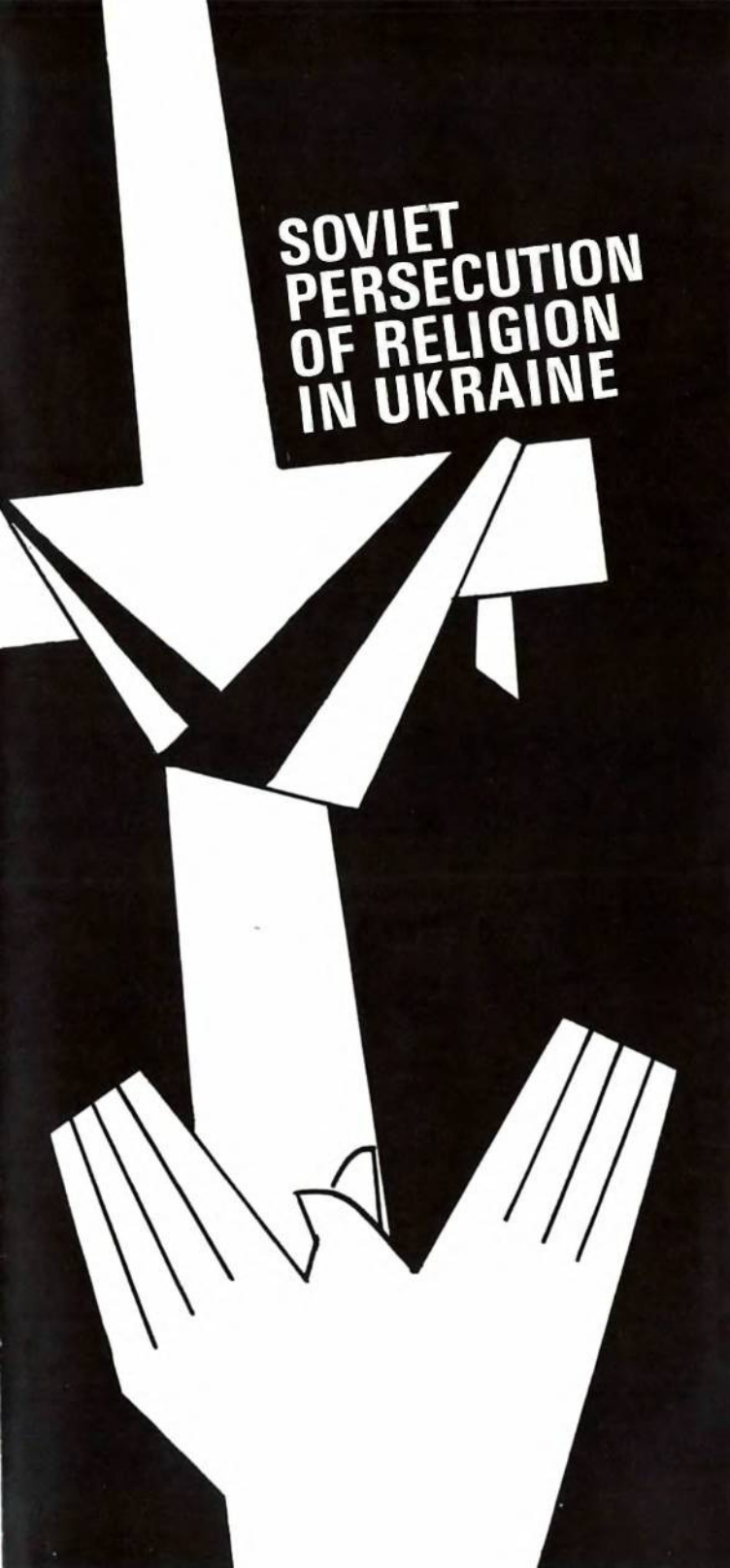


**SOVIET  
PERSECUTION  
OF RELIGION  
IN UKRAINE**



**1961 "INSTRUCTION" OF THE COUNCIL FOR AFFAIRS  
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ATTACHED  
TO THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR**

**Article 23**

Not eligible for registration [i.e. banned] are religious associations and groups of believers which belong to sects the doctrines of which have anti-state and fanatic character: Jehovah's Witnesses, True Orthodox Christians, True Orthodox Church, Adventists-Reformists, Murashkovites, etc.

