

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND ETHICAL JUDGMENTS IN U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS**

by Alan Geyer

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Any discussion of U.S.-Soviet relations today must, of course, begin in wide-eyed wonder at the absolutely stunning array of recent events in the erstwhile communist bloc. We have witnessed more sudden and more sweeping transformations of power relationships in more countries simultaneously than at any other moment in modern history -- at least in any period of relative peace.

The vital involvement of Christian churches in every one of these transformations is more than enough reason for Christian ethicists to look deeply into the dynamics and meanings of these events.

This paper will not attempt to account for these most recent developments. Before we move too quickly to the vainglorious claim that we Americans have won the Cold War, or still less to the pseudo-eschatological declaration of Francis Fukuyama that we have reached "the end of history," we would do well to reflect on what that awful enmity has cost: in impoverishment and pain and death, especially among the world's poorest peoples and the millions of have-nots in this country,, the basic amenities or Soviet peoples, and the quality of life for all of us. Can any of us really doubt that this enmity should long have been a much higher priority on the vocational agenda of Christian ethics?

A brief account of some of our professional liabilities may be in order. Most of us share in what John Stremmler of the Rockefeller Foundation has called the "dangerous and self-inflicted ignorance" of our educational system concerning Russian studies. That ignorance is compounded by a severe asymmetry in historical seriousness. The Russians have a profound sense of things past; Americans do not. Most Americans have never been emotionally gripped by the fact that the Soviet people bore the heaviest burdens of World War II and were alone in fighting the main force of German armies on Russian soil for three years -- but the Russians remember, and many of them still believe that the Western allies wanted their whole nation to bleed to death.

Whatever the deficiencies of our educational system in these matters, Christian ethics as a field has hardly been dominated by historical seriousness. In a 1972 essay, James Gustafson charged Christian ethicists with "a strong inclination to neglect history." I believe that neglect has tended to make us all the more vulnerable to some of the unfortunate tendencies of "Sovietology as a vocation," as Stephen F. Cohen has described it: a preoccupation with abstract totalitarian and monolithic models and a bent toward gross exaggeration of the influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology" on Soviet behavior. Such common (but not universal) traits of soviet studies, especially as the field developed in the Cold War context of the 1950s and 1960s, reinforced the relative neglect of history, nationalism, and culture in understanding the Soviet Union.

Ethicists and other Christians concerned about issues of war and peace and the nuclear arms race have tended to be preoccupied with the abstractions of what George Kennan has called "military mathematics" (weapons numbers and specifications) and also with doctrinal disputes concerning deterrence and just-war theory -- rather than with the concrete historical realities of U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations.

It was not until the 1980s that our mainline churches began to get institutionally serious about education and exchange programs in Russian studies. It is still the case that Protestant and Roman Catholic theological education devotes only peripheral attention to Eastern Orthodoxy which has been the dominant historical influence on Russian nationhood and culture.

Yet the Russian Orthodox Church remains the largest national church in the world and the largest member church in the World Council of Churches. It has experienced a "religious renaissance" since the 1970s that has especially flowered during the Millennial celebrations and the glasnost of the past two years -- and is now blessed and burdened with opportunities for mission and education for which it is hardly prepared.

This paper is essentially programmatic in suggesting the most appropriate topics of study and teaching by ethicists in the field of U.S.-Soviet relations. My undisciplined approach to Christian ethics tends to emphasize the moral burdens of history. Here I wish to highlight the irenic powers of a political ethics of ambiguity: an ethics which knows that historic responsibilities for most international conflicts tend to be shared -- and also that there are gifts and graces on both sides of such conflicts.

Such an approach, of course, risks the reproach of certain nameless zealots who harangue us about the alleged sins of "moral equivalence" in U.S.-U.S.S.R. affairs. My sleazy meager ten-point outline does not presume to measure guilt arithmetically on either side of this enmity: it only proposes an agenda of morally significant topics and offers some hypotheses about historic responsibility.

