

THE TRUTH ABOUT RELIGION IN RUSSIA:  
RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA DURING  
WORLD WAR II

THESIS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....iv

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION.....1

II. ANALYSIS OF  
*THE TRUTH ABOUT RELIGION IN RUSSIA*.....19

III. RUSSIA THROUGH THE LENS OF *TARR*.....41

IV. UNITED STATES AND *TARR*.....66

V. GREAT BRITAIN AND *TARR*.....77

VI. CONCLUSION.....90

APPENDIX.....94

REFERENCES.....96

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

In September 1942, the Soviet government allowed the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) to publish a small tome entitled *The Truth about Religion in Russia* (henceforth known as *TARR*). The appearance of this book was odd for a number of reasons. First, the Soviet Union was a Communist country that was officially devoted to atheism. Second, the book, although originally published in Russian, was not widely available in the Soviet Union. In December 1942, it was translated into English and eventually became available in the two English-speaking countries that were allied with the USSR against Nazi Germany. Finally, the title and content of the book suggested that there was a misunderstanding or gap in knowledge in some quarters, particularly the Western world, between reality and perception regarding Soviet religious and antireligious policy and that, this book was a government-sponsored effort to set the record straight. Indeed, the Soviet Union was universally and accurately believed to be a persecutor

of religion. The book's title and content challenged that belief and argued that there was religious freedom in the Soviet Union. Why did the Soviet government feel compelled to take up the religious issue, especially in light of its belief that religion was unimportant, was dwindling in significance, and was about to collapse – a condition that the Communists maintained would strengthen their state and advance the worldwide revolution?

This thesis examines this question and other issues related to this small book. The significance of this study is that it reveals the importance of religion as both a domestic and international issue in Russia and the West, the value of propaganda in World War II, and, finally, the desperate struggle to mold and influence Western public opinion in favor of the Soviet alliance. Although a facility in Russian would enhance the author's study, such a skill is not essential for an examination of *TARR* because the book was published in English and its principal market was the English-speaking readers in the United States and Great Britain.

There were several primary sources utilized to complete this study. The most important source was *TARR*, which is the basis for this study. However, the *British Correspondence*, United States foreign relations papers, and

documents from the FDR Library aided in giving a better understanding to the topic. These sources provided an enhanced view of *TARR* from the perspective of the British and American governments. They were indispensable because they give an inside look at the governments thoughts on religion in Russia and on the publication of *TARR*. The *New York Times* provided essential insight into what the American public was being told about the religious situation in the Soviet Union and American public opinion on that topic. The basic limitation of these sources is that they do not give an accurate picture of what the leaders of the United States and Great Britain were thinking about the publication of *TARR*. Throughout the years, there has been a significant amount of work done on Russia and religion during World War II.

In those works, various authors have studied or mentioned *TARR*, but none has explained its significance in terms of wartime propaganda, the Western-Soviet alliance, and Soviet and Western domestic policy. N.S. Timasheff wrote *Religion in Soviet Russia* in 1942, which was the first significant book on religion in the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> It covered the history of the ROC between 1917 and 1941 and

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<sup>1</sup> N.S. Timasheff, *Religion in Soviet Russia 1917-1942* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1942).

was based on available secondary sources. However, it did not mention the publication of *TARR*.

John Shelton Curtiss' *The Russian Church and the Soviet State, 1917-1950*, was published in 1953.<sup>2</sup> It is a good, solid study of the relationship between the ROC and the Soviet State from 1917 to 1950, but it is not based upon primary sources, which were not available at the time. Despite this flaw, his work was a major contribution to the study of Russian history. It successfully illustrated the struggle between Orthodoxy and the Soviet State, and it outlined the relations between the church and the state during World War II. His effort in the end, however, tended to be a mere listing of events without analysis. Surprisingly, Curtiss failed to mention the publication of *TARR*. His book is evidence that the implication of *TARR* was not apparent to historians as late as 1950—eight years after its original publication.

Matthew Spinka wrote *The Church in Soviet Russia* in 1956.<sup>3</sup> He covered the period in Russian history from the fall of the tsar to 1955. The main focus of the book was the relations between the ROC and the Soviet State. Spinka

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<sup>2</sup> John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State 1917-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953).

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Spinka, *The Church in Soviet Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

included all major events and policies regarding religion and the state. He also devoted some attention to the publication of *TARR*. He labeled the book a propaganda piece and quoted some excerpts from the book to prove his point. He also aimed to stress that the book demonstrated that the ROC cooperated readily with the Soviet government. However, Spinka never provided an analysis of *TARR* and failed to see its relevance to the wartime alliance, Soviet domestic affairs, or public opinion in the English-speaking countries of the United Kingdom and the United States.

Walter Kolarz published *Religion in the Soviet Union* in 1961. In order to get a better view of "Russian reality," Kolarz examined the believers living in the Soviet Union. He approached the subject from the perspective of different nations, cultures, or denomination within the USSR. Therefore, this book covers not only the ROC, but also the many other denominations that existed under the leadership of Lenin, Stalin, and Nikita Khrushchev. Kolarz mainly outlined the history of the churches that existed at that time. He, however, did not give an extensive view of the actual religious conditions under the Communist leaders. Despite the fact that the ROC was the largest religious entity in the Soviet Union, it composed only a small percentage of Kolarz's book. This

lack of detail on the ROC also meant the exclusion of TARR's publication. In spite of its lack of detail on the ROC, Kolarz provided an excellent survey on a variety of religious denominations that were then part of the Soviet Union.

The next major book on religion in the USSR was Michael Bourdeaux's *Opium of the People: The Christian Religion in the U.S.S.R.*, which was published in 1965.<sup>4</sup> Bourdeaux's book was produced to record the attitudes of the Russian people toward the ROC and faith. His book was of great historical value because it gave an abbreviated view of the Church from its origin to 1965. Because of the vast scope of the book, it only covered World War II superficially. However, Bourdeaux mentioned the publication of TARR. He wrote that the appearance of the book in 1942 was evidence that the status of the ROC had improved compared to its position in the 1920's and 1930's. He also argued that the book's main goal was to persuade "its readers that they were right in supporting the war effort because the Soviet Government had always looked benignly on religion."<sup>5</sup> Bourdeaux noted that the book was very expensive

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Bourdeaux, *Opium of the People: The Christian Religion in the U.S.S.R.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

to produce and seemed extravagant considering that much of the Soviet Union was near starvation. Although Bourdeaux outlined part of the book's purpose, he neither analyzed his assessment nor provided details about the effectiveness of the book's impact. He also neglected to discuss the book as propaganda aimed at Soviet Western allies.

Robert Conquest wrote *Religion in the U.S.S.R.* in 1969. His main purpose was to "examine the factual history and nature of the confrontation [between Church and State in Soviet Russia] largely in connection with the Orthodox Church, which has been the largest scale religious phenomenon the regime has faced."<sup>6</sup> Conquest only briefly described the relationship between the state and the church in the period from 1941 to 1945, because the church and the state in the Soviet Union appeared to be cooperating. He did not mention TARR because in his mind it was evidence of church-state cooperation. In fact, however, the publication of TARR was not proof of church-state cooperation. It was really a propaganda publication that ironically underscored the lack of a free church and real, voluntary cooperation between Church and State in Soviet Russia.

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Conquest, *Religion in the U.S.S.R.* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 11.

In 1969, Max Hayward and William C. Fletcher edited *Religion and the Soviet State: A Dilemma of Power*.<sup>7</sup> This work was a collection of essays covering a variety of aspects dealing with religion in the Soviet Union. Although full of useful information on the decades after World War II, the articles lacked detail on World War II itself. The one author who included coverage on the war was Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, who has long been recognized as the leading scholar on religion in the USSR. He wrote about the Soviet agency's realization that the ROC was a useful ally in the struggle against the Nazis, but curiously he did not mention the publication of *TARR*.

William C. Fletcher published *The Russian Orthodox Church Underground, 1917-1970* in 1971.<sup>8</sup> He concluded that underground Orthodoxy resulted because of the Soviet government's persecution of the ROC. He also found that Soviet persecution of religion was ineffective because it merely forced religion underground. Finally, he wrote that the importance of the underground opposition was a way to ensure the continued existence of religious institutions.

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<sup>7</sup> Max Hayward and William C. Fletcher, editors., *Religion and the Soviet State: A Dilemma of Power* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> William C. Fletcher, *The Russian Orthodox Church Underground, 1917-1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

This book was valuable because it proved that there was underground activity in the Church, but it did not focus on the publication of *TARR*, which did not deal with the underground church because it maintained religion was free and that no underground movement was needed.

Harvey Fireside published *Icon and Swastika: The Russian Orthodox Church under Nazi and Soviet Control* in 1971.<sup>9</sup> The title accurately describes the subject of the book. Fireside began the book by analyzing the attitudes of the two regimes toward religion. His study was historically significant because it was the first work in English to look at the German and Soviet attitudes toward religion. The author included several chapters on the religious situation in the Soviet Union before and after the war. Fireside mentioned the publication of *TARR* in his book, but he simply quoted Metropolitan Sergius, the acting head of the ROC, to the effect that the book was published to undermine the Fascist claim that religion in Russia was persecuted. Like other authors, Fireside's brief mention of the book was due to the nature of his subject. His background leaned toward German events. When discussing

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<sup>9</sup> Harvey Fireside, *Icon and Swastika: The Russian Orthodox Church under Nazi and Soviet Control* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

events in the Soviet Union, his descriptions were brief and tentative. He never really offered an analysis of *TARR* as a weapon in the Allied alliance or a tool in the propaganda war.

Richard Marshall Jr. edited *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union, 1917-1967* in 1971. His work was a collection of essays by leading experts on religion in Russia. The book covered the experience of religion in the Soviet Union over a fifty-year period.<sup>10</sup> Although the subject of the essays varied, all the writers agreed that the Soviet regime was a determined and consistent persecutor of religion. The authors mainly used secondary sources, although most of their sources were in Russian. The book also included an appendix, which gave all the major laws regarding religion in the Soviet Union, and a selected bibliography of books in English. Unfortunately, none of the authors delved into the meaning of the publication of *TARR*.

Another important book on religion in the Soviet Union was Gerhard Simon's *Church, State and Opposition in the USSR*, which was originally published in German in 1971 and

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<sup>10</sup> Richard H. Marshall, ed., *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union 1917-1967* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971).

then translated into English in 1974.<sup>11</sup> It was a collection of essays, most of which had been published elsewhere originally. Simon's book was a study of the dissident movements that occurred in the ROC after World War II. Simon's book covered the religious situation in the Soviet Union before the revolution of 1917 through World War II, but only in the context of dissent. Simon and the other authors failed to examine the book *TARR*.

Dennis J. Dunn wrote *The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government, 1939-1949* in 1977. It was the first major treatment of Catholic-Soviet relations during and immediately following World War II. Dunn does briefly mention the publication of *TARR* in the context of the Russian government attempting to influence the Vatican to adopt a pro-Soviet stand during the Nazi invasion of the USSR. Stalin was also hoping that the Vatican would support United States Lend-Lease aid for Russia. According to Dunn, *TARR*'s 1942 publication confirmed "the growing bond between Stalin's government and the Orthodox Church."<sup>12</sup> Dunn, having only mentioned the publication of *TARR* as it pertained to the situation with the Catholic Church, did not attempt to

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<sup>11</sup> Gerhard Simon, *Church, State and Opposition in the USSR* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

analyze the book's meaning to the Allies or discuss it as a major propaganda piece. Dunn also edited another first-rate collection of essays on religion in the USSR in 1978. The work entitled, *Religion and Modernization in the Soviet Union*, consisted of the best research by the leading Western authorities on the subject of religion in the USSR, who gathered at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos in 1976. Again, none of the specialists investigated the significance of the publication of *TARR*.

Dimitry Pospelovsky is the author of the two-volume work entitled *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime, 1917-1982*, which was published in 1984.<sup>13</sup> Pospelovsky's book is a synthesis of information from other historians on the subject of religion in the Soviet Union. It included expanded information on areas that many historians had left untouched. This book utilized new documents that had been previously unavailable to historians and gave an insider's perspective on the ROC. Pospelovsky's book mentioned the publication of *TARR*. He wrote that *TARR* was a propaganda piece strictly aimed at a foreign audience. He analyzed the book's pictures, its contradictory statements, and its lack of statistics about the Church. Pospelovsky mentioned that

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<sup>13</sup> Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime 1917-1982*, Vol. 1 (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984).

*TARR* was published simultaneously in several languages, but he did not explain what simultaneously meant. Most authors understood that there was a seven to eight month delay in publishing *TARR* in English. There also was no analysis of the book's primary audience, which were the English-speaking Allied countries. He also provided no details of how *TARR* was received by the Allied nations. He wrote that it was a propaganda piece, but did not explain what purpose it served in and out of Russia.

