→ History in the Making 6 (2000)

ISSUES IN SOVIET ANTI-RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGNING
A CASE STUDY OF THE SMOLENSK REGION DURING THE 1920s

Isaiah Gruber, Georgetown University[1]

Up to now, anti-religious propaganda has not attracted the special attention of enlightenment organizations, and that is why it has been conducted in a very unorganized, unsystematic, and often absolutely improper manner.

From a letter of May 26, 1925, issued to all volost' committees of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) and of the Russian Leninist-Communist Youth League in the Smolensk Guberniya[2]

The evidence of the Smolensk Archive[3] suggests that anti-religious campaigning ranked as one of the least organized of all Communist Party activities during the 1920s. Secret communiqués, interdepartmental reports, official directives, and the protocols of a variety of Party organizations all point to the eclectic and uncoordinated nature of the Soviet regime's "assault on heaven."[4] To be sure, some of these allegations may be dismissed as *topos*, the usual complaints of overburdened and understaffed agencies, or as exaggerated attempts to stimulate greater activism on the local level. However, explicit expressions of dissatisfaction are not the only indications of a lack of planning and organization along the so-called anti-religious front. The oft-alleged "weakness"

[1] This paper was written before the following monograph could be incorporated: William Husband, *"Godless Communists": Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

[2] National Archives and Records Administration, "Records of the All-Union (Russian) Communist Party, Smolensk District, Record Group 1056," WKP 396, l. 49.

[3] The Smolensk Archive consists of 536 files captured first by the Germans and then by the Americans during the Second World War. It contains approximately 200,000 pages of documentary evidence on Communist Party activity in the Smolensk Guberniya and Western Oblast' from 1917 to 1938. The Archive is preserved on rolls of microfilm (series T87) at the National Archives (site II), College Park, Maryland.

[4] See John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State, 1917-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), 196-216; Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams. Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 105-109; Glennys Young, *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Village* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 79ff; Arto Luukkanen, *The Party of Unbelief: The Religious Policy of the Bolshevik Party* (Helsinki: SHS, 1994), 208ff.

(*slabost'*) of efforts to eradicate popular religious belief is borne out by the exceptional disarray and, alas, comparative poverty of relevant portions of the Archive.[5]

The documents dealing with anti-religious campaigning are, for the most part, hortatory in nature – expressions of intention rather than praxis. As such, they provide a good record of the aims, intentions, and *mentalité* of leading *antireligiozniki* in the Smolensk Guberniya and Western Oblast'.[6] However, their account of concrete actions and results is significantly weaker, furnishing little basis for an uninterrupted narrative of anti-religious efforts during the 1920s. Instead of seeking to bridge the evidentiary gaps, then, this paper will proceed thematically to discuss certain salient issues on which the documents of the Smolensk Archive can indeed shed new light: perceptions of the enemy, the choice of strategies and tactics, and the proposed role of the Communist Youth League (Komsomol) in anti-religious activity.

The Enemy

In the words of Merle Fainsod, whose classic study *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* remains the only full-length monograph based on the Smolensk Archive, the writings of party officials concerned with anti-religious work show "a grudging evaluation of the strength of a redoubtable enemy."[7] This enemy was usually the Russian Orthodox Church, or, perhaps more accurately, the Russian peasant's attachment to Orthodox custom and ritual.[8] Yet the Jewish religion also commanded the allegiance of a substantial

[5] In general, the files dealing specifically with anti-religious activity are less organized and less complete than the records kept by party organs such as the Komsomol. For example, the proceedings and decisions of meetings of the Bureau of the Orgbureau Central Committee for the Western Oblast' (WKP 40) are accompanied by a typed list of contents, complete with dates and page numbers. Nothing like this exists for any of the documents dealing with anti-religious campaigning, which tend to include such items as scrap paper and the discarded drafts of prepared speeches. In fact, the better organized materials touching on this subject are found not in the files kept by anti-religious organizations themselves, but in the records of other Party committees and organizations (e.g., Gubkom, Ukom, Komsomol). See WKP 40, 44, 458-461.

[6] The Smolensk Guberniya comprised ten uezds: those of Belyi, Demidov, Dorogobuzh, Gzhatsk, Roslavl', Smolensk, Sychevka, Vyazma, Yartsevo, and Elnya. It lasted until 1929, when it was replaced by a different administrative structure, the larger Western Oblast' (which was also seated in Smolensk). The Western Oblast' comprised 91 raions. See Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), *passim*.

[7] Fainsod, 430.

[8] There is, of course, an ongoing debate concerning the strength of the Russian peasant's attachment to Orthodox Christianity. In this paper, however, the concern is not so much the actual strength of that attachment but how it was perceived by contemporary *antireligiozniki*. A variety of documents indicate that the peasantry did convey the impression of holding firmly to Orthodoxy. See, for instance, WKP 458, l. 58b. See also Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*

minority of the population, and consequently Passover was as much a target of springtime anti-religious campaigns as was Easter.[9] Moreover, "sectarianism" – that is, evangelical or Protestant Christianity – had emerged as a dynamic competitor in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution. With the preferential status of the Orthodox Church abolished, Baptists and Old Believers alike experienced new freedom to worship as they chose and to pursue converts.[10] According to a report of November 17, 1925, Old Believers outnumbered sectarians nearly five to one in the Smolensk Guberniya,[11] but it was the latter who often fascinated and disturbed atheist activists with their "conscious emulation of Bolshevik codes and rituals in order to compete with them."[12] Each of these groups – Orthodox Christians, Jews, sectarians, and Old Believers – received separate treatment in official surveys and descriptive reports. Later, we shall consider whether the *antireligiozniki* were able to develop specific, practical means of countering their various activities based on this information.

What was the condition of the enemy – or enemies – in the eyes of communist activists? How did the latter form their impressions of the population's attachment to religion and of the prospects for "correcting" the situation? What sources of information did they have at their disposal, and how did they transform this into propaganda?

The process of information-gathering, as might be expected, began before the introduction of anti-religious campaigning. Throughout 1922, the Cheka establishment in Roslavl' Uezd provided Party Headquarters in Smolensk with top-secret reports that included information about the district's religious situation. These reports indicate that support for the Church was rather high, even though the institution itself had recently split

Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 65-69, 184-185, 253-254.

