapitanchuk remained at liberty after receiving warnings about their activity suggests that the current members of the Christian Committee have a breathing space of a year or more to continue the Committee's work. However, since the arrests of Yakunin and Kapitanchuk the Committee's work has reduced noticeably in quantity, if the number of documents received in the West is any guide. The massive crackdown on Soviet religious activists during the summer of 1980 has evidently inhibited their activities for the time being. It is too early to say when and in what form they will resume.

<sup>1</sup>See the founding *Declaration* of the Christian Committee dated 27 December 1976: English translation in *RCL* Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 33-4.

<sup>2</sup>A copy of the visitor's report is filed in the Keston College archive.

<sup>3</sup>From Vol. 13 the task of publishing is being assumed by CCDBR Publications, Glendale, California, while responsibility for editing and translation is being taken over by the Society for the Study of Religion under Communism, Keston College's US affiliate. Vol. 13 (Russian texts) and Vol. 14 (selected English translations) are currently in preparation. Earlier volumes of *DCCDBR* may be ordered from Washington Street Research Center, 3101 Washington Street, San Francisco, California 94115, USA. Vols. 1, 2, 3 and 12: \$4.95 each; Vols. 4, 6, 7, 8-9 (combined), 10 and 11: \$9.95 each; Vol. 5, Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3: \$1.95 each. Postage and packing to be added. Vols. 1, 3, 11 and 12 are of special interest to English readers.

<sup>4</sup>English translation in *RCL* Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 34-6.

<sup>5</sup>This document, published in Russian in *DCCDBR* Vol. 1, pp. 30-35, is available in English translation from Keston College.

<sup>6</sup>Abridged English translation in *RCL* Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 191-4.

<sup>7</sup>Russian text in *DCCDBR* Vol. 11, pp. 1128-68. The same volume contains a fairly full English translation, pp. xvi-xxx. The Russian text has also been published in *Arkhiv Samizdata* by Radio Liberty, *AS* No. 3751; and in *Volnoye slovo*, Nos. 35-36, Possev, 1979, pp. 5-78. A complete English translation is to be published under the auspices of the Society for the Study of Religion under Communism (see note 3).

<sup>8</sup>*Russkaya mysl*, 27 September 1979, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>For information on the Christian Seminar, see the article by Jane Ellis and appended documents in *RCL* Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 92-112.

<sup>10</sup>The breakdown of these documents is as follows: Orthodox—154, including 20 signed by the Christian Committee; Reform Baptist—100, including five signed by the Christian Committee; Pentecostal — 25, including five signed by the Christian Committee;

documents jointly issued by Reform Baptists and Pentecostals (mostly on the emigration issue) — 17, including five signed by the Christian Committee; True and Free Seventh-Day Adventist—37, including three signed by the Christian Committee; Roman Catholic — 49 (nearly all from Lithuania, but with some from Moldavia), including one signed by the Christian Committee; Georgian Orthodox—five, including three signed by the Christian Committee; Jewish—two, both signed by the Christian Committee; other—16, including two signed by the Christian Committee. This last category comprises documents covering more than one denomination, and those concerning non-religious matters (mostly appeals on behalf of arrested members of the Helsinki Monitoring Groups who had helped religious believers).

<sup>11</sup>Two of these documents, concerning the town of Kotovo in Volgograd region, and the village of Balashovka, Berezno district, Rovno region, were published in *RCL* Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 258-61.

<sup>12</sup>One of the documents on behalf of Catholics which as far as we know was sent to the West by the Christian Committee alone is published in this issue of *RCL*, pp. 295-7.

<sup>13</sup>One of these documents, a *Press Statement* published in *DCCDBR* Vol. 2, p. 170, is available in English translation from Keston College.

<sup>14</sup>See documents in this issue of *RCL*, pp. 291-5.

<sup>15</sup>The Romanian document in this issue of *RCL*, pp. 314-17, was circulated by ALRC.

<sup>16</sup>See document in this issue of *RCL*, p. 298.

<sup>17</sup>Zherdev is a signatory of the document in this issue of *RCL*, p. 293.

<sup>18</sup>English translations of these documents appear in Fr Gleb Yakunin and Lev Regelson, *Letters from Moscow: Religion and Human Rights in the USSR*, co-published by Keston College and H. S. Dakin Company, 3101 Washington Street, San Francisco, Ca. 94115, USA. Available from Keston College at £3.25 including postage and packing, and from H. S. Dakin Company at \$4.95, plus postage and packing.