In *The Russian Orthodox Church: A Contemporary History* in 1986, Jane Ellis focused on the internal affairs of the ROC and how it related to the Soviet state. She used newly available sources, such as the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, to gain perspective on the realities behind the ROC. Her account gave readers a fresh look at some of the old issues regarding church-state relations. Although Ellis included some detailed information about Soviet publications during World War II, the publication of *TARR* was not among them.

Nathaniel Davis published *A Long Walk to the Church: A Contemporary Study of the Russian Orthodox Church* in 1995. As the title suggested, the book was a study of the ROC in

the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> Davis examined how the Church in Soviet Russia had changed in light of the rise and fall of communism. This book, an excellent study of the contemporary ROC, it includes sources from newly opened Russian archives. His main concentration is the Church after World War II, and he does not mention the publication of *TARR*. This gap is a significant drawback, but it was not atypical.

Robert A. Graham's, *The Vatican and Communism during World War II: What Really Happened?* Published in 1996, provided a closer look at the Vatican and Communism during the war.<sup>15</sup> Graham's book does an excellent job illuminating many myths about relations between the Vatican, Nazis, and Communists. He provided a new picture of the attitude of not only the Soviet Union, but also its allies toward the Catholic Church. His book mentioned the publication of *TARR*, which according to him, showed the ROC's submission to the Soviet regime. He argued that *TARR* was an effort to sway world opinion in favor of the USSR by claiming that religion in the USSR was as free as the Soviet regime claimed it to be. Although Graham does go into more detail

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<sup>14</sup> Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Robert A. Graham, S.J., *The Vatican and Communism during World War II: What Really Happened?* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996).

than other writers about *TARR*, he was still vague about how it was received abroad. He also speculated about

Metropolitan Sergius' motives for "writing" the book.

Graham believed that the preface of *TARR* was written with the hope that those abroad would take a deeper look at the situation of the Church. Graham's insights about *TARR* are astute, but he does not completely explore the reasons why this book was significant to those abroad and why it had so much value as a propaganda tool among the Allies.

Felix Corley composed *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader* in 1996.<sup>16</sup> This book was an exploration of Soviet archives dealing with the how bureaucrats within the Soviet system dealt with problems caused by religious believers. Because all aspects of religion were dealt with by the Soviet system, Corley was able to find evidence of religious dealings in the archives. This book does not present any major discovery about religion and the Soviet State. However, it provides evidence of how the Soviet system dealt with religion. Corley's use of the archives and his reproduction of documents are a valuable resource for scholars studying religion in the Soviet Union. Corley obviously could not include every available document. He

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<sup>16</sup> Felix Corley, *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1996).

only included those that were important to his topic. There is no mention of the publication of *TARR*.

Tatiana A. Chumachenko wrote *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years* in 2002.<sup>17</sup> This book examined the relationship between the Church and the Soviet State between 1943 and 1961. Although other historians have covered this time period, Chumachenko presented a new view of the topic by focusing on the "state activity, various governmental institutions and special organs," in particular the Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs.<sup>18</sup> Chumachenko also recreated "the circumstances and conditions of Russian Orthodox Church life in the decades covered."<sup>19</sup> The period surveyed by Chumachenko does not include the publication of *TARR* in the Soviet Union. However, she briefly mentioned the book's publication in her introduction. She believed that *TARR* "attested to the initial process for normalizing relations between the government and the Russian Orthodox Church."<sup>20</sup> She viewed

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<sup>17</sup> Tatiana A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years*, Edward E. Roslof, ed. and trans. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

this book as the first step in the mending of the Church and State relationship. In other words, she took the publication of *TARR* at face value – as evidence that religious conditions had and were improving in the USSR. She also did not analyze the book's content. In addition, she did not mention that the book gave an inaccurate picture of religion in Russia in the years preceding the war. Chumachenko also did not stress that the book was intended only for consumption by a foreign audience. Her book was based upon the newly opened Soviet archives, but her interpretation is incomplete and one-sided.

The most recent work on the subject of religion in the Soviet Union during World War II came from Steven Merritt Miner in 2003. His book, *Stalin's Holy War: Religion, Nationalism, and Alliance Politics, 1941-1945*, looked at the religious question in a broader sense than earlier authors did.<sup>21</sup> He wrote that religion was important to "Soviet politics, state security, diplomacy, and propaganda."<sup>22</sup> Miner proffered the most comprehensive look at the publication of *TARR*, but he was somewhat vague in

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<sup>21</sup> Steven Merritt Miner, *Stalin's Holy War: Religion, Nationalism, and Alliance Politics, 1941-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

describing how the Allied countries viewed the book as propaganda. Although he mentioned Great Britain's role in its publication, he did not elaborate on the details of the controversy about the book's possible publication. Furthermore, although he acknowledged that the book was propaganda, he did not really explore its usefulness as a propaganda tool in Great Britain and the United States.

This thesis intends to provide a detailed analysis of the publication of *TARR*. Other historians do not mention the publication of *TARR* or just mention it briefly as an event that happened in 1942. The more recent works of Miner and Graham examine *TARR* with some depth, but they, too, did not study its significance as a tool of propaganda during the war. They also did not explain the book's importance to the Western-Soviet alliance or its role in Soviet and Western domestic policy.

This thesis examines the publication of *TARR* and provides an analysis of its contents. This study will also examine the reality of the religious situation in the Soviet Union versus the perception produced in *TARR*. The final chapters look at the views of both the British and the United States government in regards to *TARR* and whether it was a useful piece of propaganda.

## CHAPTER II

### ANALYSIS OF THE TRUTH ABOUT RELIGION IN RUSSIA

In September 1942, the Moscow Patriarchate, the governing body of the ROC, published *The Truth about Religion in Russia*. The book's title used the term religion, which meant the ROC. There was no reference to any of the other religions that existed in Russia, such as Catholicism or Judaism.

The same month that *TARR* was published, Metropolitan Nikolai of Kiev and Galicia, one of the leading members of the Moscow Patriarchate, made an unannounced visit to the British Embassy, newly relocated to Kuibyshev from its original location in Moscow. Nikolai met with the British diplomat, Lacy Baggallay, who had served for many years in the Soviet Union. During this brief visit, Nikolai gave "Baggallay several copies of a Russian-language book entitled *Pravda o religii v Rossii* (*The [T]ruth about [R]eligion in Russia*)."<sup>1</sup> At that time, Nikolai told Baggallay that several boxes of the book had also been sent to the archbishop of Canterbury, but

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<sup>1</sup> Miner, 97.

this was an understatement on the part of Nikolai. He had actually "sent ten cases, containing 700 copies."<sup>2</sup>

On the same day that he dropped by the British Embassy, Nikolai also visited the United States and Chinese embassies. According to Baggallay, Nikolai "might be contemplating further calls among the diplomatic corps."<sup>3</sup> It was evident that Nikolai was going to great lengths to insure that other countries were aware of the book. Obviously, the Russians wanted this book to be viewed by the citizens of its Allies. Why were the Russians so interested in having the Allied countries, especially England and the United States, become familiar with *TARR*? In order to answer that question, it is necessary to examine and analyze the contents of *TARR*.

A useful starting point for an analysis of *TARR* was a report issued by the Soviet relations branch of the Ministry of Information (MOI) in Great Britain, which included an analysis of various aspects dealing with *TARR*. The report began with statements that *TARR* consisted of a collection of essays written by individuals specifically for the book. According to the report, it also contained some "documentary

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<sup>2</sup> Miner, 97.

<sup>3</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Exchange of Visits between Leaders of Russian Church and Church of England," *British Correspondence*, September 20, 1942, microfilm, Reel 17, 32950: 32.

material."<sup>4</sup> The contributors included three Metropolitans and various "members of the secular clergy and laity." The laity referred to consisted of "an actress, a doctor, one or two journalists, some scholars, and several chairmen of Parochial Church Councils."<sup>5</sup>

Some of the writings from the secular clergy and the representatives of laity, according to the report, occasionally included "a certain radicalism either of an ultra-nationalist character or [were] reminiscent of the more radical and democratic professions of the Renovators or the Living Church."<sup>6</sup> Despite the occasional radicalism, most of "the contributors present one consistent account...of the past and present of the Orthodox Church and the role it is playing in national life."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Report on the book *The Truth about Religion in Russia*" *British Correspondence*, Dec.4, 1942, microfilm, Reel 17, 32950: 125.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-6. According to Marshall's *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union, 1917-1967*, the Living Church was sponsored by the Soviet Union after the revolution. Its establishment "was interpreted by some, both in Russia and abroad, as proof of the fact that the authorities were not opposed to religion as such but merely to reactionaries and counterrevolutionaries in the churches" (Anderson, 17). The Living Church with the "opportunistic support" of the Soviet government sought to "wrest control from established religious authorities" (Marshall, 190). The best book on the Living Church is Edward E. Rosloff's, *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-6.

The report also stated that the contributions were "written in good and literary Russian," and included the usage of Bible quotations and quotations from "the Lives of the Saints."<sup>8</sup> The report also noted that the book included references to Marxist influence, Russian nationalism, and domestic politics. The following quote is representative of the latter:

A portion of the terms used represents a peculiar blend of the old ecclesiastical language and Soviet journalese. Thus the Acting Patriarch refers to the "church bourgeoisie" and to the "Church oppositioners [sic]"; the war of 1914 is described as an "imperialist" war; the "young Soviet republic" as the victim of "capitalist encirclement". According to pre-revolutionary usage Peter I is referred to as Peter the Great. "Russia" is much more often used than the "Soviet Union".<sup>9</sup>

The usage of certain terms shows that the book was written to deemphasize the Communist aspects of the Soviet Union. Russia had been perceived as a religious country while the Soviet Union was viewed as atheistic. Changing certain terms to be more nationalistic was a good way to disassociate the country's current religious status from the rumors of persecution and its pro-atheistic practices, which had reached many countries in the West. It was ultimately the western

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 126.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 126.

Allies approval that was being sought with the publication of *TARR*.

Examining the book itself reflects the attitude of the ROC toward the Soviet government, the status of religion in Russia, and the view of the war with Nazi Germany. A glimpse of these are seen in the preface (or Foreword) of *TARR*, which was written by Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow and Kolumna on March 28, 1942. In it, he overtly claimed that there was not any religious persecution in Russia. The book opened with the following statement by Metropolitan Sergius, the Acting Patriarch of the ROC:

This book is primarily a repudiation of the so-called "crusade" of the fascists, in which they have had effrontery to advance a specious claim to "liberate" our nation and our Orthodox Church from the [B]olsheviks. But, at the same time an answer is given to the broad question of whether our Church conceives of itself as persecuted by the [B]olsheviks, and hence whether it asks anybody for liberation from such persecution.

To those convinced of the existence of persecution the attitude maintained by our Church towards the fascist invasion might appear constrained and not corresponding to the inner exceptions of the Church; and its prayers for the victory of the Red Army may appear as a mere lip service, a thing done for the sake of form or, to put it differently, as being evidence that the Church, even inside its own walls, must be acting under constraint.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Moscow Patriarchate, *The Truth about Religion in Russia*, eds. Nicholas Yarushevich, Gregory Petrovich Georgievsky, and Alexander Pavlovich Smirnov, trans. Rev. E. N. C. Seargeant (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1942), 5.

Sergius blatantly stated that those who believed that the Church had been persecuted or was under the auspices of the Soviet government were mistaken. The Church supported the Red Army and the Soviet government because that was what was best for the country in order to purge itself of the fascist invaders. The Church was acting on its own accord, and not in some vain effort to please the government. The rest of the preface included more explanation of why there was the mistaken idea that the ROC had been persecuted.

Sergius continued to discuss the foreign press, which he claimed exaggerated the extent of persecution of the Church in the Soviet Union. He argued that so-called religious persecution was nothing more than stories made up and printed in "Russian émigré ecclesiastical publications."<sup>11</sup> He claimed that the topic of persecution played a major role not just in portraying the normal attention given to any event, "but official, systematic measure on the part of the Soviet authorities were alleged, aiming at the destruction of all believers in religion in general and ministers of religion in particular."<sup>12</sup> He continued with statements about how the publicists were not above fabricating stories of persecution. The stories of various clergy being shot or tortured were

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 5.

denied. Sergius refuted the stories of religious persecution with claims that the very men who were reportedly executed were actually doing well and had not been harmed in any way.