### 1. The Moral Burdens of Russian History

Soviet novelist Yuri Trifonov once wrote: "History is not simply something that was. History is with us and in us."<sup>5</sup> Russian history -- both lived history and the legendary and

fabricated accounts of it -- is much with and in the Russian people. That history is a compound of deeply-rooted Christian identity, the harshness of nature, the brutality of invasion and despotism, revolts and revolutions, the inexhaustible flow of artistic and musical genius, and centuries of violence and incalculable unnatural death. Since 1914, just one long lifetime ago, perhaps seventy million Russians have perished in war, civil war, famine, forced collectivization, purges and gulags -- by far the largest unnatural loss of life by any nation in modern history. The centrality of the Resurrection in Russian faith and worship testifies to the bitterness of his national experience.

What we make of such a heavy history -- whether we imagine that Russians have a uniquely callous view of human life, or a uniquely precious view of it, or are absolutely determined to defend it in the name of Mother Russia -- is a question that cannot be sensitively addressed without profound study and human encounter. But it is a question that can be answered in part by lifting up another feature of Russian history.

## 2. The Special Russian Graces that Illumine the Moral Life

Suzanne Massie's powerfully attractive 1980 book, Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia, testifies to such special graces:

The Russians know the darker side of humanity, but they also understand the extraordinary capacity of the human soul for sacrifice and love, and they have the ability to accept both sides of man with greater equanimity than we in the West. They know how to take a long view, something we have all but forgotten in our anxious desire for immediate gratification. . . . They have approached God in a spirit of meekness; they have loved nature. . . . Their knowledge of suffering and their understanding of human weakness have made their 19th century novels probably the greatest in world literature.

If Suzanne Massie's testimony is primarily to the artists and writers of pre-Revolutionary Russia, the unending flow of creativity since 1917 is no less remarkable, notwithstanding the harshness of "socialist realism" and political repression. The continuing power of poetry as a public art and the undisguised spirituality of contemporary novelists, even party members, continue to amaze non-Russian observers. In short, there are blessed treasures of humanism in the Russian mind and spirit which command our wonder and awe.

## 3. Our Lost History of Russian Relations Before 1917

The magazine Soviet Life, aimed at American readers, has recently been full of references to early chapters in our shared history, going back to the 18th century. There was indeed an extensive pattern of U.S.-Russian relations between the revolution of 1776 and the revolution of 1917. In fact, almost every major happening in U.S. foreign policy in that period of nearly a century and a half was marked by at least an incidental element of Russian-American engagement.

Catherine the Great gave rhetorical support to the American Revolution. Thomas Jefferson greatly admired and carried on an extensive correspondence with Tsar Alexander I. Later Alexander offered to mediate an end to our War of 1812 with Britain. Still later he proposed that the U.S. join the Holy Alliance and become a European power. The definitive language of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 was in the context of Russian expansion down the West Coast as far as California. In the Civil War, Russia dispatched fleets to the harbors of New York and San Francisco, professing support for the Union against any British or French threat to intervene for the Confederacy. While Tsar Alexander II may have been motivated more by the desire to keep his ships from being bottled up in the Baltic Sea by the British navy, President Lincoln had indeed appealed for Russian help. Russian sailors were feted at grand parties and dinners up and down the East Coast. Alexander's freeing of the serfs virtually coincided with Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. There was a burst of romantic pro-Russian sentiment that lasted for some years, further inspired by the poetry of Oliver Wendell Holmes and Walt Whitman. The purchase of Alaska in 1867 was facilitated by an amiable relationship between Secretary of State William Seward and the Russian minister in Washington, along with Russian bribes of some well-selected Congressmen who had disparaged Alaska as "Seward's Folly" and "Walrusia."

It would take a fantastic imagination to trace the causes of the Cold War to the 18th or 19th centuries. Yet in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville did imagine just such a rivalry in his Democracy in America. These two emerging powers, he wrote, "have suddenly placed themselves in the front rank among the nations" and seem "marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe."