<sup>19</sup>English translation in *RCL* Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 9-14; reprinted in *Letters from Moscow*, pp. 41-6.

<sup>20</sup>See document in this issue of *RCL*, pp. 297-8.

<sup>21</sup>*DCCDBR* Vol. 10, pp. 1078-9.

<sup>22</sup>See document in this issue of *RCL*, p. 297.

<sup>23</sup>Boris Roshchin, "Svoboda religii i klevetniki", *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 13 and 20 April 1977; English translation "Freedom of Religion and the Slanderers" in *Letters from Moscow*, pp. 74-83, together with translations of replies by Yakunin and others, pp. 84-115.

<sup>24</sup>See *Keston News Service*, No. 106, 4 September 1980, pp. 2-4.

<sup>25</sup>The first point of view was expressed in a conversation with the present author; the second is described in an article entitled "Impressions from Recent Visit", *Keston News Service*, No. 94, 20 March 1980, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup>Fr Dudko, arrested on 15 January 1980, made a "confession" on Soviet television on 20 June, subsequently published in the Soviet press, in which he said that he had engaged in anti-Soviet activities which he now regretted. It is generally agreed that he must have done so under unimaginably severe pressure from the KGB. At the time of writing, Fr Dudko has been released from prison, but may yet be brought to trial on as yet unknown charges. See *Keston News Service*, Nos. 101, 26 June 1980; 102, 10 July 1980; 104, 7 August 1980; and 105, 4 September 1980.

## Appendix

### Appeals on behalf of Father Yakunin

*After the arrest of Fr Yakunin on 1 November 1979, many religious believers of different denominations wrote appeals*

*on his behalf. We are publishing three of these here: they are all translated for the first time. The first, written by the Ortho-*

*dox believers Alexei Zalessky and Irina Zalesskaya, entitled Appeal to the Christians of Our Country, was published in Russian in Russkaya mysl, 17 January 1980. The second, entitled Declaration, was written by Pentecostal believers and is dated November 1979. The third, entitled Appeal, was published in Russian in the monthly bulletin Religiya i ateizm v SSSR, No. 3 (151), March 1980. It was written by young Orthodox believers in the Soviet Union and addressed to Catholics in the West. The hopes expressed in this last document reflect the growing awareness amongst young Christians in the USSR—no doubt partly inspired by the example of the Christian Committee — that interdenominational co-operation amongst Christians throughout the world will be fruitful in a religious sense and also help the cause of persecuted believers in the Soviet Union. (The young members of the Christian Seminar on Problems of the Religious Renaissance were becoming aware of the possibility of this kind of international Christian communication and were excited by the possibilities it offered. See the article by Jane Ellis in RCL Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 92-101.)*

#### APPEAL TO THE CHRISTIANS OF OUR COUNTRY

Dear brothers and sisters!

Storm-clouds are again gathering over our heads. A month ago Fr Gleb Yakunin was arrested: he is a member of the Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights. He may face a long prison sentence. Other members of the Committee have been subjected to searches. Recently various other defenders of human rights have been arrested: Valeri Abramkin, Tatyana Velikanova and others. The famous preacher and beloved priest Dimitri Dudko has again been summoned to the KGB. Before this, the local authorities permitted a number of outrages and acts of violence against his spiritual children and parishioners. The aim of all these repressive acts is clear: before the approaching Olympic Games everyone who wants to think, speak, write and believe in God freely is to be frightened and forced into silence. The authorities think that if they can remove the "ringleaders", then the rest — small fry, in their opinion — will scatter like beetles and hide in crannies. Their only weapon in their struggle with people

who think differently is terror.

They gild the cupolas of closed churches and force the bishops to talk about religious freedom in our country; and at the same time they are bending every effort to extinguishing any signs of real life in the Church. All honest Christians whose religious activity is not confined to attending magnificent liturgies and offering up quantities of candles but is inseparably tied up with preaching the Gospel to all people, with the Christian education of children, and with free fraternal intercourse both inside and outside church must respond to these repressive acts with a decisive "No". We repudiate any accusation that we are engaged in anti-Soviet agitation and we adhere to the law that "there is no power but of God" (Rom. 13:1); we declare that we have no intention of entering into conflict with the Soviet State or with socialism as a social system. But at the same time we cannot acquiesce when we are asked to follow laws and rules which go against our Christian conscience — for instance, when we are forbidden to gather together anywhere outside church to discuss our religious problems and to pray with our brethren, when we are forbidden to engage in charitable activity, to organize children's clubs and groups to study religion, to distribute religious literature and so on. We cannot remain indifferent when our best priests are forbidden to take services, transferred from parish to distant parish or expelled from the Church. It was against all this kind of thing that Fr Gleb Yakunin and other defenders of human rights were struggling. We must state openly and decisively that we categorically refuse to obey any law, rule or demand which contradicts our Christian conscience, whatever legal or administrative measures we may be threatened with.

