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Soviet Religious Policy in the Baltics under Khrushchev, 1957–1964: Domestic Repression and International Engagement

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Abstract: The Khrushchev era brought a policy of religious repression in response to a resurgence of religious adherence after WWII. But a close evaluation of archival sources reveals distinctive features to its implementation in the Baltics, compared with other parts of the USSR and with the Orthodox Church. The study richly describes the erosion of church institutional interests, such as maintenance of registered churches and clergy, legal and financial autonomy, publications and theological education. But having adapted to their national context, republic-level state officials often pursued the campaign disproportionately against non-national churches, such as Catholics and so-called sects, thereby provoking bureaucratic tensions with party hardliners, both in Moscow and at the republic level. Motivated by its heightened anti-Vatican stance, Moscow's foreign policy opening—to the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, and the German churches—brought the Lutheran churches limited leverage against reluctant local and republic officials.

The rule of Nikita Khrushchev is often identified with a so-called destalinization “thaw,” including greater media freedom, more attention to consumer needs, renunciation of brutality, an end to the culture of personality, reining in of the secret police and release of political prisoners. In foreign policy, his rule was accompanied by greater openness, including the spirit of Geneva and summitry, notions of peaceful coexistence, and initiatives toward the Third World. The officially-registered churches definitely benefited from this destalinization process. Under Lenin and Stalin, the institutional church was virtually eliminated and virulent

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antireligious agitation decimated the ranks of believers. After Stalin's death, churches were reopened; dozens of pastors released from prison were allowed to return to parish work; a resurgence of religious rites took place; international contacts were resumed.

Yet the later years of the Khrushchev period saw a new wave of repression for the churches (Pospelovsky 1988, 121–145). Khrushchev was long known for his hard-line atheistic stance, but his assault on the churches awaited his victory over the antiparty group in 1957, and his consolidation of premier and party posts in 1959. This repression brought new trials for the churches in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) — massive deregistrations and closures of churches, widespread antireligious propaganda and arrests of activists, greater control of internal church governance to name several — leaving most severely weakened by the end of the Khrushchev era.

What insights can be gleaned from a closer, empirical investigation of the Baltic case during this period of generalized religious repression? First, the Baltic churches are confessionally and historically distinct from the predominant Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). The Catholic and Lutheran Churches prevalent in the Baltics have different theological, organizational, and socio-political orientations from the Orthodox tradition. As national churches identified with the Baltic nations, they naturally are prone to tensions with the Russian church. Not fully incorporated into the USSR until 1944, the Baltics had been incompletely sovietized. Unlike the ROC, the Baltic Lutheran and Catholic Churches held a special affinity with West European churches.

Second, most treatments of the Khrushchev period have tended to concentrate on the ROC at the expense of non-Orthodox churches. Fletcher (1973), for example, devotes little attention to churches in the Baltic republics in his early treatment of Soviet churches and foreign policy. Recently, a broad survey by Anderson (1994), although more authoritative and nuanced as a result of use of new post-Soviet archival sources, was limited in its ability to subject the dynamics of the Khrushchev period to more in-depth scrutiny. Even contemporary Russian scholars, such as Chumachenko (2002), who have analyzed the repression of the Khrushchev period in depth, focus primarily on the ROC as the primary actor and victim.

This study proposes to focus more on church institutional interests, disaggregating them, and analyzing the Khrushchev assault on them, than on the propaganda campaign or control of church elites. The assumption is that most Western churches have institutional interests essential to meet

their organizational mission and sustain their long-term survival and integrity. Although they might vary somewhat by confession, these interests distinguish churches from sects and are independent of particular church leaders. In addition, this study will particularly analyze the international activities of the Baltic churches, on the assumption that — unlike the ROC or sects — their confessional and historical ties represented both a particular challenge and an opportunity for the regime.

This study is based on extensive investigation of official central and republic-level archives of the former USSR. Primary document collections used in Moscow include the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), with its records of the Council on the Affairs of Religious Cults (CRC), and the Central Depository for Contemporary Documentation (CDCD), with its records of the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Central Committee. Files of the republic-level officials were consulted at the Estonian State Archive (ESA), Latvian State Archive (LSA), and Lithuanian State Archive (LithSA). In addition, select files of the former Central Committee of the Communist Party (CP) Estonia were also utilized. Given the research base available to the author and the scope of the present study, it will concentrate mostly on Estonia and Latvia, without discounting the important and distinct role played by the Lithuanian Catholic Church during the Soviet period.

The general pattern of religious repression was not fundamentally different in the Baltics from other regions of the USSR; indeed the major features are recognizable Union-wide. But this analysis contends that the impact of confessional differences, new foreign relations, and the interplay among local/republic/central officials on the implementation of this policy distinguishes the Baltic case from other ones, particularly from Orthodox churches and sects. The party ideologues and central CPSU bodies did prevail on most policy disputes, but the documentary record of this period reveals tendencies toward localism and dilemmas from international contacts that foreshadow the deviations in the Brezhnev period, as well as the national renewals of the 1980s.

THE CONTEXT

Already in 1957 harbingers of a reversal in policy were evident, particularly in official analyses of the Catholic Church. Charging that they were exploiting the 1954 decision by the CPSU to liberalize its religious policy, republic officials sounded alarms at the resurgence of the

Catholic Church. The Latvian official, for example, complained to Moscow: “having many years of practice in the manner of manipulation of citizens in religious spirit, church activists have had some success,” citing “demands to register new parishes, repatriation and renovation of incomplete and non-functional church buildings.” They strove to “publish church literature, but also to actively increase their influence over the population, especially youth and students” (GARF, delo 166, list 87–91; LSA, d. 256, l. 158.).¹ Demographic changes were also increasing the Catholic profile in Riga, the result of immigration since the war from Lattgalia and Lithuania (LSA d. 260, l. 49). The renewed arrests of Catholic leaders in Latvia further heightened the tensions (LSA d. 256, l. 112–113 and d. 255, l. 146).² In Moscow, the Council on Religious Cults (CRC) even requested help from the KGB in dealing with the Catholic Church (GARF d. 146, l. 162–181).³

This repression might be interpreted as seeking to split the church along Lithuanian-Latvian lines. After having been considered pragmatic and independent of the Vatican, Metropolitan Antonijs Springovics, head of Latvian Catholics, was now viewed as reactionary. That his star had waned was demonstrated by the regime’s handling of the Moscow Catholic parish. Since the early postwar period, the Latvian church had named the priest assigned to this parish, which was jurisdictionally subordinate to the Riga diocese. But when Springovics sought to recall and replace the long-time priest in this function in 1957, the state refused and pressed for a successor from the Lithuanian church instead (GARF d. 486, l. 144–148).⁴ But the state also undertook a crackdown against the Lithuanian church simultaneously. The Lithuanian Communist Party engineered arrests of priests for religious instruction of youth and illegal publications and passed a resolution to heighten antireligious propaganda among its population (CDCD d. 55, l. 60). As in Latvia, the Lithuanian officials railed that Catholic leaders exploited the liberalization since 1954 as a “capitulation of Soviet power before religious forces” (LithSA, d. 49, l. 5).⁵

In fact, the CRC evaluation of the entire Catholic Church veered sharply toward the negative by 1959. In a major policy memo from February of that year, copied to the KGB as well as the Central Committee of the CPSU (CC), the CRC described a hostile relationship to Soviet power, citing the naming of bishops despite their previous incarceration, underground activity of Uniates in the Ukraine, émigré agitation, and opposition from the Baltic churches. It concluded that “the Catholic Church is the only legal organization in the USSR which

exists under the control of a foreign center, the Vatican” and “. . . seeks to strengthen its position in the bloc, activate hostile elements of the clergy, and strangle indications of loyal relations by clergy to socialist states”(GARF d. 188, l. 28, 29). The proposed counter-measures were quite draconian, ranging from the rejection of bishop appointments to breaking ties to the Vatican and creating independent churches. Even though the final version of measures approved by the CC was milder — for example, the proposal to create a national church was dropped — the substance of the CRC position and the heightened coordination with the KGB suggest a generalized hardening toward the Catholic Church (GARF d. 188, l. 47–56).

Moreover, the regime’s concerns of heightened religious activity were not limited to the Catholics. CRC analysis of church adherence alleged an activization of Lutherans as well (CDCD d. 90, l. 103–104).⁶ Church rites in Estonia had in fact leveled off by 1958, after a rebound during 1953–1957, in part due to the demographics of the missing generation associated with World War II (ESA d. 22, l. 7–11).⁷ Indeed the rebound in church adherence likely was more evident in mainstream churches, such as Catholic, Orthodox, and Baltic Lutheran, than among sects that had managed to better weather the previous repression. Setting the tone for overall religious policy, a 1958 analysis of the CC apparatus highlighted the increased activity of churches and sects. Although most of its examples were drawn from the ROC, the KGB analysis underscored increased interest by intellectuals in religion; the Jesuits in particular were alleged to recruit intellectuals (CDCD d. 126, l. 85–87; GARF d. 97, l. 1–2). Sects, especially Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Pentecostals, were especially targeted.⁸ Thus, although the crackdown was to affect the Catholics particularly severely, it represented a generalized alarm about a popular resurgence of religion and the churches since Stalin.

The crackdown had two other causes, in addition to negative reports from the Communist Party officials at the republic level. First, not surprisingly, the bureaucratic battle between the Council on the Russian Orthodox Church (CROC) and the CRC was fought in part over the proper direction of policy. For example, Gennady Karpov, chair of the CROC, vehemently criticized the content of a new brochure on Soviet religion as too rosy regarding the sects and non-Orthodox churches, arguing that the ROC was in fact less mystical and more Russian than the sects. By bowing to his pressure and canceling the publication, which had been designed for foreign consumption, the Central Committee called into question the

international strategy of the CRC (CDCD d. 53, l. 16–20).⁹ In this context, the ouster of Ivan Polyanski as chair of the CRC represented not only a bureaucratic victory for his rival Karpov, but also a signal to his successor to pursue a tougher line with the churches.

Second, the crackdown reflected the strategic thinking of the regime in its foreign policy. For example, the Foreign Ministry viewed the Vatican as an increasing threat, even under the new papacy of John XXIII.¹⁰ For its part, the KGB evaluation of the Vatican was similarly negative. KGB analyses saw the Vatican as building a coalition against communism with Protestants in the United States and Muslims in the Near East (GARF d. 197, l. 2–3 and l. 27–29).¹¹ The increasing Protestant exchanges between East and West were alarming to the Vatican in this context. The KGB viewed the new pope as more flexible, motivated to keep the Catholic churches in the East bloc under Vatican control by replacing the overtly political stance of Pius XII with a more religious orientation (GARF d. 197, l. 34–47). To counter this threat, the regime would revisit its earlier decision to reject participation in Western church international organizations, such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and would promulgate new organizations, such as the Christian Peace Council (CPC), designed to outflank the Vatican, particularly after the announcement of the Vatican Council.¹² This foreign policy would naturally have domestic ramifications, namely a hardening line toward the Soviet Catholic Church, concentrated in the Baltics. The non-Catholic churches would benefit from continued international contact, but would find their credibility at home and abroad eroded by the new wave of domestic repression.

