

## **A WORD OF SOLIDARITY, A CALL FOR JUSTICE: A STATEMENT ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE SOVIET UNION**

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The Church in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union today is a church of many realities. There is the particularly tragic memory of Bishop Ernest Coba of Albania, murdered by prison authorities for celebrating a Mass with a few other inmates in his cell in contravention of prison regulations on Easter Day, 1979. In Czechoslovakia in 1988 there is the case of Augustin Navratil, a Catholic layman and father of nine, who has been involuntarily committed to a psychiatric clinic for responding to newspaper criticisms of his widely-supported 31-point petition for religious rights. Then there is the young believer in the German Democratic Republic (GDR)(East Germany) who was denied admission to medical school because of her open profession of her faith.

But there are also other, more hopeful, realities. There is the triumphant return of Pope John Paul II to his native Poland in 1979, the first visit by a pope to that country in its thousand year history and the first papal visit to any communist country. There is the image of 300,000 people gathered at the national eucharistic congress in Marija Bistrica, Yugoslavia in 1984, the largest religious gathering in Eastern Europe outside Poland since World War II; and there is the crowded weekday Mass in one of any number of parishes in Czechoslovakia, filled with believers practicing their faith despite the threat of discrimination in education and employment and innumerable other obstacles imposed by the present government.

All of these realities and images -- and many, many more -- make up the complex picture of religious life in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union today. They form a picture of a church that has suffered and continues to suffer much from repression and restrictions, a modern reminder that "November 14, 1998, the Church was born on the Cross and grew up in the midst of persecutions."<sup>1</sup> They also present a picture of a vibrant church, with a long and rich heritage, which our Holy Father has attested "bears special witness to the fruitfulness of the meeting of the human spirit with the Christian mysteries November 14, 1998, and continues to exercise a salutary influence on the mind of the whole Church."<sup>2</sup>

In writing this statement at this time, we seek to focus attention upon the situation of religion in these communist countries by reviewing in some detail the current situation of one religious body: the Catholic Church. We look at the situation of the Catholic Church within the framework of our concern for the protection of the religious liberty of all and our support for fundamental human rights and genuine peace in our own country and throughout the world. The Holy Father recently described this framework in this way:

"In the first place, religious freedom, an essential requirement of the dignity of every person, is a cornerstone of the structure of human rights, and for this reason an irreplaceable factor in the good of individuals and of the whole of society, as well as of the personal fulfillment of each individual. It follows that the freedom of individuals and of communities to profess and practice their religion is an essential element for peaceful

human coexistence. Peace, which is built up and consolidated at all levels of human association, puts down its roots in the freedom and openness of consciences to truth."<sup>3</sup>

In recent years we have spoken often on the moral imperative of safeguarding the fundamental right to religious liberty. We addressed the issue from a theoretical perspective in our 1980 pastoral letter on Marxist communism,<sup>4</sup> and we specifically addressed the situation of the churches in Eastern Europe in our 1977 statement, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe: A Test Case for Human Rights*,<sup>5</sup> and in various other public statements.<sup>6</sup> Equally important, we have expressed our ecclesial solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe through personal visits, prayers and witness on their behalf.

In 1988 we feel compelled once again to address the situation of believers in the communist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. It is appropriate as a final commemoration of several important anniversaries that have been observed in the past three years: the eleventh centenary of the evangelization of the Slavs settled in Great Moravia and Pannonia by Saints Cyril and Methodius (1985), the 800th anniversary of the Christianization of Latvia (1986), the 600th anniversary of the Baptism of Lithuania (1987), the 950th anniversary of the death of Hungary's founder and first king, St. Stephen, and the millennium of the adoption of Christianity in Kievan-Rus' (1988).<sup>7</sup> The very fact that these anniversaries have been celebrated throughout the world, including in Slovakia, Lithuania and Ukraine despite government interferences, is a tribute to the persistence, strength and dynamism of the churches in these regions.

In addition to paying tribute to the rich traditions of the churches, it is particularly appropriate that we address their current status in light of recent developments in many of these communist countries. Much has happened in the past decade that has changed the dynamic of the situation in Eastern Europe, including the elevation of a Slavic pope, the emergence of independent movements, and the rise to power of new leadership in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Yet much remains the same. The situation of the churches varies considerably from country to country -- reflecting the depth and variety of religious conviction among the people, and the degree of tenacity and pragmatism of the communist party leadership -- but a general pattern of intolerance of religion remains clearly evident.

Therefore, as bishops, we feel an urgent need to focus attention once again on what the Holy Father has called the "radical injustice" of the violation of religious freedom, to express our solidarity with our suffering brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, to urge the structural reforms necessary for greater religious freedom for these brothers and sisters, and to highlight the urgency and efficacy of more concerted action by all Catholics, the governments of the world and others of good will in defending and promoting religious freedom in these countries.

We focus here primarily on the situation of Catholics in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, but religious repression and intolerance are by no means directed only at Catholics or confined only to the countries examined in this statement. The difficulties faced by non-Catholics in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and by some or all religions in Vietnam, Cambodia, Cuba, Iran, Turkey, Sudan and elsewhere also demand serious attention. This statement, while limited in scope, is meant to provide a case study of the continuing restrictions and sometimes outright repression that confront all religions, in varying ways and degrees, not only in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union but in many countries throughout the world. We cannot overemphasize that the denial of religious liberty to one faith group or

in one country is a threat to all faiths in all countries and must be the concern of all who value human rights. When Soviet Jews, Bulgarian Muslims, Vietnamese Buddhists or innumerable others suffer for their beliefs, we all suffer. As American Catholics, we share their suffering just as we share the duty to protect and promote, through our words and actions, religious freedom and tolerance wherever and whenever they are lacking. For this reason, we will continue to speak consistently on behalf of the rights of these groups and individuals and those of all faiths who suffer for their beliefs.

## I. Background: Principles and Practices

### A. Components of the Right of Religious Liberty: Catholic Teaching

We seek to evaluate the extent of religious freedom in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in light of the many dimensions of this fundamental human right.<sup>8</sup>

"In the first place," according to Pope John Paul II, "religious freedom November 14, 1998 is an essential requirement of the dignity of every person November 14, 1998, and ... a cornerstone of the structure of human rights."<sup>9</sup> Religious liberty is unique among the many essential requirements of human dignity because its object is an individual's relationship with God, the ultimate end of the human person. As a social and civil right, it has both a personal dimension -- the freedom of conscience -- and a social dimension -- the free exercise of religion.

1. Freedom of conscience is the aspect of the right of religious liberty which requires that each person be free from all external coercion in his or her search for God, religious truth and faith. It is the freedom to make a personal religious decision. It requires, among other things, that believers be treated equally with other citizens and not be discriminated against in economic, social, political or cultural life; and that educational programs, the media and government policies respect religious beliefs and not attempt to undermine or destroy them. Because human nature is both personal and social, religious faith is expressed in outward acts and within a community of faith. Hence, freedom of conscience is directly tied to the social dimension of religious liberty: the free exercise of religion.

2. The free exercise of religion involves a two-fold immunity. In the words of the Second Vatican Council, this means that all "are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits."<sup>10</sup> There are three distinct but interrelated aspects to this freedom to exercise one's religion: freedom of religious expression and evangelization, ecclesial freedom and freedom of religious association.

a. Freedom of religious expression and evangelization affirms that individuals and religious bodies are to be free from coercion in public worship and public religious observances and practices. It also requires freedom to publish and import bibles and other religious literature; the freedom to have social communications media and access to public communications; the freedom to teach publicly and witness to the faith; and the freedom to address the religious and moral dimensions of social, economic and political questions. It also includes the rights of parents to determine the kind of religious education that their children are to receive, and to avoid education for their children that is not in conformity with

their religious beliefs.

b. Ecclesial or institutional freedom is the corporate right of religious organizations to internal autonomy, that is, to control the many dimensions of church life. This autonomy requires the freedom to develop and teach doctrine, the freedom to choose and train ministers in their own institutions and to appoint and transfer these ministers without external interference, and the freedom to construct and use buildings for religious needs and to obtain other materials necessary for the church's life.

c. Freedom of religious association affirms the freedom of a person to enter or leave a community of faith; the freedom to form religious groups for educational, cultural, charitable or social purposes; the freedom to assemble to engage in religious pilgrimages; and the freedom to communicate freely with co-religionists at home and abroad.