Our reply to the authorities when they arrest priests or laymen who are struggling for human rights must be firm and unambiguous: do not imagine that arrests and repressive measures will have the effect you are hoping for. Your aim is to extinguish the religious movement and the human rights movement: on the contrary, you will reinforce them. When any religious activist or human rights defender is arrested or dismissed from his job, dozens more will stand up to take his place. Arrest dozens, and hundreds will appear. Arrest hundreds, and thousands

will appear. If you ignore this fact and extend your repressive activities, you will appear before the whole world as a government of mass terror for whom there is one law only: arbitrary power. Today you are sure about tomorrow; but tomorrow the ground is going to burst into flame under your feet. You already know about all human rights defenders; but new ones, unknown to you, will enter their ranks. The cause will continue at any price. In the past you meant to destroy religion by pulling down churches and arresting priests; but religion rose again like Christ crucified. History repeats itself. You won't succeed in breaking us now, just as two thousand years ago the Roman authorities did not succeed either. The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.

Now is the testing time for the conscience of every Christian — Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Baptist. Every Christian must ask himself: "Whose side am I on? Christ's or Antichrist's? Am I ready to suffer for Christ or for my neighbour (which is the same thing) now, this very day? What ways and means can I use to help those who are persecuted for their beliefs and convictions?" When he comes to the defence of a victim of arrest, or gives him material help, a Christian must not ask whether he is a believer or not. Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan. Our neighbour is anyone who is unfortunate or suffering. We ask all Christians to pray for prisoners of conscience: Fr Gleb Yakunin, Tatyana Velikanova, Valeri Abramkin and the rest. Write about them, hold services for them. Ask priests to remember them during the liturgy. If people start "working on" a believer or persecuting him at his factory or place of work, or hounding believing children at school, speak up in their defence! Do not be afraid! Christ will help you! Do not cease to pray for them at home or in church. Ask your friends and relatives to pray for them too. Pray also for us who wrote this letter. We believe that God will hear our united prayer.

Most Holy Mother of God, save us! Holy Archangel Michael, intercede for us with God! Holy Fathers Sergi and Serafim, intercede for us with God! Communion of Saints, intercede for us with God!

Alexei Zalessky  
Irina Zalesskaya

Moscow, Prospekt Vernadskogo No. 91, block 2, flat 88.

\* \* \*

DECLARATION

We are Pentecostal Christians and we would like to speak in defence of Gleb Yakunin, a member of the Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR.

As an Orthodox priest, Fr Gleb Yakunin took an active part in the struggle against infringements of the law with regard to religious minorities in the Soviet Union. He was also concerned for the fate of children who suffer along with their parents for their belief in God.

We want to express our sincere gratitude to the priest Gleb Yakunin for the invaluable work he has been doing to dissipate the enmity between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians sown by the atheist State.

Whenever you meet Gleb Yakunin you feel joy and admiration for this selfless man.

His arrest shows clearly that religious freedom is not protected in the USSR and that believers who cannot reach a compromise between the authorities and their own consciences are subject to persecution.

The authorities' aim is to put a stop to the work of the Committee and to reveal the activists.

We must endure this systematic provocation and make sure that everyone understands how serious the present situation is.

Gleb Yakunin's contribution to the struggle for believers' rights in the USSR is immense.

We call on the governments and parliaments of all countries, on Christians throughout the world, and on all men of good will to join in the struggle for the release of Gleb Yakunin with all the strength God gives you!

Moscow, November 1979

Stanislav Zherdev, member of the Council of Churches  
Anatoli Vlasov  
Nikolai Romanyuk and 300 signatures  
altogether

\* \* \*

APPEAL

Yea, and all that will live godly in Jesus Christ shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

We are appealing to anyone who hears us! But we would particularly like to be heard by the priests and people of the Holy Catholic Church. This appeal has been compiled by a large group of young Orthodox Christians who are very sympathetic to the Roman Catholic Church and who have dedicated themselves to the cause of Christian unity.