The present analysis will consider policies affecting the churches' institutional interests (disaggregated by construction and closure of churches, legal and financial interests, publications, religious practice, theological education), atheistic propaganda and socialization efforts, international contacts, dissent in the church leadership, and bureaucratic tensions regarding the Khrushchev policy.

CHURCH INSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS: CHURCH CONSTRUCTION, CLOSURE AND REGISTRATION OF PARISHES

A clear indication of the harsher line was reflected in the official treatment of requests for church construction and registration. The state's

earlier forthcomingness on these issues evaporated. Projects underway were halted and even reversed, including some high-profile ones that could not escape the attention of Western observers. For example, renovation of war-damaged St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Tartu, Estonia, was halted again. The Catholic Church in Klaipeda, Lithuania, approved earlier under considerable public pressure, was in fact completed but then summarily seized for use as a concert hall in 1959.¹³

Construction work on low-profile projects likewise became impossible. Latvian Bishop Gustav Turs' requests for renovation of war-damaged churches and reopening of unused churches had been approved in 1955–1957, but by 1958 the state approved only one such project (Liepaja) and in 1960 all such requests were rejected (LSA d. 10, l. 33–33r, and d. 260, l. 8). In Estonia, all construction requests were denied except the construction of a house for Bishop Jaan Kiivit, a decision clearly tailored to enhance Kiivit's ability to host the growing numbers of foreign visitors. State officials rebuffed requests by suggesting that these be handled by the "market" (ESA d. 26, l. 27). Even in cases of arson and fire involving the wooden churches common in Estonia, the Estonian authorities refused to approve insurance compensation for rebuilding (ESA d. 23, l. 173–174).

Closure of churches again became the order of the day in this period (Chumachenko 2002, 171–173). A 1962 study by the Latvian plenipotentiary's office documents the heavy-handed role of the state in this process. For example, among other measures the local and republican officials forced the self-liquidation of the *dvatsatka*, the group of 20 laypeople required to request registration of a parish under Soviet law (LSA d. 261, l. 11–16).¹⁴ Registration of some Lutheran churches was withdrawn "at the request of parishioners," with state officials citing the "dying character" of the Lutheran churches and the infrequency of services in some churches (LSA d. 262, l. 13).¹⁵ Even in Estonia, with its leading Lutheran church largely subdued politically in the Stalinist period, decisions to register churches taken in the liberal period 1953–1957 were now reversed (ESA d. 32, l. 10).¹⁶ Again the confiscated church buildings were turned over to local governments for alternative uses. For example, a newly-constructed church in Sigulda, Latvia was seized by the local government for use as a food store (LSA d. 259, l. 35–37).

Whether in fact local officials converted most churches to secular uses, or merely left them idle is debatable. A census of closed churches in Estonia by the CRC officials in 1963 caused anxiety among local officials (GARF d. 1577, l. 4–8). A Latvian study in 1973 indicated that, of the

132 church buildings returned to local authorities in the period 1950–1973, 43 had not in fact been converted since they were in poor condition. Yet a later study from 1980 indicates of a total of 142 churches deregistered during 1950–1980, only 17 buildings were ruined. The discrepancy suggests that many churches, although deregistered during the Khrushchev era, were neither converted to secular uses nor razed, but in fact kept in limbo.¹⁷

Local officials sometimes sought to meet Moscow's expectation of closures by targeting minority faiths. For example, officials in heavily Catholic Lattgalia hit Lutheran churches disproportionately, in order to limit the popular resentments against the policy.¹⁸ In the case of Russian Orthodox churches, local officials attempted this tactic, but were often overruled by republican-level Latvian officials.¹⁹ This asymmetry was apparent in Estonia as well, with the Orthodox and Herrnhuter churches bearing the brunt of the campaign to the relative advantage of the dominant Lutheran church. For example, during the brief period 1961–1963 alone, 34 churches were closed, of which 14 were from the small Orthodox community (ESA d. 34, l. 14). A branch of the pietistic Bohemian Brethren with long roots in Estonia, the tiny Herrnhuter movement, registered by the regime in 1948 under the umbrella of the Lutheran churches, saw its registrations cancelled, constituting over 20% of closures in Estonia (ESA d. 30, l. 8–9).²⁰ The republican officials viewed the Herrnhuters as a dying movement that could be better controlled under the auspices of the weak Methodist church, simultaneously reinforcing the uneasy relationship between the largely charismatic Herrnhuter movement and the liturgical Lutheran church (ESA d. 30, l. 38–39).²¹

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the plenipotentiary in Lithuania was similarly inclined to achieve closures at the expense of the minority non-Catholic churches. Requests by Lutheran parishes to register in the Klaipeda region were rejected by Vilnius. In one case of a Lutheran church converted earlier to a house of culture in Klaipeda, state officials suggested to the petitioners that they negotiate with the Orthodox or Catholic Church for worship space. A high percentage of the complaints that the plenipotentiary in Vilnius received were from Lutherans seeking registration (LithSA d. 52, l. 91 and l. 94–101).²² The arrest of pastors had been used as a pretext to close churches; not surprisingly, their return from imprisonment produced opposition and demands for registration.

In the case of certain high-profile parishes, the policy of closing churches became very contentious, leading to conflict with the churches

as well as with republican officials and Moscow. In Tallinn, for example, the local government proposed closing the large Peeteli Lutheran Church and converting it into a theater for Estonian television (ESA d. 30, l. 81–83).²³ It was claimed that there were numerous other churches in Tallinn that could accommodate the parishioners who would be inconvenienced by the closure. Despite protests by Bishop Kiivit, the church was closed.

In Riga, the Latvian Lutheran church faced even more contentious battles. With its central location and superb acoustics, the magnificent Cathedral became a lightning rod in the relationship with the state in the late 1950s. Despite its imposing edifice, the number of its parishioners had plummeted even as the costs of maintenance had risen. In an effort to develop more support for the Cathedral, Bishop Turs had taken advantage of the earlier liberalization to begin public organ concerts, along with outreach activities and tours for visitors. Several times the state officials warned him to curtail these activities (LSA d. 257, l. 56–57).²⁴ With the new crackdown, the state turned up the pressure. Charging that the church was unable to maintain the building, the local authorities in Riga decided to abrogate the registration agreement with the parish.²⁵ Intimidated by the authorities, the church organist issued a formal statement attesting to the state of disrepair of the organ; students, musicians, and artists signed a petition calling for state control of the church.²⁶ An “expert” analysis concluded that the church was unable to pay for the maintenance of the church.²⁷ The plenipotentiary in Riga supported the planned seizure.

Under fire within the church for being too passive on this issue, Turs sought to counter the state’s pressure. He threatened to resign and made direct appeals to members/clergy republic-wide for contributions to demonstrate the church’s ability to maintain the structure (LSA d. 258, l. 73–75).²⁸ Speculating that Moscow’s interest might be different from the local Latvian interest, Turs appealed to the Soviet Peace Committee, arguing that the annual services held in the Cathedral to commemorate the victory of the Red Army on May 9 could no longer be held (LSA d. 258, l. 79–80).²⁹ In a measure of the church’s new possibilities, Bishop Turs also appealed to foreign churches for political support. Turs requested support from the LWF and German Lutheran churches, hoping that the regime’s new-found interest in ties with the Western Protestant churches would translate into clout in Moscow.³⁰ The LWF responded by inquiring with Soviet authorities. Delegations to Riga also lobbied the regime discreetly on behalf of retaining church authority over the Cathedral. But despite its high profile, this case demonstrates the limits of international

clout and the “peace card” during the Khrushchev repression: Turs’ efforts to trump the local and Latvian authorities *via* Moscow proved unsuccessful and the Cathedral was deregistered and seized by the regime on March 25, 1959. It was to serve as a state concert hall for the next 30 years.

In another high-profile case in Latvia, the government sought to seize Riga’s large New Gertrude parish. Rumors that the state would merge it with a Baptist parish gave way to a proposal for merger with the Old Gertrude parish in 1961 (LSA d. 258, l. 46–53).³¹ Turs sought to deflect the Latvian plan by offering the state the Riga Reformed church instead, but this alternative was rejected by the authorities. The Latvian officials’ machinations included the tactic of offering Turs an increase in church publications and reception by republic officials in exchange for his acquiescence to “request” the closing of New Gertrude. According to the plan, “Turs will consider such a reception a large honor and trust, as exclusive attention of the government to his person . . . and then in the form of a wish, the state will raise the question of transferring New Gertrude to the Gosarchiv, for which the Reformed church is inappropriate” (LSA d. 260, l. 61–62).³² In this strategy, the state was using the same strategy used with the Russian Orthodox Church by the CROC, namely placing the onus for closing churches and monasteries on the church leadership itself.³³

Finally, the case of the Catholic Church in Daugavpils demonstrates the political stakes involved in the issue of church closures. Located in Lattgālija, largely Catholic but with a significant Orthodox population as well, Daugavpils proved a test case of state policy. Local authorities sought to close the Catholic Church there in 1961, but the CRC plenipotentiary overturned this decision after the visit of the deputy head of the CRC to Latvia. This decision to leave the church open was countered by Arvid Pelsche, head of the Latvian Communist party, who apparently possessed sufficient clout with the party leadership in Moscow to reverse the decision. Moreover, Pelsche managed to oust the plenipotentiary over the dispute (GARF d. 1426, l. 100–102).³⁴ The case of Daugavpils is indicative not only of the particular antagonism toward the Catholic Church, but also of the clout of ambitious republican officials in pursuing the hard line campaign.

The campaign to close churches clearly targeted some denominations more than others: Catholics, Jews, Old Believers, and Muslims were more affected than Lutherans and other Protestants.³⁵ By contrast, the Baptists became more vulnerable to indirect pressure from the regime. Often with few members and less established than other churches, many Baptist

parishes met in rented premises. However, during this period of repression, the private owners of these premises began to cancel the rental agreements, leaving the Baptists *de facto* without a place of worship (GARF d. 1434, l. 1–4).³⁶ Lithuanian Lutherans also found their requests to register rejected: anticipating the repatriation to Germany of many Lutherans following the amnesty of Soviet Germans, the regime regarded such requests as superfluous (LithSA d. 61, l. 38).³⁷ The archival records are replete with cases of requests to register new parishes that were rejected by the state officials. For example, repeated Lutheran attempts to register a parish in a new residential suburb of Riga, Salaspils, were rejected, despite a supporting petition with 475 signatories (LSA d. 258, l. 77–78 and d. 11, l. 46).³⁸ Indeed in this period rare was the request that was approved by the state. Catholic Bishop Peters Strods' requests for registration, along with construction projects, were repeatedly rejected by Latvian authorities (LSA d. 258, l. 76 and 93–94).³⁹

The drive to close churches suggests yet another reversal in regime strategy toward political control. After massive closures during the late Stalin period, the regime had tilted during the period of liberalization in 1954–1957 toward registering previously-unregistered groups in order to have better oversight over them. Clearly more alarmed about the activity of these underground groups, the CRC now sought to rely instead on mobilizing the KGB to monitor the activities of these underground groups. Yet in the Baltics, few such unregistered groups existed (LSA d. 257, l. 24).

