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and Religion

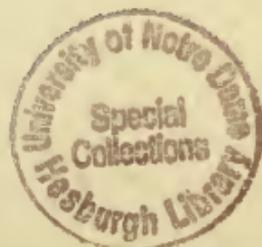


The Red Terror
AND RELIGION



by

RICHARD GINDER



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Communism—or Red Fascism—is atheistic. When we Americans think of an atheist, we think of the genial easy-going fellow around the corner who doesn't go to church and who is known, among his friends, as not believing in God. But he's a good neighbor, we think; he does his work well, lives decently, is a solid family man, chips in on community projects, and helps with various charities in the vicinity. He lives and lets live. More than that—

he will patronizingly concede that Religion does a great deal of good. It's a fine thing—for other people.

And so when we are told that Communism is atheistic, we may find ourselves disarmed and thinking of the Red Fascists in terms of our harmless friend around the corner.

But if our atheistic neighbor, with a few like-minded friends, were somehow to get control of the government and begin preaching that Religion is harmful; if he were to start jailing and shooting ministers and priests; if he were to begin padlocking our churches and suppressing our church periodicals—!

That is precisely what happened in Fascist Russia. Marx, the founder of Red Fascism, had been born a Jew, baptised a Protestant at the age of six, and became an

atheist by the time he was thirty—but not the good-natured sort of atheist we're familiar with in America. Marx was bitter. He thought Religion was a bad thing and should be stamped out—"opium," he called it—"the opium of the people."

The Soviet Constitution

This was written into the Soviet Constitution of 1918 in the following terms:

"For the purpose of securing real freedom of conscience for the workers, the Church is declared separate from the government and the schools from the Church. But freedom for religious and anti-religious propaganda is recognized for every citizen."

This meant practically a death blow to the Russian Orthodox Church, for up until then it had been supported largely by government funds. Now it was left on its

own, to sink or swim, dependent on donations made by citizens with very little to donate.

But even the "freedom for religious . . . propaganda" was regarded by the atheists as too big a concession. In 1929 it was cut out by substitution of "freedom in the exercise of religious worship and freedom for anti-religious propaganda." This is summarized as follows in the 1936 Stalin Constitution of the U.S.S.R., article 124:

"In order to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the U.S.S.R. is separated from the state, and the school from the church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens."

Publication of Bibles, hymnals, prayer books, Sunday-school literature—anything religious, in fact, is punishable by law in

the Russia of today. Charitable work done in the name of religion, even such as the Salvation Army carries on, is likewise outlawed. Parochial schools obviously fall under the ban.—But there is no limit on the publication of anti-religious books and leaflets.

U. S. Government Report

“Communism in Action,” a United States Government publication prepared at the instance and under the direction of Representative Everett M. Dirksen of Illinois, has this to say in comment:

“Eradication of religion, the Bolsheviks’ objective, was to be accomplished through the youth of the land. Under the Constitution, religious instruction in public or private schools was forbidden. However, until 1929 children in groups of three or less were allowed to receive religious instruc-

tion provided it was given outside the churches and schools. The decree of April 8, 1929 abolished this right and confined the teaching of religion to the parents. In the United States, certain State laws regulate religious instruction in public schools, but the regulations do not apply to private schools, church, or private groups. Under Bolshevism, the miracles and splendors of the church were exposed as superstition and unscientific processes. The religious youth of the land were made to feel as outcasts and outsiders who were not contributing to the welfare of their country."

Continuing, the Government report says that—

"The state confiscated all church buildings and property. Many churches were closed and others diverted to various uses—schools, clubrooms, anti-religious mu-

seums, lodgings, and industrial works. In some instances, members of the clergy were jailed or executed. Anti-religious demonstrations were organized, services in churches interrupted, and the clergy insulted by members of the Komsomol (Communist youth association) . . . Atheistic publications waged violent attacks on religion, whereas, after 1927, no religious publications were allowed."

Freedom of Worship?