9 The anti-Paschal campaign of 1930 was designed to culminate on the last days of the Jewish Passover holiday (April 19-20) with special rallies on the theme of "Religion as a hindrance to the building of socialism." The campaigners sought to prevent the observance of religious holidays on the part of both Christian and Jewish believers. WKP 460, l. 1.
The Jewish population of the Western Oblast' was given as 94,445 in the census of 1926. Fainsod, 440.

10 See Boleslaw Szczesniak, trans., ed., *The Russian Revolution and Religion: A Collection of Documents Concerning the Suppression of Religion by the Communists, 1917-1925* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 9, 22, 202; Stites, 121-122; Luukkanen, 92-95, 181-186; David E. Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union: A Study of Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975), 27, *passim*.

11 WKP 458, l. 58b.

12 Stites, 121; see also Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society between Revolutions, 1918-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 163.

into two antagonistic camps (*lagerya*).[13] Both peasants and workers opposed the confiscation of Church valuables, which had been decreed on February 23, 1922, considering it a ruse instigated by greedy Jews. Attempts at confiscation provoked stiff resistance and outbreaks of anti-Semitic violence.[14]

Peasants were particularly vehement in clinging to and defending their religion. In his report of April 30, 1922, Bureau Chief Krotovokin wrote that the majority were hostile to the Communist regime, and he cited the confiscation of Church valuables as the principle cause of their discontent.[15] Workers were more concerned with economic matters, but they were suffering from a severe pay shortage and doubted that "Communist Power" had much to offer them. As a result, they too were susceptible to the Church's "counter-revolutionary" ideology.[16]

In 1924, however, a general survey of the political and economic situation of the entire Smolensk Guberniya painted a much rosier picture.[17] With ill-concealed delight, the Party noted that the Church schism had intensified. Happily, it seemed that both sides were too busy fighting one another to put up much resistance to Communist rule. In consequence, the clergy's influence over the masses was allegedly declining, and the only Orthodox believers left were "old women, old men, former bureaucrats [*chinovniki*], and so on."[18]

On the other hand, sectarianism was admittedly on the rise in the Smolensk, Roslavl', and Dorogobuzh Uezds, where it had an estimated three thousand adherents. However, since evangelical sects drew their converts principally from the ranks of the Orthodox Church, the latter (in its two manifestations) had mounted an "intensified struggle" against them. Thus, with the Orthodox Churches "exposing the tricks of sectarians," and *vice versa*, it seemed that the Party could simply wait for religion to destroy itself.[19]

13 In 1922 the Church had split between the followers of Patriarch Tikhon ("Tikhonites"), who sought to follow a policy of uncompromising resistance to the Soviet regime, and those of Bishop Antonin ("Renovationists"), who adopted a more conciliatory stance.

14 WKP 273, ll. 140, 154, 410.

15 WKP 273, l. 197c.

16 WKP 273, ll. 1-4, 101, 140, 248, 356, etc. See also Fainsod, 156-157.

17 The Guberniya Party Committee had appointed a special commission "to photograph the actual condition of the Smolensk countryside" with respect to five areas of concern. The fourth of these categories was "Hostile forces of the countryside, such as: churchmen, sectarians, the use of rural darkness and ignorance [*ispol'zovanie derevenskoi temnoty i nevezhestva*]." WKP 278, l. 58.

18 WKP 278, l. 32.

19 WKP 278, l. 32.

Yet this was not the whole story, if indeed it was anything but mere wishful thinking or gratifying propaganda. On May 27, 1925, L. Divenkov, the official responsible for propaganda in Yartsevo Uezd and an anti-religious enthusiast, filed a detailed report in which he described the situation as "DANGEROUS."[20] He reiterated one point from the 1924 survey, stating that few besides the elderly bothered to attend church any longer. By his count, average attendance in most Orthodox parishes had fallen from about three hundred to only fifteen or twenty. Consequently, many priests were experiencing financial difficulties; one had allegedly stated that he received only eighteen kopecks per month.[21] But the remainder of Divenkov's report was a ringing denunciation of the complacency which apparently prevailed at the Guberniya Party Headquarters in Smolensk.

According to Divenkov, the Yartsevo Uezd had a population of 173,000 and contained fifty-seven Orthodox churches. Thirty-nine of these were Renovationist, and the remainder Tikhonite in orientation. Although attendance had declined severely, the churches remained by far the largest and most powerful of all religious – and anti-religious – organizations in the uezd. Divenkov noted that the overwhelming illiteracy rate (eighty percent) worked in favor of established religion, which alone possessed the extensive organizational structure necessary for reaching the masses on a personal level.[22]

So much, then, for the alleged disintegration of the Orthodox Church. Next Divenkov turned his attention to "even more dangerous and long-lived enemies – that is, the sectarians of every hue [*eshchë bolee opasnye i dolgovechnye vragi – eto sektanty vsekh ottenkov*]." By his account, there were some two hundred sectarian believers, mainly evangelicals, in the city of Yartsevo alone, and others scattered throughout the uezd. He had also learned of the existence of a society of Seventh-Day Adventists, about twenty in number, in Demidov Uezd. To judge from his statistics, sectarianism was almost certainly more prevalent than Judaism in Yartsevo, where there were only two synagogues serving an unknown number of practitioners.[23]

Against this impressive array of religious activity and organization in Yartsevo, Divenkov could posit only two anti-religious circles of thirty-five members each.[24] These

---

20 WKP 459, doc. 1, l. 1. Emphasis in the original.

21 WKP 459, doc. 1, l. 2.

22 WKP 459, doc. 1, l. 1.

23 WKP 459, doc. 1, l. 1.

24 The minutes of an anti-religious circle (*kruzhok*) led by Divenkov himself are included in the Smolensk Archive as WKP 459, doc. 9 (9 pp.). The first gathering of this group occurred on December 10, 1924, and was attended by eight persons. Thereafter, attendance jumped to eighteen but soon stabilized at fourteen. The records conclude with the fourteenth meeting, which took

circles remained for the most part inactive and therefore useless, like the many village "reading huts" (*izby-chital'ni*) which lacked basic reading material. Such considerations prompted Divenkov to stress, in concluding his evaluation of the religious situation in Yartsevo Uezd: "To close one's eyes, [or to say] that things have turned out well for us, must not be done. By their numbers they [the religionists] reveal our weakness. There are more priests than communists in the villages."[25]