CHURCH INSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS: LEGAL AND FINANCIAL INTERESTS

As noted in the discussion of closures, the regime often used financial pressures on the churches to justify closing parishes. But it also used tax policy to heighten pressure on the churches more generally in this period (Chumachenko 2002, 165). In Latvia, the Finance Ministry hiked the tax on all church lands, including parsonages and parcels with church buildings. The plenipotentiary annulled this move, but monasteries remained subject to the higher tax.⁴⁰ Tax hikes were to continue to be used against parishes and clergy however. Local officials were ordered to clamp down on collections of any monies outside church premises or for charitable purposes. In Estonia, the churches were charged rent for use of the parsonages (ESA d. 26, l. 26).

An important thrust of the Khrushchev repression was also legal restriction on parish governance. Clerics had dominated the church councils in both Catholic and Protestant Churches in the Baltics. Church councils were now limited to three members and the cleric registered for that parish was prohibited from sitting on the council, or having any influence over the financial accounting in the parish (Chumachenko 2002, 186–187).⁴¹ In practice, however, Catholic priests continued to dominate parish councils.⁴² The CRC ruled in 1961 that the constitutions of the Lutheran churches in the Baltics were in violation of this new law and in need of revision (LSA d. 156, l. 15; ESA d. 27, l. 32). The Baptists' constitution was changed from the Moscow headquarters; the Methodists were also forced to alter their constitution in Tallinn (ESA d. 28, l. 41–46).

CHURCH INSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS: PUBLICATIONS

The harsher line also affected church access to publications. Imports of religious literature were subjected to tighter controls. An analysis by the Central Committee apparatus based on Glavlit information found a dramatic increase in imported religious literature with anti-Soviet content, especially in the western USSR. Émigré organizations were blamed for this trend.⁴³ It should be noted that despite its privileged status, the ROC did not escape this crackdown.⁴⁴ Significant quantities of imported literature were confiscated from the ROC Theological Academy in Zagorsk as well. Nor was literature sent from socialist countries exempt: books and journals sent by churches in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) often were seized.

Perhaps more significantly, the recently-improved possibilities for publishing in the USSR were now circumscribed. Suggesting that publication of Baltic church calendars had become largely routine, the CRC proposed devolving decision-making power over such publications to the republic level, but this flexibility was rejected by the Central Committee, which wanted to retain veto power over each publication in Moscow (GARF d. 167, l. 8, 55–56).⁴⁵ Moscow cut the numbers of church calendars for the Estonian Lutheran church in 1958, despite the plenipotentiary's objection to the negative impact of this measure on the Lutheran church there. For all Lutheran churches, the state reduced the annual publications from 22,000 to 12,000 (ESA d. 21, l. 27; d. 22, l. 182; d. 26, l. 28; GARF d. 188, l. 82–92).⁴⁶

But the state hesitated to eliminate the Lutheran publications entirely, since they represented a distinctive part of the Lutheran tradition (LSA d. 158, l. 34–35).⁴⁷ Moreover, the churches astutely sought to blunt these cuts by linking publications to their increased international work. For example, the Latvian Lutherans proposed to link the sales of songbooks to their dues to the Christian Peace Conference, but were rebuffed immediately by the Latvian authorities; the USSR would pay the dues itself for participation in this organization, largely a creature of the Soviet regime in any case. But eventually the linkage with the increased international ties of the churches would be accepted by the CRC, which lobbied the republics to approve increased church publications to finance this activity valued by the regime. In 1960, the plenipotentiary confirmed the linkage: “these ties exist by order of the CC-CPSU. . . . Participation by the Latvian Lutherans in these ties is evaluated positively . . . since it is the only measure where the church gives well-known advantage to the Soviet government.”⁴⁸ Both Lutheran tradition and rising international exposure helped limit the damage of repression in this area.

The curtailment of publications did have a chilling side-effect on church relations between the republics. Earlier, for example, Turis had been solicitous of improved ties with the small Lithuanian Lutheran church. But now, jealously guarding its publication contingent, the Latvian church rejected the Lithuanians’ request for Latvian-language bibles (LithSA d. 53, l. 41).⁴⁹

REPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

A major step by the regime under Khrushchev was the renewed campaign to eliminate monasteries and curtail pilgrimages to so-called “holy places” (Chumachenko 2002, 159, 168–169). In the mid-1950s, popular participation in Catholic pilgrimages had begun to rise again, after having declined under Stalin. At Aglona and Kannepene, Latvia pilgrimage sites, the state grew alarmed at this trend, particularly by Catholics from outside Latvia and by the growing number of celebrants (LSA d. 257, l. 107 and d. 257, l. 73–77).⁵⁰

Moscow used legal changes to curtail such pilgrimages, namely a resolution of the USSR Council of Ministers promulgated in October 1958, which then served as the blueprint for republic laws (Chumachenko 2002, 168–169).⁵¹ Documents suggest that the main targets were the Catholics and Muslims, but this did not deter the CRC from hounding the Estonian

authorities on this issue, despite their rebuttal that pilgrimages were not a tradition in Lutheranism (ESA d. 23, l. 24). Lumping the Catholics with Muslims and Armenians, the CRC concluded that “it is necessary for administrative organs and procurators to strengthen the battle with parasitic elements which exploit religious feelings of believers for their selfish goals.”⁵² In addition, the 1945 law permitting religious rites in the home was abrogated.⁵³ Latvian authorities sought to pressure the Catholic leadership in 1959, making their recognition of Strods as new apostolic administrator contingent on his guarantee that only local priests would celebrate in the pilgrimage services at Aglona and that there would be no processions outside church territory.⁵⁴

The state legal campaign against pilgrimages initially seemed ineffective and the regime resorted to administrative chicanery, such as forbidding the use of kolkhoz trucks to transport pilgrims, scheduling sporting events during the pilgrimage, and forbidding sale of food near pilgrimage sites. By 1959–1960 the intensified measures apparently brought the desired results: state officials claimed that “mass-cultural programs” and warnings had sharply reduced participation in Latvian pilgrimages to Aglona.⁵⁵

Latvian authorities eventually sought to completely close the Catholic monasteries and nunneries. The nunnery at Aglona was dismissed as “a center of oppression of women,” which exerted a “negative influence” particularly on younger women. Along with the monastery at Vilyani, it was slated to be closed to find work for the “dropouts from life” resident there.⁵⁶ In 1960, despite protests from the German Embassy, it was liquidated. The Orthodox monastery in Latvia, however, was spared this fate, suggesting the favored treatment for the Orthodox (LSA d. 259, l. 19–21).

In addition to new proscriptions against pilgrimages and monasteries, the existing sanctions against youth work and religious instruction were again enforced more strictly. Catholic priests were warned and deregistered despite Bishop Strods’ interventions; increasing numbers were even arrested and convicted (LSA d. 257, l. 29 and d. 258, l. 137). The Catholic leadership was again attacked for permitting the participation of youth in services.⁵⁷ Although among Lutherans the controversy over religious instruction had been largely ended by the late 1940s, the increased international contacts had led some leaders to reopen the issue.⁵⁸ After his visit to Czechoslovakia for the formation of the CPC, Turs was intrigued by the existence of religious instruction there. To the chagrin of the plenipotentiary, he also announced plans to lower

the confirmation age back to 15, instead of 18, citing the practice in other socialist countries to confirm at age 14.

Lacking a monastic tradition, Lutherans avoided conflict with the regime over pilgrimages, but found other aspects of religious practice now impeded. For example, local authorities increasingly prohibited so-called cemetery days commemorating the dead unless pre-approved by authorities. Large numbers of church complaints, however, led the republic-level plenipotentiaries to correct these authorities' illegal actions.⁵⁹ Implementing a new Soviet law, local officials increasingly also sought to prohibit the ringing of church bells.⁶⁰

Clergy replacement also became more difficult during this period. Under liberalization clergy released from prison camps had been reintegrated into parish life, but now found it more difficult to obtain the certification from the plenipotentiary necessary to legally serve a parish.⁶¹

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Hard-hit again by the renewed repression was the churches' ability to train clergy (Chumachenko 2002, 176–177). In Estonia, for example, the correspondence courses begun by the Baptists were eliminated in 1961.⁶² The regime increasingly ex-matriculated theology students, questioning their political reliability. In Lithuania, the state overturned admissions decisions to the Catholic seminary in Kaunas (LithSA d. 52, l. 35–36). In Latvia, current students were ex-matriculated and new admissions curtailed in draconian fashion.⁶³ The students protested to the Latvian government and Moscow to no avail.

In one aspect of theological education, namely postgraduate training, there did seem to be a modest breakthrough for the churches. With the emigration of pastors, the aging demographic of those remaining, and particularly the closing of the theology faculties at the universities in Riga and Tartu, the Lutheran churches feared that they would be unable to sustain a professorate with advanced degrees in theology in order to prepare the future generation of clergy. As a result of their new ties with the Lutherans, the British churches responded to this concern by inviting the Baltic churches to send students to Britain to study for doctorates in theology. The CRC approved the churches' request and the plenipotentiaries handpicked two candidates, Kaide Ratsep of Estonia and Andris Vejs of Latvia, to attend Oxford in 1958 (Bourdeaux 1966, 185–189; GARF d. 166, l. 198 and d. 188, l. 134).

The initiative was only partially successful: Ratsep returned to Estonia as pastor of the large Kaarli Church in Tallinn but never taught theology; Vejs recanted his faith and became a researcher in scientific atheism. Various indicators point to KGB assignments for the two candidates also. As a result, the churches lost their enthusiasm for this option. Later, the son of Bishop Kiivit was rejected by the state for study abroad in Germany although Kuno Pajula of Estonia was approved to study for two years in Goettingen, Germany in 1960.⁶⁴ But ironically, invitations from the theology faculty of Martin-Luther-University in Halle to send theology students to the socialist GDR were never approved by the regime.

ATHEISTIC PROPAGANDA

Not surprisingly, the Khrushchev period was characterized by heightened propaganda against religion and the churches and new organizational forms (Pospelovsky 1988, 98–108; Chumachenko 2002, 174–176). Party propagandists increasingly monitored sermons, which were seen as “reactionary, anti-scientific, and hostile to Marxism-Leninism” and “interfering with the success of construction of communism.” The antireligious campaign focused particularly on youth. The Estonian plenipotentiary exhorted that “we should now fight for every young person who has fallen prisoner to the church and its agents. The closer we move toward communism, the clearer the inconsistency between these relics of the past and the spiritual perspective of the person of the new society” (ESA d. 28, l. 34–41). The new organizational vehicle for the antireligious campaign was *Znanie* and its publication, *Nauka i Religiya*.⁶⁵

Often this propaganda took very crude forms, such as impugning the morals of priests. For example, under the title, “Serving Two Masters,” the Latvian party paper *Cina* accused Professor Smigal of the Riga seminary, of a loose lifestyle with women (LSA d. 257, l. 30). In *Komsomolskaya pravda*, the Latvian head of Komsomol accused Strods of having ordered Catholic priests to buy copies of the *The Good Soldier Schweik*, presumably to prevent others from being affected by its iconoclasm.⁶⁶ In a new twist, the state showcased clergy who had recanted their faith.⁶⁷

Interesting to note is that the plenipotentiaries in the Baltic republics tended initially to defend the church against this crude campaign, for

example, by upbraiding the publishers of the attack against Bishop Strods (LSA d. 257, l. 31). Seeing the propaganda as largely ineffective, even counter-productive for the goal of regulating religion, some state officials opposed a return to it. The Estonian plenipotentiary argued in 1959 that the “shrill and exaggerated perspective” in the newspaper attacks promoted “talk among believers of a ‘repression of clergy,’”⁶⁸ Yet the CRC in Moscow promoted the campaign, praising the high quality and frequency of the articles in Estonia and Latvia (GARF d. 209, l. 79).