We appeal to you to stand up for the arrested priest Fr Gleb Yakunin. His arrest and the accusations laid against him have unfortunately received little publicity in the West. What is more, we have heard (perhaps incorrectly) that some Catholics feel unable to defend Fr Gleb because he is allegedly opposing the hierarchy of his own Church.

We can take the responsibility of testifying that we know Fr Gleb and that he is a fervently believing Christian, a man deeply attached to the Church, an Orthodox Christian who is open to everything that is best in other confessions. His sympathy towards the Catholics is well known.

Father Gleb Yakunin humbly submitted to the ban imposed on him forbidding him to exercise his functions as a priest, and he disputed the justice of this ban by purely legal and canonical means. It was precisely his devotion to the canons of the Church and his grief at their blatant infringement which prompted Fr Gleb to speak out openly and honestly.

Fr Gleb's work in the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights is self-sacrificing service of his neighbours. Thousands of people have appealed to the Committee and they have all received help and support. Fr Gleb's activity is based on strict observance of the laws of State and Church, and he has worked openly, in the sight of all.

The passionate, even polemical tone used by Fr Gleb Yakunin is explained by the immense grief he feels over the present state of affairs in the Russian Orthodox Church. Of course he is not opposed to the episcopate — on the contrary, he is *in favour* of a genuine episcopate. The conditions in which bishops and priests find themselves are very abnormal. Father Gleb Yakunin opposes precisely these *abnormal, improper conditions*: he clearly sees that they are pernicious and are aimed at the gradual extinction of the Church.

The harsh and emotional tone of Fr Gleb's letters is tied up with the Russian

national character. The famous Russian philosopher S. L. Frank\* once wrote: "One of the most characteristic features of the type of mind which predominates in Russia is, so to speak, its *emotional and intuitive* nature: it is characterized by powerful and elemental passions, judgments and feelings. People of this kind should not really be called 'thinkers' at all in the strict sense of the word: they are more like . . . spiritual warriors, exposers of falsehood, preachers, 'prophets'."

But of course, the real state of affairs in our country corresponds exactly with the picture painted by Fr Gleb in his letters and appeals. People who live in the free West may wish to disagree. We have no desire at all to quarrel on this point. We only know that in any civilized country no priest in a similar situation is persecuted by the State. If Fr Gleb has been in any way guilty of insubordination or of violating the canons of the Church, he ought to come before an ecclesiastical court. But he has now been accused of propaganda against the State and he could face 12 years in prison!

Can the Catholic Church remain uninvolved in the fate of this fervent Christian? We firmly believe it cannot!

Nothing could be further from our intentions than to offer concrete advice about ways of defending Fr Gleb. Charity and sympathy must be combined with vigilance and wisdom. But Catholic believers should be informed as extensively as possible in the press about the fate of Fr Gleb and his family (he has three children, two of them very young). If a well-known journal — *Famiglia Cristiana* for instance — were to carry the story of

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\*Semyon Lyudvigovich Frank (1877-1950), university professor, writer and religious philosopher, was one of the leading lay figures in the Russian "religious renaissance" of the early 20th century. He was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1922. He is popular nowadays amongst representatives of the contemporary religious renaissance in the Soviet Union. The quotation is taken from the introduction to his anthology of Russian philosophers, *Iz istorii russkoi filosofskoi mysli kontsa 19go i nachala 20go veka*, designed to introduce Russian thought to western readers and finally published in Germany in 1965. *Ed.*

the search carried out on Fr Gleb's wife and his eldest daughter (a body search: a neighbour was invited in specially to strip the two defenceless women!), we feel sure that the hearts of ordinary Catholics would show the way to concrete actions. Letters, telegrams, parcels for Fr Gleb's children would show that Christians are remembering the family in their sufferings! And this is the best defence against unjust persecution!

The Church is no party, no "clan", but the mystical Body of Christ! Members of the Church, especially ordinary believers, ought to be the first to protest against injustice and violence, to defend the unjustly persecuted whoever they may be, Catholics or Orthodox, Christians or non-Christians. This is what our Lord Jesus Christ Himself said in the parable of the Good Samaritan! And now that a human being, Fr Gleb, needs their help, surely God's servants are not going to pass by on the other side!