Apparently Divenkov's warnings had some effect, for soon afterwards the Agitation and Propaganda (Agitprop) section of the Smolensk Guberniya Party Committee (Smolgubkom), in conjunction with the Organization of Friends of the Newspaper *Bezbozhnik* (ODGB) and the Communist Youth League (Komsomol), decided to conduct a thorough survey of religious and sectarian activity throughout the region. Local officials received instructions to begin collecting information "about priests and so on" in early July of 1925.[26] To underline the importance of this work, the relevant directives specified that it should occupy the leading anti-religious activists from local Komsomol cells, trade unions, and non-party organizations.[27]

The survey itself was entitled "Questionnaire concerning the Investigation of the Ecclesiastical-Sectarian Front and of Anti-Religious Work." Its sixteen questions were designed to provide the central administration with a basis for evaluating the strength of religious forces and how best to counter them. The main component was a chart summarizing information about eleven categories of religious personnel: priests, deacons, paid sacristans [*shtatnye d'yachki*], members of Church councils, evangelicals, Stundists, Baptists, Old Believers, rabbis, synagogue managers, and believers of other faiths. Each group was to be classified by social background, sex, age, level of education, degree of economic prosperity, and a few other characteristics. Thus, for instance, one particular volost' reported having eight priests, seven of whom were over forty years old. In the same district, there were two deacons, six sacristans, fifty-five members of Church councils, and eighty-five evangelicals.[28] Of the evangelicals, more than forty percent had completed some form of higher education, more than half were women, and more than sixty percent had not reached their fortieth birthday. Clearly, then, the so-called

---

place in April 1925. It is therefore possible, but not necessarily creditable, that this circle could boast thirty-five members by May 1925, when Divenkov delivered his report.

25 WKP 459, doc. 1, l. 2.

26 The Dorogobuzh Uezd Committee issued the appropriate directive to all subordinate volost' committees on July 8, 1925. The original deadline for completion and delivery of all investigative work was August 1, but that was later extended to October 1. WKP 458, ll. 2-3.

27 WKP 458, ll. 2-4.

28 Accompanying sheets listed by name each of the 155 religious workers included in the survey. In this volost', at least, there was no simple fudging to avoid the process of investigation.

sectarians had encountered some success in their conscious attempt to appeal across social boundaries to people of all strata and backgrounds.[29]

The remaining sections of the questionnaire inquired about the earnings of religious personnel, the topics of their sermons, and the activity of Party members and cells of the ODGB. The answers to such questions were typically laconic; when asked for the historical origins and causes of sectarianism in his volost', one respondent wrote simply "*ne izvestna*" (*sic*). Yet even laconic answers could be quite revealing at times, as when the same respondent recorded that since 1921 sixty-nine individuals had converted to sectarianism whereas only one renounced it.[30]

The accumulated results of this survey produced a more sober evaluation of the enemy's strength in the guberniya than had been propagated in 1924. The official data ran as follows:

Orthodox churches	548	**Sectarian Believers**	at least 2,300 (sic)
priests	736	Evangelicals	1,911
Renovationists	344	Baptists	at least 400
Tikhonites	301	7^{Th} day Adventists	about 80
Undeclared	91	Pentecostals	about 20
Old Belief churches	16	**Jewish synagogues**	31
Believers	11,000	prayer houses	11

The report containing these figures, which was dated November 17, 1925, also included explanatory remarks concerning each of the four major religious groupings. The authors argued that although the majority of the population was ostensibly Orthodox, in reality the "semi-proletarian" segments of the citizenry had adopted a critical attitude toward this "ecclesiastical cult." Yet because they remained indisposed to atheism and communism, many fell under the influence of sectarianism. The Smolgubkom considered that pacifist evangelical sects were particularly successful because they attracted young men who wanted to escape service in the Red Army. All told, the sectarians were growing at the rate of about two hundred a year. As for the Old Believers, they remained as "fanatic" and "intolerant" as ever, in many cases refusing to send their children to school with "tobacco-smokers" and "*inomyslyashchie* [those who think differently]." The party thus conceded the tremendous staunchness of Old Belief, but it did not seem overly concerned about the possibility of its growth. Finally, it remarked that Judaism was intimately bound up with questions of material welfare, to the extent that "the struggle

[29] WKP 458, ll. 5-21. See Stites, 121.

[30] WKP 458, l. 7b.

with the Jewish religion should be first of all founded on the defense of the economic interests of the Jewish masses from the robbery of its religious clique."[31]

Whether or not these judgments were accurate, they do show that by late 1925 the Communist Party leadership in Smolensk was making clear distinctions between its various enemies on the "anti-religious front." Its evaluation of those enemies stemmed from a serious, concerted, guberniya-wide process of data collection possibly brought on by internal dissent and carried out by local officials and activists. It remains to be seen what practical use, if any, the region's *antireligiozniki* were able to make of this newfound information.

Strategies and Tactics

Following the formulation of Maksim Gorky, Richard Stites has characterized the dilemma of anti-religious campaigning as the choice between Godkilling and Godbuilding. Advocates of the first strategy aimed to liquidate religion; proponents of the second sought to substitute a new, socialist religion for existing faith structures. Anatolii Lunacharskii, the head of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (Narkompros), was the most prominent Godbuilder, while the central figure of Godkilling was Emelyan Yaroslavsky (*né* Minei Izrailovich Gubelman), founder of the journal *Bezbozhnik* (*The Godless*).[32]

The strategy of choice in the Smolensk Guberniya during the 1920s was Godkilling. Notwithstanding that the vast majority of peasants could not read, the official policy of Smolensk Agitprop stated: "The journal *Bezbozhnik* should play a colossal [*gromadnaya*] role in the proliferation of the ideas of godlessness among the extensive masses of backward peasants."[33] A position paper of 1925 on "Contents, Organizational Forms, and Methods of Anti-Religious Propaganda in the City and Countryside" asserted that all anti-religious circles and clubs in the guberniya fell under the authority of the regional branch of Yaroslavsky's Society of the Godless (*Obshchestvo Bezbozhnikov*).[34] Similar statements abound in other documents of the Archive.[35] Clearly, then, those concerned with anti-religious campaigning in the Smolensk region belonged to

[31] WKP 458, ll. 58-59.

[32] Stites, 101-105. See also Young, 80ff; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, The USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 197.