An important part of this new push at atheistic propaganda was the introduction of secular rites-of-passage to substitute for the religious ones (Lane 1978, 192–195). Pioneered in 1954 in the GDR and based on the coming-of-age (*Jugendweihe*) ceremony of the atheistic movement, they were imported by the Soviets into the Baltics in 1957 where they eventually proved quite successful from the regime’s viewpoint. Their contacts with German church leaders likely informed the Baltic Lutheran pastors of the insidious danger to confirmation participation.⁶⁹ In Estonia, state officials employed traditional folk rites in an effort to make the secular rites more attractive.⁷⁰ Ironically, following Khrushchev’s lead and using *Nauka i Religiya*, party propagandists attacked similar Latvian folk holidays, such as Ligo, as heathen and ideologically reactionary. However, like the Estonians, the Latvian party leadership had earlier supported this holiday and now lobbied against such attacks, fearing the counter-productive effect of banning its celebration. The Khrushchev repression thus produced dissension as to whether such folk practices represented a means of eroding religion, or a different form of religious holiday.⁷¹ In the new climate of repression, the Komsomol and local authorities sometimes intimidated confirmands in order to pump up participation in the secular rites (LSA d. 260, l. 46 and d. 258, l. 135).⁷² The least popular of these rites was burial, but here state officials called for increased “participation of the workers’ collective in the burials of those who worked in the enterprise [which would] not only deliver a decisive blow to the main income of Lutheran pastors, but contribute to the development of the new traditions.”

The response of the church leadership was muted. Bishop Kiivit requested reports of antireligious articles in the press from his subordinates, but the Estonian authorities prevented the distribution of his letter and Kiivit offered little protest over this usurpation of internal church communication (ESA d. 28, l. 34–35).

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THE CHURCHES

Guiding the international relations of the churches during this period was a heightened effort by Moscow to use the churches in its foreign policy. Chairman A. Puzin argued that, “in contrast to those in the USSR, the churches abroad are politically powerful, capable of influence over public opinion and the official policy of their countries” (GARF d. 166, l. 78–83). To be sure, the main thrust for the CRC was to increase ties with Muslims and Buddhists in Asia, parallel to Khrushchev’s interest in bridgeheads in the Third World. But increasing the coherence of the East bloc by consolidating ties among their churches and opening a new flank against the Catholic Church was also an essential component of this strategy. The Central Committee of the CPSU ratified this international initiative by religious centers in 1960.⁷³

Destined to become a lead vehicle for this mobilization of the churches throughout the Soviet period was the Christian Peace Council. Organized by Prof. Josef Hromadka in Czechoslovakia, it was designed to be more effective than the World Peace Council, which had been the Soviets’ propaganda instrument in the early 1950s. Although most Western church leaders were skeptical of it, the CPC did find easy partners in Eastern Europe.⁷⁴ The CRC and CROC largely controlled the planning for the CPC, with the GDR Communists giving major input.⁷⁵

Another organizational vehicle under the new strategy was the World Council of Churches. The documentary evidence is fairly convincing that the overture to this Western ecumenical organization was motivated by the need to fend off the perceived threat of the Vatican to the ROC, rather than by the WCC’s usefulness for the regime’s peace campaign, the need to compete with émigré churches, or even the need to blunt criticism of Soviet religious policy.⁷⁶ Moscow’s analyses of Pope John XXIII’s proposed Vatican Council were suffused with alarm, seeing it as a tactical shift by the Vatican in its efforts to battle communism.⁷⁷ The KGB concurred, concluding that Vatican representatives had lobbied hard but unsuccessfully with the WCC, particularly its Protestant and Orthodox members, to prevent Soviet membership.⁷⁸ In this orientation, the regime certainly found support from the ROC, despite rumors of patriarchal interest in participating in the Vatican Council.⁷⁹ After state-supported overtures to the WCC by the ROC, the other Soviet churches followed suit, including the Baltic Protestant churches.⁸⁰

In the overture to a third international organization, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the Finnish church was to play a key role (CDCD d.

190, l. 112–116). The CRC promoted Kiivit's contacts with the Finnish church as an avenue to explore membership. Despite the close political ties with the USSR, the Finnish churches had earlier been cool to the Soviet Lutherans: contacts had been limited to the bishop of Tampere and focused primarily on their fellow Finns in Ingermannland in the Leningrad oblast, not the Baltic churches. In 1959, however, they expressed an interest in visiting Estonia, and by linking their visit with an invitation to the LWF General Secretary, Kiivit managed to obtain state approval.⁸¹ Latvian and Estonian admission to the LWF was crucial to the regime's strategy for the WCC, namely to counter the Vatican. Eventually in 1962, the Finns reciprocated with invitations to Kiivit.⁸² In the preparation for the admission to the LWF in 1963, the number of international visits to Estonia and Latvia skyrocketed (LSA d. 261, l. 103–105).

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) provided an attractive new venue for the Soviet churches, since unlike the WCC and LWF, the CEC did not include the American churches. The regime increasingly encouraged deepening contacts with this organization and the Baltic Lutheran churches became active members (GARF d. 189, l. 53–65).

In their contacts with all these organizations, the Soviet church leaders engaged in a certain amount of deception. For example, in an effort to increase their attractiveness and clout, the churches vastly exaggerated the number of functioning churches and church adherents (LSA d. 258, l. 126).⁸³ Under instructions from the CRC before leaving on trips, they whitewashed the problems facing their churches from the regime, and painted the relations with the ROC in overly-rosy terms (GARF d. 134, l. 255f).

Not surprisingly given the green light after the meeting between Khrushchev and Adenauer in 1955, this period also saw increasing contacts with churches in Germany. For the Lutherans, Germany represented a type of Mecca, with its many Luther sites and large Evangelical-Lutheran churches. Contacts during this period were initiated and soon became established. However, they were heavily politicized and manipulated by the regime to pursue its German policy. In particular the regime used the contacts in an effort to undermine the position of conservative West German church leaders opposed to a split in the German churches along East-West lines.⁸⁴ Kiivit indulged the regime in this regard, emphasizing in his reporting to the state his success in reducing the influence of the US and conservative German church leaders in international organizations, such as the CEC (ESA d. 24, l. 29–30).

In this context exchanges with “progressives” in the GDR were particularly encouraged by Moscow. In 1958 and 1960, for example, the Christian Democratic Union (East), a transmission belt of the Communists in the GDR and a vehicle for their efforts to build legitimacy among GDR Christians and outflank the West German churches, invited the Soviet Lutherans to send a delegation to its congress.⁸⁵ The Soviet Embassies in East Berlin and Bonn, as well as the CRC, strongly supported these ties, for example considering it not simply “expedient”, but “necessary” for Soviet Lutherans to participate in meetings of pro-GDR groups, such as the CDU and Weimar Circle; the Central Committee apparatus concurred.⁸⁶ Capstone of this “GDR-strategy” was the visit of Bishop Moritz Mitzenheim and his adjutant Ingo Braecklein to the Baltics in 1962.⁸⁷ Thus the Baltic Lutherans became increasingly useful in the Soviets’ German policy.

The small but established Lutheran minority churches in Eastern Europe also represented considerable potential for contacts. After its earlier suspicion, the state promoted activity in the LWF’s subgroup, Lutheran Minority Churches in Europe, seeing it as anti-Catholic.⁸⁸ Similarly, the state encouraged the Baltic Lutheran leaders to establish contact with the Polish Lutheran church, again with an eye to offsetting Catholic power in Poland.

Within the overall context of these new international opportunities for the non-Catholic churches in the Baltics, the state increasingly differentiated among its church “diplomats.” In particular it grew increasingly dissatisfied with Turs’ role. For example, his obsequiousness toward the Orthodox Church hierarchy, particularly in the presence of visiting church delegations such as the EKD, undermined his credibility and reinforced the Western preconceptions of the dominance of the ROC in Soviet foreign policy (LSA d. 257, l. 36). After his international meetings, he was upbraided by the CRC for attempting to activate religion in Latvia.⁸⁹ Turs was particularly interested in ties with the West German Bruderschaften, whose leftist stance and influence in the FRG the regime saw as useful (LSA d. 259, l. 41–45). But Turs’ request to attend the WCC General Assembly in New Delhi in 1961 was vetoed by the CRC (LSA d. 156, l. 68).

By contrast, the star of Kiivit continued to rise during this period, both with Western churches and with Soviet officials. The CRC instructed Estonian officials to widen his contacts with progressive church leaders in Europe (especially in Germany and the CEC) (ESA d. 21, l. 2). For example, Kiivit rather than Turs was invited by Praeses Ernst Wilm,

prominent leader of the Westphalia regional church, to lecture throughout West Germany in 1958 (GARF d. 166, l. 127–128). In 1959, the EKD invited only Kiiivit, unlike in 1956 when both Turs and Kiiivit were invited (GARF d. 188, l. 93–94). LWF officials also implied that the Turs-led Latvian church was not a good candidate for admission to the LWF (ESA F. d. 24, l. 28). The GDR Peace Committee in 1960 requested a visit by both Turs and Kiiivit, but Edgar Hark substituted for Kiiivit; similarly, Kiiivit refused to attend the CDU congress in the GDR. Kiiivit's growing credibility with Western church leaders would have been compromised by visits to such Communist-dominated organizations in the GDR and the Soviets sent lower-level Estonian representatives instead.⁹⁰ Turs resented this treatment and sought to convince the state he was a stronger supporter.

Some groups did not benefit from the international initiative. The Lithuanian Lutherans continued to be excluded from this international activity, due to the split within the church between a more Latvian-oriented faction and a more Lithuanian-oriented one.⁹¹ Likewise, overtures from the Reformed World Alliance to the Reformed churches, including those in Lithuania and Latvia, were rebuffed by the state, due to fears of contacts with oppositional Reformed elements in Sub-carpathian Ukraine (GARF F. d. 171, l. 44–46; LSA d. 258, l. 8).

The Catholic Church's stance continued to be quite problematic from the regime's perspective, particularly on questions of foreign policy. To be sure, the state found Bishop Strods' strong opposition to atomic testing congenial.⁹² But the church rejected participation in Soviet friendship societies and public positions on foreign policy issues, such as the United States intervention in Lebanon in 1958. Indeed, state officials labeled Strods a "true slave of the Pope" (LSA d. 257, l. 105, 110). Contacts with the Vatican continued to be taboo. For example, the CRC rejected an application for a Soviet Catholic delegation to attend the funeral of Pope Pius XII in 1958 ("none of the higher Catholic clergy are reliable") (GARF d. 172, l. 7–8). The state forbade annual reports by the Soviet dioceses to the Vatican, fearing that such reports would increase "anti-Soviet propaganda" (LSA d. 258, l. 3–4).