This brief summary of the many essential components of religious liberty provides the criteria by which we seek to judge the current situation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The claims of some governments notwithstanding, it is clear from this summary that freedom of conscience and freedom of worship alone do not constitute freedom of religion.

It is also clear from this summary that the right to religious liberty is inextricably connected to other legal rights and protections, most notably, freedom of conscience, association and speech, equality before the law, and legal recognition of independent entities. If a state limits or denies the right to full religious freedom, it almost certainly will limit or deny these other rights as well. In this sense, the civil and social right to religious liberty is a point of reference and a measure of other fundamental rights.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Pope John Paul II reminds us in his recent encyclical, *On Social Concern (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)*, that the lack of religious liberty is one index of poverty and underdevelopment:

The denial or limitation of human rights -- as for example the right to religious freedom, the right to share in the building of society, the freedom to organize and to form unions or to take initiatives in economic matters -- do these not impoverish the human person as much as, if not more than, the deprivation of material goods? And is development which does not take into account the full affirmation of these rights really development on the human level?<sup>12</sup> (emphasis added)

Given the fundamental importance of the right involved, we are specially committed to those whose religious freedom is suppressed or limited, not for the purpose of being polemical or adversarial, but in order to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good. Human dignity and the common good demand religious liberty.

## B. Religious Repression and Intolerance in Eastern Europe and the USSR: An Overview

The present situation of religious liberty in Eastern Europe can only be understood in light of complex historical, cultural, religious and political factors unique to each country. Most Eastern European states have suffered many centuries of foreign domination, and few have a recent tradition of religious or political freedom or tolerance. The Latin Catholic and Orthodox churches have been dominant -- except in the German Democratic Republic (where the Protestant Church has been in the majority) and Albania (where Islam predominates) -- and often were closely aligned with the state. Moreover, nationalism and religion have long been closely linked in Eastern Europe, sometimes creating divisions among Christians, but in

other cases engendering a vital sense of cultural, social and political identity that continues to have far-reaching consequences.

Clearly, some of these factors have facilitated the communist persecution of religion; others help to explain the widely divergent situation of the churches in the Soviet-bloc countries. However, it is the abiding ideological hostility to religion common to all communist regimes that has most significantly defined the present situation. In our 1980 pastoral letter on Marxist communism, we noted certain variants in Marxist theory and practice, which include questions of religion.<sup>13</sup> Despite these variants, all communist movements are grounded in a "scientific atheism" that rejects, not only the Christian vision of the person, society, history and morality, but the very idea of religion itself. The scientific atheism of Marxism-Leninism regards religion as a distortion of reality, an illusion which manifests social and economic conditions that impede the realization of a socialist society. Lenin regarded religion as a poison, deliberately administered for sinister social purposes by the bourgeois class. As an antidote to this poison, he advocated indoctrination in scientific atheism in conjunction with severe restrictions on religion until it inevitably withered away under new social and economic conditions.

This ideological antagonism toward religion has translated into a long history of persecution of religion by communist governments, first in the Soviet Union and later throughout Eastern Europe. The scale of persecution has been and remains sustained and comprehensive, and its roster of victims all inclusive: Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Jews, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, and many others.

As sustained and comprehensive as this persecution of religion has been and is, its particular form has varied widely over time and place, depending upon the strength of the churches, strategic considerations of the governments and other factors. In general, the policies of communist governments have followed three approaches, reflecting differing judgments as to the methods by and pace at which religion can or should be suppressed: (i) an all-out assault on religion; (ii) a containment of religion through strict administrative controls; and (iii) a form of coexistence with religion, which accommodates religious institutions -- within well-defined limits -- for the sake of national interests.<sup>14</sup>

### 1. Outright repression

The first approach to religion -- which was most prevalent during the Stalin period but continues in some areas today -- calls for an all-out assault on religion as a reactionary threat to the communist state and an obstacle to social and economic progress. This all-out assault includes in its most severe form the outright prohibition of all religious activities -- as is found in Albania -- or entire denominations -- as is the case with the Eastern Catholic Church in Ukraine and Romania, and the Jehovah's Witnesses in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup> It includes the confiscation of church property, and the exile, imprisonment or murder of bishops, priests and lay leaders. These repressive measures are augmented by intensive atheistic indoctrination, bitter anti-religious propaganda campaigns, and officially-sanctioned discrimination against religious believers.

### 2. Containment through administrative measures

Under this second approach -- which is the most typical today in the Soviet-bloc -- religion is seen as a deeply rooted historical, cultural, social and political force that must be tolerated, at least in the short-term, but only within strictly-defined limits. Through law and

administrative norms and practices, the government attempts to limit religious liberty, in all relevant respects, to freedom of worship. The Soviet Constitution is typical. It states:

Citizens of the U.S.S.R. are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess or not to profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or atheist propaganda. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds is prohibited. In the U.S.S.R. the church is separate from the State, and the school from the church.<sup>16</sup>

This and other constitutional and statutory provisions are combined with extensive administrative regulations of "religious cults" to constrain severely religious activity. State registration of all religious groups is used to deny legal status to some groups. Once registered, churches face strict regulations which, in most cases, prohibit formal religious education for children, parish associations or study groups, charitable activities, most or all religious publications, religious orders and evangelization.

The few aspects of religious life that are not banned are often subverted through state control or co-optation of all important aspects of church organization, including appointments, finances, training of clergy, publishing, opening or closing of churches, and the like. All but the most ordinary day-to-day activities of the religious communities require state approval, and the decisions of government authorities are often arbitrary, guided by political expediency or based on regulations that are not even published. Those who actively oppose or circumvent these administrative controls or are involved in religious activities deemed to be "anti-state" are subject to fines, searches, arrest, imprisonment, intimidation, harassment and beatings.

As in the first model, these strict controls are reinforced by active discrimination against believers in education and employment, persistent anti-religious propaganda, and pervasive atheistic indoctrination through the schools, the media and various other means, not the least of which are the state-sponsored ceremonies, such as the Jugendweihe (Youth Dedication) in the German Democratic Republic, which are designed as atheistic substitutes for confirmation and other religious rites.

### 3. Coexistence and limited accommodation

This third approach is more accepting of religion as a fact of life that must be tolerated and that actually can have, within certain limits, a positive role in furthering national interests. This model suggests the possibility of a more open relationship between church and state than the other two models. What distinguishes this approach is that it allows considerably more religious activity than just freedom of worship. The churches -- most notably in Yugoslavia and Poland -- are relatively free to manage their internal affairs without significant state interference and control and they have a certain degree of freedom of religious association and expression. The Church is able to choose its own bishops and clergy and to run its seminaries without significant government interference, and religious orders are permitted. The religious press is more likely to offer a credible independent voice, bibles and other religious literature are generally available, contacts with co-religionists abroad are extensive and unhindered, and large-scale religious gatherings are permitted. The churches are permitted to operate secondary schools and, in Poland, a university, and formal religious education of children is allowed at the parish level and in the home. The churches also maintain rather extensive charitable activities, although they are limited in scope, for the most part, to work in hospitals, orphanages, and senior citizen centers.

The churches still suffer under this approach from some of the significant restrictions found in the second model, however, including the prohibition of church-affiliated primary schools, state- and self-censorship -- though usually to a lesser extent -- of religious publications, government-imposed limits on newsprint and printing equipment, and, with few exceptions, a lack of access to radio or television. Perhaps most importantly, religious believers face discrimination, anti-religious propaganda and atheistic indoctrination similar to that found in the previous two models. Finally, with certain exceptions, the churches are limited in their ability to criticize publicly government policies, and face considerable pressure strongly to endorse these policies.