[33] WKP 458, l. 27.

[34] WKP 459, doc. 7, l. 2.

[35] In 1925, for example, local leaders in the Smolensk Guberniya received a number of materials designed to help in the struggle against religion. Virtually all of them made mention of the Union of the Godless and its leading role on the "anti-religious front." The primary practical means of struggle was to be the establishment of new cells of that Society. WKP 458, ll. 26-36.

Yaroslavsky's grouping; that is to say, they were propagandists opposed to religion in any form.

This choice of strategy dictated tactics. Rather than seeking to provide the peasantry with an attractive spiritual substitute for religion, anti-religious activists in the Smolensk region aimed to eradicate religious belief by "unmasking" God and the Church, or by "proving" the superiority of science over faith. The principal means of accomplishing these ends were lectures, debates, sacrilegious plays, and "rallies of an anti-religious character [*mitingi antireligioznogo kharaktera*]." Ironically, however, these actions served to establish an alternate ritual of sorts, insofar as the anti-religious calendar essentially mimicked the religious one. It was during religious holidays that the godless girded themselves to smash religion, and hence the main events in a typical activist's year were the anti-Christmas [*antirozhdestvenskie*] and anti-Paschal [*antipaskhal'nye*] campaigns.[36]

The archival records of such campaigns fall into two basic categories: documents written in 1923-25 and those produced in 1929-30. As expected, the former describe a rather disorganized, unsystematic, and unsuccessful application of Godkilling techniques, while the latter portray a much more regularized and effective program of work. Unfortunately, there are no records of the transition period between these two phases of anti-religious activity.[37] However, the source base does permit a comparison of five important campaigns: the anti-Christmas campaign of 1923-24, the anti-Paschal campaign of 1924, a campaign against Judaism in the fall of 1929, the anti-Christmas campaign of 1929, and the anti-Paschal campaign of 1930. These suffice to illustrate the evolution of anti-religious tactics and methods in the Smolensk region during the 1920s.

The first anti-Christmas campaign in the country had taken place in December 1922 and January 1923. Komsomol members burned God in effigy, mocked priests, read out inflammatory lectures, chanted sacrilegious slogans, and otherwise managed to offend the sensitivities of virtually everyone but themselves. The overwhelmingly negative popular reaction to these antics prompted anti-religious leaders to rein in their subordinates and to be more cautious in the future.[38]

[36] A report of 1925 entitled "On Anti-Religious Propaganda in the City and Countryside" termed KomRozhdestvo (Komsomol Christmas) and Kompaskha (Komsomol Easter/Passover) the two "fundamental campaigns" of anti-religious activity. WKP 459, doc. 11, l. 1. See also WKP 278, l. 82; Young, 96, 100-103; Kenez, 183-184.

[37] In 1924, the foremost anti-religious activist, Emelyan Yaroslavsky (see above, p. 8), chose to discontinue Komsomol Christmas and Easter festivals. The holidays were revived only in 1928-29. Since these biannual campaigns formed the cornerstone of anti-religious activity in rural regions such as Smolensk, evidence of "godless work" in the intermediary years is almost entirely lacking. See Young, 108-109.

[38] The first Komsomol Christmas gained such notoriety that as late as 1930 the Rzhev Komsomol leadership was still reminding its membership: "Without tolerating either the shadow of tolerance

This may help to explain why the anti-Christmas campaign of 1923-24 was apparently lackluster, at least in the Smolensk region. According to a report of the Agitprop section of the Smolensk Uezd Committee (Smolukom), the local library hung up a copy of an anti-religious journal – in all likelihood *Bezbozhnik*[39] – and posted a list of recommended anti-religious books.[40] Given that the library had a membership of only 228, however, these measures were unlikely to produce widespread results. The only other reference to the campaign indicated that it was intended primarily for the rural areas of the uezd; yet no details of its implementation in the countryside were given. Clearly, then, anti-religious campaigning ranked significantly below such urgent tasks as "the liquidation of political illiteracy" on Agitprop's list of priorities.[41]

The primary impediment to effective propaganda of all kinds, as the same document explained, was the sorry state of the Party's organizational structure. "Poor links with individual village cells," brought on largely by a lack of personnel, were said to cripple Agitprop's work.[42] Since directives of the time often went unfulfilled, it is doubtful whether the "anti-religious Christmas campaign" of 1923-24 had any impact whatsoever in the region's scattered villages.[43]

In formulating its plan of activity for April and May of 1924, Smolukom Agitprop placed little emphasis on anti-religious work. The anti-Paschal campaign was mentioned fourth in a list of six campaigns that included the spring planting, Lenin's birthday, and May Day. It was supposed to be carried out in conjunction with the

or of conciliatoriness toward religion, it is necessary at the same time to remember [that there is] a dangerous approach to the struggle with religion, meaning that exaggerations and carelessness in this [matter] lead to a kindling of religious fanaticism." Another document of the the time stressed the necessity of carrying out all aspects of anti-religious campaigning "with special tact [*s osobym taktom*]." WKP 219, l. 15; 460, l. 4. See also WKP 219, l. 16; "Materialy po Komsomol'skoi Paskhe i Komsomol'skomu Rozhdestvu," Jan. 27, 1923, in *Russkaya pravoslavnaya tserkov' i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo (1917-1941): dokumenty i fotomaterialy* (Moscow: BBISAA, 1996), 171; Young, 100-101; Stites, 109.

[39] Journals so displayed were referred to as *stengazety* or "wall newspapers." For a visual example, see Young, 120.

[40] Such lists of recommended reading were quite common, particularly for the young. See, for example, WKP 396, ll. 4-5.

[41] WKP 277, ll. 4-7.

[42] WKP 277, l. 4.

[43] See Young, 276. It is interesting to note that relevant documents refer to "anti-religious *Christmas*" and "anti-religious *Easter/Passover*" as well as to "*anti-Christmas* campaigns" and "*anti-Paschal* campaigns." The basic meaning is the same in both cases, but the first formulation seems to me to be an indication of the extent to which the *bezbozhniki*, despite their strategy of Godkilling, nonetheless incorporated some of the elements of religious belief into their own godless program. See WKP 277, ll. 7, 10a.