Instead of church leaders, the regime sought to encourage the development of international contacts by "progressive" lay Catholics and reliable Catholic leaders from the bloc. For example, the regime gave its blessing to Lithuanian lay Catholics visiting Italy.⁹³ Hungarian party officials promoted Archbishop Gress of Hungary for a visit to the USSR.⁹⁴ Yet when Soviet embassies in the West requested Catholic delegations from

the USSR, they were usually rebuffed by Moscow with the response: “Catholic clergy do not travel”.⁹⁵

Local and republican officials were often less enthralled than Moscow by the increased international exposure. As noted above, the heightened contacts, particularly with churches in the East bloc, led some church leaders to make increased claims on the state (for example, Lutherans raising anew the issue of religious instruction, as well broaching the confirmation of youth at age 15 instead of 18; the churches seeking to leverage the international contacts for increased publications) (LSA d. 259, l. 30). The German churches sought to use their ties with the Baltic Lutherans to establish contact with the isolated Soviet German Lutherans, efforts rebuffed at this stage by both church and state officials.⁹⁶ Indeed, local officials saw the ties as “useful only for the German friends, since for local believers such foreign delegations constitute a happening” (LSA d. 259, l. 30).

In addition, the local officials lacked the background and information needed to master the nuances of foreign partnerships and were forced to rely on church leaders themselves for information. The plenipotentiary in Estonia, for example, incorrectly equated the German *Bruderschaften*, anti-Nazi resisters and often leftist in political orientation, with the “fanatical” *Bratsvo* of Herrnhuters in Estonia, leading him to oppose visits by these Germans (ESA d. 24, l. 107–108). Thus, at the republic level officials were often disinclined to encourage foreign ties, fearing an activation of religion and churches.

An archival study of the growing communications flow necessary to deal with this increasing international contact illuminates the decision-making process itself and the bureaucratic interests that developed as a result. International invitations were initially discussed between the plenipotentiary and the responsible church leader in an effort to determine the level of interest of the church leader and the preferences of the plenipotentiary. The plenipotentiary was charged with obtaining the approval of republican authorities. Then he would make a recommendation to the CRC, which would inquire with the Foreign Ministry as to the advisability of the travel from the perspective of Soviet foreign policy, usually after consulting with the particular Soviet Embassy in question. Only then would the CRC submit its recommendation to the CPSU Central Committee apparatus for final approval. The lengthy bureaucratic process certainly did not make international church relations easy, although they did become more routine by the end of this period.

The Soviets' intelligence apparatus, particularly in the East bloc, made these international contacts somewhat risky for the individuals involved. For example, CDU informants in the GDR reported on Estonian delegates to their convention in 1960. In turn, their confidential criticism of fellow Baltic Lutherans was often reported back to Moscow.⁹⁷

The state officials responsible for the churches sought to accommodate the increased workload attendant to this growing international activity. The Baltic plenipotentiaries now included extensive time for international relations in their work plans and asked for additional staffing to deal with the new responsibilities. Likewise, the CRC and CROC requested the creation of deputy director positions to handle international relations. Yet all were unsuccessful in using the international card to bargain with the Central Committee for more staff.⁹⁸

The archival record also suggests the growing import of Soviet East bloc allies in the decision process, particularly the GDR officials and the German question. At the republic level, officials were rather disinclined to encourage contacts with the Lutheran churches in the GDR, naturally fearing the infection of ideas and demands stemming from the far more liberal policy toward religion in the GDR. But the evidence is clear that GDR officials repeatedly lobbied successfully with the Soviet Embassy, whose endorsement, "at the request of the comrades," was usually sufficient to overcome the resistance at the republic level. For example, Hans Seigewasser, in charge of religious affairs in the GDR government, pressed for invitations to Bishop Friedrich-Wilhelm Krummacher to the USSR, in order to influence him regarding inter-German church issues.⁹⁹ GDR Communist leaders vetoed the visit of Soviet Lutherans to the July 1961 all-German Kirchentag in Berlin and lobbied against inviting the new head of the EKD, Kurt Scharf, to Moscow, suspecting him of using ecumenical ties to maintain inter-German church unity.¹⁰⁰

Yet in other cases, Moscow overrode concerns of the Foreign Ministry, for example, regarding contacts with the LWF. The Foreign Ministry had earlier vetoed a visit by Kiivit to Bishop Martti Simojoki of Finland due to his anticommunist orientation and was ambivalent about contacts with LWF officials. However, Moscow's interest in joining the LWF, whose general assembly was scheduled in Helsinki in 1963, outweighed the objections of the Soviet Embassy and the Foreign Ministry: in 1959 LWF officials visited Estonia and in 1962 Kiivit was permitted to accept Simojoki's invitation.¹⁰¹

CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL DISSENT

As this discussion of his foreign role suggests, Latvian Lutheran Bishop Turs continued to leave the regime ambivalent. Without a trace of irony, Communist officials steeped in Leninism criticized him for being authoritarian and out of step with the post-Stalin era, citing his failure to request a synod since 1951 and reliance on his *clique* in the Higher Church Administration (LSA d. 257, l. 98–99).¹⁰² Yet the regime sought to exploit his weak authority among the grassroots in the churches by increasing his international activities and reveled in his lukewarm resistance to repressive measures by the state. In a clear statement of the regime's strategy, the plenipotentiary wrote,

“it is desirable to use Turs even more for various international ties and distract him from the direction of church affairs in the republic. This would enable the future decline of parishes and mass exodus of believers from the church” (LSA d. 260, l. 26).

With the Latvian Catholic Church, the regime confronted a much more oppositional leadership. A key confrontation with the regime developed over the Latvian Catholic leadership. Bishop Strods was seen by the state as a nationalist, fanatically committed to the Catholic Church and the Pope. Critical of the lack of religious freedom in the USSR, he was also loath to lend public support to Soviet initiatives regarding émigrés and foreign policy.¹⁰³ The regime contested the Vatican's planned succession of Bishop Strods as apostolic administrator of the Riga Diocese and used this uncertainty to gain bargaining advantage over him and the Catholic hierarchy. Strods was forced to concede some state demands, for example, limiting priests at pilgrimage services, banning activity of priests outside their registered parish, banning processions outside church territory at Aglona, and forbidding reunions of priests.¹⁰⁴ But the regime refused to permit Casmir Dulbinski, rearrested in 1957, to return from exile in Belorussia, despite the entreaties of Strods (LSA d. 258, l. 136).

Strods' premature death in 1962 — only three years after he had assumed the archbishopric following Springovics — thrust a renewed succession crisis upon the Catholic Church. Dean Zachest of arch-Catholic Lattgalia was named by the Vatican as Strods' successor as apostolic administrator, but like Strods before him, the regime refused to accept him, threatening to close the Curia office in Riga.¹⁰⁵

Applying heavy pressure to Zāčest, the Latvian authorities forced him to resign and yield to Julijans Vaivods, whom the state had long favored.¹⁰⁶ After earlier having enjoyed milder treatment than the Lithuanian Catholic Church, the Latvian Church had now become in fact less autonomous than the Lithuanian Church.

The travails of the Lithuanian Lutheran leadership continued, leaving them easy prey. As noted earlier, they lagged in international contacts and publications behind their co-confessionals in Estonia and Latvia and they were targeted for closures disproportionately. They were also the object of republic officials' attempts to eliminate their church structure, the Consistory. The plenipotentiary argued that the electoral period for its head, Vilhelmas Burkevicius, had ended and "since the consistory does not enjoy authority among the clergy or believers, its liquidation would not provoke reaction from believers."¹⁰⁷ The antireligious campaign in Lithuania thus hit not only believers, but also the Lutheran organization.

For individual clergy who were now monitored more closely, expressions of political dissent were punished by loss of certification. In one example, the funeral sermon of a Latvian Lutheran pastor equated the killing of a child by the military during target practice with murder, resulting in his loss of certification by the plenipotentiary.¹⁰⁸ In Estonia the monitoring was intensified by the formation in 1963 of local commissions to report on the content of sermons, as the state sought "deeper dissolution of religion ideas and superstition in church sermons and strict limitation of their content to the appropriate limits of the law." In particular, the Estonian authorities attacked "active propagation of passivity," arguing that "checks by propagandists keeps the clergy in line best of all" (ESA d. 28, l. 39–41).

BUREAUCRATIC FRICTION OVER THE NEW REPRESSION

The shift toward a hard line on religion precipitated some differences between CRC representatives and republic-level officials. In the case of Latvia, for example, the Council of Ministers pressed for a harsher policy toward the churches than that endorsed by the plenipotentiary. Commenting critically on the plenipotentiary's report, the point man at the CM, Eduard Berklavs, insisted on notification and approval by local authorities for the Lutherans' cemetery days and repairs to churches. Berklavs also masterminded the blanket rejection of registration requests

by the Catholic Church and the initial refusal to accept Strods as the successor to Springovics.¹⁰⁹ Berklavs was likely responsible for the ouster of the plenipotentiary and his replacement by a hard-liner in 1960.¹¹⁰

Tensions in Moscow also occurred over the shift in policy. As noted, the CRC chair during the earlier more liberal post-Stalin phase, Ivan Polyanski, was replaced by A. Puzin. The Central Committee apparatus criticized the “serious mistakes” of the CRC in religious policy; Puzin rebutted that these mistakes belonged to his predecessor.¹¹¹ Like the churches, the CRC sought to leverage the churches’ increased international contacts into greater resources, but was rebuffed by the Agitprop Department of the CPSU Secretariat.¹¹² Repeated proposals during this period to merge the CROC and CRC, on the grounds that foreign contacts required greater coordination and that the two councils were inconsistent in their policies, were rejected by the CPSU leadership (CDCD d. 54, l. 11–12).

CONCLUSION

There is little doubt of the impact on the churches and believers of these various measures of the Khrushchev repression. After rebounding during the earlier liberalization, church adherence now plummeted, particularly among Lutherans.¹¹³ Even holidays attendance fell off and many began to take rites in secret. Official estimates in Estonia claimed only 10–15% of church members were observing rites. Pilgrimage participation dropped, even in arch-Catholic Lithuania. As measured by participation in church rites, the drop among Catholics was certainly lower than among Protestants and Orthodox.¹¹⁴ Even with the cuts at Kaunas, the Catholic seminary there remained much more robust than that in Riga by the end of the repression.

This study shows that the Baltics were indeed caught up in the Khrushchev repression, a response to the rise in religiosity during the post-Stalin liberalization. In the case of the Baltic churches, however, this phenomenon naturally carried national overtones, given that most churches were national churches and that even leaders compromised by their rise to power under Stalin, such as Turs and Kiivit, sought to broaden the churches’ base after 1953.