Clearly, no Eastern European government's policy toward religion fits neatly into one of these three categories. The policies of these governments have changed over time and often depend on which denomination or national group is involved. Most governments follow a combination of these approaches, though one approach often dominates policy and practice at a particular time. Recognizing these important qualifications, some general observations about the approach to the Catholic Church are possible: Albanian policy and the Soviet and Romanian policies toward the Eastern Catholic Church most closely represent the first model; the general religious policies of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania fall under the second model; the Hungarian approach is a hybrid of the second and third models; and the German Democratic Republic, Polish and Yugoslav policies roughly correspond to the third approach.

These distinctions, while not always clear-cut, are important because the approach that is followed has enormous significance for the degree of religious freedom the churches retain. But, except for Albania -- which is unique in that it prohibits all religion, the differences, however significant, are differences of degree not quality. The extent of denial of religious liberty may vary widely between countries, but the fact remains that the policies of all these governments are rooted in an ideological hostility toward religion and are designed to restrict religious freedom in morally unacceptable ways.

The churches have defended themselves against this hostility and these restrictions in a variety of ways which reflect ecclesiological, cultural and political differences. In some cases, prohibited activities have been continued in secret; in others, believers have directly confronted the government, usually with harsh consequences. Many religious bodies have pursued a nonconfrontational approach, seeking a practical compromise with the state in an effort to prevent further limitations on their activities. In a relatively few cases, some individuals have collaborated with or become virtually subservient to the state. Since Pope John XXIII, the Holy See has pursued political agreements with various Eastern European governments as part of a long-range strategy to win by small steps at least a measure of religious freedom for the Church. While some might disagree with the particular response of individuals or churches to religious persecution, those of us who are not directly confronted with their difficult choices should be slow to judge the many different ways that believers have chosen to respond in faith to a very difficult situation.

In order to illustrate the spectrum of church-state relations in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, it might be useful to look briefly at the situation in each of the nine countries. We do not attempt an exhaustive analysis of the complex factors at work here, but simply offer an overview of the present situation of the Catholic Church, as a modest case study of church-state relations in these countries.<sup>17</sup>

## II. Religious Repression and Intolerance: A Closer Look

### Soviet Union

As with many other government policies, the Soviet Union's approach to religion has served as the model for the whole of Eastern Europe. This approach has alternated between attempts to destroy religious institutions through outright persecution and the more subtle, but still very damaging, efforts to constrain religion to worship alone through strict administrative controls.

After years of oppression under the Czars, the Catholic Church in the Soviet Union has been repressed systematically under communist rule.<sup>18</sup> The majority Russian Orthodox Church and all religious institutions have also suffered greatly under communism. The government has been especially hostile to the Catholic Church because it has served as a focus for the development of a distinct national and cultural identity, especially in the Baltic States, western Ukraine and western Byelorussia.

### The Baltic States

After a period of independence between the world wars, the Baltic States -- Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia -- were forcibly annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, an action not recognized by the Vatican, the United States, and 32 other states to this day.<sup>19</sup>

Lithuania is the only republic in the Soviet Union that is predominantly Latin Catholic;<sup>20</sup> after 44 years of continuous Soviet occupation, some three-fourths of the 3.3 million people remain practicing Catholics.<sup>21</sup> During these years, the Catholic Church has been a bulwark against Soviet attempts to repress and eradicate the religious, cultural and political expression of Lithuanian identity. Six centuries after the Christianization of Lithuania, the Church remains relatively strong and unified despite over a century of oppression under the Czars, and almost five decades of overt attacks, strict controls and pervasive atheistic propaganda under Soviet communism.

The Church's situation has improved slightly in recent years with progress towards regularizing and strengthening the Church's hierarchy, including the recent appointment of Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevicius of Kaisiadorys, the first known Lithuanian cardinal in modern times; with a three-fold increase since 1973 in the number of students allowed to enroll at the lone seminary in Kaunas; with the publication, in token quantities, of the documents of Vatican II, a new translation of the New Testament, portions of the Latin Catholic Sacramentary and Lectionary, a few prayer books and catechisms, a modest Catholic almanac, and one or two other publications; and with the promise to return the Cathedral and the Church of St. Casimir in the capital city of Vilnius, and the Queen of Peace Church in Klaipeda.

Since 1972, an organized protest movement with its own underground journals, the most notable being *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, has helped galvanize widespread opposition to religious repression in Lithuania and has focused international attention on the Church's plight. The Soviet authorities have reacted harshly to the growth of this movement by harassing, intimidating, imprisoning and confining to psychiatric hospitals leaders -- including several priests -- of the *Chronicle*, the Lithuanian Helsinki Group, the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights and other groups concerned with basic human rights. Others have been assaulted or have died under suspicious circumstances.

This harsh reaction to religious protests may have diminished somewhat with the emergence of glasnost and perestroika, but surveillance and intimidation of religious dissenters continue, as do the more subtle but no less damaging restrictions on the Church. A state-induced shortage of priests; the government's refusal to allow Bishop Julijonas Steponavicius to function as apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Vilnius; the ban on religious education of children, charitable activities, all religious orders, and most religious publications; and increasingly sophisticated anti-religious propaganda prevent the Church from exercising even its most basic religious functions.

In sum, the situation of the Church brings to mind, "the image of the Hill of Crosses which has grown up in November 14, 1998, Lithuania: thousands of crosses, witnessing the suffering and the hope of the entire nation, which has been able to preserve its faith even in the most painful hours of trial."<sup>22</sup>

Unlike in Lithuania, the Catholic Church in Latvia is a minority church (about 20% of the population) but it is stable and has been growing in strength and influence in the last few years, buttressed by the naming of the first known cardinal in the Soviet Union, Cardinal Julijans Vaivods, in 1983. The Latvian Church faces the same constraints as its counterpart in Lithuania but, as in Lithuania, some minor concessions have been won in recent years: the number of seminarians at the seminary in Riga -- one of only two Catholic seminaries in the Soviet Union -- has more than doubled (to about 65) in the past decade; a lectionary and catechism have been published; and two new bishops have been named since 1982.

#### Ukraine

The celebration of the millennium of the conversion of St. Vladimir and the introduction of Christianity into Kievan-Rus' is seriously marred by the fact that the Eastern Catholic Church in Ukraine remains illegal.<sup>23</sup> Since it was abolished and forcibly merged with the Russian Orthodox Church in 1946, a large underground church (estimates range from three to six million faithful) has developed -- though its existence and legitimacy are denied by Soviet authorities. Although verifiable statistics are unavailable, there are as many as eighteen bishops and perhaps a thousand priests functioning without government permission in Ukraine. Inspired by the election of Pope John Paul II, the advent of glasnost and the millennium, an organized human rights movement has emerged among believers since 1982 and the underground church has become more visible in its call for legalization. The Soviet authorities have responded by denying all requests for recognition, arresting or harassing numerous priests, and embarking on a massive propaganda campaign against "religious nationalism" in Ukraine.

We are encouraged by the start of formal discussions between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church on the status of Ukrainian Catholics (as well as other Eastern Catholics). We join with Pope John Paul II in urging that the great numbers of faithful of this repressed Church be permitted to "enjoy true freedom of conscience and respect for their religious right to give public worship to God according to many different traditions in their own rite and with their own pastors."<sup>24</sup> As our Holy Father has said, "Membership in the Catholic Church should not be considered by some as incompatible with the good of one's own earthly country and with the inheritance of St. Vladimir."<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the Latin Catholics in Lithuania and Latvia, and the Eastern Catholics in Ukraine, at least 4 million Latin Catholics are found in western parts of Byelorussia and

Ukraine (i.e., in the former Polish territories which after the Second World War passed under the control of the Soviet Union) and other Soviet Republics.<sup>26</sup> The Church in these areas is forced to operate with relatively few parishes, fewer priests and no resident bishops.

#### Perestroika, Glasnost and Religion

There is little doubt that General Secretary Gorbachev's perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) have ushered in a new political climate and a process of reform that, if successful, would bring about significant and necessary change in Soviet economic, political and cultural life.<sup>27</sup> It is much less clear whether there also would be significant improvement in the government's approach to religion. We welcome the tentative moves toward a relaxation of the strict controls on religion. More bibles are being printed and imported, some church buildings have been returned, a number of religious prisoners have been released or allowed to emigrate, steps have been taken to improve dialogue between religious leaders and state officials, there has been a fuller and more frank treatment of religion in the official media, there have been official admissions of past and present abuses of the rights of believers, a few experiments in establishing religious charities have been allowed, and some previously illegal religious bodies have been registered. Believers have also benefited from the greater freedom of expression and association brought by glasnost.