There was some political skirmishing after the U.S. emerged from the Spanish-American War as an Asian and Pacific power, especially as the dubious Open Door Policy clashed with Russian expansionism in Northeast Asia. But Theodore Roosevelt's settlement of the Russo-Japanese War on terms more favorable to Russia than to Japan was gratifying to the Russians (and infuriating to the Japanese).

Perhaps the most important pre-1917 happening was the migration of more than three million Russian subjects to the United States between 1881 and 1917. Tsarist repression and pogroms (including the mass killings of Jews) predisposed many Americans to favor a Russian revolution. Thousands of emigre socialists organized trade unions which became adjuncts to both Democratic and Socialist parties, founded journals of social philosophy, and taught in the burgeoning social science departments of urban universities. (In later years of Red Scares and McCarthyism, some of these escapees from Russian tyranny became victims of American witch hunts.)

Still it must be said that in all the interaction between Russia and America before 1917, there were no vital conflicts of interest or disastrous turning points that made enmity inevitable. It is the Russian remembrance of that history and the American forgetfulness of it that makes it a moral dimension of our present relations.

#### 4. The Moral Legacy of the Russian Revolution and the U.S.

## Response

On April 3, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson went before Congress to ask for a declaration of war against Germany. It was less than three weeks after the overthrow of the Russian monarchy. Wilson's address was ecstatic in hailing "the great, generous Russian people" who "in all their naive majesty and might" had been added to "the forces that are fighting for freedom in the word, for justice, and for peace. Here is a fit partner for a league of honor."

So there might have been a partnership between revolutionary Russia and the United States. Even after the second round of revolution eight months later, that of the Bolsheviks, Wilson was conspicuously solicitous for the new Soviet government. In the sixth of his Fourteen Points set for the January 1918, he pleaded for acceptance of Soviet self-determination, "a sincere welcome into the society of free nations," and assistance "of every kind" from "her sister nations."

The U.S. and its allies did not respond positively, however, to Lenin's Decree on Peace, calling for an immediate armistice and issued on the very first day of the Bolshevik triumph. That pointless and pitiless war of attrition ground on for another year without any serious effort at a political settlement. In the meantime, as civil war broke out in Russia in mid-1918, Wilson was persuaded by the British and French to dispatch U.S. marines to Murmansk and thousands of soldiers to Archangel and Vladivostok -- ostensibly to protect Allied munitions and a Czech legion that had defected from the Austrian army and proposed to join the allies. When U.S. troops remained on Russian territory long after the November 11, 1917 armistice, their implication in Allied efforts to overthrow the Soviet government became a very serious matter, leading to battle with the Red Army and over 500 U.S. casualties. The last U.S. troops did not leave Russia until April 1920.

Here begins, then, a long list of "what-if" moments in U.S.-Soviet relations: moments when other decisions and policies on both sides might have prevented the abyss of distrust. What if World War I had ended in 1917 instead of 1918? What if the U.S. had not been misguided into invading Russian territory?

The aftermath of World War I and the Russian Revolution offered many more such moments.

What if the Allies had not excluded both Russia and Germany from the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, thus denying them both a stake in the peace settlements -- terms which proved to be prime causes of an even more terrible war just twenty years later?

What if Wilson had not inexplicably refused to receive William C. Bullitt, his own emissary, back from a mission to Lenin in March 1919, returning from Moscow with a provisional agreement to end the Russian civil war and Allied intervention and to provide amnesty for Russians who had aided the Allies?

What if the generous Hoover food mission to Russia in 1921-22, which saved millions of Russian lives from starvation, had been followed with diplomatic recognition instead of Herbert Hoover's own demands that the Soviets "abandon their present economic system"?

Virtually all the governments of Europe recognized the Soviet government by 1924. The U.S., righteously refused until Franklin Roosevelt announced recognition in November 1933. Roosevelt's climactic conversations with Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov included a strange and amusing homily. FDR said:

Now you know, Max, your good old father and mother, pious Jewish people, always said their prayers. . . . Now you may think you're an atheist..but I tell you Max, when you die do you know what you're going to think of? You're going to be thinking about what your father and mother taught you. . . . That's all I ask, Max--to have Russia recognize freedom of religion.