The study demonstrates the intriguing cross-currents produced by bureaucratic tensions between the center and republic, as well as between party and state. Aware of confessional nuances and fearing the

impact on their productive relations with church leaders, plenipotentiaries often sought to soften the crackdown, as evidenced in their criticism of crude atheistic propaganda and church closures skewed in favor of national churches. In this they were often trumped either by hard-line republican officials, such as Pelsche and Berklavs in Latvia, or by Moscow's diktat. Just as the CRC underwent personnel change at the top, so too its plenipotentiaries in the Baltics were replaced as a result of the victory of the ideologues in this bureaucratic battle.

The study also suggests the cross-current that Soviet foreign policy can have on the implementation of religious policy. Because the Protestant churches, represented disproportionately in the Baltics, became a key part of the regime broadside against the Catholic Church under Pope John XXIII, republic level officials and plenipotentiaries were reluctantly forced to deal with the increased leverage, however limited, that these ties (WCC, LWF, etc) brought the churches on their institutional interests. Inclined to limit such contacts with Germany and Finland, they found themselves trumped by the Soviet leadership's new effort to use the churches as part of a broader policy shift toward the West, in particular on the German issue.¹¹⁵ Credibility with Western church interlocutors — even as the churches' institutional interests and those of believers were being curtailed — became tricky to maintain at the grass-roots level. Combined with this foreign policy imperative, republic policy often resulted in disproportionate pressures on non-national churches or sects, as well as on the Catholic Church. Although the religious repression under Khrushchev did not leave them unaffected, the foreign policy of the Soviets and the adaptation of republic officials to their national context produced asymmetrical implementation of this policy in the Baltics.

NOTES

1. In Lithuania, for example, Catholic confirmands in Lithuania rose from 43,000 in 1954 to 65,000 in 1956, before declining to 42,000 in 1957. The CRC also noted increases among Lutherans between 1954 and 1957, particularly regarding holidays and cemetery day events.

2. Bishop Casimir Dulbinski and seminary instructor Valerian Zondaks, sentenced earlier to long terms in prison but amnestied after 1954, were rearrested by the KGB, allegedly on the basis of previous mistakes in the amnesty process. Dulbinski was described in internal characteristic as an "active enemy of Soviet power and powerful bourgeois nationalist"; Zondaks was accused of arranging for the secret escape of a critical priest to the Vatican in 1950–1952.

3. The Council on Religious Cults was created by Stalin, along with the Council on the Russian Orthodox Church (CROC), in 1944 as a state body to oversee the affairs of non-Orthodox churches in the USSR.

4. Springovics was apparently unhappy with Father Buterovich's links with the KGB.

5. In particular, the plenipotentiary highlighted weaknesses in the party line that permitted group catechism of children.

6. Anderson 1994, 9, emphasizes the sects and Uniates in this revival of religion, but these documents suggest it was more widespread.

7. Analyzing the one-year increase in church adherence — 15% for baptisms, 23% for weddings in 1957 — the plenipotentiary attributes much of the increase to “multiple rites,” namely clergy insisting that parents marry and even be confirmed in the church before they would baptize their children. The pent-up demand was spent by later in 1958, according to ESA d. 22, l. 143–145.

8. In 1961, the Central Committee liquidated the Adventists’ religious center, affecting Baltic Adventists along with others throughout the USSR. The KGB’s role in eliminating the Adventists’ religious center and compromise its leaders and preachers, as well as the continuing effort to remove republican leaders in Latvia, among others, is found in CDCD d. 215, l. 78–80, N. 1380c (4 June 1962), Semichastny/KGB-CC. GARF d. 210, l. 57–61, N. 32-84c (5 Dec. 1960), Puzin-Central Committee; Directive N. 393–17 (21 June 1962), CM LSSR, “On the Liquidation of the Representative of Non-Existing Center All-Union Seventh-Day Adventists in Latvian SSR,” LSA d. 261, l. 32–33; ESA d. 26, l. 131–133, N. 17–83c (19 Dec. 1960), Puzin-Plenipotentiaries.

9. Karpov attacked the brochure as reflecting the soft line of the CRC and the alleged discrimination against the ROC in publications for churches. CDCD d. 53, l. 22, Memo (15 Mar. 1957), Chernenko/Snastin, indicated that reviews of the manuscript were negative.

10. See the analysis of Foreign Ministry in N. 511 (22 Dec. 1958), Medvedovskii-Puzin, GARF d. 172, l. 97–100, which sees the new pope as continuing Pius XII’s anticommunist stance.

11. Even Vatican overtures to the Serbian Orthodox Church were interpreted in this light.

12. The memo of Feb. 19, 1959 from both Councils to the Central Committee (GARF d. 188, ll. 22–25), confirms the main motive for permitting the Soviet churches to join the WCC was to “explode the influence of the Vatican as an international center.”

13. In its justification for the seizure, the government trumped up charges that private monies had been collected and used corruptly by the Klaipeda parish. The fallout from this action would be long-lasting, as repeated petitions would be circulated, demanding return of this church.

14. This document reveals “administrative overreaching” by local officials, such as writing themselves the requests to dissolve parishes and pressuring active churchgoers to nonetheless quit the *dvatsatka*.

15. The state claimed that the Latvian church leadership and parishioners supported the closures. LSA d. 155, l. 19–23 and d. 260, l. 2 and l. 11–12, among the numerous reports replete with statistics suggesting declining number of services at many parishes, especially Lutheran ones, and with allegations that the churches overestimate their members and underestimate their income.

16. This document reveals the case of Krudneri, Polva raion, which had been registered in 1956. The plenipotentiary reveals the supply-side orientation of the state: “This all indicates that it has become necessary to curtail the network of churches and prayer houses to a number reasonably approximating the true needs of believers.”

17. LSA F. 1419, d. 262, ll. 170–176. 74 of the 142 churches deregistered during the period 1950–1980 were Lutheran, 45 Russian Orthodox. Anderson (p. 66) sees local officials as more hard-line. This seems plausible, given their incentive system, but these later investigations suggest a considerable falloff of implementation and the limitations of central oversight, thus a softer line instead.

18. In Daugavpils, for example, repeated requests to reverse decisions to close a Lutheran church were rebuffed by the authorities.

19. In Talsi, Latvia, local authorities closed an Orthodox church and gave it to the Catholic church; the Latvian government reversed the “politically incorrect” decision to give the church to “the more reactionary Catholic church.” Krumin/CM LSSR-Prokofiev/Talsi Raiispolkom, (Feb. 1962), LSA F. 1448, d. 261, l. 1–5.

20. Of the 34 Lutheran parishes closed by 1960, 14 were Herrnhuter parishes.

21. The strategy involved “under the roof of Methodists, this remnant sect from bourgeois times will not conduct illegal meetings in numerous apartments and there is the possibility to limit its activities to the framework of existing laws on cults.” On the other hand, the state reckoned that managing the Methodists would be more complicated with the Herrnhuters.

22. For example, four of the seven complaints to reclaim closed churches in Lithuania in the second half of 1958 came from Lutherans.

23. "Despite the absence of sufficient information regarding the current Lutheran parish there to justify the closing," the state moved to close the church.

24. The plenipotentiary warned against organ concerts disguised as worship services and proposed forbidding them, using state cultural offices to perform such concerts.

25. The government set up a government commission to manage the Cathedral. Rasporiazhenie N. 400 (8 May 1959), Riga City Executive Committee, "On Repair and Exploitation of the Building Riga Cathedral Church," LSA d. 11, l. 92–93.

26. Letter, Cathedral Organist Nikolai Kachalov, (20 Oct. 1958) to Otto Latsis, CM LSSR; Letters, Kachalov (18 Feb. 1959 and 13 Feb. 1959) to Riga City Ispolkom, alleging phony repairs on the organ by the church. Petition (10 Jan. 1959). LSA F. 1432, o. 6, d. 242, ll. 13–16, 30–31, 33–34, and 37.

27. The commissions of "authoritative specialists" found that the organ was not kept in necessary order, the building lacked heat and was in need of repair, and that repairs would cost 1.1 million rubles. It concluded that "the Cathedral has more importance as a museum than as a church for the goal of services" and not surprisingly recommended giving the building to the state. N. 3c (23 Jan. 1959), Information Report Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 257, l. 139–140.

28. The state forbade the distribution of Turs' appeal, on grounds that it was illegal to solicit contributions outside the particular parish. Turs solicited funds and organ parts from the GDR as well. His threat to resign was apparently made during a meeting of the church leadership in May 1959, in response to dissatisfaction with his role in the cathedral issue.

29. Turs appealed to the Soviet Peace Committee to "defend my conduct of the worship service for peace so that the prohibition of the service by the local government may be annulled" and warned of the "foreign anti-Soviet propaganda" which it would cause.

30. LSA d. 11, N. 315 (30 April 1959) Turs-Restberg, l. 63–64; N. 60 (7 May 1959), Restberg-Puzin, l. 76; and N. 83 (7 May 1959) Restberg-Puzin, l. 82. In "What has the Ev. Luth. Church of Latvian SSR Done to Promote Peace in the World and for Friendship among Peoples and How Has it Maintained Relations with Christian Churches Abroad?" Turs recapitulated to officials the church's peace activities since 1946 and attempted to invoke his West German ties to reverse the state's decision. The document is found in N. 20 (11 Feb. 1959) Restberg-CRC, LSA d. 11, ll. 30–35.

31. Rejecting such merger pressure, the plenipotentiary blamed the rise in Baptist activity on such administrative overreaching.

32. The plenipotentiary argued that the Reformed church was heavily damaged, in a bad location, and less adaptable for state use than New Gertrude church. Merger between Reformed and Lutheran groups also portended intramural disputes.

33. CDCD d. 126, l. 74–84, n. 157 (7 April 1959), Karpov-CC/CPSU, "Memorandum of Conversation, Patriarch Aleksei and Met. Nikolai of 2 April 1959," indicating the Patriarch's agreement to close monasteries in Moldavian SSR and to forbid admission to the remaining monasteries to those under age 30. l. 146–147, Snastin/Agitprop Dept.-Central Committee (31 July 1959) criticizing CROC's coordination of harsh measures with the Patriarch for making the plenipotentiaries de facto part of the church apparatus.

34. This confirms that the personnel change was precipitated by the approval of church construction in Daugavpils by the previous plenipotentiary, Pizans. See also CDCD d. 190, l. 105–107, N. 7c (21 April 1961), Pelsche-CC/CPSU and l. 108 (15 Aug. 1961), Snastin/Morozov, Note to the Files. This case would support Anderson's conclusion (pp. 27–28) that regional party officials could trump the CRC in a power struggle.

35. Anderson (pp. 55–56) goes so far as to conclude that the number of Lutheran churches actually increased during the Khrushchev period, which seems exaggerated, though Lutherans certainly emerged less scathed than the ROC and Baptists.

36. The CRC favored permitting the Baptists to build churches, rather than pressure apartment owners to terminate rental contracts.

37. The regime intensified this pressure in 1961 by decertifying some Lutheran pastors known for requesting registration and for religious activism among unrepatriated Germans.

38. The plenipotentiary rejected the petition, arguing that Riga churches were only 19 km away and that petitioners had collected signatures by alleging plans of a collective farm to seize the church.

39. For example, in the first half of 1959, Strods requested registration for 10 parishes and completion of construction on five buildings, all of which were rejected. Often local parishioners sent formal complaints to Riga regarding these issues.