**CRIMINAL CODE OF THE UKRAINIAN SSR**

**Article 209**

Organizing or directing a group, the activity of which, carried on under the appearance of preaching religious beliefs and performing religious ceremonies, is connected with causing harm to citizens' health or with inducing citizens to refuse social activity or performance of civic duties, or with drawing minors into such a group, shall be punished by a deprivation of freedom for a term not exceeding five years or by exile for a similar term with or without confiscation of property.

The active participation in the activity of a group specified in paragraph one of the present article, or systematic propaganda directed at the commission of acts specified therein, shall be punished by deprivation of freedom for a term not exceeding three years, or by exile for the same term, or by correctional tasks for a term not exceeding one year.

**DECREE OF THE PRESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET  
OF THE UKRAINIAN SSR**

**March 26, 1966**

[It provides for the imprisonment of up to three years for]:

... the organization and systematic conduct of religious instruction of minors in violation of established legislation;

... the preparation for mass dissemination, or the mass dissemination of written appeals, letters, leaflets, and other documents calling for the nonobservance of the legislation on religious cults;

... the organization and conduct of religious meetings, processions, and other cultic ceremonies which violate the public order;

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## **UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **Article 18**

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

## **UN COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS** Dec. 16, 1966

### **Article 13**

3. The States parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimal educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions..

## **UN COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS** Dec. 16, 1966

### **Article 18**

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

4. The States parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

### **Article 27**

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

## **CONSTITUTION OF THE UKRAINIAN SSR**

### **Article 104**

In order to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the Church in the Ukrainian SSR is separated from the State, and the school from the Church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda are recognized for all citizens.

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# SOVIET PERSECUTION OF RELIGION IN UKRAINE

In clear violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the UN Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and on Civil and Political Rights, and in contravention of its own Constitution the Soviet regime has been consistently denying freedom of conscience to religious believers in Ukraine and the USSR in general. Christians and Jews alike have been discriminated against, politically, economically, and socially on account of their religious beliefs. They are barred from positions of responsibility in all walks of life which have been reserved for atheists — members of the Communist Party and the Komsomol.

The rights of believers and religious organizations to express and practise their beliefs have been severely restricted, with the internal activities of religious organizations subjected to close administrative scrutiny and repeated arbitrary interference by Communist officials. While atheism is being forced upon children in Soviet schools and is being widely disseminated by the state-owned media, any systematic instruction in religion of children under the age of 18 has been declared a serious criminal offense.

Entire denominations have been banned by the Soviet regime. In an attempt to destroy the historical interdependence of religion and nationality in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was suppressed by the regime during the 1930's, and again in 1943-44, its members being forced into the Russian Orthodox Church.

During 1945-49, in the wake of Soviet annexation of Western Ukraine and Trans-Carpathia, the Soviet authorities unleashed a campaign of mass terror against the four-million strong Ukrainian Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church; its entire episcopate and hundreds of priests and monastics, and many thousands of laymen were arrested by the Soviet secret police, with many of them perishing in concentration camps or in exile. The Uniate Church was declared "dissolved" by a group of terrorized priests posing as a "Sobor" of this Church, with its four dioceses annexed to the regime-supported Russian Orthodox Church. Since then the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church has been persecuted by the Soviet authorities as an "illegal" organization, its catacomb bishops, clergy and laymen subjected to unceasing harassment, public slander, police terror and judicial repressions — though no Soviet law or decree has ever been published banning the Uniate Church. Repeated appeals from the Ukrainian Catholics for their constitutional right to freely practise their religion have invariably been treated by the regime as a pretext for renewed repression against the Uniate Church.

Also banned and persecuted for their insistence on religious freedom are the numerous reform Baptists — the so-called



"Initsiatyvnyky" — organized since 1965 in a Council of Churches of the Evangelical Christians [and] Baptists who split away from the government-controlled main body of this denomination.