It remains to be seen, however, whether General Secretary Gorbachev's reforms will include fundamental changes in religious policies comparable to those announced for other areas of Soviet life. The promises to release all prisoners of conscience, to reopen more churches and, most importantly, to revise the 1929 law regulating religious bodies and other laws affecting believers have raised hopes and expectations that the current process of reform, in fact, will include greater tolerance of religion. The fulfillment of these promises would be cause for hope. Other necessary signs of true improvements in the state's policy toward religion would include:

- \* legalization of the Eastern Catholic Church in Ukraine and other churches that have been banned and restoration of their property;
- \* recognition of religious bodies as legal entities;
- \* an end to the anti-religious campaign in the official press, discrimination against believers, and interference in the selection of bishops and the training and appointment of priests;
- \* a lifting of the ban on educational, charitable, cultural and social activities, and on formal religious education of children, youth and adults;
- \* a guarantee of the right to travel abroad and to emigrate; and
- \* publication and public review of all decrees and instructions governing the regulation of religious bodies.

Structural reforms of this type would be important indicators of the nature and direction of glasnost and perestroika.<sup>28</sup>

It is still less clear whether other communist governments in Eastern Europe will reform their religious policies. The significant differences between these countries' policies regarding atheistic propaganda and the regulation of religion indicate that religious policy in this region is not monolithic. While the Soviet model has been applied throughout Eastern Europe, countries such as Poland and Yugoslavia have adapted it to their own situations in ways that

allow the churches considerably more latitude than in the Soviet Union. In countries such as Albania, on the other hand, the Soviet model has assumed an unprecedented severity. Differences in the strength and approach of the communist party leadership, historical and cultural factors, and the vitality of religion help account for these varied approaches; they do not, however, justify the ideological and structural intolerance of religion which is at the heart of the policies of all of these governments.

### Albania

Christianity in Albania dates from the first century preaching of Saints Paul and Andrew. Today, this ancient Church suffers from religious persecution unprecedented in modern times.<sup>29</sup> After years of religious persecution, all religion was formally abolished by government decree in 1967, when 2,200 mosques, churches and other religious buildings were closed and religious leaders were imprisoned or executed, leading dictator Enver Hoxha to boast that Albania was "the first atheist state in the world." Albania is the only country in the world where the suppression of all religious belief and practice is constitutionally mandated. Since 1979, any religious activity is punishable by imprisonment without trial. Albania is also the only country in Eastern Europe that has not signed the Helsinki Accords or any other international human rights convention. Albania remains a member of the United Nations, however, despite its explicit rejection of the principles of the U.N. Charter.

All three religious traditions -- Muslim (68%), Orthodox (19%), Catholic (10%) -- have been devastated by the communist persecution, but the harshest repression has been directed against the Catholic Church. Between 1945 and 1981, 137 Catholic clergy were executed or died in prison. The persecution continues unabated. Bishop Ernest Coba was killed in 1979 for saying Mass in secret. The one remaining prelate, Bishop Nikoll Troshani, is detained in labor camp, as are the few remaining priests. In recent years, priests have been executed for baptizing children, believers have been given jail sentences of twelve years for possessing Bibles and eight years for having a child baptized. Despite these hardships, even the government has admitted that religion endures, as people continue to follow religious rituals, pray and read scriptures secretly.

We pledge our solidarity with this Church which continues to suffer in silence, and we pray that the Albanian government soon will realize that faith cannot be eliminated by government decree and that religious persecution must come to an end.

### Bulgaria

The situation of the Church in Bulgaria is also very serious.<sup>30</sup> Religious activity is at a far lower ebb than in any other Eastern European country except Albania. Bulgaria experienced especially severe repression of religion in the early 1950s. Since the 1970s, government policy toward religion in general has been relaxed somewhat, but Muslims have been singled out for severe repression because of their beliefs and their Turkish roots.

The majority Orthodox Church is the only religious group that is free to train its clergy in its own seminary, print books and own land. Religious education and evangelization by any church are banned, and young people are discouraged from attending worship services. The state even has gone so far as to offer cash incentives to those who participate in substitute secular ceremonies. Bibles and other religious literature remain almost impossible to obtain.

The Catholic Church in Bulgaria consists of Latin (two dioceses) and Eastern (one diocese) Catholics; about sixty thousand faithful served by about thirty priests. The Church was

severely persecuted between 1948 and 1952. It continues to experience difficulties with the appointment of bishops (the Sofia-Plovdiv see was vacant from 1983-88) and the training of priests (Catholic seminaries remain closed; only recently did the government sanction the ordination of three priests annually). The government also has renewed efforts to prevent religious education of children under age 16. One of the few positive developments has been a partial lifting of the virtual isolation of Bulgarian Catholics from the outside world. Since 1978, a small number of Catholics have been allowed to make religious pilgrimages and study abroad.

The Bulgarian Church seeks the freedom to appoint bishops and to train priests without state interference, and to provide religious instruction to Catholics of all ages. Such freedom would threaten no one and would contribute to revitalizing this venerable church.

#### Czechoslovakia

In 1987, Pope John Paul described the Church's status in Czechoslovakia as a "sad situation with no analogy in countries of Christian tradition."<sup>31</sup> While most Eastern European countries have refrained from overt attacks on the churches since the 1950s, since 1968 the Czechoslovak government has reintroduced an increasingly harsh policy toward religion that remains in place, and may have intensified, in the 1980s.<sup>32</sup>

In a country with a large Catholic majority, ten of the thirteen dioceses have been without a resident bishop for decades due to the state's refusal to accept the Vatican's appointments (three Vatican appointments, two auxiliaries and an apostolic administrator, were finally accepted in 1988, the first in fifteen years). State restrictions on admissions at the two remaining seminaries (there were 13 in 1945) and state control over ministerial licenses (more than 500 priests have been deprived of their licenses) have left one-quarter of the parishes without a priest. A government-sponsored priests' association, *Pacem in Terris*, has been condemned by the Vatican and Cardinal Frantisek Tomasek of Prague for its pro-government political activities. Religious orders of men have been illegal since 1950 while orders of women have been prohibited from accepting new novices since 1971 and, with a few recent exceptions, are allowed to work only in homes for senior citizens and centers for the incurably sick and handicapped. The government also has made it virtually impossible to build new churches and has restricted severely contacts with the Church outside Czechoslovakia. As in the Soviet Union and Bulgaria, believers suffer from prohibition of most religious activity and face sustained atheistic propaganda and serious discrimination in education and employment as a result of worshipping openly.

These government policies have been applied with particular severity against Eastern Catholics, who have borne the heavy cross of oppression. The Eastern Catholic Church was forcibly incorporated into the Orthodox Church after World War II. In the portion of Czechoslovakia that was annexed to the Soviet Union (Carpatho-Ruthenia), the Church continues to operate underground with priests and bishops. The remaining diocese in Slovakia was restored in 1968 but remains without bishops and continues to be oppressed in countless ways.

Despite these and similar policies, the 1980s have brought a strong religious revival in Czechoslovakia, especially among the young, in some of the traditionally more secularized urban areas and in heavily Catholic Slovakia.<sup>33</sup> This revival is evidenced by several large pilgrimages in recent years and high levels of daily Mass attendance. In 1987 and 1988 this

revitalized Church, led by Cardinal Tomasek and some other bishops, has been clear and unified in its articulation of the pressing need for new, more open policies towards religion. We support the aspirations of the Catholics in Czechoslovakia, as outlined in their 31-point Charter of Believers, for an end to discrimination against believers and state interference with Catholic seminaries and the appointment of priests. In demanding restoration of the religious orders, construction of new churches, ordination of new bishops, freedom to receive and publish religious materials, and the right to form Catholic associations, Czech and Slovak Catholics seek no privileges but only the ability to live their faith and contribute to the common good. The recognition of these legitimate demands combined with the success of the recently-announced ten year plan for spiritual renewal would do much to heal the scars of the past, bring about reconciliation and strengthen the moral fabric of society.