40. N. 3c (23 Jan. 1959), Information Report Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 257, l. 135. N. 20c–11c (18 May 1962), Liepa/Sakharov-Raion Executive Committees, “On Monitoring and Submission of Overviews of Composition and Use of Monetary Funds in Religious Organizations,” LSA d. 261, l. 61–65. LSA d. 260, l. 2 and 5 alleges underreporting of income by pastors and tax hikes on them.

41. N. 4/32 (5 Oct. 1961), J. Fredrickson, Chair of Juridical Commission of CM LSSR, LSA F. 938, o. 6, d. 91a, l. 105–108 rejects the need for particular Latvian decrees or legislation, indicating that the new 1961 Union legislation regarding cults provides sufficient legal basis.

42. For example, in Lithuania, see Lith SA d. 59, l. 50–51, and d. 61, l. 29, reporting that “the priests are removed from the executive organs of the parish, but parishioners are not the real masters.”

43. 25% of the literature confiscated by customs officials was religious in character, according to N. 2086c (12 Nov. 1958), Romanov/Glavlit-CC/CPSU, CDCD d. 88, l. 73–84. Émigré organizations are blamed in N. 1703 (14 Aug. 1959), Naidanov/Glavlit, “Note on Procedures for Control by Organs of Censorship of Literature Imported from Capitalist States,” CDCD d. 121, l. 122–130.

44. N. 60c (21 Feb. 1959), Karpov-CC/CPSU, CDCD d. 126, l. 22–24. Despite CROC’s political and practical objections, Glavlit sought successfully to eliminate the right of the ROC External Affairs Department to import foreign literature directly; the CC-CPSU concurred.

45. The CROC official noted that Comrade Alexandrov indicated the CPSU leadership wanted to retain central control of church publications.

46. In 1959, the state cut the printing of song sheets dramatically for Estonian Lutherans and completely cancelled publication of their almanac.

47. The plenipotentiary supported the church’s request, justifying it based on the importance of their international ties.

48. In 1960, the CPL head, Arvid Pelsche, bowed to CRC pressure on this issue, although he cut the print run. The arm-twisting of Pelsche needed to achieve even these modest levels of church publications is documented in N. 14c (Dec. 1960), Pizans-Secretary Voss, CPL, LSA d. 258, l. 48–49. 1600 New Testaments were approved for Latvia, although the state ordered Turs to use more for his work abroad. N. 20 (11 Feb. 1960), Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 155, l. 7.

49. The head of the Lithuanian church indicated that the Latvian church had rejected a request for 400 New Testaments in Latvian and suggested contacting the CRC instead.

50. For example, 40 priests gathered in Aglon in 1958. 50% of the pilgrims to Kannepene were from Lithuania.

51. Anderson (pp. 31–32). “On Liquidation of Monasteries on the Territory of the LSSR,” Decree N. 584, CM LSSR (15 Nov. 1958), based on Resolution N. 1159 of the CM USSR (16 Oct. 1958), “On Monasteries in the USSR.” Based on this resolution, the CRC reported plans to close one Catholic monastery and forbid new monks at two others, in anticipation of eventual closure. GARF d. 167, l. 43–47; LSA d. 256, l. 37–38.

52. Report, “On Facts of Charlatanism and Use of Superstition of Believers by Clergy of Muslim Confession, Armenian and Catholic Churches,” Ryazanov-Central Committee, N. 27–84c (25 Sept. 1958), GARF d. 167, l. 13–26.

53. Referring the new directive, CRC chair Ryazanov indicated to the Agitprop Department that it reversed earlier Soviet decisions from 1930 and 1945 which permitted religious rites in the home by registered clergy. N. 34–84c (15 Dec. 1960), GARF d. 210, ll. 65–66.

54. In meetings with CM LSSR officials and the plenipotentiary, Strods insisted on the need for 17 priests to conduct pilgrimage services in Aglon, but the plenipotentiary approved only 3–4, arguing that this suffices for similar services of the ROC in Moscow. Allegedly Strods agreed to abide by this stipulation. N. 27c (23 May 1959), Restberg-Puzin, and N. 32c (14 July 1959), Information Report Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 258, l. 60–62 and l. 82–83.

55. The state claimed the number of pilgrims to Aglon dropped by half — from 8,000 in 1959 to 3000–4,000 in 1960, according to N. 16c (30 Jan. 1961), Information Report Pizans-Puzin, LSA d. 260, l. 3. N. 36c (21 June 1959), Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 258, l. 107–109. N. 8c (20 Aug. 1960), Pizans-Puzin, LSA d. 259, l. 23–25.

56. “Since the absolute majority of the residents of monasteries are dropouts from life in Latvia, the question of creating work for them can be decided positively.” The state mobilized support from the nearby school personnel and kolkhoz for closing the nunnery in Aglon, as well as the monastery in Vilyani. N. 12c 911 March 1959), Restberg-CM LSSR, LSA d. 258, l. 2–7.

57. N. 2c (6 Feb. 1960), Information Report Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 258, l. 142. Arguing that the Moscow Patriarch had issued a directive against children participating, the plenipotentiary ordered Strods to likewise instruct his priests: "When children reach the age of maturity, they may themselves choose which path they go." LithSA d. 59, l. 50–51.

58. N. 24c (15 July 1958), Information Report Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 257, l. 33–34. The plenipotentiary opined that "since Turs faces several trips abroad again, it is not to be excluded that he will bring back something new."

59. In Latvia, 50 complaints were generated in 1961, a high number given past experience; the violations continued however. N. 16c (30 Jan. 1961), Information Report Pizans-Puzin, LSA d. 260, l. 10. However, apparently the violations continued. In 1962 the Chair of the Council of Ministers of LSSR, Krumins, criticized local officials for prohibiting cemetery days: "such administrative prohibition . . . is illegal and politically incorrect. It does not serve the interest of atheistic upbringing of workers." See N. 661c (6 June 1962), Krumins-Ispolkom chairs, LSA d. 268, l. 27–29.

60. The law was promulgated on March 16, 1961. Reflecting the importance of bells and music in the Baltic tradition, the Latvian plenipotentiary advised warnings, rather than fines, for violations. N. 212 (25 Sept. 1961), Sakharov-CM LSSR-Otdel Agitprop CC-CPL, d. 156, l. 56–57. N. 123 (18 July 1961), Sakharov-Iesmina (Valmiera raiispolkom chair), LSA d. 156, l. 38–39, in which the state threatens to cancel the registration of a church that does not curtail bell-ringing.

61. For example, Pastor Rozenwalds, freed in 1955, was now denied certification in 1958, on grounds that he had served in the Latvian Legion during World War II. N. 3c (23 Jan. 1959), Information Report Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 257, l. 142.

62. ESA d. 28, l. 68–70, N. 4 (3 March 1961), Veiderpass-Kaebin/CPE. The plenipotentiary indicated that he opposed the decision to permit such correspondence courses in 1956, but that the "international conditions" required it. In 1960 the CRC eliminated the courses.

63. In the 1959–1960 academic year, the state ex-matriculated nine and admitted only two of seven new applicants, leaving the Riga seminary with 20 students, as opposed to 30 the previous year; the Latvian officials were responding to the CRC directive "to eliminate those students who are very undesirable for us in the political context" N. 41c (24 Oct. 1959), Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 256, l. 116–119 and Excerpt from Protocol N. 16, Meeting of CRC, 6 July 1959. The students protested to Latvian officials and "responsible authorities" in Moscow, according to N. 2c (6 Feb. 1960), Information Report Restberg-Puzin LSA d. 258, l. 151.

64. ESA d. 26, N. 14 (9 Aug. 1960) Veiderpass-Lentsman/CPE-Muurisepp/CM ESSR. Pajula was approved by the Estonian Politburo on 30 Aug. 1960, according to CC-CP Estonia Archive, o. 1, d. 216, l. 23.

65. Znanie sought unsuccessfully to carve out a large role for itself in the state apparatus for religious policy, for example proposing to create an inter-ministry council to promote scientific atheism. CDCD d. 59, l. 27–28, N. 149 (23 May 1958), Mitin/Znanie-CC/CPSU and l. 29 Snastin and Ilichev/CC-CPSU (17 June 1958).

66. Beman's *KP* article was published 18 April 1958. Strods denied such an order and in fact upon investigation the plenipotentiary found no evidence of such an order. The CRC criticized as "poisonous" such propaganda by Komsomol, in N. 10–84c (2.6.58) Puzin to CC, GARF d. 148, l. 76–77.

67. Znanie was the forum for meetings and publicity for two such Latvian Catholic priests in 1958, one of whom later returned to the church, but was refused reregistration by the state. See LSA d. 258, l. 137. According to ESA, d. 26, l. 26–27, the Estonian plenipotentiary acted to place antireligious articles authored by former pastor Laubach in daily newspapers.

68. ESA d. 24, l. 172–173, Information Report Veiderpass-Puzin. The press "revelations" regarding alleged economic venality, phony healing services, moral flaws of pastors provoked numerous complaints to the officials from the churches.

69. Anderson (pp. 46–49). N. 32c (14 July 1959), Information Report Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 258, l. 82. The "new Soviet traditions" detracted from church rites, despite Turs' spin that these were merely religious rites in new form.

70. CDCD d. 554, l. 42, Ilichev/Chernenko-CC/CPSU (16 June 1959) hailed the fact that ". . . the social organs of Estonia strive to imbue the old folk holidays, customs and traditions with new content."

71. CDCD d. 190, l. 71–74, N. 133c (3 March 1961), Pelsche/CPL-CC/CPSU. Latvian CP leader Arvids Pelsche criticized the articles ("give support to the remaining nationalist elements in the

republic . . . and directly contradict the policy of the CC CPLatvia in relation to the holiday Ligo") and the CPSU leadership agreed to correct the views.

72. Some local officials forbade confirming more than two youth in one service, in order to heighten the success of the secular coming-of-age ceremony.

73. Fletcher 1973, Chs. 5 and 6. ESA d. 26, l. 118, N. 11–83c (6 Sept. 1960) Puzin-Veiderpass, referring to CC-CPSU decision of 18 Aug. 1960, "Widening of Foreign Activities of Religious Centers of USSR in Fight for Peace."

74. Fletcher 1973, Ch. 4. The CRC/CROC report indicates the state's early disappointment with the unrepresentative character of the Western delegates to the 1958 CPC congress. Puzin and Cherednyak-CC/CPSU, N. 289c–13/84c (14 June 1958), GARF d. 166, l. 111–113.

75. ESA d. 27, l. 16–17, "Protocol N. 5, Session of CRC (31 Jan. 1961)" indicating the plan of goals and agenda for the upcoming CPC assembly in Prague, in consultation with the GDR.

76. Bourdeaux 1966, pp. 223–231, and Fletcher 1973, pp. 119–128, seem to ignore the alarm regarding the Vatican as a motive and even sees an interest in rapprochement with the Catholic church by the Kremlin. Here the archival record serves as a significant corrective.

77. CDCD d. 92, l. 76–79, N. 5–85c (19 Feb. 1959), Puzin and Karpov-CC/CPSU. Both CRC and CROC supported ROC membership in the WCC, "which will decrease Vatican influence as an international center." LithSA d. 53, l. 35–36, N. 1–70c (31 March 1959), Puzin-Rugenis.