If Lenin's contempt for religion was originally balanced by a strategic concern not to alienate all religious support of the Revolution, the militant alliance of the Orthodox Hierarchy with anti-Soviet forces in the civil war led to the deaths of many bishops and priests and to an increasingly repressive state policy. Nicholas Berdyaev, the great Russian Orthodox theologian-philosopher who was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1922, acknowledged a quarter-century later that "the militant godlessness of the communist Revolution" was largely due to the failure of Christianity to "carry out its mission for the transfiguration of life" and to Orthodoxy's slavish "support of an order which was based upon wrong and oppression."

Whatever Lenin's ambiguous legacy concerning religion, Stalin's persecutions and virtual shutdown of the churches matched his brutal collectivization of agriculture and mass purges which cost untold millions of lives. Soviet commentators have recently acknowledged that the horrors of Stalinism were partly responsible for the West's hostility in the Cold War -- a long-overdue note of ambiguity on the Soviet side. Yet there was an immense investment of social idealism and sacrifice in the early years of the Soviet Revolution which stirred millions to lift their poor and backward country above the miseries of previous generations.

Perhaps nothing more tragically requires an ethics of ambiguity than the fate of the Weimar Republic, Germany's brief experience of democratic, libertarian government between 1918 and 1932. It was the unwitting collusion between Stalin's nihilist strategy to wreck democratic socialism in Germany, on one hand, and the export of the American Depression that wiped out Germany's lower middle class, thus providing Nazism with its prime political base, on the other hand, that ushered Hitler into power.

Even then, had the United States belonged to the League of Nations, or at least been prepared to join in collective resistance to Nazi aggression, as urged most forcefully by the Soviet Union, the moral balance might have been righted. Stalin's strange 1939 pact with Hitler, at once cynical and naive, might have been precluded.

Many Western liberals believed in 1936 and after that the last chance to stop the march of Fascism was in the Spanish Civil War. A Congressional embargo on arms to Spain (arms that might have enabled the Republican government to survive) was strongly supported by the American Catholic hierarchy. On the March day in 1939 that Franco's army marched into Madrid, Pope Pius XII sent Franco a message thanking God for the Fascist victory in "Catholic Spain." There was a double-tragedy for foreigners who had fought on the Republican side and survived. American liberals and socialists were later victims of McCarthyism in the Cold War, while Russians who had been dispatched to Spain by Stalin and become imbued with democratic ideals returned home to become special victims of Stalin's purges and exterminations.

If the Cold War's most immediate causes are to be traced to the context of World War II and its aftermath, then the moral accountability for the events leading up to World War II becomes a central issue for the ethics of history. The demons of Nazism developed in large part from the sins of other nations.

#### 5. Responsibility for the Cold War

Somehow, in ways still disputed by historians and politicians, U.S.-Soviet relations in the 1940s moved from wartime alliance and the promotions of friendship between our two peoples to a near half-century of enmity, apocalypticized by the threat of mutual annihilation. I recently acquired a video of a 1943 War Department propaganda film that offered a glorified account of Russian history and heroism in the war against Hitler. Some of that film's pro-Russian sentimentalities are almost embarrassing even today in a time of renewed detente.

One persuasive account of the Cold War's origins begins not with Stalin's violations of Yalta Conference principles in Eastern Europe, but back two years earlier. In January 1943, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill met in Casablanca and announced their wartime goal of "unconditional surrender"--partly to persuade Stalin, whose armies were then embattled at Stalingrad, that the Western allies would wage total war against Hitler without an appeasing settlement. Louis Halle, a State Department official in the 1940's judged that the policy of unconditional surrender "laid the foundations of the Cold War" by eliminating German power from Central Europe.

Both a prime cause and the most serious consequence of the dogma of unconditional surrender was the compulsion to demonize the enemies. That meant the righteous incapacity to recognize that there were either "good Germans" or early prospects for an armistice with Japan that would preclude the use of A-bombs.