#### German Democratic Republic

The religious situation in the GDR differs from that of the Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia insofar as the major religious bodies retain a greater degree of independence in internal church affairs.<sup>34</sup> The crass anti-religious propaganda and harassment campaigns against clergy and church leaders that aggravate church-state tensions in these other countries have been abandoned, for the most part, in the GDR. The Socialist Unity Party (SED) has sought a relationship based on dialogue while allowing the churches a certain limited freedom of action.

Given its minority status (about 8% of the population) and a desire to maintain its distance from the communist government, the Catholic Church's relationship with the state has been somewhat strained. The Church has criticized discrimination against Christian youth in education and employment (including the 'youth dedication' ritual for fourteen-year-olds), protested the introduction of pre-military training in the schools and the militarization of society generally, and, most significantly, has condemned the continuing atheistic education that has accelerated the secularization of society. Only in 1987 was the Church allowed to hold a national convocation, the first since World War II and a most significant event for the Church.

It is the state's monopolization of youth, its ideological threat and the virtual impossibility for practicing Christians to have access to higher studies and public offices, rather than the direct attacks and subversion of the church common in some other Eastern European countries, that impede improvement in church-state relations in the GDR. As Cardinal Joachim Meisner has said, Christians seek only the ability to live their faith and to "assume their social responsibility, in full accord with their conscience oriented by the faith of the church."<sup>35</sup> Christians desire to lend their talents to society "without thereby following any star other than that of Bethlehem."<sup>36</sup>

#### Hungary

The Hungarian government's willingness to compromise on a limited basis regarding church-state questions and a generally nonconfrontational approach by the Catholic Church (about 60% of the population) and the Reformed and Lutheran churches (about 20% of the population) have combined to ensure believers in Hungary a degree of religious freedom in certain areas of church life that is not found in some other Eastern European countries.<sup>37</sup>

Hungary is distinguished from the more repressive regimes by the limited number of Catholic religious orders which are permitted to operate eight secondary schools, the filling

of vacancies in episcopal sees with less rigid state interference, the general availability of Bibles and other religious materials, and the broadcast of religious programs by the state radio every Sunday. In the past decade private religious meetings have been largely tolerated, the study of the Bible as literature has been introduced into state secondary schools, a retreat house for lay people has been opened, and the state has permitted the establishment of a religious women's community dedicated to medical and social services.

No doubt the Church has benefited from some loosening of restrictions on it, but, as certain Hungarian bishops have indicated, more fundamental changes are necessary. It has been suggested that it is necessary to rethink the present legal framework for Church-state relations, in a spirit of cooperation and out of a desire to contribute to Hungarian society.<sup>38</sup> Specifically, the bishops have requested an end to the bureaucratic restrictions on religious instruction; a free hand for involvement with young people; rehabilitation of the religious orders, associations and publications that were dissolved during the Stalin era; an expansion of the eight high schools to accommodate unmet demand; greater access to the media; the right for priests to visit freely hospitals, prisons and schools; and a reconsideration of the government's policy toward Catholic conscientious objectors. These kinds of reforms could contribute to the creation of a new structure for church-state relations in Hungary.

#### Poland

Since the consolidation of communist rule in Eastern Europe after World War II, the Catholic Church in Poland has been the strongest and one of the most dynamic in the region -- in part because of its size, its identification with Polish national aspirations, its strong moral leadership and its role as the major independent institution in the country.<sup>39</sup> The election of Pope John Paul II in 1978 seems to have only increased the strength of an already vital Church.

The Church's remarkable resilience is most evident in its success in maintaining a significant degree of religious freedom despite the government's persistent efforts to suppress it. Both in law and in fact Polish citizens enjoy considerable freedom to practice their religion. Although the church still lacks legal status, the government has had to respect, for the most part, her institutional integrity. Unlike many other Eastern European countries, Polish law allows religious education in the home and in the churches. The Catholic Church operates the only independent university in Eastern Europe, numerous independent theological institutes and seminaries, several high schools and an extensive catechetical program. Church publications and the Catholic press offer a credible independent voice. The Church also is allowed limited charitable activities, and some lay organizations and movements, such as the Catholic Intellectuals' Club and Oases, are permitted to operate at the local level.<sup>40</sup> The Church has retained ownership of much of its property and has embarked in the past few years on a vigorous building program. Finally, the number of clergy and religious has more than doubled since 1945 and Poland remains one of the few countries in Europe where religious vocations are on the increase.

This relative freedom should not obscure the need, often expressed by the Polish Bishops, for important changes in state policies. State officials intimidate parents and their children who want to enroll in the optional catechetical programs. More importantly, the religious education of children and young people is threatened by secular programs and what the Polish bishops in 1986 termed a campaign of "intense atheistic propaganda" in the state schools.<sup>41</sup> Religious publications, though relatively independent, have limited circulation and

are subject to governmental censorship; and churches have no access to state-controlled radio and television other than the weekly radio broadcasts of religious services. The state continues to refuse legal status to the Church and lay Catholic associations, and the government consistently has encouraged anti-Church propaganda.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Polish case is the way in which the Church's strength and relative freedom have enabled it to serve as a defender of and advocate for other human rights and to contribute positively to the common good. It has played a courageous and pivotal role in the crisis brought about by the government's imposition of martial law and its attempts to crush Solidarity, and in subsequent efforts to stabilize the social, economic and political situation. It has supported the human and social ideals expressed by Solidarity, opposed martial law and demanded legal recognition of various civil, cultural and political rights as part of its call for far-sighted transformations in the economic and political system. At the same time that it has spoken on behalf of social justice, the Church has assumed the role of mediator, encouraging steady, nonviolent change in an effort to foster national unity.

#### Romania

As in Poland, religious practice is very strong in Romania and has similarly close ties to nationalistic feelings and culture, but the government's religious policies are much harsher.<sup>42</sup> As in the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, most religious activities other than worship are virtually banned, and the state exercises strict control over the churches. The government has settled, by necessity, for a form of co-existence with the majority Orthodox Church. But it has severely suppressed the Eastern Catholic Church (1.8 million adherents), which was banned and forcibly integrated into the Orthodox Church in 1948. Latin Catholics (1.2 million) have also suffered because the government has considered them a threat to national unity due to their primarily German and Hungarian origins and their loyalty to Rome. The five Latin Catholic dioceses have been effectively reduced to two due to difficulties in appointing bishops, the orders and religious congregations have been suppressed, the training of priests is highly restricted and the Church, as such, is not recognized by the state. Appeals by believers seeking the most basic of religious freedoms have been ignored or suppressed. Discrimination against believers, especially ethnic Hungarians and members of other minority groups, is increasing and the state frequently attacks religion through the media and the schools.

In recent years the Church has won small concessions from the government. The Bucharest Archdiocese has a bishop for the first time since 1954 and pilgrims have travelled to Rome for the first time since World War II. The very modest nature of these concessions is indicative of the difficulties faced by our Romanian brothers and sisters and the urgency and legitimacy of their desire for greater freedom to live fully their faith.

#### Yugoslavia

Since the Belgrade Protocol of 1966, which formalized relations between the Holy See and the Yugoslav government (Yugoslavia is the only Eastern European country with which the Holy See maintains formal diplomatic relations), the Catholic Church has maintained a considerable degree of freedom from state interference in internal church administration and has taken an active role in national life despite continued strong pressure from the government.<sup>43</sup>

The almost seven million Catholics in Yugoslavia (found mostly in Croatia and Slovenia) are

less restricted than in many other communist countries in Eastern Europe. They benefit from a vigorous Catholic press, extensive religious education programs and some charities. Problems remain, however. The Church must guard against atheistic and Marxist indoctrination in state schools, some anti-religious media propaganda regarding the church's alleged misuse of religion for nationalistic and political ends, employment discrimination against Catholics, and efforts to divide the Church. Also of concern are a lack of access to radio and television, restrictions on religious practice for those in the military, and limitations on certain pastoral activities such as prison and hospital ministry.