The remarkable Russian philosopher and passionate writer Vladimir Solovyov expressed his frank opinion that the struggle for social justice and for "liberty, equality and fraternity" has frequently been led not by the Church but by secular organizations. At the time, his speech (the essay *The Breakdown of the Medieval Worldview*) provoked stormy protests: some people said he must be mad.\*

We would not like to hear this same criticism voiced today by our friends who are watching the Church with attentive interest, who are interested in Christianity

and who are on the brink of entering Christ's Church. But there are people who have been saying: "Well, they've arrested your priest and nobody has come to his defence in the free West! Where's your fraternal love? Or are political and diplomatic considerations more important than a human life?"

And for us young Orthodox Christians too it is important that we should feel we have support not in words but in deeds (difficult as this is) in our concern for the fate of Fr Gleb and his family.

"BEAR YE ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS, AND SO FULFIL THE LAW OF CHRIST!" (Gal. 6:2)

GLORY BE TO JESUS CHRIST! THE CHURCH IS ONE!

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\*Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov (1853-1900) was a mystic, theologian, poet, political writer, and arguably the greatest of Russian Orthodox philosophers: his universal religio-philosophical worldview, in which the concept of *vseyedinstvo* (all-unity) plays a central role, influenced virtually all the thinkers of the Russian "religious renaissance" of the early 20th century, and continues to influence their disciples in the Soviet Union today. The essay by Solovyov referred to here and the controversy it aroused are discussed by Yevgeni Barabanov, a Russian Orthodox writer living in the Soviet Union, in his article "Zabyty spor" (*Vestnik RSKhD*, No. 118, 1976, pp. 117-65). Barabanov agrees with Solovyov's view that the Church should show active concern for society. *Ed.*

## ⚔ Moldavian Catholics Appeal to the Christian Committee

*The following Appeal to the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights was written by Roman Catholic believers in a village in Moldavia and sent to the West by the Christian Committee. It demonstrates how far the fame of the Committee has spread in the Soviet Union and also indicates that the Committee is concerned to give active support to non-Orthodox denominations. The document is undated, but must have been written in late 1978. It was published in Documents of the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights in the USSR*

*(DCCDBR) Vol. 11, pp. 1224-5, and is translated here for the first time.*

*There are some 15,000 Roman Catholics in the Moldavian SSR. They are served by one chapel in the Moldavian capital Kishinyov, and until recently by one young priest, Fr Vladislav Zavalnyuk (born 1949). In any community in the USSR, a group of 20 or more believers (a dvadtsatka) may apply for the provision of a place of worship. Such applications are rarely successful. Although official permission was eventually granted for a church in the Moldavian village of Rashkovo, the*

authorities pulled it down shortly after its consecration. Attempts by believers to provide themselves with unofficial places of worship are met with reprisals. Fr Zavalnyuk was an active priest who tried to travel as much as possible to visit sick and dying parishioners. An attempt to call him up into the army in 1975 was thwarted by believers who gathered in Kishinyov and staged what almost amounted to a protest demonstration. In 1977 the authorities confiscated his driving licence and car number-plates. In December 1979 Fr Zavalnyuk was forbidden to celebrate Mass. He was then replaced by a new priest and sent to a parish in Kazakhstan. Shortly afterwards, because of bad references from the representative of the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) in Moldavia, he was barred by the CRA in Moscow from serving in any Catholic parish in the USSR. (For further information on Moldavian Catholics and Fr Zavalnyuk, see RCL Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 115-17; Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 35-7; Keston News Service, Nos. 49, 66, 93, 100.)

To the Christian Committee for the  
Defence of Believers' Rights

#### APPEAL

We, Catholics of the village of Sloboda-Rashkovo in the Moldavian SSR, have heard on the radio that in Moscow and in Lithuania there is a Committee for the Defence of Believers. Therefore we are turning to you for help. We live a long way, 175 km., from Kishinyov, where there is a small Catholic church, the only one in the whole of Moldavia. For us to get to Kishinyov requires several changes, and the old and the sick can never get there. There is only one Catholic priest for all Moldavia and the authorities do not permit him to minister to the Catholics. The Soviet government treats us badly. In 1977 they pulled down our church, which we had built by our own hands and our own efforts by night so that our work by day at the collective farm was not affected. Each person took along what he had for the construction: bricks, planks, nails, tin and so on. The government gave us nothing. We used to pray in the house of Valentina Oleinik, but it could not accommodate us all, so we began to enlarge it and make it into a church. Can this really be a crime? We have hurt no one and have

stolen nothing from the government.