Sergius further argued that such stories were invented "to maintain the illusion of persecution in Russia." He also said that stories of religious persecution were "brought into being among simple Orthodox believers" by fears, rumors, and Russian tradition going back to the persecution of the Old Believers by the tsar. In addition, according to Sergius, there were some clergy who held a bourgeois outlook and who might see some government actions as proof of religious persecution. For example, the Church and state were now separate entities. This meant the Church or rather ecclesiastical institutions (for example, monasteries) and the clergy as a caste or profession lost certain privileges. These privileges had to do with owning property and professional rights that were different from the other people. In essence, the Church and clergy had certain advantages that were no longer recognized by the state.<sup>13</sup> Such developments, according to Sergius, were not persecution but products of an evolving, modern society.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 6.

The "ordinary orthodox people," according to Sergius, did not perceive these reforms as persecution. They felt that such changes were the cleansing of an entity that had forgotten its roots. The Church was now on a path, which was aligned with the Biblical principles put forth by Jesus Christ and His apostles.<sup>14</sup>

Metropolitan Sergius explained further that the Church and state being separated "removed artificial barriers which kept people within the Church, and all nominal Church folk left us."<sup>15</sup> He continued that many seemingly faithful Orthodox Church members had "lost their illusions about the tsar" and instead of staying in the Church turned to atheism. Apparently, to many believers, Sergius continued, tsarism and the Orthodox faith were unhealthily intertwined. Sergius also pointed out that many of the Russian people could not understand how one could reject the idea of tsarism and still be a member of the Orthodox Church. Sergius claimed that many people left the Church because they believed that it did not oppose the Soviet regime and described the new Church as having "redness" in its outlook.<sup>16</sup> Sergius said this view was wrong, that separation of church and state now prevailed, and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 6.

that the church and government worked together for the benefit of the people.

Metropolitan Sergius not only addressed the believers within the Soviet Union, but also the comrades located in other countries, especially those in the United States. He specifically addressed the Orthodox representatives in the United States who seemed to be working in opposition to their brethren in Russia. The American-based Orthodox leaders had asked President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) to urge the Soviet government, according to Sergius, for the re-establishment of religion, which for them meant that the clergy had certain advantages because of the position. Sergius mentioned that there were rogue Orthodox churches abroad that were working in Hitler's service. Sergius went on to emphasize that many of the Orthodox churches were united in their effort to overcome the fascists and that they showed their support for the efforts of the Red Army with prayer.<sup>17</sup>

The preface also included the address Sergius made to the Russian people on June 22, 1941. This address by Sergius was an attempt to rally the Soviet people against the Nazi government. It included the following passages:

Our Orthodox Church has always shared the destiny of the people, bearing their trials, rejoicing in their

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 8.

successes, and this time too it is not going to forsake its people, bestowing as it does, the blessing of Heaven upon the forthcoming heroic exploit of the whole people.<sup>18</sup>

Let us lay down our lives together with our flock. Innumerable thousands of our Orthodox warriors have followed the path of self-sacrifice and laid down their lives for their country and their faith at all times of enemy invasion of their Fatherland. They have died, not thinking of glory, but thinking only that their country was in need of sacrifice on their part and humbly sacrificed everything, even life itself.<sup>19</sup>

The Church of Christ blesses all Orthodox believers for the defence of the sacred frontiers of our native land. The Lord will grant us victory.<sup>20</sup>

These statements were meant to stir up emotions among the Russians and to invoke a sense of patriotism and awareness that the people needed to band together in order to get rid of the Nazis.

Following Sergius preface, the main body of the book was divided into two parts, which continued the themes of denying persecution of the church, the freedom of religion in Russia, and portraying the Germans as barbaric animals. Part one was titled, "The Russian Orthodox Church True to its Native Land." The beginning of part one dealt with the freedom of the ROC in the Soviet Union. Additional chapters described the attitude of the Church toward the war and the support it received from

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 9.

churches abroad. Part two described acts of murder, destruction, looting, and desecration by the Nazis.<sup>21</sup>

The first chapter in part one of *TARR* is entitled "On the Freedom of Religious Profession in Russia." The major theme of this chapter was the existence of religious freedom in the Soviet Union, not just since the war but also before the war. The authors of chapter one claimed that

The Soviet Government's decree on freedom of conscience and of religious profession lifted the weight which had been lying upon the Church for so many years. It freed the Church from external tutelage. This liberation has been of enormous benefit to the inner life of the Church. The decree grants freedom and guarantees to all religious communities the inviolability of this freedom.<sup>22</sup>

The authors also mentioned that the separation of the Church from the State was not appreciated by all of the believers. They argued that the disaffected believers were the people who were making the claims that the Soviet government was persecuting the Church and "depriving it of its lawful rights."<sup>23</sup> They also alleged that such charges were promulgated abroad and were made to justify anti-church activities. The main purpose was "to undermine confidence in Soviet

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<sup>21</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Report on *TARR*," 32950: 125.

<sup>22</sup> Moscow Patriarchate, *TARR*, 20.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

authorities."<sup>24</sup> This allegation was made emphatically, in a later passage, in part one written by Archpriest Sergius Vozdvizhensky. Vozdvizhensky was the priest in charge of the Kosmo-Damayansky Church in the village of Bolshevo, blamed the nations of Western Europe for spreading the idea that there was religious persecution in the Soviet Union. He exalted the importance of the Church and wrote that the Church was drawing large crowds of people since the advent of the war. He asserted that there were more people attending church than ever before.<sup>25</sup> He concluded by stating: "May my voice be an accusation against enemies of our native land who are trying to lead astray world public opinion by spreading absurd rumours about religious persecutions in Russia."<sup>26</sup>

Priest Sergius Lavrov, a priest in charge of Tikhvin Church in the village of Dushonovo, continued this theme in another passage. He reiterated that the "protestant pastors" who came with the Germans were spreading rumors that there was persecution of the ROC. Lavrov wanted to inform the Führer, who, he claimed, had a tendency to play around with words like "God" and "Providence," "that Providence called the Soviet

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 41.

Government into being in our country [Russia]."<sup>27</sup> He continued by claiming, "The Government without playing on religious words is rebuilding life efficiently on new foundations in practice."<sup>28</sup>

The writers of *TARR* acknowledged that religion in the USSR was different than it had been under the tsars. But the separation of church and state and removal of unfair privileges for bishops and monks, they argued, did not mean the Church was persecuted. Rather, Russia was becoming a modern state where there was religious freedom, but not religious intolerance and interference with public policy.

The main theme of the first chapter therefore was to put to rest the notion that religion in the Soviet Union was persecuted. It also moved the focus from the Russians to the Germans regarding religious persecution. For the Soviet authorities, chapter one was a chance to inform the public about the cruelties Germans had delivered upon the Russians. The charge was that the Germans were godless people since they continued to commit "cruel and shameful deeds."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Chapter II, "The Orthodox Church and the War," concentrated on the role of the ROC during World War II. It included sermons and teachings from various representatives of the ROC. These sermons gave the impression that Russian people were fighting in defense of their great country because they were inspired by the Church.

Chapter II included an Easter message entitled "Christ is Risen!" by Andrew, the Archbishop of Saratov, delivered on April 1, 1942. In addition, the editors included an interview between Archbishop Andrew and a correspondent of the Associated Press, Gilmore Eddy Lehner King, which took place on December 24, 1941. During the interview, King asked Andrew, "To what extent is freedom of religious profession restricted today in the U.S.S.R.?"<sup>30</sup> Andrew replied, "The Soviet Power has never restricted freedom of religious profession."<sup>31</sup> He continued to tell King that the Soviet government was tolerant of all religions, and that the tolerance was "guaranteed by a special article in the Constitution."<sup>32</sup> Archbishop Andrew explained that any "reprisal measures" taken against clergy or their congregations had nothing to do with religious belief,

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 57.

but were "on account of activities directed against the Soviet regime."<sup>33</sup> When Andrew was asked if there had been any change in the Church's position since the dawn of the war, he answered, "no," quite emphatically. He claimed that the Church had not been restricted before or since the war. Andrew emphasized that the Church was free, and that anyone who thought otherwise was misinformed on the situation.<sup>34</sup>

At the end of the interview, Archbishop Andrew articulated optimism that since America was a wealthy country, it would willingly lend a charitable hand to its Russian brethren engaged in the war against the fascists. King endorsed this hope.<sup>35</sup>

Chapter three, entitled "The Great Patriotic Enthusiasm among Believers and Clergy," encompassed passages that outlined the peoples' support for the war effort. One example of such support was an article written on March 21, 1942, by Maria Semenovna Voronkova, a member of the church council of the St. Nicholas Kuznetski Church, called "Our Church." She claimed that the people loved their native land and were willing to die in the effort to stop the Nazis. Voronkova made

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 58.

statements praising the unity of the Russian people in their prayers for those in the heat of battle. She wrote about the significance of the church in the war effort, not only its spiritual aid, but also its material contributions as well. She specifically pointed out that her church, for example, had contributed 50,000 rubles toward the Soviet Union's defense.<sup>36</sup>

Many of the writings in this chapter called attention to money raised and donated by the churches for the defense of Russia. The writings were designed to give the impression of unity and religious freedom among the clergy and the laity. Including the laity provided evidence that they were willing supporters of the Soviet government and its labors in the war.

The final chapter in part one of *TARR* was entitled "The Orthodox Church in Russia, in its Outburst of Patriotism is not Alone." The first section of this chapter educated readers to the vastness of support received by the ROC from churches all over the world in its life and death struggle with Nazi Germany. The author wrote that among these contributions were telegrams from the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. In addition, Bishop Dionysius of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the United States sent a telegram expressing good wishes, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 79.

head of the Anglican Church in England, expressed sympathy for the Soviet Union in several "speeches made at meetings of various public organizations."<sup>37</sup>

A special section of the last chapter in part one included a series of statements by Metropolitan Benjamin of the Aleutian Islands and North America. Benjamin wrote an "Epistle to all Russian People in America" on October 16, 1941. This epistle addressed the schism within the ROC in the United States. The purpose of his statement was to get the members of the ROC abroad unified behind their brethren in Mother Russia. Benjamin was specifically addressing hierarchs of the ROC who had sent telegrams to President Roosevelt asking him to obtain assurances about religious freedom from the Soviet Union. According to Benjamin, the hierarchs were so concerned about religious freedom that they neglected to ask for the provision of material aid.

Benjamin also addressed the believers abroad whom he claimed had separated themselves from their mother country, the church, and even the United States with their opposition to aid to the USSR without proof of religious freedom. He was concerned that they were continually opposing the leader of Russia and the Mother-Church. Benjamin asserted that Stalin

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 108.

"declares, as we do also, that freedom of religion (prayers, services and sacraments) exists in Russia..."<sup>38</sup> Benjamin accused the leaders of such believers of being for the enemy because they were acting against Roosevelt and in turn holding up "aid to the Motherland," which was also harmful to the United States. Benjamin ended his epistle with a prayer for protection for those in Russia and for those who had turned away that they might see the error of their ways and come back into the fold before it was too late.<sup>39</sup>

In a passage from July 2, 1941, Benjamin conveyed his love and pride for the Russian people and church in the Soviet Union. He did not believe that the ROC was being forced to support the Soviet government. He wrote

And do not let anyone think for a moment that our Patriarchal Church only through hypocrisy, through fear, was loyal to Soviet authorities! No—and again no! The Church has always been completely sincere in its loyalty to the authorities, for religious reasons. And now it will be doubly faithful. We know this! We feel this here and understand. And our line of conduct is clear and direct. God's path is no false. The Church has not been, and has not had to be, hypocritical. Its countenance is clear now!<sup>40</sup>

Along with his adamant denial that the ROC in the Soviet Union was coerced into cooperating with the government,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 116-7.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 118.

Benjamin mentioned that the Germans were making false promises to free the people of the Soviet Union from godlessness.

Benjamin emphasized that such promises were not real but just an excuse that Germany made up to further its own cause and effort to win the support of the Russian people. Benjamin ended his address with a note to the Americans stating that the Russians were just common folks who needed help.<sup>41</sup>

Part II of *TARR* is entitled "The Fascist New-Fangled 'Crusaders' Mock at Orthodox Sanctuaries, Ministers and Believers." This part consisted of three chapters that highlighted German atrocities toward the Russian people and property. This whole section was an attempt to portray the Germans as the ultimate evil.

Alexander Smirnov, Archpriest of Moscow, wrote a passage that was typical of the theme of part two. He said,

The Germans are a dark, fiendish power, bringing evil and sorrow at each step. Everlasting shame upon them in the annals of history! Even the White-Guardists are beginning to feel this shame[,] which sticks to the German uniform; they frequently make significant remarks to Russian priests. "I would readily exchange my German uniform for a Russian one," confessed one White-Guardist interpreter to the priest, the Reverend I. Socolov of the town of Staritsa.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 118-9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 131.