Komsomol, but no specific instructions or expectations were mentioned.[44] A subsequent report affirmed that the campaign had in fact taken place and that most libraries in the uezd had participated by hanging up *stengazety*. Again, however, there was no indication of additional activity or of results. The near-total absence of specific information concerning the anti-religious campaign allegedly carried out is striking in such a detailed report.[45]

A survey taken in advance of the XIIIth Smolensk Guberniya Party Conference (May 10, 1924) provides further evidence that the "anti-religious front" did not particularly concern Agitprop at the time.[46] None of the survey's nineteen questions inquired specifically about religious or anti-religious activity.[47] In such an overwhelmingly rural region still recovering from the Civil War, Agitprop's true function remained "Agroprop" rather than *bezbozhie*.[48]

Nonetheless, there was some effort to increase the number of anti-religious discussions and gatherings during the "off-season" (i.e., between religious holidays). This was listed as a goal in the Agitprop plan of May 1, 1924, and in fact two of the department's seventeen meetings in subsequent months were devoted to the question of anti-religious propaganda.[49] On a local level, up to five hundred people participated in seven different anti-religious assemblies, while in the city of Smolensk itself an "excursion concerning the anti-religious question" attracted an additional one hundred. Anti-religious activity remained relatively minor in comparison with other aspects of Agitprop's work – during the same period, the international political situation merited fifty-one conferences, gatherings, and rallies; and the women's movement, thirty-nine – but at least some intensification had taken place. The movement even gained a bit of momentum: in August and September of 1924, the uezd's reading huts held twenty-four discussions on the anti-religious question, in addition to thirty-eight each on agriculture and international politics. They also staged eighteen performances, some of which may have been "of an anti-religious character."[50]

---

44 WKP 277, l. 2b.

45 This was the periodic report of Smolukom Agitprop for the period from April 1 to October 1, 1924. WKP 277, ll. 10-11.

46 It will be recalled that a complacent attitude toward religion apparently prevailed at Party Headquarters in Smolensk at the time. See above, p. 4.

47 WKP 277, ll. 34a-34b.

48 See Fainsod, 17-18, 20-22; WKP 277, l. 10b.

49 WKP 277, ll. 36b, 44a, 47a.

50 WKP 277, ll. 32b, 44a. Some examples of the kinds of shows put on by anti-religious activists may be found in the files of the Gzhatsk Komsomol section. One play, entitled "A Trial of the Bible," was used during the anti-Christmas campaigns of 1923 and 1924. It featured a rather insecure and idiotic character who proved unable to answer such simple questions as his own age.

The bottom line, however, was that this modest upsurge in anti-religious activity had very little effect on the population of the district. The Agitprop report for the period of June to October, 1924, stated: "Notwithstanding a whole series of questions raised in the countryside concerning this issue, anti-religious propaganda in essence yields insignificant results."[51] Apparently the peasantry continued to prefer its "religious way of life" (*religioznyi byt*) to the new, socialist way of life (*novyi byt*).[52]

A more interested party, but one possessing fewer resources than Agitprop, was also setting up its anti-religious shop in the Smolensk region in the mid-1920s. The Organization of Friends of the Newspaper *Bezbozhnik* (ODGB) and its successor, the Union of the Godless (SB), sought to establish cells throughout the guberniya in 1924 and 1925. The ODGB, according to its charter, was a "voluntary" society dedicated to "active struggle for the complete emancipation of the laboring [masses] from spiritual slavery."[53] The ODGB insisted that all anti-religious campaigning be carried out under its banner, and it succeeded in convincing the Komsomol leadership to adopt this refrain as well. However, from the frequent complaints it seems likely that hardly anyone paid much attention to this demand.[54]

Be that as it may, the ODGB and SB came to dominate anti-religious campaigning, since they supplied virtually all of the materials used by local activists. Firstly, as mentioned, they distributed the journal *Bezbozhnik*, the literary cornerstone of the struggle against religion. Yet in Yartsevo Uezd, despite Divenkov's best efforts, only twenty-seven people had subscribed by February 1, 1925.[55] However, activists relied on the ODGB and SB for other materials as well, in particular the texts of anti-religious lectures and assorted propaganda. The associations of Godkillers distributed a number of reports and "informational letters" with such titles as "How to Cure the Disease of Faith with Science," "The Christian Holiday [Called] 'The Birth of Christ' and its Origin,"[56] "An

---

Predictably enough, the play ended when a jury of Komsomol members indicated their condemnation of this "Bible." WKP 401, ll. 75-79.

Since in late 1924 dramatic clubs were the most prevalent type of "circles" (*kruzhki*) in the Smolensk uezd – the district could boast of seventeen such clubs, in comparison with twelve agricultural, five journalistic, and four anti-religious circles – one is tempted to speculate that such societies collaborated with the reading huts in presenting spectacles related to the latter's topics of discussion. I did not find any conclusive proof of this, however. See WKP 477, 32b.

51 WKP 277, l. 45b.

52 WKP 277, ll. 36b, 47b.

53 WKP 396, l. 50. Cf. the charter of the Union of the Godless, which contains exactly the same words. WKP 458, ll. 31-34.

54 See, for instance, WKP 396, l. 49.

55 WKP 459, doc. 11, l. 1.

56 Anti-religious propaganda was not always entirely consistent. For instance, the author of this treatise asserts that the existence of Christ was unproven and in all likelihood a pure fiction. In "A

Agronomist on the Anti-Religious Front," and "Anti-Religious Work of the Teacher in School and Outside of School."[57] While some of these papers appear laughable (and many were greeted with jeers by assembled crowds), others were detailed, quasi-scholarly inquiries concerning real issues in the history of religion. In either case, these documents served as ammunition for activists like Divenkov, and anti-religious campaigning could not have been carried out without them.

Some of the available anti-religious literature focused specifically on sectarianism or on the Church schism, but overall anti-religious strategy had not yet evolved to the point of developing specialized tactics for use against different enemies. This was to change toward the end of the 1920s. Already in the first half of the decade, though, Jews had been treated somewhat differently than other religious groups, due to the formation of Evsektsiya, the Party's Jewish wing. In 1924, for instance, the Smolensk Uezd Evsektsiya recorded its intention of closing down two religious schools (*khedery*) and replacing them with secular Jewish schools.[58] But there is no record in the Archive of a specialized campaign directed exclusively at Jewish holiday observances until 1929.