Yugoslavia's economic and political crisis since President Tito's death in 1980 has provoked divisions and disagreements within the communist party and exacerbated tensions among Yugoslavia's nationalities, notably between the Orthodox Serbs and the Muslim Albanians. These tensions have adversely affected church-state relations. The Church is not in a position to play the same role in helping to resolve these tensions as the Polish Church, but, as in Poland, the Church is a leader in promoting human rights and, with the Serbian Orthodox Church, in encouraging unity in a quite diverse Yugoslav society.

### III. A Program of Action

#### A. A New Framework for Church-State Relations

In speaking to the current dynamic of church-state relations in some detail, we seek to highlight the fact of the continuing denial of fundamental religious freedoms and the urgent need for fundamental reform in this area by the communist governments of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In doing so, we seek to avoid the tendency of those, on the one hand, who believe that the whole story of the Church in these countries is told by the despicable murder of Bishop Coba and the unjustified confinement of Augustin Navratil, as well as those, on the other hand, who would deny or ignore the reality of these and other continuing attacks on basic human rights and mistake full churches for full religious freedom.

This review of church-state relations in these nine countries shows important differences in the extent that religious practices are tolerated by the state. The context in which the Polish Church functions is very different than that in neighboring Czechoslovakia or Lithuania, and the situation in Albania has no analog in Eastern Europe. But important as these differences are, it is evident to us that all governments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union share a common hostility, expressed in different ways, toward religion, and this hostility is reflected in repressive or restrictive state policies.

It is also clear to us that the churches throughout this region desire and deserve the freedom fully to profess and practice their faith and fully to participate in the building of a just and free society in conformity with the interests of the nation and the demands of the common good. As Pope John Paul II noted in April of this year, "That freedom which November 14, 1998, our fellow believers demand is rooted in the human heart ... enriching the lives of November 14, 1998, the nation with the contribution of a sober, well-formed conscience, living by the values of the highest truth, justice, brotherhood, and peace."<sup>44</sup> Expanded religious freedom, then, would benefit both believers and society; it is necessary for integral human development and it would contribute to the development and maturation of these societies in ways commensurate with their long and rich traditions.

We are encouraged by the breezes of renewal that are beginning to blow across the Soviet Union and parts of Eastern Europe and pray that they will bring positive and far-reaching

political, economic and cultural reforms. Such reforms must not be confined to these spheres, however, but must extend to religion as well. Progress in these other areas will be measured in part by the extent to which institutional guarantees of greater religious freedom are put into place.

Greater religious freedom would mean a new framework of church-state relations that allows more than freedom of worship alone. This new framework would allow for the widespread dissemination of uncensored religious materials and would provide greater access to the media. It would mean new policies that protect parents' rights to provide formal religious education to their children; that end discrimination and atheistic and anti-religious propaganda; and that allow the formation of church groups for educational, charitable, cultural and social purposes. Moreover, it would allow religious bodies the freedom to choose, train and appoint ministers without state interference; to construct church buildings; to run their own schools; to form religious orders and to control the many other dimensions of their corporate life.

Such a new framework would go far in implementing the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Helsinki Final Act and other international agreements signed by the Soviet Union and all of the countries of Eastern Europe except Albania. These and other just demands have been expressed frequently by believers of all faiths in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union for many years. With our Holy Father our "hope wells up that -- at least in the November 14, 1988<sup>ese</sup> matters which are essential -- the longings of our ... brothers and sisters who sincerely confess their religious faith will not be disappointed."<sup>45</sup>

#### B. A Response of Solidarity by Churches, Groups and Individuals

The fact of repression of and restrictions on religious practice in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union creates in us a responsibility and an opportunity. We must, as Pope John Paul II has said, "endeavor to assume an attitude of Christian solidarity with our brothers in the faith who are undergoing discrimination and persecution. It is also necessary to seek forms in which this solidarity can be expressed."<sup>46</sup>

In the spirit of Christian solidarity, we cannot succumb to indifference, complacency or despair in the face of a seemingly intractable problem of religious liberty in certain countries and under certain political systems. What we said in *The Challenge of Peace* is apt: "Soviet behavior in some cases merits the adjective reprehensible, but the Soviet people and their leaders are human beings created in the image and likeness of God. To believe we are condemned in the future only to what has been the past of U.S.-Soviet relations is to underestimate both our human potential for creative diplomacy and God's action in our midst which can open the way to changes we could barely imagine."<sup>47</sup> Without trivializing or ignoring the deep ideological antagonism toward religion that has been variously manifested in the Soviet Union since the 1917 revolution and throughout Eastern Europe in the past 40 years, we are convinced that real progress is both possible and necessary. We recognize that significant progress toward religious freedom will be the result of changes in the internal dynamics of these countries, but we can play a role in encouraging the process of change. Therefore, we pledge ourselves and urge others concerned with promoting justice, freedom and peace to take the following actions.

1. Because the promotion of human rights is required by the gospel and is central to the

Church's ministry, we must pursue the cause of religious liberty as an essential component of our defense of human dignity, our option for the poor and vulnerable, and our pursuit of peace and justice. In doing so, we cannot forget that the lack of religious liberty is not a concern of Catholics or Christians only, but also of Jews, Muslims and members of all faiths. The ability of religious communities to voice a united advocacy for freedom, based on the principle that the lack of religious freedom for one is a lack of religious freedom for all, would be a prophetic statement and one in keeping with the ecumenical spirit of our times.

2. The starting point for action on behalf of religious liberty is to inform ourselves of the situation of believers in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We must respond to the dire need for education about the complex realities of the situation. This education should take seriously the differences in the treatment of religion between communist countries as well as the common problems, and it should avoid the polemics, oversimplifications and self-righteousness which are so tempting in this area.

3. Education must lead to action and advocacy for greater religious freedom in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and in the many other areas of the world where it remains unrealized. Among the many steps that can be taken, we commit ourselves to and recommend the following:

a. Wherever possible, more East-West contacts and exchanges, especially between churches and believers, but also between professionals, scientists, cultural groups, unions and others. These exchanges can be invaluable means of sharing information, improving understanding, and developing trust;

b. The introduction of the issue of religious liberty and other human rights concerns into these contacts and exchanges. The need to raise these issues frankly and constructively becomes especially urgent precisely when these relationships are pursued as small steps towards improved understanding, trust and peace;

c. Application to businesses operating in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union of the same norms of corporate responsibility that are used to evaluate the appropriateness of U.S. business presence and activities in other parts of the world;

d. Wherever possible and to the extent feasible, financial support for the churches in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and for the many private organizations that provide direct aid, such as bibles, religious literature and other materials, to these churches;

e. Public and private protest against violations of religious liberty, where directed against individual believers or religion in general.

4. Finally, and most importantly, we should continue to pray for those who suffer for their beliefs, recognizing our own deeply felt need for their prayers as well. We should pray with the confidence that Jesus has been sent "to proclaim liberty to captives and ... to set the downtrodden free" (Lk. 4:18), and with the assurance that those who are persecuted for Christ's sake will be greatly rewarded in heaven (Lk. 6:22-23).

## C. Policy Proposals

These individual and corporate efforts are, perhaps, the most important ways in which we can act in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. But, as concerned citizens, we cannot ignore the positive ways in which U.S. policy can play a role, however limited, in encouraging the expansion of religious liberty in these countries.

A constant theme of our statements on matters of international justice and peace has been that human rights -- as a matter of principle and as a matter of integrity -- should play a prominent role in U.S. foreign policy. In giving human rights this prominence, the United States respects the sovereignty of other nations at the same time that it exercises its legitimate concern for violations of basic human dignity. We are encouraged by efforts to make religious liberty and human rights concerns a more integral part of U.S. relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the past decade. Three dimensions of this policy of integrating human rights into U.S. foreign policy deserve more detailed attention.