The theme of German evilness was also underscored by accounts of life in picturesque villages and towns that were destroyed by the fascists invading them. It was also carried forward by descriptions of Germans who cruelly attempted "to Germanize" the Russian population and clergy by closing down Orthodox Churches and turning them into German "kirchen" (churches). The Germans, according to some sources, were also turning Russian churches into ruins.<sup>43</sup>

Additional passages in part two stressed the anti-German message. For example, part two included the following quotes from a report by Alexis (Sergeev) the archbishop of Ufa:

History had never before known of cases where churches were turned into places of executions and shootings of believers.<sup>44</sup>

Killing and looting the orthodox population, the Germans barbarously destroyed the Orthodox Russian churches and cathedrals.<sup>45</sup>

Murders, shooting, lootings, destruction of churches—nothing succeeded in shaking the patriotic spirit of the believing population of the districts which for a time were occupied by the Germans and have now been freed.<sup>46</sup>

The last chapter of *TARR* included more about the destruction of property by the Germans. However, it also

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 136.

exuded a hope and unity among believers that Russia would celebrate victory over the fascists.

Professor A. Rybnikov wrote the final passage of *TARR* on April 15, 1942. This passage did not fit with the anti-Nazi theme of part two. Instead of writing about German destruction and atrocities, Rybnikov told of the importance of three great Russian cities—Kiev, Novgorod, and Pskov. He claimed, "These cities are important monuments of world historical importance. More than this, they are most valuable pages of the heroic past of our native land, they are standards symbolizing the invincible might of the Russian people and their inexhaustible creative power."<sup>47</sup>

Rybnikov spent considerable time on the history of each city and then discussed the measures the Soviet government employed to restore them, including the religious buildings and monuments. He argued that the Soviet regime's restoration of religious buildings was proof of their pro-religious policy. He concluded

These cities bear witness to eight centuries of their history, to their great creativeness in time of peace, to their disasters and wars with the "pagan" usurpers. We listen to their glorious testimony in the black days of German destruction and oppression, and we know in our hearts: Woe to him who lifts his hand against their hallowed sanctuaries!<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 154.

A major claim in part one of *TARR* was that there was no religious persecution of Russian believers or the ROC. The rest of the book attempted to reiterate the freedom that the Church and its believers had to practice religion. Finally, the book tried to discredit the Germans with stories of Nazi atrocities in the German-occupied regions of the Soviet Union. Was *TARR* reflective of reality in the Soviet Union? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to look at religion in Russia prior to and during World War II.

## CHAPTER III

### RUSSIAN RELIGION THROUGH THE LENS OF TARR

TARR made certain statements about the religious situation in the Soviet Union prior to and during World War II. These statements did not accurately explain that situation. This chapter will first discuss the religious situation in Russia prior to World War II and then give the reality of that situation. In order to get a better understanding, it is important to look at the political and religious situation from the advent of Communism.

In 1917, the Communists came to power in Russia. They set up a government that was adamantly opposed to religion. Almost immediately the new Communist regime passed antireligious laws, closed churches, and arrested clergy. They also launched physical attacks upon clergy and believers. Since the largest church in Russia was the ROC, it notably suffered the most among all religions.

The ROC had faced repression before 1917. Since 1700, tsars denied it the right to have a leader, a patriarch, independent of the state. However, in early 1917 when Tsar

Nicholas II fell from power, the Orthodox Church moved quickly to elect a Patriarch, Patriarch Tikhon. His time as a free church leader did not last long under the Communists. They put him under house arrest where he stayed until his death in 1925. The Communists then refused to allow the ROC to name a successor.

Not allowing a successor was only the beginning of the repressive measures the Soviet government took toward the ROC and religion. The Soviet regime used its power to pass laws that would cause friction in the Church. These new laws included the censoring of sermons, following a new calendar that made church holidays become workdays, and the banning of religious instruction within the Church. For example, children under the age of eighteen were not allowed to receive religious instruction and adults could only get instruction in seminaries; however, the number of seminaries was declining. By the year 1929, approximately fourteen hundred churches were closed and an uncounted number of priests had been executed.<sup>1</sup> In addition, "Material support of the churches was further whittled away by raising taxes on their remaining land and

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey Fireside, *Icon and the Swastika* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1971), 33.

imposing compulsory insurance on their property with the state as beneficiary."<sup>2</sup>

By the time of Stalin's collectivization policy in the 1930s, the ROC and other religions were in a crisis. Soviet authorities closed most of the churches and only a handful of bishops remained free. Rank and file believers experienced discrimination in jobs and education. Evidence of this started in 1929, when "major trade unions announced that they would have no contact with the Church." In addition, the possibility of disgrace was automatically assigned to people affiliated with the church; therefore, "overt believers found themselves barred from any administrative, professional, or industrial careers." Soviet schools aided in further repressing religion with their antireligious teachings, which also actively began in 1929.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of the 1930s, the Communists were convinced that religion was virtually dead in Russia. They were wrong, as they learned from census results 1937, when the results indicated that close to 50 million people still claimed to be

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 33.

religious, the Communists redoubled their efforts to eradicate religion.<sup>4</sup>

The advent of World War II did not alter Soviet antireligious policy. Soviet leaders were committed to an atheistic society because they thought it was the direction of history for the whole world. Fireside, wrote, "The true communist society can be realized only by a major human transformation, and "the new Soviet man" can never exhibit such a vital weakness as belief in God."<sup>5</sup> There was also the continuing expectation that Communism would spread to other nations once they viewed its success in Russia. Therefore, the Soviet government held the belief that its continuing advocacy of atheism would make both Communism and Russia stronger.

The antireligious campaign did not jeopardize the Soviet alliance with the Nazis in August 1939. In fact, the Nazis were just as antireligious as the Soviets, so they saw the atheistic policy as one that abetted their alliance and reinforced their strength and desirability as an ally. When the Soviet Union invaded Poland with the Nazis in 1939, they continued their antireligious policies there. They also

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<sup>4</sup> Dennis J. Dunn, "Religion, Revolution, and Order in Russia," *Christianity After Communism: Social, Political, and Cultural Struggle in Russia*, ed. Niels C. Nielson, Jr. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 18.

<sup>5</sup> Fireside, *Icon and Swastika*, 26.

incorporated their policies in the Baltic States and northern Romania when they annexed those regions in 1940.

However, after the Nazis attacked Russia on June 22, 1941, the acting Patriarch of the ROC, Metropolitan Sergius, took a leadership position for the Church. He issued a proclamation "to the whole church" in an effort to encourage the believers to fight for the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> He even went so far as to call it a sin if they did not resist the evil of Nazism. He feared that the people might side with the Nazis against their own country. Metropolitan Sergius addressed the public twice before Stalin tried to rally support. The Church aided in spreading the idea that the Nazis would force atheism upon the country and further suppress the Orthodox faith. Metropolitan Sergius also proclaimed that the people needed to unite under the Holy Cross of Russia. Despite his effort to connect the people and the Church, there appeared to be a schism in the church.<sup>7</sup>

There were reports of priests and clergy collaborating with the enemy. Metropolitan Sergius' concern was the fate of the Church if the government could prove that there was collaboration between members of the clergy and the Nazis. Ideologically driven persecution was bad enough, but charges

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<sup>6</sup> Moscow Patriarchate, *TARR*, 8-10.

<sup>7</sup> *Fireside, Icon and Swastika*, 172-3.

of treason could undermine the Church with traditional believers. In an effort to downplay the reality of collaboration and its potential consequences, Metropolitan Sergius avoided making any kind of decision regarding the collaborators until September 23, 1942. It was only then that the Baltic Exarch Sergius the Younger was condemned for Nazi collaboration. Four other collaborators were also denounced for their collaboration.

For its part, the Soviet government was not very interested in punishing the Church because of collaborators who, after all, were products of the Soviet government's repressive policies. Instead, the Soviet regime sought to exploit the Church's influence with believers in the contested war zones of Eastern Europe to turn public opinion there and elsewhere in Europe and the United States in favor of the Soviet armed forces. This led to a perceived change in Soviet policy toward the ROC and religion, which is evident in the fact that the state government had already quit printing its two antireligious propaganda journals, *Bezbozhnik* and *Antireligioznik*, in the fall of 1941 due to "the shortage of paper." In reality, these journals and the Militant Atheist Society were disbanded because of ineffectiveness after the 1937 census. However, their suspension did have the benefit of making it appear as if the Communist Party was ending its

policy of religious persecution.<sup>8</sup> This appearance was touted by the government as evidence that there was religious freedom in the USSR and that the Soviet regime was better than the Nazis for religious believers.

The appearance of religious toleration had a number of positive benefits. It undermined collaborating with the Nazis, strengthened the resolve of believers in the Soviet Union to support the Soviet government, confounded religious opponents of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and the West, particularly the Poles and the Vatican, and favorably impressed the two major Western Allies of the USSR, Great Britain, and the United States. In June 1941, when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, England held out the hand of alliance - Stalin readily grasped it. For the success of this alliance, it was important for the Soviet government to appear as a power that was better than the Nazis, as one that no longer persecuted religion.

More important than Britain as a potential ally against the Nazis, the United States stood as a prime target for the re-engineered Soviet approach to religion. The United States was not in the war, but it was supplying the British with war material and it could supply the Soviet Union. The United

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 173-5.

States had sent a point man to Moscow - Harry Hopkins - in July 1941 to see if the Soviet Union could survive. Stalin convinced him that it could. What was necessary now was massive aid. In September-October 1941, W. Averell Harriman arrived in Moscow to find out what specific aid the Soviet Union needed.<sup>9</sup>

Against the backdrop of the United States' willingness to give aid to Soviet Russia was a looming problem. The United States expressed concern over the fact that the Soviet Union was an avowed atheist country that persecuted religion, even if it produced the illusion of officially relaxing religious suppression. The image of the Soviet Union was not favorable in the United States. The *New York Times* often printed articles that did not support aid to the Soviet Union. The title of an article from June 27, 1941, read, "Urge Soviet Aid Hinge on Reforms: Speakers at Taminent Economic Conference Demand Pledge of Democratization." The point of this article was that the U.S. should not give aid to the Soviet Union unless the Soviets agreed to the "democratization of the Soviet regime, release of political prisoners and restoration of civil liberties in that country." The article continued with Raymond Leslie Buell, former president of the Foreign

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<sup>9</sup> Dennis Dunn, *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin: America's Ambassadors to Moscow* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 132.

Policy Association, declaring that "the American and British Governments 'should urge the Russian regime to restore full religious freedom and abolish the Third International' as a condition essential to successful Russian resistance to the Nazi invasion." The rest of the article emphasized saving Russia as a democracy and demanding freedom of many civil liberties such as freedom to worship and the right to free speech.<sup>10</sup> On July 5, 1941, a special article in the *New York Times* entitled, "Opposes Aid to Soviet: Philadelphia Judge calls Stalin 'Worst Persecutor Since Nero,'" provided another example of opposition to giving aid to Soviet Russia reminding the people that their tax dollars were going to support the communist way of life.<sup>11</sup>

The Soviet government was beginning to understand the importance of the religious issue in its relationship with the United States, but it was still a long way from comprehending the value of religion in terms of the US-USSR alliance. It failed to understand how its record of persecution adversely affected United States public opinion against the Soviet government.

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Shaplen, "Urge Soviet Aid Hinge on Reforms," *New York Times*, June 27, 1941, 8.

<sup>11</sup> "Opposes Aid to Soviet: Philadelphia Judge Calls Stalin 'Worst Persecutor Since Nero,'" *New York Times*, September 19, 1941, 8.

In the face of this ostensible American public opinion that opposed the Soviet regime on the grounds of its repressive nature, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) determined to alter public opinion of the Soviet Union as a persecutor of religion. For him, getting Lend-Lease through Congress was predicated on changing American public opinion. Lend-Lease was available to provide assistance to the Soviet Union, and that was essential if the Soviet Union was going to have a decent chance of holding and defeating the Nazis, who, in Roosevelt's mind, were the principal threat to America's interest and international peace.

An extremely important aspect of United States' public opinion was concern about Soviet atheism and religious persecution. FDR decided to meet the problem with a sleight of hand and parsing of words. In a series of meetings with the Soviet Ambassador Konstantin Alexandrovich Umansky, FDR related that he wanted a statement from the Soviet government regarding religious freedom in the Soviet Union. For example, on September 11, 1941, President Roosevelt made a suggestion to Ambassador Umansky, "that 'some publicity' regarding the freedom of religion in the Soviet Union 'might have a very

fine educational effect before the next lend-lease bill comes up in Congress.'"<sup>12</sup>

FDR then held a news conference in October 1941, after reviewing Article 124 of the Soviet constitution. The press conference was an attempt to enlighten the public on the Soviet Union's stance toward religious freedom.

QUESTION: Mr. President, --the State Department got out a letter from the Polish Ambassador today, showing that the Russians are going to allow the Poles to have their own churches.