According to official Komsomol documents, in fact, specialized anti-religious work of this type commenced after that organization's First Western Oblast' Conference in August 1929.[59] The first campaign directed specifically against the Jewish High Holy Days took place between October 1 and 24, 1929. Its primary purposes were to expose the "counter-revolutionary essence" of Judaism and to ensure 100 percent attendance at work during the holiday period. The Komsomol leadership in Smolensk issued specific instructions about how the campaign was to be conducted, including the following:

> In no case should the campaign be restricted to work among youth, but Komsomol organizations should unfold [their] work broadly among the Jewish population... The anti-religious campaign should also have its reflection in the work among youth of other nationalities.... During the days of the holiday, Komsomol cells should be the most active participants in organizing mass evening

Trial of the Bible," however, an ostensible member of the public demonstrates that the Pentateuch is not the oldest book in the world by authoritatively stating that Moses could not possibly have led the Israelites out of Egypt more than 1,250 years *before the birth of Christ*. WKP 401, l. 75; 458, ll. 39-40.

57 WKP 458, ll.37-45.

58 WKP 277, l. 37a. On the Evsektsiya, see Zvi Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

59 WKP 219, l. 1.

> [gatherings]..., providing for this [purpose] a strong anti-religious and artistic unit.[60]

The mention of an artistic unit (*khudozhestvennaya chast'*) is noteworthy, for *antireligiozniki* – and Soviet propagandists in general – had long recognized the great potential of artistic forms.[61] However, early anti-religious art was so offensive that it was counter-productive, and hence the Komsomol leadership felt the necessity to warn its membership that "all artistic propaganda should be concentrated on elucidating in a lively and understandable form the hostile role of religion as an obstacle to the Five-Year Plan, but in no case should it assume the character of a crude mockery of the religious feelings of believers."[62] Tactics may have been similar to those of the first half on the 1920s – lectures, rallies, posters, and so on – but by the end of the decade anti-religious campaigning included a great deal more preparation and circumspection. Goals were more clearly defined, and there was more cooperation between the Party itself, the Komsomol, and the Society of the Militant Godless (SVB).[63]

This conclusion is borne out by the documents related to the anti-Christmas and anti-Paschal campaigns of 1929-30. Resolutions concerning these campaigns designate specific tasks to be accomplished; for instance, demonstrations against absences from work, recruitment of workers and peasants into the SVB, advertisements in newspapers, or even organization of new *kolkhozy*.[64] They include detailed instructions about when to take certain preparatory steps and when to sponsor meetings on pre-selected topics.[65]

Yet the greater attention paid to anti-religious work at the end of the 1920s went hand in hand with greater quantities of vacuous rhetoric. In announcing its anti-religious campaigns, the Smolgubkom now felt obliged to denounce religious organizations repeatedly as "warmongers" (*podzhigateli voini*) and "allies of the kulak and the nepman."[66] Furthermore, higher levels of systematization, however desirable, had the adverse side effect of producing formulaic approaches to anti-religious campaigning. It is thus uncertain whether the "acceleration" of anti-religious activity over the course of the

60 WKP 219, ll. 24a-24b.

61 See Kenez, 104-118.

62 WKP 219, l. 16. See Stites, 107.

63 The Society of the Godless added the word "Militant" (*Voinstvuyushchie*) to its name in the late 1920s.

64 WKP 460, doc. 1, l. 2; doc. 7, l. 1.

65 See, for instance, the "Plan of the Anti-Paschal Campaign" dated March 27, 1930; i.e., WKP 460, ll. 5-6.

66 WKP 460, doc. 1. l. 1; doc. 2, l. 1.

1920s actually induced people to abandon their faith, or simply provided an outlet for a small minority of atheist enthusiasts.[67]

The Role of the Komsomol

Much of historiography attributes a leading role in Soviet anti-religious campaigning to the Communist Youth League. This is particularly true of the works of pro-Church historians, who have tended to see the manipulation of youth as one of the more pernicious aspects of the Communist regime. The evidence of the Smolensk Archives confirms that members of the Komsomol were often the only personnel available for anti-religious campaigning, but it also tells a different story – one of lack of interest in anti-religious activity and failure to comply with the wishes of the League of the Militant Godless (SVB). For most of the period under consideration, it is clear that only the *bezbozhniki* considered anti-religious campaigning to be a priority of the Komsomol. The Komsomol leadership itself did not, nor apparently did the overarching political authority.

Beginning in August 1929, the Komsomol did seek to promote anti-religious campaigning as one of its main activities. Nevertheless, there is evidence that local cells continued to resist cooperation with the SVB and often failed to comply with instructions to engage in anti-religious activity.[68] In February 1925, the Komsomol Secretariat had complained bitterly about the utter lack of responsiveness on the part of its subordinate organizations:

> Already more than a month has passed since the execution of the Komsomol Christmas campaign, and from that time until now not a single volost' committee has submitted information on the results of the campaign in [its] volost'. The Komsomol Christmas campaign is of exceptionally great significance in the anti-religious work of our village cells...[69]

Almost exactly four years later, the Komsomol leadership still found itself in precisely the same situation, despite its new emphasis on anti-religious campaigning. After receiving no response concerning the anti-Christmas campaign of 1929-30, it was forced to extend the deadlines for submission several times.[70] In the end, the department actually did receive some response to this demand for information. An obliging

[67] See Kenez, 254.

[68] See WKP 219, l. 2.

[69] WKP 396, l. 2.

[70] WKP 219, l. 5.

Komsomol secretary in Selizharovsky Raion filed a handwritten report which mentioned ten anti-religious lectures, a carnival involving one hundred Komsomol members, ten additional subscriptions to *Bezbozhnik*, and similar events.[71] However, judging from the statements of central organizations and from the contents of the Archive itself, this was a highly exceptional occurrence. In most cases, local leaders did not even bother to submit reports on the campaigns they were supposed to have carried out. Consequently, uezd and guberniya committees could not even be sure that the "absolutely essential" campaigns had truly taken place throughout the region.