78. N. 1/9–1518 (19 July 1961), A. Krokin-Puzin, GARF d. 125, l. 5–7. The KGB informed the CRC that Vatican prelate Willebrands went to Holland to meet Visser't Hooft of the WCC, arguing that admitting the ROC to the WCC would derail ecumenical efforts by the Vatican and that the Vatican had directed its representatives in Protestant/Orthodox societies to "take action against the new maneuver of the Moscow Patriarchate."

79. The regime pressed the Patriarch to issue a public denial of such participation amidst Italian publicity regarding an alleged meeting between the ROC and Papal Nuncio in Vienna. CDCD d. 126, l. 134, Ilichev-CC/CPSU (12 June 1959).

80. The cautious initiatives of the ROC toward the WCC during 1958–1960, and the state's analysis and steering of this process are detailed in CDCD d. 126, l. 187–191, N. 372c (29 July 1959), Cherednak/CROC-CC/CPSU and l. 223–226, N. 472c (29 Sept. 1959), Vasiliev/CROC-CC/CPSU. See also CDCD d. 162, l. 1–4, N. 1c (3 Jan. 1960), Karpov-CC/CPSU. A WCC delegation to the USSR in 1959 explored the issue of membership with the Soviet Lutheran churches.

81. Kiivit argued that the ties with the LWF would strengthen the Estonian church vis-à-vis the émigré churches. N. 21–89c (20 March 1959), Puzin-MID, GARF d. 189, l. 28.

82. The Finns saw the LWF as providing cover against domestic criticism of such a shift, according to ESA d. 24, l. 105, N. 10 (3 May 1959) Veiderpass-Puzin-Lentsman-Muurisepp.

83. For example, Turs indicated to a visiting WCC delegation that the Latvian church represented 600,000–700,000 members organized in 280 parishes.

84. CDCD d. 91, l. 32–34, N. 203c (23 April 1958), Karpov-CC/CPSU indicates that the regime was pleased with the "blow against Berlin Bishop Dibelius" (head of the EKD and vociferous opponent of the GDR) from a West German delegation hosted by the ROC in 1958.

85. Future Bishop Edgar Hark of Estonia led the Baltic delegation, along with the ROC Exarch in East Berlin. N. 49c (8 Dec. 1958), Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 257, l. 113–121, containing the report of V. Ozolins from the Latvian Lutheran church.

86. N. 12–84c (13 May 1960), Puzin-CC/CPSU, GARF d. 209, l. 46. The Soviet Embassies in Germany concluded that visits by the Soviet Lutheran churches "help the transformation of the clergy of the GDR toward a loyal position toward the government of the GDR, assist in diffusing anti-Soviet libel and strengthening position of opponents of atomic arming of Bundeswehr in the FRG." Puzin-CC/CPSU N. 26–84c (22 Sept 1960), GARF d. 209, l. 149. Contacts with the Weimar Circle ("organized to counter the reactionary policy of German church leadership of Dibelius") were supported in CDCD d. 190, l. 48–51, N. 34c Puzin-CC/CPSU and Snastin/Morozov (20 Feb. 1961).

87. N. 29c (24 Oct. 1962), Liepa-Puzin, LSA d. 261, l. 85–95. The state received two separate reports from church officials regarding this visit. The reports suggest that the GDR church leaders were particularly interested in availability of theological literature and training in Latvia.

88. CDCD d. 162, l. 65, N. 26–84c (22 Sept. 1960), Puzin-CC/CPSU, in which the Conference of Lutheran Minority Churches is described as "opposing the influence of the Vatican and Catholic church in states where this church is dominant."

89. State officials took satisfaction in Turs' toning down of such efforts thereafter, seeing this as part of the "dying character" of the Lutheran church. N. 3c (23 Jan. 1959), Information Report Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 257, l. 139.

90. The Soviet authorities sent Bishop Turs and his adjutant, Voolaid, to the CDU congress in 1960, according to N. 12-84c (13 May 1960), Puzin-CC/CPSU, GARF d. 209, l. 46.

91. N. 18-84c (15.7.58), Puzin-CC/CPSU, GARF d. 166, l. 162 and N. 135c (30 May 1961) Puzin-CC/CPSU, GARF d. 1364, l. 120 indicate the continued travel ban on the Lithuanian Lutheran church representatives to meetings of the LWF in Gdynia 1958 and the LWF Executive Committee in Warsaw in 1961.

92. LSA d. 10, l. 141-146, with Strods' text indicating that it might be published if in full.

93. N. 5-85c (28 Feb. 1958), Puzin-CC/CPSU-MID, GARF d. 166, l. 23-27. The trip successfully achieved the goal to "widen contacts with Catholic circles in Italy to exert influence through them on the Vatican."

94. Both the CRC and the Soviet Peace Committee vied for the opportunity to invite Gress, but the Peace Committee won that battle; the Lithuanian Catholic hierarchy was clearly not involved at all. N. 31-84c (22 Oct. 1958), GARF d. 167, l. 40-42.

95. N. 61-89c (29 June 1959), Puzin-MID, d. 189, l. 108, rejected a trip to Ireland by Soviet Catholics.

96. Kiiivit advised against approval of an invitation to Pastor Eugen Bachmann of Akmolinsk to Germany, since this may "direct the German bishops' attention to the Germans in the USSR." ESA d. 24, l. 106-107, N. 10 (3 May 1959), Veiderpass-Puzin, Muurisepp, Lentsman. But Soviet authorities did hesitate to go so far as to deregister the Bachmann parish, fearing West German reaction. Puzin-CC/CPSU (24 Dec. 1959), GARF d. 188, l. 190-193. Later in the 1970s German/LWF contacts would be possible and eventually almost routine.

97. Estonian delegate Voolaid criticized Latvian Bishop Turs to Wolfgang Heyl, CDU leader, who in turn reported this to the Soviet Ambassador Pervukhin, according to CDCD d. 162, l. 40-41, N. 571 (8 July 1960), Ambassador Pervukhin-Andropov/CC/CPSU.

98. N. 35-84c (1 Dec. 1958), Puzin-CC/CPSU, GARF d. 166, l. 58-60. CDCD d. 162, l. 32-39, N. 21-84c (2 Aug. 1960), Puzin-CC/CPSU and Spravka (30 Dec. 1960), Snastin/Morozov-CC/CPSU.

99. N. 11c (16 Jan. 1961), Puzin-CC/CPSU, GARF d. 1364, l. 7. Seigewasser sought an invitation for Krummacher "to enable him to remove himself from the influence of reactionary all-German church leadership and attract him to loyal cooperation with the state organs of the GDR."

100. N. 1/9-1671 (9 Aug. 1961), Kotov-Puzin, GARF d. 1375, l. 8-10. According to the KGB, "the German friends consider that the invitation of Scharf to Moscow may be used by him against the policy of the GDR . . ."

101. N. 185c (20 Nov. 1962), Ryazanov-MID, GARF d. 1394, l. 73; ESA d. 30, l. 103, N. 17 (15 Nov. 1962), Veiderpass-Puzin.

102. The plenipotentiary describes Turs as having "little authority among believers, among pastors" and labels him "amoral" and "ambitious" particularly toward the Reformed and Lutheran churches in Lithuania.

103. N. 49c (17 Aug. 1957), Vereshagin/Plenipotentiary LSSR and Chenikov/CRC-Puzin, LSA d. 255, l. 134-146. In this analysis to the Moscow CRC, the characteristic of Strods is very negative. It emphasizes his alleged pressure to expand Catholic influence in Belorussia and among Catholics in Siberia, etc. and his dependence on the Vatican.

104. N. 32c (14 July 1959), Information Report Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 258, l. 82-83. State authorities did then grant him recognition as apostolic administrator.

105. For its part, the Vatican likely feared disruption in the church activity with Strods' death, as the state began to register priests without their being named by the Vatican. But the state accused Zachest of refusing to follow the state's recommendations and violating Soviet laws. N. 20c (21 July 1962), Liepa-Puzin, LSA d. 261, l. 59-60.

106. N. 4c (19 Feb. 1963), Information Report Liepa-Puzin, LSA d. 262, l. 16-17. After the CRC approved the removal of Zachest, he was called to the plenipotentiary's office Sept. 25, 1963 and told to name possible successors. The plenipotentiary approved Vaivods and arranged for him to meet with the Chair Krumins of the Council of Ministers, LSSR. Vaivods indicated he would "do all possible so that the church may live in peace and accord with the organs of

Soviet power.” Vainods’ letter to the Pope is found at N. 7c (6 April 1963), Liepa-Puzin, LSA d. 262, l. 32–36.

107. LithSA d. 56, l. 21–22, N. 11c (March 1960) Rugienis-Puzin. The authorities also advocated elimination of Reformed and Old Believer religious centers.

108. Allegedly Pastor Kalks said “you cannot trust weapons to idiots; then death would not walk the streets and fields.” N. 16c (30 Jan. 1961), Information Report Pizans-Puzin, LSA d. 260, l. 18.

109. N. 3c (23 Jan. 1959), Information Report Restberg-Puzin, LSA d. 257, l. 138, 143–144. Strods was faulted for political abstinence and not criticizing “reactionary forces” in Lebanon and France: “Thus it is clear that the leadership of the Catholic Church refrains from any kind of participation in the matter of the fight for peace.”

110. N. 4c (3 May 1960), Information Report Pizans-Puzin, LSA d. 259, l. 6. Pizans reported directly to the Latvian party leader, August Voss, suggesting his caution regarding republican authorities.

111. N. 7–85 (11 June 1958), Puzin-CC/CPSU, GARF d. 166, l. 110. Anderson (p. 26) addresses the sacking of Karpov of the CROC in this regard, but does not explore the parallel purge on the CRC side.

112. Puzin argued that the churches “may become an active channel of Soviet propaganda and counterpropaganda abroad,” but his request to create a Department of International Affairs within the CRC was rejected by Snastin and Chernenko, according to N. 35–84c (1 Dec. 1958), Puzin-CC, CDCD d. 91, l. 161–163.

113. N. 16c (30 Jan. 1961), Information Report Pizans-Puzin, LSA d. 260, l. 25. Latvian Lutheran baptisms dropped precipitously from 5305 to 3423 between 1958 and 1960; first communions by Catholics dropped from 4454 to 3657 during the same two years. Weddings and burials showed similar declines. ESA d. 28, l. 26, N. 1 (21 Jan. 1960) Veiderpass-Puzin, and l. 24–25, N. 2 (24 Jan. 1961), Veiderpass-Puzin.

114. Lith SA d. 58, l. 46–47, 66–71, no number (14 Jan. 1961), Information Report Rugienis-Puzin, indicated 1/3 drop in church attendance, dramatic drops in pilgrimages (roughly 20% of 1956 levels), and considerable drop in religious rites of baptisms, weddings, etc.

115. Fletcher 1973 (p. 152) sees this possibility from such international ties – “the benefits gained abroad might become too small to counterbalance the domestic difficulties” – but concludes for the 1960s that the “services rendered by the churches abroad entailed few if any counter-productive effects at home.”

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