THE PRESIDENT: I have just got it--the mimeographed State Department letter--but I also got it from another source this morning.

QUESTION: Would you care to make any comment on it?

THE PRESIDENT: No. It speaks for itself.

QUESTION: (interposing) Mr. President--

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing) As I think I have suggested a week or two ago, some of you might find it useful to read Article 124 of the Constitution of Russia.

QUESTION: What does that say, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I haven't learned it by heart sufficiently to quote--I might be off a little bit, but anyway: Freedom of conscience--

QUESTION: (interposing) Would you say--

THE PRESIDENT: (continuing)--Freedom of religion. Freedom equally to use propaganda against religion, which is essentially what is the rule in this country; only, we don't put it quite the same way.

For instance, you might go out tomorrow--to the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue, down below the Press Club--and stand on a soapbox and preach Christianity, and nobody would stop you. And then, if it got into your head, perhaps the

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<sup>12</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers*, Volume 1, 1942 (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Press, 1958), note 28, 999.

next day preach against religion of all kinds, and nobody would stop you.<sup>13</sup>

Secretary State, Cordell Hull, sent a copy of FDR's comments to the American Ambassador in the Soviet Union, Laurence A. Steinhardt on October 2, 1941. Secretary of State Hull sent the telegram with an explanation that the President had actually misquoted Article 124, but he ordered Steinhardt to get clarification from the Soviet government on its interpretation of Article 124. On October 4, 1941, an official spokesman for the Russian government supported FDR's statement about religious freedom and quoted anew Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution, "To insure citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the U.S.S.R. is separated from the State and the school from the church. Freedom to perform religious rights and freedom of anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens."<sup>14</sup>

American policy makers continued to pressure the Soviets for a public declaration. On October 4, 1941, Steinhardt replied to the telegram from October 2, stating that he and W. Averell Harriman had a conversation with Stalin requesting public clarification on the religious question as well as the

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<sup>13</sup> *Roosevelt's Foreign Policy 1933-1941: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Unedited Speeches and Messages* (New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1942), 498-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, note, 499.

"relaxation of restrictions as exemplified by releasing two Polish Roman Catholic priests from confinement and allowing them to conduct services." Stalin did say he would look into these issues. Steinhardt and Harriman after discussing President Roosevelt's wishes in a series of meetings with Umansky and Vyacheslav Molotov came to an agreement that the Soviet government would address the President's concern about a statement on religious toleration in Soviet Russia. However, Harriman received the impression that Moscow would go through the motions but that the Soviet government was "not yet prepared to give freedom of religion in the sense that we understand it."<sup>15</sup>

On October 10, 1941, Congress passed the Lend-Lease bill, but not without opposition from some congressmen who held suspect the new Soviet stance on religion. One amendment to the bill had stated that no aid should be given to Russia. However, that amendment was defeated. The amendment had been "offered by Representative Rich, Republican, of Pennsylvania, who submitted that the Russians were unworthy of aid from the United States because of their lack of religion and their general actions since the inception of the Communist regime in

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<sup>15</sup> *FRUS*, 1001-2.

1917."<sup>16</sup> This argument was supported by Representative Day, Republican, of Illinois, and Representative Cox, Republican, of Georgia. Cox actually "contended that there was 'not enough water in all the seven tumbling seas to wash away the blood from Joe Stalin's hands.'"<sup>17</sup>

In the end, Hitler as the more feared enemy trumped any misgivings American decision makers may have had about extending Lend-Lease aid to the USSR. Therefore, it was necessary for the United States to do whatever it would take to defeat Hitler and the Nazis. If that meant giving aid to Communist Russia, then so be it.<sup>18</sup> The Soviets received their aid; therefore, they still did not immediately catch on to the vital importance of the religious issue for Western propaganda.

In 1942, an effort was finally made by the Soviet government to put a positive spin on the religious situation. On May 23, 1942, an article appeared in "The Sphere" entitled "How Stalin stands towards Christianity." There were sixteen points given in an effort to prove that Stalin was trying to make peace with the Church (See Appendix). The British Embassy

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<sup>16</sup> James B. Reston, "House Votes 6 Billion Aid, Rejects Any Ban on Russia," *New York Times*, October 13, 1941, 1-2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

in Kuibyshev found the exercise disappointing. It admitted that the Soviet Government had made some concessions toward religion, but it was not sure as to how long the changes would last. The point was made that, although the concessions had been made, there had not been any change in the Soviet leader's views toward religion. The British Embassy then proceeded to refute many of the sixteen points outlined in "The Sphere" article.<sup>19</sup>

On the first point, which claimed that priests could now vote, the Chancery wrote that the Soviet Constitution had since 1936 allowed this right to citizens who were age eighteen, not condemned by the court, and of any class. However, the Embassy pointed out that since 1936, there was discrimination against voters who professed religious beliefs, particularly priests.<sup>20</sup>

The Embassy then dealt with the third and fifth points. These stated that the Government had removed anti-religious matter that might offend believers from textbooks and that "blasphemous stage plays and films" were forbidden.<sup>21</sup> The Chancery stressed that this development was not a new

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<sup>19</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Stalin's Attitude toward Christianity," *British Correspondence*, 1942, microfilm, Reel 16, 32949:109 and 136.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 109 and 136.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

concession but merely an effort "to eliminate the more obvious revolutionary crudities rather than a conscious "concession.'"<sup>22</sup>

The fourth point abolished anti-religious tests that a person had to take in order to be commissioned in the army or gain an appointment to the civil service. The Embassy maintained that no matter what changes were made in the test, however, if one's religious ideas were not aligned with the Party, there would be no appointment.<sup>23</sup>

The sixth point dealt with the abolition of the six-day week, which had prevented Christians from attending church more than one Sunday out of every five, as well as reestablishing the "Christian week with Sunday as the universal day of rest". The Chancery argued that this was not really a concession, but a way "to increase the hours of work."<sup>24</sup> There is no explanation of how this would increase the hours of work. According to other sources, this change was

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 109 and 136.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 109 and 136.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 109 and 136.

"done for purposes of industrial efficiency" or "workingman efficiency."<sup>25</sup>

The seventh point, which was the opening of ten churches, the Chancery could not be sure if ten churches had really been opened. The eighth point dealt with the restoration of a religious icon to its former place in Red Square. The Chancery stated, as of the second week in July, it was not there. The ninth point was about the leniency of religious policy in Galicia when the Soviets took it over in 1939. Although the Chancery did not have very much information on this, it believed, "leniency" was "a matter of opinion."<sup>26</sup>

The tenth point was the allowance that Polish troops fighting with the Red Army "could have the services of their own Roman Catholic chaplains." The Chancery agreed that this had been allowed, but there had been difficulties. It also mentioned that foreign Roman Catholic priests in Russia were not a new occurrence. There had been some in Moscow and

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<sup>25</sup> John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State 1917-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), 274-5; Fireside, *Icon and Swastika*, 170; N.S. Timasheff, *Religion in Soviet Russia 1917-1942* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1942). According to Timasheff, before this decree was issued, many atheist leaders wanted the day of rest to be on Monday or Wednesday instead of Sunday. It was explained to the League that Sunday was the only convenient day since most of the nation (the people in the villages) insisted on the observance of Sunday as their day of rest. There could not be a discrepancy between the town and country (125).

<sup>26</sup> Foreign Office, "Stalin's Attitude Toward Christianity," *British Correspondence*, 109 and 136.

Leningrad since the revolution. The eleventh point dealt with the "tacit understanding" that Orthodox priests who had been conscripted into the Army would be allowed to minister to their fellow Orthodox soldiers. The Chancery admitted that it was unable to confirm this detail. However, there was doubt as to whether there "was any actual understanding, tacit or otherwise."<sup>27</sup>

The twelfth point related to the permission granted to make and sell objects that were related to religious worship. The Chancery replied that as far as it could tell there was no public sale of any religious icons, but there were private sales. The thirteenth point dealt with "the removal of at least one notorious atheist from the broadcasting staff." The Chancery replied that the removal might have had nothing to do with the staff member being atheist. The fifteenth point was the appointment of priests and professors from seminaries to chairs in Soviet universities. This point could not be confirmed by the Chancery.<sup>28</sup>

The second, fourteenth, and sixteenth points dealt with the allowance of peasants to keep the great festivals by relaxing the labor discipline, "closing down the press of the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 109 and 136.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 109 and 136.

Godless Union," and recognizing the "'role of religion' in the national effort." <sup>29</sup>

In addition to the Chancery's commentary on Soviet claims that the government was changing its religious policy, the British Ambassador in Kuibyshev, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, offered his opinion, which recognized a relaxation of Soviet policy toward religion and religious activities. This was especially evident after the Germans attacked Russia. According to Kerr, the Soviet regime had acquiesced to allow many Russians returning to the familiar traditions, beliefs, and prayer that comprised public worship. The regime, according to Kerr, allowed such public worship without opposition. It was best to preserve the unity of the people in that time of crisis. The Soviet Government also feared, according to Kerr, that if the Nazis found that there was no religion in Russia, they would use this to their advantage and turn the Russian people against the Soviet Union. By allowing the Russian people to worship and pray, they could express the love of their country and in turn be more willing to fight for Russia as opposed to against it. This particular policy gave the appearance of a unified Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 109 and 136.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 114-116.

According to Kerr, the Soviet Union decided that, in the war situation, it was best to play down the anti-religious aspects of Soviet policy. By 1939, the Soviet Union had been made out to be the most godless country in the world because of its persecution of religion and the purges that had been committed. Between 1937 and 1938, the *New York Times* ran articles with the following titles:

Soviet 'Cleansing' Sweeps Through All Strata of Life: Starting with Generals and High Leaders, Stalin's Purge Is Now Hitting Cooks and Nurses—People Getting Inured to Arrests (Sept. 13, 1937)

Jewish Soviet State Suffers First Purge: 17 Reported Shot in Birobidjan as Spies and Wreckers (June 15, 1938)

Ukraine Suffers New Soviet Purge: Arrest of 10 Party Officials Is Disclosed in the Strategic Western Border Region (June 20, 1938)

This type of media coverage aided the negative opinion formed by the people in the U.S. Therefore, when in need of help from the West, it was best for the allied countries to de-emphasize the Soviet Union's negative traits and put them on to the new enemy, the Nazis. The Nazis had made it easy for the Soviet Union to appear as more reasonable; they had destroyed and desecrated churches as well as other religious objects as they advanced to the east. The Soviet Government, therefore, according to Kerr, played down its atheism. This effort included shutting down anti-religious newspapers, suppressing

atheist activities, and emphasizing Article 124 in its Constitution.<sup>31</sup>

This new tolerance for religion also included allowing and even encouraging the people to celebrate various religious holidays such as Easter and Christmas. The churches, according to Kerr, were allowed to perform their rituals without any interference of Soviet officials, and they were packed with people for these services. However, the churches were packed, Kerr observed, because there were so few churches opened. Kerr also stated that although there was tolerance for religion, the Soviet Government was still atheistic in nature. Religion and the Marxist ideology held by the Soviet Government did not mix. Kerr also noted that this resurgence in religion was evidence that a person's beliefs could not be repressed so easily. He also stated that toleration had not led to decreased discrimination in giving promotions or appointments. Professed religion, according to Kerr, was still "a bar to advancement in life."<sup>32</sup> The article that discussed Stalin's attitude toward Christianity was not the only effort made to change the view of religion in Russia. Kerr's assessment was important in pushing the British government toward accepting the Soviet government as a regime, that was changing its

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 114-116.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 114-116.

position on religion, or at least as a regime that appeared to be changing.

Supporting Kerr's judgment and the growing momentum that the Soviet government was favorable toward religion was the powerful voice of Archbishop Benjamin, the Head of the ROC for North and South America. He gave an address in the City of Montreal in July 1942. He started the address by observing that Soviet Russia had been considered the great enigma and "pariah of the world" ever since the revolution in 1917. This, he explained, was "due to lack of proper information or, perhaps, due to purposeful misinformation (propaganda)."<sup>33</sup> The advance of Hitler, according to Benjamin, changed the way the world viewed the Soviet Union. The country no longer seemed quite so threatening. Therefore, he encouraged not only a military alliance with the Soviet Union but spiritual and cultural alliance as well. Benjamin also emphasized the importance of knowing and understanding one's allies in order to defeat the enemy.