Among other outlawed denominations are the Pentecostals and the most severely persecuted, Jehovah's Witnesses.

Even the officially "recognized" and closely controlled churches have been subjected over the past two decades to recurrent anti-religious attacks. In the course of these attacks the authorities closed between one-half and two-thirds of the churches belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Christians [and] Baptists, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Judaic communities and other groups existing in Ukraine. 29 out of the post-war total of 38 Orthodox monasteries and two out of three theological seminaries in Ukraine were disbanded by the Soviet authorities during the Khrushchev rule alone.

"Detente" has not prevented the systematic Soviet destruction of churches and religious monuments, and the repression of religious rites and traditions. The most recent such case was that of the Orthodox Church of the Epiphany in Zhytomyr, Ukraine, which was razed to the ground on August 13, 1975, on orders from local communist officials, despite an almost two-year effort by parishioners to save it.

Defying its international commitments to respect the fundamental human right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the Soviet Union holds in its forced labour camps, prisons and places of exile hundreds of priests and believers from Ukraine, whose only crime has been their insistence on exercising this right. Every religious denomination is represented in the contemporary Soviet "Gulag Archipelago". Here are some of the representative cases:

## ORTHODOX CHURCH



**Rev. Vasyl Romaniuk** — He was born in 1925 to a peasant family. First arrested in 1944 for "national-religious activity," he was sentenced to 10 years of forced labour, while his family was deported to Siberia.

Rev. Romaniuk studied theology and eventually became parish priest for the Orthodox congregation in the village of Kosmach, Ivano - Frankivs'k oblast. In 1970, his home was searched and several books were confiscated.

After the trial of the Ukrainian dissident historian, Valentyn Moroz, on November 27, 1970, Rev. Romaniuk wrote a letter in his defense to the Supreme Court of the Ukrainian SSR. As a result, in January, 1972, after being transferred from Kosmach to Pokutia in 1971, Rev. Romaniuk was arrested during the mass arrests of intelligentsia in Ukraine. Charged under Article 62 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR

for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda," he was sentenced in July of that year to 7 years imprisonment and 3 years of exile. Presently, he is in camp 381/1-6 in the Mordovian ASSR.

In November 1974, Rev. Romaniuk along with several inmates, including Danylo Shumuk and Svyatoslav Karavanskyi, appealed to the Committee in Defense of Human Rights against such arbitrary arrests and imprisonments. In the summer of 1975, two appeals from Rev. Romaniuk reached the West: one addressed to the World Council of Churches in Geneva and the other to Pope Paul VI, calling upon them to speak out in defense of incarcerated Ukrainian cultural leaders and those being persecuted for their religious convictions.

On August 1, 1975, in protest against the consistent violations of human rights in the USSR, Father Romaniuk declared a hunger strike and vowed to continue it until such time as he received a Bible from camp authorities. Though his hunger strike lasted almost 3 months, he received no Bible.

## UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC (UNIATE) CHURCH

**Rev. Roman Bakhtalovskyi** — Born in 1897, he was a Ukrainian Greek Catholic (Uniate) priest in Kolomyia, Western Ukraine. Rev. Bakhtalovskyi was arrested in 1946 and sentenced to a ten-year term of imprisonment for his refusal to accept the illegal prohibition of the Uniate Church and its forcible "re-union" with the Russian Orthodox Church. Arrested again, he was tried by the Ivano-Frankivs'k oblast court in the fall of 1969 under Article 62 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda." His "crimes" were the celebrations of Uniate masses, religious instruction of candidates for priesthood in the Catacomb Church and "anti-Soviet" sermons. For this, he was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment and 5 years' exile. Having already completed his prison sentence, Rev. Bakhtalovskyi is currently in exile in the Irkutsk oblast in Siberia.

Identities of 25 more Ukrainian Catholic priests, monastics and laymen currently imprisoned or exiled for their religious activities are known, but there is no doubt that the total number greatly exceeds this.

## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

**Rev. Bernard V. Mitskevich (Mickevicius)** — The parish priest in the town of Stryi, Western Ukraine, Rev. Mitskevich was arrested towards the end of 1973 and sentenced to an undisclosed term of imprisonment. The specific charges against him were those of attempting to recruit new members to his congregation among the townfolk, repairing the church building, organizing prayer groups, etc.

## COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS [AND] BAPTISTS ("INITSIATYVNYKY")

**Pastor Georgii Petrovich Vins** — Originally from Kiev, aged 46 and the son of an American-educated Baptist minister, Pastor Vins is executive secretary of the Council of Churches of the Evangelical Christians [and] Baptists (ECB).

In 1966, for his activities in defense of the rights of his Church, Vins was arrested and sentenced to 3 years in a labour camp. Upon release from his first prison term, he became pastor in Kiev but was later required to do a year of compulsory



factory labour. When in 1970 a new case was opened against him, Vins went into hiding in order to continue his work for the Church. For the next four years, he eluded Soviet authorities as he travelled about, preaching and organizing.

Arrested in March 1974, Pastor Vins was not tried until January of the following year. At this time, during a closed trial, Vins was sentenced to 5 years of prison and 5 more in exile for "unauthorized religious activities." Vins is currently serving his prison term in Tabaga, Iakutsk ASSR.

Among the reform Baptists held in Soviet prisons and forced labour camps in 1975, 42 were residents of Ukraine.

## SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS

**Maria Floreskul and Orysia Kondriuk** — These sisters are from Berehomet, Chernivtsi oblast. Sentenced early in 1975 to "prolonged incarceration" for their attempt to bring up their young orphaned nephew in a religious spirit.

## PENTECOSTALISTS

**S. H. Salamakha** — Senior Pentecostal presbyter for the Vorshylovhrad oblast of the Ukrainian SSR; born in 1930. He was tried in March 1973 under Article 209-1 of the Criminal Code of the Ukr. SSR for "unauthorized religious activities," specifically for organizing religious meetings, teaching religion to minors, etc. Salamakha was sentenced to a term of 5 years' imprisonment and 4 years' exile. His property was confiscated.

## JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

**Vira Iovna Bozhar** — She was born in 1924. Arrested and sentenced in 1963 under Article 62 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" to 7 years' severe regime labour camp and 5 years' exile.

Numerous Jehovah's Witnesses from the Ukraine are reportedly held in Soviet places of detention and exile.

## JUDAIC COMMUNITIES

These communities in the Ukrainian SSR, where some 800,000 Jews reside, have been largely disbanded, with only a handful of synagogues and one active rabbi remaining in Ukraine. Most of the Jewish cemeteries have been destroyed; recently the cemetery in Sarny, Rivne oblast, has been turned into a refuse dump.

The blocking of contacts with Jewish religious centres abroad and the actual lack of facilities for the training of new rabbis have combined with administrative harassment of Jewish believers and often slanderous anti-Judaic propaganda to threaten the very survival of Judaism in the country.



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The persecution and repression of religious believers are flagrant violations of the fundamental human rights that the Soviet authorities claim to uphold. These illegalities demand the intervention of world-wide public opinion. International peace and stability depend on the observance of human rights everywhere. Human rights should have no boundaries but should truly become universal.

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## HOW CAN YOU HELP THE PERSECUTED BELIEVERS?

— voice your concern by writing to:

His Holiness  
Pope Paul VI  
The Vatican  
Italy

World Council of Churches  
150 route de Ferney,  
1211 Geneva 20  
Switzerland

Leonid Brezhnev  
First Secretary of the CPSU  
Kremlin  
Moscow  
USSR

His Excellency  
Kurt Waldheim  
Secretary General  
United Nations  
New York, N.Y.  
USA

The government of your country.

The Soviet Embassy in your country.

— make your congregation or organization aware of the plight of believers in the Soviet Ukraine and ask them to give their support to the cause of freedom of conscience and religion in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Covenants.



For further information and additional copies of this brochure please write to:

Human Rights Commission  
World Congress of Free Ukrainians  
Suite 2  
2395 A Bloor Street West  
Toronto, Ontario  
M6S 1P6  
Canada

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