If Halle's thesis is correct, we then confront one of the most terrible ironies of the twentieth century. A supremely tough, militant, no-compromise, fight-to-the-finish wartime policy for the sake (it was said) of an enduring peace, set the stage for both the Cold War in Europe and the nuclear arms race.

It is surely more than a minor footnote to recall in this context the efforts of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, on behalf of an impressive corps of anti-Hitler resistance leaders, to persuade the Allies to consider an early peace, given a successful overthrow of Hitler. We are left with another haunting "what-if": wondering what the shape of Europe and of U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations might have become after 1945 if Bonhoeffer and Anglican Bishop George Bell had been taken more seriously by Allied governments.

There were many other decisional moments in the later stages of the war, and the months just after, that stepped up the momentum of antagonism: the abrupt cancellation of Lend-Lease aid to the Russians and the refusal to comply with a Russian request for a \$6 billion reconstruction loan; U.S. secretiveness about the A-bomb and then implicit brandishing of the bomb against the Russians; Stalin's engineering of a coup in Czechoslovakia after the Czechs' democratic government decided to participate in the Marshall Plan. The Berlin Blockade of 1948-49 led directly to the formation of NATO -- and military alliances increasingly defined Cold War relationships.

In subsequent years, the prospects for detente were repeatedly frustrated by secondary aspects of the Cold War:

- \*proxy wars in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, and Central America;

- \*the Paris Summit of 1960 undone by U-2 overflights;

- \*the planned beginning of nuclear arms talks in 1968, disastrously postponed by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia;

- \*the promise of SALT I, broken by the Nixon administration's decision to deploy MIRVs (thus forsaking the opportunity to stabilize the nuclear parity of the superpowers and bedeviling all subsequent arms negotiations;

- \*Soviet interventions in Angola and the Horn of Africa;

- \*the 1976 presidential primary campaign of Ronald Reagan, which led the Ford White House to abandon the virtually completed SALT II Treaty and even to abandon the very word "detente" -- after which U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations were plunged into a decade of regression to some of the worst of Cold War animosities and military escalations.

If the causes of the Cold War and its perpetuation remain morally ambiguous and debatable, the causes of its seeming denouement are no less so. Should the credit go to Ronald Reagan and his aggressive "peace through strength" policies? Or to Mikhail Gorbachev and his visionary "new thinking" and relentless diplomatic initiatives? Or to the unprecedented anti-nuclear movements of the 1980's. Or to the magisterial engagement of church hierarchies in these issues? Or to Nancy Reagan and her astrologer? And what shall we say of the remarkable achievements of the disciplined nonviolent demonstrations that recently toppled the communist regimes of Eastern Europe? Was the spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr. alive in them?

How we read the histories of such events tends to be influential in shaping our ethical orientations to East-West relations and our policy prescriptions for the future. The public policy struggles of our time have increasingly been fought over alternative readings of history.

## 6. Truthfulness and Enmity

Hans Küng's 1968 essay on Truthfulness: The Future of the Church lamented that, historically, there had been a "sweeping disregard of truthfulness in moral theology." Truthfulness had not been classed as either a theological virtue or one of the cardinal virtues. At best, it was subsumed under some other virtue; so Thomas Aquinas subsumed it under justice.

Whatever the defaults of moral theologians, the virtue of truthfulness has been very hard to come by in U.S.-Soviet relations. The Cold War has been waged with vicious strategies of disinformation on both sides. For many years, anti-American propaganda in Soviet rhetoric and media (not least from Soviet "peace" groups) has been outrageously crude. But the problem of truthfulness is hardly one-sided. George Kennan has exposed the "primitivism" of American propaganda against the U.S.S.R.: its "endless series of distortions and oversimplifications," its "systematic dehumanization" of Soviet leadership, its "routine exaggeration" of Soviet military capabilities, its "monotonous misrepresentation" of the Soviet people, and its "reckless application of the double standard to the judgment of Soviet conduct and our own."