In his address, Benjamin described the Church and its role in Soviet Russia. He said that the Church had always been a major influence over most of the common people. He went on

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<sup>33</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Article published in *Canadian Churchmen* about Russian Religion," *British Correspondence*, 1942, microfilm, Reel 17, 32950:180.

to say, that this remained true and that "the Church's voice was still mighty in Russia." Although the people still listened to the Church, there had been questionable reports that led people to believe that Russia was "the land of the Godless." Benjamin emphasized that Hitler himself believed that to be true and used that concept to justify his attack on Russia. Hitler claimed it was to save the "humanity from the 'Godless International' flourishing on Russian soil." President Roosevelt made every effort to dispel this notion with his statement that "Soviet Russia enjoys fundamental Religious Freedom." Benjamin agreed that the statement made by the President was indeed true.<sup>34</sup>

When Benjamin was asked about the situation between the Soviet Government and the Church, he told them that the beliefs of Marxism did not include religion and, therefore, the State "graciously" tried to get rid of religion. The government did support the Society of the Godless, but realized that its efforts were in vain because it was unable to get all the people to turn away from religion.<sup>35</sup>

In an effort to prove his statement, Benjamin gave the following statistics from a recent report.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 180-1.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 180-1.

There are thirty million believers - 4,500 churches, thirty-seven monasteries - 5,700 priests and 3,000 deacons of the Greek Orthodox Church. There are, also, 1,800 Roman Catholic churches and 2,500 chapels as well as 1,500 mosques and 1,000 synagogues...we can safely say - claimed the Archbishop - that 70 per cent. of the people (Russian) are still "Orthodox" ("true believers"). The "Godless" in Soviet Russia are between 5 and 10 per cent. I wish to add here that there are about four million Protestants (Baptists) and over ten million souls belonging to the Liberal Orthodox Church (the "Living" Church in Russia).<sup>36</sup>

He used these statistics as evidence that religion still existed in the Soviet Union and despite the many hardships it continued to flourish. These statistics were merely an attempt to reinforce the illusion that the ROC had not endured persecution and was still a growing institution. Benjamin reported that on June 28, 1941, he received a telegram from Metropolitan Sergius that told of the upsurge in religion since the advent of the war. He conceded that there were people who were apathetic toward religion, but explained that was to be expected after an experience like the Russian revolution. However, he stressed that these were new developments.<sup>37</sup>

Benjamin openly stated that there was religious persecution in Soviet Russia, but claimed that it was "beneficial" for the Church. In his words,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 181.

Did not the Master tell us to take up the Cross - and that we are to be persecuted for His Name's sake? If we are persecuted in Soviet Russia - don't feel sorry for us! For persecution is a Christian privilege, it is a gift of God, such suffering is necessary for the spiritual growth of the Christian, for the purging of the soul. This has been good for us priests and bishops, it has been good for the Church, and for the people. Don't pity us or be surprised when we suffer for Christ - rather rejoice with us. Our Master pointed to the path of the Cross as to the only road that leads to spiritual grandeur. The Russian Orthodox Church took the Cross upon herself voluntarily in order to save herself and redeem the State. The experiences of the Russian Church have served to deepen religion in the Soviet Union.<sup>38</sup>

Benjamin then addressed the issue of church loyalty. He claimed that the Church was loyal, not for economic or political gain, but "because of deep spiritual principles." These principles were put into place by Christ in the acknowledgement He had for the Roman government. The Apostle Paul continued to accept the authority of the government, and Peter urged people first to fear God, but also to honor the king. Benjamin mentioned that the ROC at first did not embrace the Soviet Government. Patriarch Tikhon actually denounced the new government, but upon realizing that it was what the people of Russia wanted, he had no choice but to embrace it as well. According to Benjamin, despite the differences the Church had

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 182.

with the State, it was necessary for the Church to remain loyal to the state.<sup>39</sup>

In regards to the Soviet government's policy toward religion, Benjamin asserted that there was no freedom of religion in the Soviet Union. He insisted, "that idea is the result of pure propaganda." The ROC had relied on the State for financial support for hundreds of years. Therefore, when the Soviet Government decided to separate church and state, many churches suffered. Although many churches did not have the support needed to keep the doors open, some were able to remain active. Benjamin acknowledged that it was true that all legal rights were taken away from the Church, but he pointed out that the government did not just pick on the Church, but pursued similar policies against large private property owners. Benjamin claimed that priests were denied their civil liberties, and that theological seminaries were no longer allowed to function. The Church Council also could not meet and, therefore, no new Patriarch had been selected. However, he stressed that these developments had to be kept in context. Benjamin said, "We should not forget the storm of the Revolution that had swept the country. The influence of the French Revolution could be felt even a hundred years later.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 183.

We, as [r]eligious leaders, should be concerned not so much with our own rights, but with how we are to preserve the faith among our people."<sup>40</sup> He stressed that suffering persecution was an honor because it was for the sake of the people.

Benjamin's statements were contradictory to the image the Soviet Union wanted to portray. While there had been persecution in the USSR, this was a perception the Soviet government wanted to downplay. Therefore, in September 1942, they published *TARR* in the Soviet Union, which as explained in the previous chapter, stated inaccurately that there was no persecution of religion in Russia. Reports claimed that 50,000 copies of the book were widely available in bookstores and they were sold for 30 rubles each.<sup>41</sup> That same month, Great Britain and the United States received copies of the book. It was not until December that Great Britain was asked to translate and publish it in English.<sup>42</sup> *TARR* had a write-up in the "Moscow News," which devoted three of its four pages to describe the book. Correspondence from a Mr. Baggallay noted

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>41</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: New Book Published called *The Truth about Religion in Russia*," *British Correspondence*, 1942, microfilm, Reel 16, 32949:138.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 138 and *FRUS*, 1001 note.

that the book had not been mentioned in any newspapers that were in the Russian language.<sup>43</sup>

This book, although published in Russia in 1942, was not widely available to the Russian people. In a message from Kuibyshev to the Foreign Office in London, it was reported that the book was only available in churches.<sup>44</sup> According to Father Leopold Braun, an American Catholic priest stationed in Moscow since 1934, there were not 50,000, but only 10,000 copies of the book published. The book was only available at one or two churches and sold for 110 rubles. A person who wanted to buy the book first had to fill out an application. The book was made available to Great Britain in order to be translated and published for public consumption there as well as in the United States. It seemed disingenuous that this book with its proclamations of religious freedom was sent to the Allies after Roosevelt requested a statement that there was in fact freedom of religion in the Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup> In 1941, the President of the United States knew that any statement or material regarding freedom of religion would be helpful in

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<sup>43</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Description of the book *The Truth about Religion in Russia* in the *Moscow News*," *British Correspondence*, 1942, microfilm, Reel 17, 32950:62.

<sup>44</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Activities of Russian Orthodox Church," *British Correspondence*, 1942, microfilm, Reel 16, 32949:145.

<sup>45</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Description TARR," 62.

gaining public support toward its newest lend-lease recipient and ally.

## CHAPTER IV

### UNITED STATES AND TARR

Once the United States established diplomatic relations with the USSR in 1933 and had official representation in Moscow, its representatives reported widely on the Soviet policy of religious persecution. As mentioned in the previous chapter, U.S. public opinion was generally familiar with Soviet antireligious policy, since international news representatives broadly covered the very public and evident attack by Soviet authorities on religion. The American and Western governments also were knowledgeable about the Soviet government's flagrant abuse of Father Leopold Braun, who was the only Catholic priest in Moscow. There had been reports of such abuse sent to the State Department, the British Foreign Office, and the Vatican. Braun was only tolerated by the Soviets because President Roosevelt had insisted that Americans have an opportunity to profess their religion freely and that chaplains (Catholic and Protestant) and rabbis be assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. Roosevelt and the U.S. Government knew that only such insistence would guarantee

religious freedom because in the Soviet Union itself the government was brutally antireligious.

After the Nazi attack upon the Soviet Union, the American government was hoping that Moscow would modify its policy of religious persecution. An embassy report of September 20, 1941, however, provided more evidence of the existence of religious persecution even after Nazis had invaded the Soviet Union. It told specifically of limitations of the Catholic faith. There was only one opened church in Leningrad, but the priest was forbidden from preaching in Russian. Churches that were not closed were often converted into something more useful to the Soviet government such as an archive, a granary, and a movie theater.<sup>1</sup>

The report said that the Soviet government had forced the church closings by imposing heavy taxes on the churches. The faithful who attended such churches were not able to raise the money to keep them open.<sup>2</sup> The report then declared that the Soviet government had also started a similar program "of bolshevization and dechristianization in the Baltic, Polish and Roumanian territories" that had been either occupied or

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<sup>1</sup> FDR Library, "Religious Situation in Russia", September 20, 1941 <<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/psf/box51/a465r01.html>.> (March 1, 2004), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2.

annexed by the USSR since September 1939. This process was done in a gradual fashion because of the people's resistance.<sup>3</sup>

The report also stated that after the advent of the Russo-German war, the killing and deportation of ecclesiastics became more prevalent. Those clerics who were killed in Lithuania were first "subjected to atrocious torments: they were for instance, bound to a cross, the mark of a cross burned into their foreheads and chests, their entrails torn from their bodies while they were still living."<sup>4</sup>

President Roosevelt knew that the Soviet policy of religious persecution would affect the war and evolving alliance against Nazi Germany. By October 1941, as already mentioned, he set in motion a chain of events to try to change the Western perception of Soviet antireligious policy. He specifically pushed for some evidence from the Soviets that he could use to persuade Western public opinion that the religious situation in the USSR was not bad.

It took some time, but in September 1942, Metropolitan Nikolai arrived at the British Embassy with copies of *TARR*. He also visited the U.S. Embassy. Soon word of the book was out. As previously mentioned, Archbishop Benjamin touted it and so did the British and eventually the U.S. governments.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 3 and 4.

Perhaps the best-informed rejection of the veracity of *TARR* and the most detailed came from Father Braun, the American priest in Moscow, who wrote a multi-pronged refutation of Benjamin's speech. Braun also addressed statements made by Metropolitan Sergius in the book *TARR*, in the private statement crafted for the U.S. and British governments. Braun wrote that it was rather odd that Archbishop Benjamin admitted "the fact of religious persecution in Soviet Russia while many of his ecclesiastical [c]olleagues who wrote articles in the book entitled: "The Truth Concerning Religion in Russia" (Local publication- 1942) do not agree with him and emit contradictory statements!" Father Braun drew the conclusion that someone was not telling the truth about religion in Russia. He also noticed that what Archbishop Benjamin called persecution, Metropolitan Sergius saw "in the changes that have taken place, not persecution but a more rapid return to apostolic times." Father Braun made the statement that the changes in the Church were definitely not voluntary.<sup>5</sup>

Father Braun also refuted Archbishop Benjamin's statement that the Church was loyal to the Soviet Government. He noted

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<sup>5</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Report by Father Braun on Religious Conditions in Russia," *British Correspondence*, 1943, microfilm, Reel 10, 36961:155.

that the Archbishop glossed over Patriarch Tikhon's troubles, which included arrest for his opposition to the new Communist regime. Metropolitan Sergius, the esteemed guardian of the Patriarchate, had also undergone that same fate.<sup>6</sup>

Father Braun admitted that Archbishop Benjamin was correct "in denying that the Soviet Government allows no religious freedom at all." He also admitted that it was true that there was much dissatisfaction with the new arrangement between the church and the state. This dissatisfaction was mainly in the ranks of the clergy because they had up until the new decree enjoyed certain "protection from the state, much to the detriment of other worshipers." Churches were closed, but not for the lack of financial support as Archbishop Benjamin said, but for other "Marxist" reasons. The increased taxes were paid by the many worshipers who attended the churches, yet the doors remained closed. Father Braun also wrote that the reason for the scarcity of clergy in the USSR had little to do with the operation of theological seminaries, as Archbishop Benjamin argued, but primarily because the clergy were purged. Father Braun also stated that very rarely in Russia since 1918 had priests been ordained into the ROC.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 156.

He gave Archbishop Benjamin credit for "trying to clarify some points and create an atmosphere of sympathy with regard to his valiant country."<sup>8</sup>

Father Braun had access to *TARR* at the time of its original publication in the Soviet Union. His negative appraisal of *TARR* was not helpful in terms of the U.S. government's hope that Western public opinion could be influenced to accept the idea that the Soviet government was not a persecutor of religion. However, the very existence of *TARR* as a publication, if awkwardly written and not a readily accessible document was positive in terms of the alliance and the need to have public opinion support the Soviet Union.