With Stalin urging "warfare" in the countryside, the Komsomol leadership moved to rectify the situation described above. An official communiqué from Stakhurskii, the head of anti-religious work in the Western Oblast', laid out new tasks for youth sections. As before, they were to distribute anti-religious journals, hang up *stengazety* and posters, and participate in atheist rituals. Yet they were also charged with policing all other activists and residents during holiday seasons; that is, they were ordered to conduct raids (*nalëty*) on stores (to verify the absence of Christmas presents), clubs and libraries (to check on the preparation of anti-religious propaganda and materials), workplaces (to expose absenteeism and drunkenness), and a variety of other establishments. Subsequent directives expressed dissatisfaction with the state of anti-religious campaigning and ordered local Komsomol cells to form brigades of "Light Cavalry" in order to "check up on the fulfillment by local organizations of the existing directives of the highest organs."[72]

In such a situation, it is not surprising that incidents of violence increased. The struggle against religion came to be seen as part and parcel of the collectivization campaign, and hence a veritable battle which warranted stronger tactics.[73] As Peter Kenez points out, military vocabulary had saturated the discourse of the new regime from its inception, and this could not but have some effect on the mentality of the population. He believes that the constant use of terms such as "storming," "besieging," and "war" in non-military contexts – such as the "struggle" against illiteracy – eventually robbed these words of intelligible meaning. In his words: "These sentences were not meant to be understood but incanted. Soviet propaganda had substituted meaningless verbiage for discussion of issues facing society."[74]

There is undoubtedly a great deal of truth to this perspective. Yet at the same time, it must be recognized that the militarized language of the new regime facilitated the

[71] WKP 219, ll. 19a-19b.

[72] WKP 219, ll. 12-13.

[73] See WKP 219, l. 5; Ann Todd Baum, *Komsomol Participation in the Soviet First Five-Year Plan* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 46-49. See also Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[74] Kenez, 255-256.

militarization of society by eliminating the conceptual boundaries that divided ideological conflict from armed struggle. By 1930, a generation of youth had been raised to equate *politnegramotnost'* and *religiya* with physical enemies to be "liquidated." In such a situation, precious little separated the liquidation of *religiya* from the liquidation of *religiozniki*. Words had not completely lost their meanings; rather, their meanings had been extended far beyond proper limits.

In the end, then, the Komsomol did play the role assigned to it by historiography; namely, that of literal campaigners against religion and religionists. However, the records of the Smolensk Archive reveal that this was not always the case. Throughout most of the 1920s, Komsomol participants frequently disappointed anti-religious leaders through their lack of dedication to the struggle against religion. Only when a younger, thoroughly indoctrinated generation entered its ranks did the Communist Youth League begin to take on religion with a vengeance.

Conclusions

The outstanding feature of Soviet anti-religious campaigning during the 1920s was a vast discrepancy between means and ends. Especially in rural regions such as the Smolensk Guberniya, Communist Party offices were understaffed and overburdened. Not only were links between central and local agencies weak, but directives might be passed down a long chain of command before reaching the ground level – where there was often no one to carry them out. This lack of resources manifested itself in all areas of work. In 1922, for instance, the Roslavl' Cheka typed its top-secret biweekly reports on the backs of old train schedules, leftover questionnaires, and, in one case, a sign reading "inflammable."[75] Faced with the same problem in 1930, the highest organs of the Komsomol in the Western Oblast' had to issue directives on French cigarette paper.[76] The situation was not unlike that faced by the old Muscovite chancelleries, whose officials sometimes wrote diplomatic correspondence on the reverse of old wedding programs.[77]

Despite such embarrassing setbacks, however, anti-religious campaigning did take place in the 1920s. The evidence suggests that it was carried out primarily by enthusiasts like Divenkov, similar to the way in which anti-clerical zealots during the

75 WKP 273, ll. 101, 140, 197b, 248, etc.

76 WKP 219, ll. 11, 15-16. The imprint on these sheets reads: "PAPIER A CIGARETTES / EXTRA FIN A MALINE / ORIGINAL DE MALINE."

77 See Russell E. Martin, "Royal Weddings and Crimean Diplomacy: New Sources on Muscovite Chancellery Practice during the Reign of Vasilii III," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 19 (1995): 389-427.

French Revolution provoked and directed the campaign of de-Christianization.[78] Without a doubt, some people had ardently committed themselves to the eradication of religion, and they struggled against enormous odds to achieve their goals. In Divenkov's case, this even meant taking on the Smolgubkom, the ruling body of the region.

It is very difficult to evaluate the success of anti-religious campaigns during this period.[79] Most of the archival traces are hortatory in nature – consisting of white papers, official directives, and the like. There are precious few indications of actual implementation, and still fewer of popular response. However, the documents do permit some conclusions about the choice of strategy and tactics. The anti-religious activists in the Smolensk region were Godkillers, but their methods were inadequate to bring about the destruction of religion. Lectures on the wonders of electricity or the manufacturing of agricultural machinery were unlikely to sever peasants from their belief, however much such speeches "proved" the superiority of science over faith. Other anti-religious events, such as mock trials, carnivals, and concerts might have captured the popular imagination had they not so often deteriorated into blasphemous insults. But the Godkillers *were* blasphemers; their ideology did not permit any concessions to religion. Hence, their most powerful weapon was intimidation, not persuasion.

The changing political context at the end of the 1920s placed this weapon at their disposal and completely altered the balance of power on the anti-religious front. It did so by making the latter a front indeed – an arena of actual combat. Many of the *bezbozhniki*, no doubt, sincerely believed that they were waging a just war against the forces of "darkness and ignorance."[80] This mirror image of Christian ideology supports Stites' proposal that anti-religious campaigning represented a "quasi-missionary crusade."[81] It

78 The principle figure of de-Christianization was Joseph Fouché, an ex-priest who had turned wholeheartedly against his former religion. I have been unable to determine whether any of the leaders of anti-religious campaigns in the Smolensk region came from clerical backgrounds, but the possibility should not be dismissed. My thanks to Argyrios Pisiotis for suggesting this point to me. On de-Christianization, see A. Aulard, *Christianity and the French Revolution*, trans. Lady Frazer (New York: Howard Fertig, 1996); Christopher Dawson, *The Gods of Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1972); William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989); Pierre de la Gorce, *Histoire religieuse de la Révolution française*, 7th ed, vol. 3 (Paris: Plon, 1921); Albert Mathiez, *La Révolution et l'Église* (Paris: Colin, 1910); John McManners, *The French Revolution and the Church* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1969); and other works of a similar nature.