The phrase "freedom of religious worship" is often flaunted by Red Fascists to give the impression that Religion under Red dominion is as free in the U.S.S.R. as it is in our own country. This is misleading. It is true that religious congregations may organize, but they must register with the local commissar who will assign a church for their use. They may not own

property. They must confine their religious activities within the limits of the congregation registered. They may engage in no missionary or welfare work. And they will have to look long and hard for an ordained leader, because priests and ministers have been well nigh hounded and persecuted out of existence, while the operation of religious seminaries for the training of future ministers is, of course, strictly forbidden.

There have been at least three distinct waves of anti-religious persecution in the U.S.S.R., the first from 1917 to 1922; then between 1929 and 1930; and finally during 1937 and 1938 with the result that whereas in 1917 there had been 46,457 Orthodox churches in Russia, by 1941 this had dwindled to 4,225—a reduction of 90 percent. The number of Orthodox priests in 1917 had been 50,960. In 1941,

it was 5,665. And the 1,026 Orthodox monasteries had dropped to 38 in 1941.

An Apparent Letup

Anti-religious measures as described above have been relaxed somewhat since 1943, in the hope that Religion may be exploited by the Fascist dictator in achieving his own purposes. These changes have not been written into the Constitution, however, and it isn't unlikely that they will soon be withdrawn.

Edmund Stevens, commenting on this in *Russia Is No Riddle*, says that "though the Soviet Government stresses the separation of Church and State, it is virtually impossible for anything to exist apart from the State under the Soviet system. And now the Soviet State, which professed Marxist materialism, was to all appearances equipping the Church to fight

against its ruling philosophy. In practice, however, the Church took great care not to bite the hand that was now feeding it. It fully realized that in return for the favors bestowed, the State expected the Church to give its firm support to the system and to operate within certain limits. The tradition of centuries as the official State religion was deeply rooted in the Orthodox Church, and it therefore slipped very naturally into its new role of close collaboration with the Soviet Government."

Why Atheism?

"Why this militant atheism?" the reader might ask. If Religion be nothing more than a stubborn superstition, why not leave it to wither and dry up beneath the spotlight of increasing knowledge and advancing science?"

The answer can be found in the question. If Religion were a superstition, it would most assuredly vanish with the increase in knowledge. Magic and witchcraft have gone, together with charms and the casting of spells. People no longer believe in the existence of goblins, leprechauns, elves or water sprites. Superstition is naturally suicidal. It can't survive the spotlight of common sense.

But Religion has persisted. In this twentieth century it is stronger and winning more converts than ever before. The strides of science serve only to bolster and reinforce its fundamental arguments. Each fresh fact turned over in the laboratories, every new discovery, shows more conclusively that there is a God, that He is interested in us, and that our actions have value in His sight.

There simply is no argument in favor of anti-God. All one can do is to ridicule believers and suppress the facts or interpretations of fact that point toward God's existence.

They Fear Religion

The frantic fear of Religion on the part of Red Fascist tyrants arises from the fact that true democracy is based finally on Religion. It is Religion and Religion alone that stands for the dignity of the individual. "The State exists for the individual," Religion says, "and not the individual for the State." Thus Red Fascism and Religion—by that one only fundamental proposition—are already in diametric opposition.

The man who believes in God, who believes that he has a soul and that by keeping his conscience unstained he can reach

everlasting happiness—that man as long as he lives is a threat to any dictator, for that man can never be enslaved. He values his honor more than his life.

The Catholic Church as early as 1846 condemned Red Fascism, lock, stock and barrel. The condemnation was repeated and published before the world in 1878—and again in 1924; and in 1928; and in 1931; twice in 1932; in 1933; and in 1937.

No agency is more cordially detested by Red Fascists than the Catholic Church, for in that body the tyrants see a disciplined army deployed through the world, 365,000,000 strong, united under the leadership of one man, and determined to fight on God's behalf by truth, prayer and sacrifice—sacrifice of their own lives if need be.

For further information on Red Fascism, address the publishers of this leaflet for list of titles.

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