The first public report on *TARR* appeared, in the United States on September 18, 1943, a year after the book was published in the Soviet Union. It appeared in the *New York Times* article entitled "Soviet Makes Peace with Church." The author of the article, Alexander Werth, wrote, "Many foreigners in Moscow...treated the publication [of *TARR*] with considerable irony, saying it had been especially printed for foreign consumption and export." Werth, however, actually viewed the publication as a milestone for the Church, because the Soviet government had allowed religious propaganda to be

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 158.

printed. Werth also wrote, "It would be absurd to assume that because the Patriarchate has been re-established with the approval of the Soviet Government that the Soviet regime has gone clerical. Stalin and the Soviet Government have always kept a finger on the pulse of Russian public opinion and closely examined the innermost desires of the Russian people."<sup>9</sup> Werth also had interviewed a prominent Soviet personality, who spoke of the loyalty the Church had shown toward the state. This personality was also quoted as saying, "Today the church has realized profoundly the national character of our regime and has fully 'accepted' us."<sup>10</sup>

A second article on *TARR* appeared in May 1944. It was written by Robert P. Casey for *Review of Religion* and entitled, "Russian Religion Today: A Review Article." This article began by summarizing the contents of *TARR*. Casey regarded *TARR* as a "remarkable book." When discussing its reliability, Casey believed there was "no reason to distrust" its details, and he asserted, "they obviously add considerably

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Werth, "Soviet Makes Peace with Church: Accord is Recognition of Loyal Support and Popular Demand," *New York Times*, September 18, 1943, E5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, E5.

to our knowledge of contemporary church history in Slavonic countries."<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, Casey criticized TARR for its uneven portrayal of Patriarchs Tikhon and Metropolitan Sergius. He argued that Patriarch Tikhon, until 1922, was adamantly opposed to the Communist government. Casey then raved about Sergius, especially since he had been reinstated as the Patriarch of the ROC. He stated that Sergius was "an accomplished diplomat, a trained theologian and an experienced pastor even in the mission field" as well as "a master of simple and effective language." Casey admired Sergius for his "clear-cut and incisive" decisions:

There can be little doubt that, in comparison with the exiled factions and rival groups in Russia, the Orthodox church under Sergius exhibits the most convincing signs of vigor and effectiveness and gives the most encouraging promise of survival and permanence.<sup>12</sup>

Casey also argued that the book illustrated the massive amount of support that the ROC and its believers gave to the war effort. He noticed that "little is said or shown that sheds much light on the attitude of the youth and especially young men." He also noted that the photographs in the book of

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<sup>11</sup> Robert. P Casey, "Russian Religion Today," *Review of Religion* 8, (May 1944), 370-383.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

church services portrayed buildings crowded mostly with women. The few men depicted were usually old or middle-aged.<sup>13</sup> Casey was unsure of the reason for the gender disparity, but considered the possibility that the Soviet's atheistic campaign may have had a deep impact on the Russian youth, especially the young men. Casey did not take into consideration the possibility that many of the young men could have been serving in the Russian army. He then asserted, "Without the support of the oncoming generation, the organization and able administration of Orthodoxy is more than a handsomely refurbished façade to conceal a progressive depopulated sanctuary."<sup>14</sup>

Casey also wrote that the publication of *TARR* meant that Soviet leadership was changing its view on religion. He wrote:

The great protagonists of the abolition of religion from Soviet society were Lenin, Trotsky, and Yaroslavsky, whose thinking in this regard was dominated by the influence of Marx and Engels. Stalin, however, appears never to have been so concerned with this aspect of Bolshevik ideology and, in recent years, to have given some support to the revival of religious interest[,] which is gradually making itself felt in Russia. The publication of such a book [*TARR*] as the one we have been considering is, in itself, highly significant in a state where there is real freedom to act only as the government pleases.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 381.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 381-2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 382.

Casey continued his generally favorable review by asserting the government's allowance of *TARR*'s publication was evident that "the actual political situation in Russia has become unexpectedly favorable to the church." He then noted that Stalin was "fully aware that a dictatorship is too impermanent a form and presents an ideology of too narrow appeal to stabilize a government over a long period of time." He mentioned that the war had also affected the morale of the Russian people. According to Casey, "Bolshevik Russia had tended to become more nationalistic, more Russian, than in the twenties." He credited the war with reviving the association between religion and patriotism. Casey concluded, "It is much too early to prophesy what the final result will be, but a more liberal political and economic order, once again penetrated by Christian values, may be one of the future aspects of the truth about religion in Russia."<sup>16</sup>

Casey's analysis of *TARR* stood in sharp contrast with private information that the United States government was receiving from other sources. Pope Pius XII, for example, in July 1944, told President Roosevelt's personal ambassador to the Vatican, Myron C. Taylor, that religious persecution continued in the USSR. The Pope also declared that the

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

publication of *TARR* was "due also to propaganda purposes. This book, very widely diffused abroad in its various translations, and almost impossible to find in the USSR, is reticent, inexact and sometimes contains falsehoods."<sup>17</sup>

Roosevelt chose not to challenge the reports by Werth and Casey, which indicated that *TARR* represented a shift in Soviet policy. He did not wish to do anything to hurt the Soviet alliance in terms of U.S. public opinion. At the same time, he attempted to challenge the major private report from the Pope that Soviet religious policy had not changed. The pope had objected to *TARR* as propaganda when it was first published, but Roosevelt's government told Taylor to persuade the Vatican that the Soviet government had now changed its policy.

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<sup>17</sup> *FRUS*, 1944, Vol. IV (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Press, 1966), 1220.

## CHAPTER V

### GREAT BRITAIN AND TARR

The British Embassy in Kuibyshev received a copy of *TARR* in September 1942. It was at that time that Metropolitan Nikolai mentioned that he had sent a "few" (700) copies of the book to Great Britain. Once received, the book caused a lot of discussion between the various departments within the MOI and the Archbishop of Canterbury about whether it should be published.

The British were wary about its publication because they were concerned about how the British public would react to its contents. H. Peter Smollett of the Soviet Division of the MOI, who has been revealed as a major Soviet spy, was the main advocate for the publication of *TARR* in English.<sup>1</sup> The publication process started with correspondence between Smollett, Reverend Hugh Martin of the Religions Division of the MOI, Christopher Warner of the Northern Department of the MOI, and William Cantuar the Archbishop of Canterbury discussed the book's possible publication. On December 7,

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<sup>1</sup> See Minor, *Stalin's Holy War*, 277-8.

1942, a letter from Reverend Hugh Martin to Christopher Warner mentioned that after describing the contents of the book, the Archbishop of Canterbury, at first, declined involvement in the publication of *The Truth about Religion in Russia*. At that time, Reverend Martin felt that publishing the book would be a mistake.<sup>2</sup> After thinking about the matter, the Archbishop wrote in his reply to Reverend Martin:

I should not expect this to become very public or to go on very long. The public mind is too full of other things. But my own judgment was, and I think still is, that the publication of such a book at all is an indication of a new attitude and would register a situation from which it would afterwards be more difficult to go back. I think people who know anything of the history of the relations between the government in Russia and the Church would be greatly impressed at the thought that the Government had permitted the preparation of such a book, and that if it is published, the state of affairs[,] which it records would be thereby a good deal stabilised. No doubt[,] the kinder treatment of the Church in Russia is mainly due to war conditions and a desire to avoid anything which breaks up national unity. For that very reason it is important to pin the Russian Government down if possible to the measure of liberty it has granted so far.<sup>3</sup>

The Archbishop's reply showed a change of heart about TARR's publication. He felt that the book's publication might be a way of reinforcing the earlier cited report that championed the same significance to prove the Soviets had indeed made

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<sup>2</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Exchange of Visits between Heads of Metropolitan Church and Church of England," *British Correspondence*, 1942, microfilm, Reel 17, 32950:140.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

changes regarding religion, and to keep them accountable to their less repressive policies even after the war.

On December 11, 1942, Martin wrote another letter to Warner, emphasizing that he was uncertain that the Archbishop was aware of the situation regarding the book's availability in Russia. Martin sensed that the Archbishop thought it was more accessible to the Russian public than it actually was. He reiterated that he believed it would be a mistake to publish *TARR*.<sup>4</sup> In the next letter, after having read the preface of *TARR*, the Archbishop was in agreement with Martin about not publishing the book.<sup>5</sup> The reason for this change in attitude was that many of these proclamations and passages were in direct opposition to what the public in both Great Britain and the United States knew of the religious persecution in the Soviet Union

Upon reading the preface, Reverend H. M. Waddams, Canon of Canterbury, also in agreement with Martin and the Archbishop, wrote on December 18, 1942, that the publication of a translated version of *TARR* would not be advisable. Despite the many objections, the Soviet Ambassador in London wanted to go ahead with the publication. Waddams' proposed to offer the Soviet Ambassador "suggestions for the improvement

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 137.

of the book as propaganda to the British public." He also advised including only parts of the book that would shed a positive light on Church and State relations in the Soviet Union. He went on to say, "The main need of such a book is that it should not contain any implication that the condition of the Orthodox Church in the past or present is entirely satisfactory. Public opinion in this country [Great Britain] would be up in arms at once were there any attempt to mislead them about the facts[,] which are well known to them about past persecutions or present disabilities."<sup>6</sup>

On December 22, 1942, Reverend Martin sent a letter to the Archbishop, which mentioned that an abridged English version of *TARR* proposed by Reverend Waddams might be the best way to present the book. That way "the elements which would inevitably...create difficulty in this country" would be left out. In the letter, Martin wrote that Waddams proposed a version, which "should omit any part of the book which might suggest that the position of the Church in the Soviet Union is entirely satisfactory or that stories of past persecution are

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<sup>6</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Meeting Between Archbishop of Canterbury and Sir A. Clark Kerr to Discuss Interchange of Visits with Russian Orthodox Church," *British Correspondence*, 1942, microfilm, Reel 17, 32950:149-150.

without foundation."<sup>7</sup> Only the parts of the book that pertain to the three following positions should be kept:

1. Existing freedom of worship for the Orthodox Church in Russia.
2. The whole-hearted support of the Soviet Government in waging the war by the Orthodox Church.
3. The Nazis are enemies of all Russia and of the Orthodox Church.

Martin then explained that the preface of the book would have to note, "It was restricted to certain specified aspects of the subject." The hope was that an abridged edition would help get past any difficulties and past opposition to translating the whole book.<sup>8</sup>

The Archbishop of Canterbury replied on December 24, 1942, that an abridged version with the preface would be better suited to the Allied purpose. He was going to offer to do the whole book without the preface from Metropolitan Sergius. On January 9, 1943, John A. Douglas, Hon. General Secretary of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations, wrote a letter to A. R. Dew from the Foreign Office, a division of the MOI, regarding the publication of *TARR*. Douglas wrote that he had read the book and felt that "it is extraordinarily desirable that it should be put across

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<sup>7</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Publication of *The Truth about Religion in Russia in U.K.*," *British Correspondence*, 1943, microfilm, Reel 10, 36961:6 and 82-4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 and 82-4.

[to] the British religious public." He thought that the book's "background and atmosphere" were informative. According to him, the MOI should "put it above being a mere propaganda-to-please-the-powers-that-be book." Douglas also felt that the MOI's fear that the book might spark debate could be laid to rest, and that it was only the Russian émigré population that would not like the book. He continued his letter by restating his confusion about why the MOI would get the impression that TARR would rouse adverse controversy. He believed that any controversy would actually be helpful, because, in his opinion, the only people who might criticize TARR's contents were "extreme die-hards," "friends of the émigré Russians," "or those who are pleased with the thought of Finland." Dew replied on Jan. 16, 1943, with assurances to Douglas that the issue of TARR being published was being thoroughly examined.<sup>9</sup>

In early January, 1943, there was continued correspondence between Martin and Smollett about the book. Smollett had spoken with the Counsellor of the Soviet Embassy, Mr. Zinchenko, about the possibility of only publishing part of the book. He explained that he was afraid that the British public would not look favorably on some of the subject matter, and that the relations between the two countries would be

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 19 and 22.

strained. In the conversation, Zinchenko showed great concern about whether religious circles thought the "book had been published by the Soviet Government and not the Russian Church." Smollett was quick to reassure him that that was not the case. The people thought that the Soviet attitude toward religion might change if the government and the Church were on the same side. Monsieur Zinchenko said he would pass the proposal on to the ambassador for further discussion.<sup>10</sup>

Martin wrote a letter to Warner on January 22, 1943, informing him of the discussions between Smollett and Zinchenko about the publication of *TARR*. Martin enclosed the letter from Smollett to himself in order to keep Warner apprised of the decisions being made about the possible publication of *TARR*. The enclosed letter between the two men included the decision that Zinchenko would translate all of *TARR* into English. After the completion of this task, the translation would then be sent to Martin, who would read and edit it. Smollett wrote that Zinchenko was looking forward to a candid assessment of the book. Smollett also wrote that he had emphasized to Zinchenko that "care should be taken to see

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 12.

to it that the same version is published in America as in Britain."<sup>11</sup>

Martin wrote to Warner on May 13, 1943, explaining that he had read the translated version of *TARR* and had made a list of suggestions about what he thought should be excluded and why. Martin expressed concern about the presentation of these suggestions to Zinchenko. He felt that if the changes were not properly explained, they might be misunderstood by the Russian Ambassador in London, Ivan Maisky, or Metropolitan Sergius.<sup>12</sup>

Martin began his list by first stating that he was in favor of publishing most of *TARR*. He thought, "It should be helpful in promoting mutual understanding her [Great Britain] and elsewhere." He then went on to acknowledge that there were certain parts of the book that in his opinion would be "harmful to friendly relations and would inevitably create undesirable controversy in this country [Great Britain]. Martin felt that the book's present form was not suitable, outside of its Russian distribution, unless it was revised. He believed that the book made some valuable points, such as the ROC's support of the Soviet government in the midst of the war, he viewed favorably the book's insistence on loyalty to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

<sup>12</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: English translation of *The Truth about Religion in Russia*," *British Correspondence*, 1943, microfilm, Reel 10, 36961:202.

the Soviet regime. Martin thought that *TARR's* portrayal of "German atrocities" as a means to combat the Nazi's so-called "Christian Crusade" was well documented. However, he thought that there were some serious problems.<sup>13</sup>

Martin wrote, "The grave defect of the book as a propaganda instrument for use outside the Soviet Union is likely to be its reiterated statements that there is not and never has been any religious persecution in the U.S.S.R., that the church enjoys complete religious liberty, and that all who believe otherwise are fools and knaves and pro-Hitler." Martin stated that this message could inflame heated debates. He continued with statements about how the leaders of the English church wanted to promote favorable associations with the Soviet Union. Therefore, they wanted to only look to the future and avoid any reference to past controversies.<sup>14</sup>

The biggest problem Martin found was in the preface of *TARR*. He wanted Metropolitan Sergius to provide a special preface for the English translation of the book, which would not discuss events of the past but "might look forward to the growth of still friendlier relations with the Soviet Governments." Martin also thought that it was a good idea if

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 203-4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 204-5.