### 1. International agreements and institutions

The Helsinki review process has provided a primary mechanism for dealing with these human rights concerns.<sup>48</sup> The accords bind the signatories, which include all countries of Eastern Europe except Albania, to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of religious belief and practice. Since the signing of the accords in 1975, follow-up meetings have been held in Belgrade, Madrid and Vienna. This review mechanism has encouraged the formation of independent human rights monitoring groups throughout the Soviet bloc, has focused international attention on human rights issues, has legitimized the efforts of governmental and nongovernmental organizations to raise human rights concerns directly with signatory governments, and has directly linked issues of human rights and security in Europe.

This dynamic, on-going process has coincided with some improvements in religious liberty, but the overall results have been disappointing. Despite important differences noted above, it is clear that none of the countries examined in this statement have upheld fully their obligations under the religious liberty provisions of the Helsinki accords. Rather than despair of the usefulness of international agreements such as the Helsinki Accords, however, the United States should continue to insist on full compliance with such agreements and seek to strengthen them. In addition to support for the Helsinki Accords, it is necessary to implement more fully the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights, the 1981 U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief and other international instruments, and to continue to support and to strengthen international mechanisms charged with monitoring and protecting human rights, especially the United Nations. In this regard, we welcome the establishment in 1986 of a special rapporteur on religious intolerance under the auspices of the U.N. Human Rights Commission, and support his efforts to report objectively on intolerance and discrimination wherever they exist.<sup>49</sup>

### 2. Bilateral relations

A second aspect of U.S. policy concerns its bilateral relations with the countries of Eastern Europe. This statement has tried to avoid suggesting that church-state relations are uniformly bad and that there is no hope for improvement. The cases of Poland, the GDR and Yugoslavia show the possibility of a measured and differentiated use of the United States' influence, however limited, for improvements in religious liberty. It is too early to tell

whether proposed reforms in the Soviet Union and throughout the Soviet bloc will become a reality and will include greater religious freedom. It is clear, however, that General Secretary Gorbachev's policies offer potentially significant changes in thought and practice that deserve to be taken seriously and encouraged -- not as the answer to radically different political philosophies and moralities and continuing East-West conflict, but as a potential basis for gradual expansion of freedoms in the Soviet bloc and improvements in East-West relations. The liberalization and the desire for improved East-West relations and trade in countries such as the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Yugoslavia and Hungary point to the desirability of a new assessment of U.S. policy vis-a-vis these countries.

Such an assessment should consider the possibility of using affirmative measures to influence human rights policies and practices, including developing closer relations, extending credits, and encouraging cultural and educational exchanges and tourism. Such initiatives have the potential to contribute to incremental improvements in human rights in some East European countries. In all such initiatives U.S. diplomacy should make it clear that continued improvement in relations will depend in part on continued improvement with regard to religious liberty and human rights.

### 3. Religious liberty and peace

A third aspect of U.S. foreign policy involves the Soviet Union in particular and concerns the relationship between peace and human rights, specifically religious liberty. Pope John XXIII in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* put forward freedom as one of the "four pillars that support the house of peace."<sup>50</sup> As Pope John Paul II has so often emphasized, the guarantee of religious freedom, in particular, is essential for the proper development of the human person, helps bring moral cohesion and the common good to individual societies, and contributes to the climate of mutual trust which is an indispensable condition for and primary expression of true social and international peace.<sup>51</sup> Conversely, religious repression, like every form of injustice, creates deep social divisions and mistrust that endanger and sap the energies for peace. Moreover, it negates the positive contribution to the work of peace and justice that inspires all of the great religious traditions.

Clearly, fuller protection of religious freedoms and other human rights in the Soviet bloc is one of many prerequisites to the more stable, peaceful relationship between East and West that should be our goal. Until this basic fact is taken seriously, dialogue with Soviet bloc governments often will be difficult and sterile. As we said in our 1983 pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*, U.S. relations with these governments should be guided by this "cold realism" about the obstacles to fruitful dialogue. But this realism must be "combined with the conviction that political dialogue and negotiations must be pursued.... Acknowledging all the differences between the two philosophies and political systems, the irreducible truth is that objective mutual interests do exist between the superpowers."<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, we must work tirelessly, as individuals, as a Church, and as a nation for greater freedom and justice in countries where these are not respected. But we cannot ignore the necessity for continued dialogue with the governments of these countries in order to create possibilities for agreement in areas where concrete if limited convergence of interest can be found. This dialogue has led recently to progress in disarmament and U.S.-Soviet relations. We hope and expect that it will lead to similar progress on religious liberty and human rights. We must pursue disarmament and improved relations in tandem with religious liberty and human rights. Because each has its own distinct dynamic and rationale, they should not be

held hostage to one another, but neither should one be pursued with indifference to the other. Both must be pursued with vigor and perseverance, for both share a common aim: a more authentic and lasting peace.

#### IV. Conclusion

We have spoken here in considerable detail about infringements on religious liberty in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, which are a continuing injustice and threat to peace and which all too often are hidden, ignored or dismissed. We have spoken as teachers and pastors who seek to educate about these unjust restrictions and to inspire Catholics and the wider society to take concrete steps of solidarity to assist the millions of believers in these countries who long for greater religious freedom. As preachers of the Gospel, who have spoken consistently on behalf of justice, peace and freedom in our own country and throughout the world, we have implored the governments of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to live up to their commitments under international covenants and to initiate a new framework for church-state relations so as to promote authentic human development, social progress and peace.

By speaking in these ways, we ally ourselves with the bishops of Eastern Europe in their suffering and in their ministry to their oppressed peoples. They and their fellow Christians celebrate centuries of Christianity in their nations complete in the knowledge that their faith not only has not diminished but thrives. The celebration of these anniversaries and the continuing vitality of the Eastern and Western forms of Christianity are, as Pope John Paul II has reminded us, "above all, an incentive to turn our pastoral and ecumenical sensibilities from the past towards the future, to strengthen our longing for unity and to intensify our prayer."<sup>53</sup>

We pray fervently for Christian unity, and we pray especially that all believers of all faiths soon will see the day when religious persecution and intolerance have become unvenerated relics of an unhappy past, anachronisms with no place in modern societies. Until this day dawns, we remain strengthened by the faithful witness of our brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and we will work and pray that they soon will be liberated from the structures of sin which bind them. With the Holy Father we pray that "these brothers and sisters of ours November 14, 1998, will feel our spiritual closeness, our solidarity, and the comfort of our prayer. We know that their sacrifice, to the extent that it is joined to Christ's, bears fruits of true peace."<sup>54</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

1. Pope John Paul II, address at Lourdes, August 14, 1983.
2. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, "On the Occasion of the Millenium of the Baptism of Kievan-Rus'" (Euntes in Mundum), *Origins* 17:42 (March 31, 1988): 714.
3. Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, January 1, 1988, *Origins* 17:28 (December 24, 1987): 493.
4. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Pastoral Letter on Marxist Communism," *Origins* 10:28 (December 25, 1980): 433.
5. United States Catholic Conference, "Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe: A Test Case for

Human Rights," May 4, 1977, in J. Brian Benestad and Frank Butler, eds., *Quest for Justice* (Washington, D.C.: USCC Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, 1981): 136.

6. Testimony of Reverend J. Bryan Hehir, "Religious Freedom as a Human Right" (U.S. Congress: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations, House Foreign Affairs Committee, February 10, 1982); Testimony of Reverend J. Bryan Hehir, "Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union" (U.S. Congress: Hearings Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, July 20, 1984).

7. For Pope John Paul II's commemoration of these anniversaries, see "Apostles of the Slavs" (Slavorum Apostoli), *Origins* 15:8 (July 18, 1985): 113; "On the Sixth Centenary of the 'Baptism' of Lithuania," *Origins* 17:8 (July 16, 1987): 128; Apostolic Letter, "On the Occasion of the Millennium of the Baptism of Kievan-Rus'" (Euntes in Mundum), *Origins* 17:42 (March 31, 1988): 714; message to Ukrainian Catholics (Magnum Baptismi Donum), *Origins* (May 5, 1988): 816.

8. See Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, January 1, 1988 in *Origins* 17:28 (December 24, 1987): 493; Vatican Council II, Declaration on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humanae) (1965); John Courtney Murray, *The Problem of Religious Freedom* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965).

9. Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, January 1, 1988 in *Origins* 17:28 (December 24, 1987): 493.

