

years of our history contain many examples of creative cooperation between Church and State. The great goals of peace, justice, brotherhood and freedom are common to believers and unbelievers, to Catholics and socialists. It is

therefore worth trying to create conditions in which such cooperation for the common good would be possible today: surely this would be the most effective way to true national unity in the interest of higher aims and values.

Monks Appeal for Reopening of Monastery

The Kiev Monastery of the Caves, founded in the 11th century, was one of the great religious centres of the Russian Orthodox Church. It was closed in 1929 on the basis of a resolution passed in 1926 by the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee (VUTsIK) and the People's Commissariat for the Ukraine which decided that the monastery should be turned into a museum. But in 1941 during the German occupation a number of monks returned to the monastery and reestablished monastic life there. At the end of the '50s (Khrushchev launched an anti-religious campaign in 1959) the monks (by then about 100) were no longer left in peace and by 1961 they were driven out and the monastery was closed (see "Monasticism in the Soviet Union" by Marite Sapiets, RCL, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 28-34).

In late 1977 the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR distributed the following document from former monks of the Kiev Monastery of the Caves, which is dated 18 September 1977.

To the President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR,
Leonid Ilich Brezhnev

STATEMENT

Urgent necessity compels us to turn to you: we, the monks of the Kiev Monastery of the Caves, which in 1961 was closed temporarily for repairs, have found ourselves dispersed and, already for 16 years, have been waiting in vain for our return to our own cloister.

The Orthodox people, troubled to the depth of their souls by the closing and the violation of our holy place, which is so firmly and organically bound up with the history of our Motherland, and deprived of the right to revere the holy relics of the Kiev Monastery's saints of

God, who showed to the world the fullness and glory of Orthodoxy, have repeatedly turned to the civil powers with fervent prayers for the opening of the monastery. And since the official organs (for instance the executive committee of the Kiev town soviet) replied that the monastery was closed because "the monks themselves had left and now there is no one wishing to inhabit the monastery", the people accused us, the monks, of remaining silent and being indifferent to the fate of the monastery.

We however, have only been praying, weeping and waiting . . .

By this statement we join our voice to that of the faithful and fervently beg you to open the Kiev Monastery of the Caves and to allow us to restore the monastic community in it.

All the undersigned express a firm desire to inhabit their own home, a desire long suffered in exile. We express the hope that our request will be complied with and that we will be allowed to celebrate the Liturgy in the Cradle of Russian Orthodoxy, beside the relics of the saints of God.

And the Church's prayer for peace and prosperity in our country, rising from the sacred vaults of the monastery, stills the great confusion which has gripped the Orthodox people, who long to revere the relics of the Kiev Monastery's saints.

Brothers of the Kiev Monastery of the Caves:

1. *Skhiarckhimandrit** PROKHOR (DUBROVSKY)
2. Titular abbot ISAIYA (KORIN)
3. Titular abbot AKHILA (ORLOV)
4. Titular abbot MOISEI (VALIGURA)
5. Hiero-monk MODARI (MOSHOV)
6. Hiero-monk ANDREI
7. Hiero-monk VENIAMIN (SELIVANOV)
8. Archdeacon PIMEN (SHUVALOV)

*A hermit Archimandrite

9. Hiero-deacon ZAKHARI (GAVRILYUK)
10. Hiero-deacon IGNATI (DZYUBANIN)

11. Hiero-deacon NIKOLAI (BREKHACHEV)
12. Monk VASILI (SAFIYEV)

Orthodox Believers Refused Registration

According to the 1929 Law on Religious Associations all religious groups in the USSR must be registered with the local government authorities (soviets) if they wish to meet for worship. To form a new congregation, a group of Christians must choose 20 sponsors to represent them. This group of twenty believers, (the dvadtsatka from dvadtsat=twenty; sometimes translated as "parish council") must then apply to the local soviet for registration. Should their application be refused, a group of Christians cannot legally meet as a congregation, nor can they lease from the State, or build, a church or prayer house for their services.

The following two recent documents reveal the difficulties which have faced two particular groups of Orthodox Christians in the Soviet Union. One group from the town of Kotovo (Volgograd region) wanted to register as a new congregation and reopen a disused church, and another group from the village of Balashovka (Berezhno district) wanted to reopen a church for worship which had been closed during Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign (1959-64). Both groups faced insurmountable obstacles from the local soviets concerned.

To the Chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR, comrade Vladimir Alexeevich Kuroedov, from the sponsors (dvadtsatka) of the Orthodox Russian Church of Kotovo in Volgograd region

APPLICATION

We, the inhabitants of the town of Kotovo in Volgograd region, Christian believers of the Orthodox Russian Church, on the basis of Art. 52 of the Constitution (basic law) of the USSR, which we, citizens of the USSR, approve and support, proceeding from the Resolution on religious organizations of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of 8 April 1929 and the revisions and addenda inserted by decree of the Presidium of the

Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 23 June 1975, following upon the provisions of the report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 25th Party Congress, made by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, comrade Leonid Ilich Brezhnev, remembering Lenin's pronouncement, "in our society everything that serves to promote communism is morally acceptable" and that "... whatever serves to promote communism is democratic", bearing in mind para. 1 of the Draft Decree on freedom of conscience in ecclesiastical and religious organizations, to the effect that "Religion is the private affair of every citizen of the Russian Republic" - address this application to you as follows: at a meeting of our community of Orthodox Christians we raised the question of the registration of our community and the opening of a building as a place of prayer. We therefore selected 25 sponsors, from each of whom we have a declaration, and we also have the minutes of the meeting of the sponsors. In July 1978 we sent our petition to the executive committee of the Kotovo district soviet of people's deputies. They should have sent it to the regional soviet, etc., as laid down in the Resolution.

But the secretary of the executive committee of Kotovo district soviet, comrade V. D. Klochkova, to whom we addressed our petition, took from us a list of 216 Christians - members of the Russian Orthodox Church - the minutes (No. 1) and the declarations of the 20 sponsors, and promised to give us the decision of the executive committee.

But unfortunately, instead of making a decision the executive committee began a campaign against the believers which was conducted in the most unworthy manner and, in our opinion, employed methods contrary to the Constitution.

For example, the secretary of the executive committee of the district soviet, V. D. Klochkova, said, "we will turn