Metropolitan Sergius did not include "the condemnation of other groups of Christians." He argued that if the preface was changed or omitted, then the book would be more palatable to the American and British public.<sup>15</sup>

After pointing out the major flaws in the *TARR*, Martin suggested changes related to the above issues. He then recommended smaller changes to the book, such as in places marred by repetition and grammatical or translation mistakes. After all, of the suggestions, Martin concluded that he "did not think any responsible British ecclesiastic would be willing to write an introduction for the book as it stands." However, if the suggestions were followed, then he might be able to convince someone to take on the task.<sup>16</sup>

After sending the suggestions, Martin received a reply from Christopher Warner on May 16, 1943. Warner thanked Martin for his suggestions, but felt that when meeting with Zinchenko it was better to avoid presenting any written documentation of the major changes. However, it would be okay to give him "a note on the minor points of accuracy and translation." Warner then gave Martin suggestions about how to broach the subject of making changes. This was a delicate subject and had to be

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 207.

handled in a way that would not be insulting. When explaining the suggestions, do it in way "merely to assist him [Zinchenko] in avoiding in the English edition of the book points[,] which will be likely to have bad effect on Anglo-Soviet relations by creating an adverse reaction in the British Empire." Warner made sure to reiterate that some of Martin's comments about *TARR* could be harmful if they were seen by not only Zinchenko but also some other Russian official.<sup>17</sup>

After addressing the delicate nature of dealing with the Russian diplomat, Warner moved on to Martin's comments about getting a "British ecclesiastic" to write an introduction to *TARR*. Warner warned,

Personally[,] I deprecate it and should have thought it dangerous both as likely to lay the Church of England open to attack as lending itself to what after all will be regarded by a great many as a propaganda stunt, and as giving a tremendous handle to German propaganda.

This statement was evidence that, despite the changes being made, there was still concern that the public would view *TARR* as a piece of propaganda.<sup>18</sup>

Martin wrote Warner about the meeting with Zinchenko, Smollett, and himself to discuss the abbreviation of *TARR*. He had a positive outlook about the meeting but was not

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 210-11.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 211.

completely sure what Zinchenko was thinking after they made the suggestions for the book. Zinchenko had stated, "That he appreciated our friendly purpose and the weight of our suggestions." He then expressed hope that action would soon be taken with regard to Martin's suggestions. Along with that letter was a memo for the press attaché in Moscow, who had met with the Metropolitan of Kiev, Nikolai. At that time, Nikolai asked what had become of *TARR* after the Archbishop of Canterbury received it. Nikolai was then told that in an effort to avoid controversy the book had not been completely translated. According to the press attaché, Nikolai was surprised that the book could be the source of controversy and seemed disappointed. Then a request was made for more information regarding what parts of the book were translated, what changes were being made, and that this information be sent to Nikolai. The attaché also wrote that he hated "hurting the old gentleman's feelings, but he ought to know the truth." He continued by saying, "the book is certainly disingenuous" but that he thought "we should make a good many allowances for the cruelly difficult position in which the Church is here."<sup>19</sup>

The various departments within the British government involved in the process of getting *TARR* published took their

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 232.

time. The book was not published until 1944. The people within the government all agreed that the book was propaganda, which could explain why it took so long to get it approved for publication. The Soviet government obviously wanted *TARR* published in the English-speaking countries. Peter Smollett was an important Soviet agent who facilitated the process. The British took the lead in getting the book into print for both the British and American markets, and they clearly did not object to its propaganda value. The American government, too, did not raise reservations about the real purpose of *TARR*.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In 1942, the Soviet government authorized the publication of *TARR*. This book was a blatant and somewhat disingenuous effort to deny that the Soviet Union was a violent persecutor of religion. It was not a great piece of literature. The book gave the impression of being thrown together. There was no continuity between chapters and sections, and the writing was uneven and uninspired.

The Soviet government, though, appeared to be undisturbed by the bold premise of the book, namely that there was no persecution in the Soviet Union, or by the obvious lack of sophistication in publishing the work. The reason for the Soviet government's indifference was attributable to the fact that *TARR*'s purpose was to answer a desperate plea from Moscow's Western Allies, particularly the United States. The United States and, to a lesser degree, Great Britain wanted public opinion in their countries to support Western aid to and an alliance with the USSR. Moscow apparently knew that its allies would approve the book for their own purposes.

The Western Allies, particularly the United States, had a problem with aid to and an alliance with the Soviet Union. The Soviet government was a long-term enemy of the West because of its ideology, including its open persecution of religion. Even though Hitler was a great menace to the West, too, it was not easy to embrace the Soviet Union as an ally unless there was some evidence that it had changed its colors.

President Roosevelt understood the needs of Western public opinion and of the U.S. Congress. It would be immeasurably easier to get Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union and to have public opinion accept the USSR as our ally if the Soviet government could indicate that it was not the country that most people in the West thought it was. Religious freedom was particularly important since the United States was a democratic society that personified the value of a person's civil liberties. The British, too, knew that Western public opinion was critical for the Soviet alliance to work effectively. They also recognized that religion in the United States was a sort of lynchpin to a favorable public opinion and a favorable Lend-Lease vote in Congress.

Roosevelt took the lead in pushing the Soviet government toward some sort of documentation that it was not a persecutor of religion. Roosevelt knew from a number of sources that the Soviets were persecutors, but the immediate needs of the

alliance against Hitler took precedence over truth in this instance. Roosevelt, too, believed that the USSR would eventually end persecution because it was an evolving democracy, so a small white lie was not so wrong because of the greater good of helping to defeat the Nazis. Clearly, religion was a major force in domestic and international politics. It was also a valuable tool of propaganda.

The Soviet government responded to Roosevelt's pressure with *TARR*. It was a crude book, which had been slapped together quickly by an atheist government that did not believe in religious merit and did believe in the hypocrisy of capitalist states, but was undoubtedly confused by the fact that the West wanted evidence of non-persecutors at a time when religion was a spent force. In any event, the Soviets delivered what the West wanted. After Moscow published the book, the Soviet Union saw additional advantages to it as a propaganda tool. It could be used to refute the Vatican, to confuse religious believers in the war-torn and soon-to-be occupied regions of Eastern Europe, and to sway some religious believers in the western borderlands of the Soviet Union to support the Soviet Union.

Accordingly, the Soviet government began to push for the book's translation into English. Peter Smollett, a key Soviet agent in the British government, was instrumental in having

*TARR* published into English in 1944. The fact that *TARR* was not available in English until 1944 did not affect its value as a propaganda tool in World War II. It had already served its purpose in terms of strengthening the Western-Soviet Alliance against Hitler by then. As Hitler went down to defeat - 1944-45, it took on additional importance, but now it was for Soviet expansion purposes and not for reasons of the Western Alliance against Hitler. Roosevelt and Churchill really no longer paid any attention to *TARR* by 1944. They were focused on continuing the alliance with Stalin in the post-war period, working out an alliance against Japan, to conclude the war in the Pacific Theater, and trying to figure out how transitional and representative governments could be set up in Eastern Europe. Churchill was more wary of Stalin and his designs in Eastern Europe and never really believed that the Soviet government had changed its colors. He wanted an Anglo-American alliance now that would confront Stalin. Roosevelt, however, believed that Stalin, although a difficult character, was changing and that the Alliance was moderating his behavior. He viewed *TARR* as evidence that Stalin could be influenced.

*TARR* affected public opinion to some degree because by the end of the war there were fewer people concerned about religious freedom in the Soviet Union. It is difficult to say

definitively that this change was because of the publication of *TARR*. Its positive publicity along with evidence of Nazi persecution of the Jews probably made it easier to focus on Nazi Germany as the real enemy of World War II. How much *TARR* affected Lend-Lease aid is also difficult to ascertain, but the positive outlook it was supposed to portray probably helped the continuance of aid to the Soviet Union throughout the war effort. Whether *TARR* continued to play a major role in propaganda, East-West relations, and Western public opinion after the war is beyond the scope of this paper. That is one topic that has yet to be explored. However, to the Allied governments, *TARR* was an obvious source of Russian propaganda and it did not tell the truth about religion in Russia as its title implied.

## APPENDIX

Concessions the Soviet Government supposedly made toward Religion as reported by Mr. Tuohy. These concessions were reported in "The Sphere" and are the views of Canon Widdington, Honorary Secretary of the Russian Clergy Fund.

- (1) The granting of the franchise to priests.
- (2) Relaxation of the Labor Discipline to enable the peasants to keep the Great Festivals.
- (3) The excision from school text-books of matter deliberately calculated to offend believers.
- (4) Abolition of the anti-religious tests for commissions in the Army and for Civil Service appointments.
- (5) The forbidding of blasphemous stage plays and films.
- (6) The abolition of the Bolshevik week of six days, which made it impossible for Christians to attend church more than one Sunday in five, and the reestablishment of the Christian week with Sunday as the Universal rest day. (Edict of June 1940)
- (7) The reopening of at least ten churches in Moscow, the most atheist of all Russian cities.
- (8) The restoration of the famous ikon [sic] of the Virgin of Iberia to its shrine in the Red Square; the shrine had been supplanted by a plaque inscribed with Marx's words: "Religion is the opium of the people."
- (9) The lenient religious policy following on the 1939 taking-over of Galicia from Catholic Poland.

- (10) The permission to the Polish troops, when fighting on the Russian front, to have the services of their own Roman Catholic chaplains.
- (11) The tacit understanding that Orthodox priests in the Army as conscripts shall be allowed to minister to the Orthodox soldiers.
- (12) Permission to manufacture and sell objects connected with religious worship; e.g. ikons [sic] etc.
- (13) The removal of at least one notorious atheist from the broadcasting staff.
- (14) The closing down of the Press of the Godless Union, which suggests an abandonment of the anti-religious drive, although official ground for this action is given as shortage of paper.
- (15) The appointment of priests and professors from the seminaries in the Ukraine to chairs in Soviet universities.
- (16) The recognition of the 'role of religion' in the national effort.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign Office, "Russia: Stalin's Attitude toward Christianity," *British Correspondence*, 1942, microfilm, Reel 16, 32949:109.

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## VITA

Cynthia Ann Dinsmore was born in Big Spring, Texas, on February 10, 1971, the oldest child of Michael W. Back and Phyllis Jolicoeur. Her father was in the United States Air Force; therefore, she lived in many places throughout her early childhood. Cynthia graduated from Rosamond High School, Rosamond, California, in 1989. She attended Antelope Valley Junior College for eighteen months following high school. After taking off several years to get married and start a family, Cynthia returned to school in 1996. She attended Auburn University at Montgomery for two terms before moving to Naples, Italy. It was in Italy that she attended University of Maryland University College-European Division and completed her Bachelor of Science in Psychology in May 2000. Cynthia then took a two-year break after her family moved to Spokane, Washington. She then moved to San Antonio, Texas, in March 2002. She entered the Graduate College of Texas State University-San Marcos in August 2002. Cynthia worked as an Instructional Assistant for the History Department while she worked toward her master's degree.

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