The authorities deceived us: they summoned Valentina Oleinik and the others who had signed up as the local *dvadtsatka* to Kamenka, and they promised to register this *dvadtsatka*, but in fact did something quite different. That very day, 25 November 1977, they called together a large body of police, atheists and soldiers, brought a large number of cars, tractors and bulldozers and pulled down our church. The site is now an empty field. Where the altar had stood we placed a candle, but the authorities, in the person of Bogorosh, the President of the village *soviet*, demanded the removal of the candle, and when we pray, a drunk comes along and interrupts our prayer, drives our children away and jeers at us.

For more than a year the authorities have not allowed the priest to come to us. People are dying without confession and without the sacrament, with no spiritual succour. We have written letters everywhere, and have been to Moscow, to Kishinyov, to the local authorities; we have never stopped writing and travelling, but all the time we are deceived. On one occasion in Moscow they promised to allow a priest to come, but the local authorities would not hear of it. Kozhukhar, the President of the Regional Executive Committee, laughs and says: "You'll never see a priest here." We have written to Moscow, to the Central Committee, to Brezhnev, to Kosygin, to the Red Cross. There have been absolutely no results. When we used to make frequent visits to Moscow, we were told: "It's a pity to waste your money, don't go, it's better to write and send a letter." We have written, but there has been no reply. When we went to find out why they were not replying, they showed us the waste-paper basket and said: "There are your letters." They pay no attention to our appeals. What are we to do? We decided to turn to you and we hope that you will not throw our appeal into the waste-paper basket. Christmas is approaching. Everyone will be celebrating it, but we cannot pray in peace in the open air. Last year we placed a decorated fir tree on the spot where the church's altar had been, but they knocked the tree over and abused us verbally. We are allowed to do nothing. We are frequently fined for praying. Just for a prayer, they fined seven people, nearly all



Fr Gleb Yakunin with (from left to right) his daughter Mariya (born 1964), his son Alexander (born 1974), and his wife Iraida Georgiyevna. Fr Gleb also has another daughter, Anna (born 1978).



The founder members of the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR. From left to right: Hierodeacon Varsonofi Khaibulin; Viktor Kapitanchuk; Fr Gleb Yakunin. See the article and documents pp. 279-98. (Both photographs © Keston College)



The Bulgarian Pentecostal Peter Yanev and his Finnish fiancée (now his wife). See the article pp. 299-304. (Photograph courtesy Keston College)



Above The Executive Committee of the Bulgarian Pentecostal Union in September 1979, with some visitors from abroad. The President of the Union, Pastor Ivan Zarev, is sitting second from the left in the front row, and the Vice-President, Pastor Dinko Zhelev, is on the far right of the same row. Standing second from the left in the back row is the Treasurer, Pastor Georgi Todorov, who had just been on trial and was free on bail pending sentence. (Photograph © Keston College)



Right The Estonian Methodist Herbert Murd, arrested in March 1980. See the item in News in Brief, p. 329. (Photograph © Keston College)

of them pensioners, 25 to 30 roubles each. These were Valentina Oleinik, Petr Pogrebnoi, Mariya Prosyana and others. V. Oleinik and Va. Pogrebnyaya were sentenced to 15 days.

Above all, they torment our children. On Fridays the headmaster of the school comes into the dining room and forces the children to eat meat, mocking them. Every day they keep the children late at school so they cannot go to pray. We gather together to pray every evening. In the summer they send the children to camp, and do not permit them to be with their parents or to help them. Parents are threatened with deprivation of their parental rights if they teach their children to pray. They scare us,

saying the whole village will be sent to the Baikal-Amur Highway.\*

We beg you, help us so that we can have a priest, make our confessions, and pray in peace, so that the authorities no longer pursue us and frighten our children, so that our dying and our sick people can receive spiritual aid, so that our children can carry out the last wishes of their dying parents and fetch a priest for confession and for the funeral.

70 signatures

\*This is a large-scale construction project in Siberia. *Ed.*

## Biographical Sketch of Fr Nikolai Gainov

*This document was published in Russian in Russkaya mysl, 24 January 1980, p. 5. It is translated here for the first time. Fr Gainov is one of the three current leaders of the Christian Committee.*

COMMUNIQUE FROM THE CHRISTIAN COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENCE OF BELIEVERS' RIGHTS IN THE USSR

On 4 November 1979 Nikolai Gainov, a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church, was accepted as a member of the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights.