The investigation of this deficiency of truthfulness requires a historical methodology and particular cases. A decisively pernicious myth that gained ground in the late 1970s and became the dominant policy presumption of the 1980s held that the Soviets had achieved (or were about to achieve) nuclear superiority, while the U.S. had allegedly neglected its nuclear forces during the 1970s. That fabrication of recent history ignored the fact that the U.S. added more than 5,000 strategic nuclear weapons during the 1970s and multiplied potential missile targets in the Soviet Union from 1700 to about 9,000 - largely through the MIRVing of both land-based and sub-based missiles. All this, while pushing ahead with all the new missile technologies: Mark 12-A warheads, Tridents I and II, Pershing IIs, MX, air-launched cruise missiles, ground-launched cruise missiles, sea-launched cruise missiles.

There is a more complicated aspect to the deficiency of truthfulness, especially in connection with the arms race: the twisted logics and the ground-shiftings involved in the endless rationalizations and proliferation of very moralistic arguments for promoting new "generations" of nuclear weapons and resisting arms reductions. Just one example: The Strategic Defense Initiative was originally presented as a project to make nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete," to overcome that "immoral" policy of nuclear deterrence. But then the moral argument flipflopped when the overwhelming skepticism of scientists was registered. Now SDI was billed as just the system to "enhance deterrence" -- and deterrence was once more a Good Thing, not the Bad Thing that SDI would abolish.

Christian ethicists may not sit in expert judgment on all such technologies. But we may, and must, discern the moral arguments and the political justifications for such technologies and the foreign and military policies they are supposed to serve. That means tracking the history of moral rhetoric in U.S.-Soviet relations.

### 7. Comparative Political Ethos

There is a largely unexamined moral paradox in any serious comparative study of the political cultures of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. One side of the paradox is to discover how radically different are the historical experiences and cultural backgrounds of the superpowers -- a great gulf that rightly discourages sentimental expectations of political harmony between them. The contrasts typically drawn by Americans between the values of the two political cultures -- their ethos -- have focused on the presumed polarities of freedom vs. authoritarianism (or security), of individualism vs. collectivism, of spirituality vs. materialism. There are at least half-truths in these contrasts, such as conflicting priorities between American and Soviet conceptions of human rights -- but the polarities have been overdrawn as descriptions of empirical values.

The other side of the paradox is the surprising discovery that there are many parallels and affinities between the superpowers -- affinities that offer potentials for both concord and intense conflict, conflict not only between them but also threatening to engulf many other nations.

As presumptuous "superpowers," both nations exude not only a historic mystique of gigantism and invincibility: their nuclear prowess (which they jointly try to deny to others) makes them implicit imperialists toward all other nations. Both have a mystical sense of destiny, of messianic identity. Both have celebrated the robust ethic of the frontier and have had the space and the wilderness to practice it. Both have ritualized ideologies of equality but offer rationalizations for increasing inequalities. Both have anti-governmental and anti-militarist ideologies -- but both have strong statist governments and enormous military establishments. Both have worshipped at the shrines of technolatriy, for which they have sacrificed community and environmental values. Both have inspired the grossest of materialistic values. Whether their common religious faiths and common hopes for peace and a more abundant life will yet provide the bonds of mutual respect and concordant relationships is an open question for the last years of this millennium.

### 8. The Christian Critique of Marxist-Leninist Ideology

The Christian-Marxist dialogue which enjoyed a brief flurry in Central Europe in the 1960s and has been a major topic in Latin American liberation theology has never had a vital counterpart in the Soviet Union. Quite apart from the political barriers to such a dialogue within the U.S.S.R. is the question as to whether there is really an integrated body of political and economic thought called "Marxism-Leninism." That is very much to be doubted. Michael Harrington's 1972 classic, Socialism, persuasively breaks apart those two terms, interpreting the mature Marx as one committed to evolutionary, democratic

social change, while Lenin's political philosophy of elitist, conspiratorial revolution owes more to the writings of Russian fanatics of the 1870s. To be sure, Lenin shared Marx's materialistic philosophy and contempt for religion. But their divergence in political philosophy makes both Soviet claims and conservative critiques of "Marxism-Leninism" suspect.