10. Vatican Council II, Declaration on Religious Freedom No. 2.

11. Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, January 1, 1988 in *Origins* 17:28 (December 24, 1987): 495.

12. Pope John Paul II, On Social Concerns (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis) (1987), 15, in *Origins* 17:38 (March 3, 1988): 643, 646.

13. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Pastoral Letter on Marxist Communism," *Origins* 10:28 (December 25, 1980): 435-37.

14. For similar categories applied specifically to the Soviet Union, see, Trevor Beeson, *Discretion and Valour: Religious Conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982): 48-9.

15. In other cases, the government authorities systematically have attempted to discourage and eliminate religious belief and practice by prohibiting virtually all essential activities. For example, the small number of synagogues that are allowed to function in the Soviet Union are severely hampered by the fact that rabbinical ordination, the teaching of Hebrew, and many other basic practices are illegal or officially discouraged.

16. 1977 Constitution, Article 52. English Translation from Moscow News supplement to issue No. 42 (October 1977).

17. Numerous books, articles, and periodicals provide an overview of the religious situation in these countries from various perspectives. See, e.g. Pedro Ramet, *Cross and Commissar: The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Trevor Beeson, *Discretion and Valour: Religious Conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); Bohdan Bociurkiw and John Strong, eds., *Religion and Atheism in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe* (Toronto: University of

Toronto Press, 1975); Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe (Easton, PA: Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe); Religion in Communist Dominated Areas (New York: Research Center for Religion and Human Rights in Closed Societies); Religion in Communist Lands (Framingham, MA: Keston College; see also Keston News Service (bi-weekly)); U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1988," report submitted to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, February 1988.

18. On the Catholic Church in the Soviet Union, see Roman Solchanyk and Ivan Hvat, "Catholicism in the Soviet Union" in Pedro Ramet, ed., Christianity under Stress, 3 volumes (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming 1989); on religion, in general, in the Soviet Union, see, e.g., Ludmilla Alexeyeva; Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985); Richard Marshall, Jr., ed., Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union, 1917-67 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

19. The tradition of Lithuanian self-rule dates back to 1236 when King Mindaugas founded a Lithuanian state which over the next two centuries emerged as one of the leading powers in Central Europe.

20. The Soviet Union is made up of fifteen republics with quite diverse national, cultural, religious and political characteristics.

21. Much has been written on the Catholic Church in Lithuania, see, e.g., Stanley Vardys, The Catholic Church, Dissent and Nationality in Soviet Lithuania (New York: Columbia University Press, distributor, 1978); The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania (Brooklyn, NY: Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid).

22. Pope John Paul II, address to bishops and administrators of Lithuanian dioceses, Rome, April 27, 1988.

23. See Bohdam R. Bociurkiw, Ukrainian Churches under Soviet Rule: Two Case Studies (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Studies Fund, 1984); Ukrainian Press Service (Ontario, Canada: St. Sophia Religious Association).

24. Pope John Paul II, message to Ukrainian Catholics (Magnum Baptismi Donum), April 19, 1988, in *Origins* 17:47 (May 5, 1988): 816, 818.

25. Pope John Paul II, sermon marking the millennium of the baptism of Kievan-Rus', Rome, July 10, 1988.

26. The Byelorussian and Ukrainian republics retain seats in the United Nations, giving the USSR a total of three.

27. There is a burgeoning literature on the Soviet reforms: see, e.g., Seweryn Bialer, *The Soviet Paradox: External Expansion, Internal Decline* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986); Timothy J. Colton, *The Dilemma of Reform in the Soviet Union* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1986); S. Frederick Starr, "Soviet Union: A Civil Society," *Foreign Policy* 70 (Spring 1988): 26; Robert Tucker, "Gorbachev and the Fight for Soviet Reform," *World Policy Journal* (Spring 1987): 179.

28. For a more detailed list of necessary reforms of religious policies, see, "An Appeal for Religious Freedom in the Soviet Union on the Occasion of the Millennium of Christianity in

Kievan Rus'" (Washington, D.C.: James Madison Foundation, 1988).

29. Pope John Paul II has appealed frequently for religious freedom for Albanians. See, e.g., address to Albanian pilgrims, May 6, 1988; For the fullest account to date of the Catholic Church in Communist Albania, see Gjon Sinishta, *The Fulfilled Promise* (1976). See also, the Albanian Catholic Bulletin (Santa Clara, CA: Albanian Information Service) and Bernard Tonnes, "Religious Persecution in Albania," *Religion in Communist Lands* 10:3 (Winter 1982): 242-255.

30. See, e.g., Janice Broun, "The Church in Bulgaria," *Pro Mundi Vita: Dossiers* 34 (March 1986); "Religious Survival in Bulgaria," *America* 153 (November 16, 1985): 323-27.

31. Pope John Paul II, meeting with Cardinal Frantisek Tomasek at Vatican, October 1, 1987.

32. See, e.g., International League for Human Rights, "Human Rights in Czechoslovakia," February 1987; "Christians and the Ideological Struggle in Czechoslovakia," *Pro Mundi Vita: Dossiers* (April 1982).

33. Czechoslovakia consists of two republics, the Czech and Slovak, each with different religious profiles.

34. See, e.g., Pedro Ramet, "East Germany: Strategies of Church-State Coexistence," *Religion in Communist Dominated Areas* 24:2 (Spring 1985): 37-41.

35. Cardinal Joachim Meisner, letter to diocesan clergy, cited in National Catholic News Service, February 10, 1988.

36. Cardinal Joachim Meisner, sermon at convention of Catholics in Dresden, July 11, 1987.

37. See, e.g., Emeric Andras and Julius Morel, eds., *Church in Transition: Hungary's Catholic Church from 1945 to 1982* (Vienna: Hungarian Institute for Sociology of Religion, 1983).

38. The government has promised a new law to regulate religious affairs in 1990. Debate is now taking place within the communist party and the churches about the underlying principles of the proposed legislation.

39. Pope John Paul II has addressed the Polish situation many times: see, e.g., the Holy Father's addresses during his 1987 visit to Poland in *Origins* 17:6 (June 25, 1987). For a history of the Polish Catholic Church, see Ronald C. Monticone, *The Catholic Church in Communist Poland, 1945-1985* (New York: Columbia University Press, distributors, 1986); Eric O. Hanson, *The Catholic Church in World Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), chapter 6.

40. In 1988, after the government had blocked the Church's original plan for an agricultural foundation, a unique -- but much less extensive -- Church-sponsored agricultural program was established to provide equipment and improved water supplies for the largely private agricultural sector in Poland.

41. Statement of Polish Bishops Conference, March 13, 1986.

42. See, e.g., P. Delvoy, "The Church in Romania", *Pro Mundi Vita: Dossiers* 4 (November-December 1978).

43. See, e.g., Stella Alexander, *Church and State in Yugoslavia Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Pedro Ramet, "Yugoslavia: The Catholic Church; 1945-

- 85," Religion in Communist Dominated Areas 25:3 (Summer 1986): 109-19.
44. Pope John Paul II, address to bishops and administrators of Lithuanian dioceses, April 27, 1988.
45. Ibid.
46. Pope John Paul II, general audience, April 4, 1979.
47. National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* (Washington, D.C.: USCC Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, 1983): No. 258.
48. For an overview of the Helsinki process, see, e.g., Vojtech Mastny, *Helsinki, Human Rights, and European Security* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986); CSCE Commission Report, "Basket III: Implementation of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Findings 11 Years After Helsinki" (March 1987).
49. Angelo d'Almeida Ribeiro, the special rapporteur, has submitted two important reports on implementation of the declaration; see U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/1987/35 and U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/1988/45.
50. Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, January 1, 1981, *Origins* 10:30 (January 8, 1981): 465, citing Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (1961).
51. Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, January 1, 1988, *Origins* 17:28 (December 24, 1987): 495.
52. NCCB, *The Challenge of Peace*, No. 225.
53. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, "On the Occasion of the Millennium of the Baptism of Kievan-Rus'" (*Euntes in Mundum*), *Origins* 17:42 (March 31, 1988): 715.
54. Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message, January 1, 1988, *Origins* 17:28 (December 24, 1987): 496.