The priest Fr Nikolai Gainov was born on 9 November 1935 in the village of Dubново, 40 km. from Pereslavl-Zalesky in the Yaroslavl region. In 1951 he began work in a factory in the town of Zagorsk in the Moscow region. From 1954 to 1956 he served in the army, after which he returned

to Zagorsk as a worker in the same factory. In 1960 he entered Moscow Theological Seminary and graduated in 1964. While studying at the Seminary he was ordained a deacon in 1963, and a priest in 1964. After graduation he served as a priest in various towns and villages in the Moscow region. In 1971 he and a group of laymen wrote an Appeal to the Council (*Sobor*) of the Russian Orthodox Church stating that the theological activity of Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) and other prominent figures in the Moscow Patriarchate was distorting the teachings of the Orthodox Church.

Fr Gainov is married with four children. He is now serving in the village of Tsarevo near Moscow.

Address: Moscow *oblast* [region], Pushkin *raion* [district], *selo* [village] Bratovshchina, *ul.* [street] Tsentralnaya 130, Gainov Nikolai Alexandrovich.

## Autobiography of Fr Vasili Fonchenkov

*This document, entitled Autobiography, is dated 16 May 1979 and was published in Russian in DCCDBR Vol. 10, p. 1077. It is translated here for the first time. Fr Fonchenkov is one of the three current leaders of the Christian Committee.*

I, Vasili Vasilyevich Fonchenkov, priest, was born in 1932 in Moscow into the family of an old Bolshevik (a member of the CPSU from 1914), chief of staff of

the Red Guard in the Dorogomilovsky district of Moscow in 1917 (one of the streets in Moscow is named after him and his brother).

In 1950 I finished secondary school, and in 1955 I graduated from the Faculty of History at the Moscow Pedagogical Institute.

I was on the staff of the Central Museum of the Revolution of the USSR, and the Moscow Region Museum of Regional

Studies (formerly the New Jerusalem Monastery).

Born into and brought up in an atheist family, and disillusioned with the official ideology, at the age of 18 I was baptized into the Orthodox Church. Instruction at the Institute, despite its single-minded atheistic treatment, did not shake my faith in God, and work in the museums — propaganda organizations of the State — only strengthened my religious beliefs.

My work at the Moscow Region Museum of Regional Studies coincided with Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign, as a result of which the museum was turned into one of the centres for procedural guidance on atheistic work in the Moscow Region.

In spite of this, the workers at the museum turned to Christianity, and one of them, besides myself, became a priest.

From 1964, having decided to dedicate myself to the service of the Church, I worked in the churches of Moscow as a reader.

In 1969, having passed the examinations

(as an external student) for the full course of the Seminary, I went to study at the Moscow Theological Academy. After finishing at the Academy in 1972, I was appointed research assistant at the Department of External Church Relations and teacher at the Academy in the Faculty of History of the USSR.

In 1971 I was made deacon, and in 1973 I was ordained priest.

In 1976-1977 I was incumbent of the Church of St Sergi in Berlin and editor of the magazine of the Central European Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, *Stimme der Orthodoxie (Voice of Orthodoxy)*.

At the present time, I take the course in Byzantine studies at the Moscow Theological Academy, where I have been assistant professor since 1974, and I direct studies at the Seminary in the Constitution of the USSR.

16 May 1979

Signature

## The Christian Committee Continues its Activity

*Despite the arrests of Fr Yakunin and Viktor Kapitanchuk, the Christian Committee plans to continue its activity. The following document, entitled Declaration from the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights, is dated 12 March 1980. It is translated here for the first time.*

The Christian Committee previously reported that it had received about 250 applications from Christians of various confessions offering their help and asking to become members of the Committee; and since then the number of such applications has grown considerably.

In the current climate of total repression directed not only against the Christian Committee in particular but against all

believers in the USSR in general, and taking into account the growing amount of work to be done in defence of human rights, the Christian Committee has decided that it must admit 10 (ten) new members. Their names will not be published.

The new expanded Committee will carry on its work in accordance with the founding Declaration adopted in 1976.\*

For and on behalf of the  
Christian Committee  
Fr Nikolai Gainov  
Vadim Shcheglov

12 March 1980

Moscow

\*Published in *RCL* Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 33-4.  
Ed.