Perhaps even more important is the judgment of many Sovietologists that the professed ideology of "Marxism-Leninism" today is simply not a prime motivator of Soviet policy, having been reduced to the rituals of official rhetoric and now, under Mikhail Gorbachev, having lost almost all of its dialectical pyrotechnics -- especially in foreign policy where the appeal is to the morality of a common humanity. One apparent reason for the growth spurt in U.S.S.R. churches is their implicit offer, especially to young people, of a counter-culture to a decaying ideology.

It has always been a serious moral error to make the atheism of both Marx and Lenin the major pretext of Christian anti-Sovietism: a pretext which excused too many Christians from apprehending the moral earnestness of Marx and many of his disciples, from concretely understanding Russian history and culture, and from discovering the immense reality of Russian Christianity.

#### 9. The Role of Christianity in Promoting Enmity

That some Christian churches, theologians, evangelists, and conspicuously Christian laity have intensified the Cold War is a fact well-known to Christians and others in the Soviet Union. The Vatican's decades-long crusade against all forms of communism and socialism was given a firm platform by Pope Pius XI's encyclical, Divini Redemptoris, and fervent support by the American hierarchy until Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical, Pacem in Terris. (I have been wondering how certain departed cardinals from the Archdioceses of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles might have responded to the spectacle of a Soviet president meeting the Holy Father at the Vatican.)

Protestant fundamentalists and others have long been inflamed by the Manichaean anti-communist preachings of "evangelical" celebrities. A recent example is Edmund Robb, proprietor of the Ed Robb Evangelistic Association and founder and board chairman of the Institute on Religion and Democracy. Robb's 1986 book, The Betrayal of the Church, castigates denominational mission and social action boards, Roman Catholic bureaucrats, and the National World councils of churches for providing "a public relations front for the Soviet Union" and identifying themselves with "totalitarians." Much closer to the heart of the Protestant mainline in the 1940s and 1950s was John Foster Dulles -- "Mr. Christian Layman" and the son of a Presbyterian preacher - whose rhetoric and policies as Secretary of State personified the ideological Cold War against "atheistic communism."

In reviewing the regressive American political climate of the 1980s, ethicists would do well to assess the relative influence of Christian groups seeking to reinvigorate the Cold War and those seeking to overcome it.

## 10. The Role of Ecumenism in Overcoming Enmity

Ecclesial relations between U.S. and Soviet churches since the 1950s have inevitably been preoccupied with issues of peace and justice. In the World Council of Churches, bilateral relations between the National Council of Churches and U.S.S.R. churches, denominational exchanges, and the Prague-based Christian Peace Conference, U.S.-Soviet ecumenism has been inescapably political. It has been marked by spirited controversy among participants, severe condemnation from outsiders, and the intrusiveness of both the KGB and the FBI.

Since the 1979 "Choose Life" Consultation of U.S. and U.S.S.R. church leaders in Geneva, there has emerged a "confluent theology": a special testimony formed by the coming together of radically different streams of Christian history and experience into a common reservoir of conviction and spirituality. Among the emergent themes are these: (1) the recovery of a theology of Creation; (2) radical responsibility for history; (3) the security of shalom; (4) the idolatry of nuclear arms; (5) overcoming principalities and powers; (6) Christ, the Conqueror of Death; and (7) our unity in Christ. All these themes are loaded with ethical implications.

The marvelous European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel in May 1989 (an event still to be discovered in our North American churches) especially lifted up the radiant testimony of Russian Orthodoxy to the harmony between humanity and nature in God's Good Creation. Archbishop Kirill of Smolensk, former rector of the Leningrad Theological Academy, devoted his keynote address to proclaiming a theocentric ethic based on God as Creator: an ethic which teaches "wholeness, inter-connectedness and the value of the whole Creation (whose one purpose is) the glorification of the Creator."

The discovery that North American ethicists have much to learn from the ethics of our longtime enemies -- in fact, our Christian sisters and brothers from whom we have been so long estranged -- is surely a promising new point of departure for the enrichment and empowerment of us all.