79 See Kenez, 254.

80 WKP 278, l. 58.

81 See Stites,

also helps explain why the youth who received their "political education" during the 1920s proved so willing to lift up the sword against religion, whereas their immediate predecessors had been unenthusiastic at best.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

A. Archival Files

National Archives and Records Administration. "Records of the All-Union (Russian) Communist Party, Smolensk District, Record Group 1056." National Archives II, College Park, MD.

- WKP 40 (T87-7-40): Proceedings and decisions of meetings of the Bureau of the Orgbureau Central Committee for the Western Oblast', 1929
- WKP 44 (T87-7-44): Proceedings and resolutions of the Communist Party Central Committee in Kaluga, 1929
- WKP 219 (T87-27-219): Directives of the Rzhev All-Union Communist Youth Organization concerning anti-religious propaganda, 1929-30
- WKP 273 (T87-32-273): Periodic reports of the Cheka in Roslavl' Uezd, 1922
- WKP 277 (T87-32-277): Periodic reports of the Smolensk Uezd Agitprop Section, 1924
- WKP 278 (T87-32-278): General summary of the political and economic situation of the Smolensk Guberniya, 1924
- WKP 396 (T87-45-396): Directives of the Secretariat of the VLKSM, 1925
- WKP 401 (T87-45-401): Files of the Gzhatsk branch of the VLKSM, 1925
- WKP 458 (T87-50-458): Information regarding anti-religious activity and religious societies, 1925
- WKP 459 (T87-50-459): Anti-religious propaganda in Yartsevo Uezd, 1924-25
- WKP 460 (T87-50-460): Plans for the implementation of anti-Christmas and anti-Paschal campaigns, 1929-30

- WKP 461 (T87-50-461): Membership forms of the Union of the Militant Godless

B. Other Primary Sources

Gidulyanov, P. V., ed. *Otdelenie tserkvi ot gosudarstva: polnyi sbornik dekretov RSFSR i SSSR, instruktsii, tsirkulyarov, i t. d.* Moscow: 1924.

---, & Krasikov, P., eds. *Tserkov' i gosudarstvo po zakonodatel'stvu RSFSR.* Moscow, 1923.

KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s"ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK. 9th ed. 15 vols. Moscow: 1983-1989.

O religii i tserkvi: sbornik dokumentov. Moscow: 1965.

O religii i tserkvi: sbornik dokumentov byskazyvanii klassikov marksizma-leninizma, dokumentov KPSS i Sovetskogo gosudarstva. Moscow: 1977.

Russkaya pravoslavnaya tserkov' i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo (1917-1941): dokumenty i fotomaterialy. Moscow: BBISAA, 1996.

Shtrikker, Gerd, ed. *Russkaya Pravoslavnaya Tserkov' v sovetskoe vremya (1917-1991): Materialy i dokumenty po istorii otnoshenii mezhdu gosudarstvom i Tserkov'yu.* Kn. 1. Moscow: Propilei, 1995.

Skvortsev-Stepanov, Ivan Ivanovich. *Zadachi i metody antireligioznoi propagandy, i Religiya v shkole.* 3rd ed. Moscow: Gos. izdat., 1925.

Szczesniak, Boleslaw, trans., ed. *The Russian Revolution and Religion: A Collection of Documents Concerning the Suppression of Religion by the Communists, 1917-1925.* Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959.

Yaroslavskii, E. *Na antireligioznom fronte: sbornik statei, dokladov, lektsii is tsirkulyarov za pyat' let, 1919-1924.* Moscow, 1924.

Zakonodatel'stvo o religioznykh kul'takh: sbornik materialov i dokumentov. Moscow: 1971.

Secondary Works

Baum, Ann Todd. *Komsomol Participation in the Soviet First Five-Year Plan.* London: Macmillan, 1987.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, [U.S.] House of Representatives. *Antireligious Activities in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Europe.* Washington, DC: U.S. Gov't, 1965.

Conquest, Robert, ed. *Religion in the USSR.* London: Bodley, 1968.

Curtiss, John Shelton. *The Russian Church and the Soviet State, 1917-1950.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1953.

Emhardt, William Chauncey. *Religion in Soviet Russia: Anarchy.* With an essay on the Living Church by Sergius Troitsky. Milwaukee: Morehouse, 1929.

Fainsod, Merle. *Smolensk under Soviet Rule.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958.

Fletcher, William C. *A Study in Survival: The Church in Russia, 1927-43.* New York: Macmillan, 1965.

Gitelman, Zvi. *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917-1930.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Kenez, Peter. *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Luukkanen, Arto. *The Party of Unbelief: The Religious Policy of the Bolshevik Party.* Helsinki: SHS, 1994.

Marshall, Richard H., Jr., ed. *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union, 1917-1967.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

McCullagh, Francis. *The Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity.* London: Murray, 1924.

Mecklenburg, George. *Russia Challenges Religion.* New York: Abingdon, 1934.

Peris, Daniel. *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Pospielovsky, Dimitri. *The Russian Church under the Soviet Regime, 1917-1982.* 2 vols. Crestwood, NY: 1984.

---. *Soviet Antireligious Campaigns and Persecutions.* Vol. 2. New York: St. Martin's, 1988.

Powell, David E. *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union: A Study of Mass Persuasion*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975.

Saudée, J. de Bivort de la. *Communism and Anti-Religion, 1917-1937*. Trans. Reginald J. Dingle. London: Burns, 1938.

Siegelbaum, Lewis H. *Soviet State and Society between Revolutions, 1918-1929*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Spinka, Matthew. *Christianity Confronts Communism*. New York: 1939.

---. *The Church and the Russian Revolution*. New York: Macmillan, 1927.

---. *The Church in Soviet Russia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956.

Stites, Richard. *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, The USSR, and the Successor States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Timasheff, N. S. *Religion in Soviet Russia, 1917-1942*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1979.

Tsypin, Vladislav. *Russkaya tserkov' (1917-1925)*. Moscow: Sretensky, 1996.

Valentinov, A. A. *The Assault of Heaven: The Black Book Containing Official and Other Information Illustrating the Struggle against all Religion Carried by the Communist (Soviet) Government of Russia*. London: Boswell, 1925.

Viola, Lynne. *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Vishnevskaya, E. D., ed. *Antireligioznaya poeziya i proza*. Moscow; OGIZ, 1938.

Young, Glennys. *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Village*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

Zatko, James J. *Descent into Darkness: The Destruction of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia, 1917-1923*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965.