

April 1986 they were refused admission. The official reason given was that Irina "... had not stood up when the doctor came to see her". Private reports suggest that she had been too ill to do so. She was suffering dangerously high blood pressure with considerable risk of a stroke, or heart or kidney failure. It appears likely that the visitors were refused admittance because of the authorities' reluctance to allow confirmation of reports of her deteriorating physical condition.

Unofficial information released shortly before Irina's transfer to Kiev in July indicated that she had developed angina and was suffering frequent loss of consciousness. The camp infirmary lacked the necessary equipment and medication to help her, and relatives were not permitted to supply medicine. She had not been released from compulsory labour, and had to report daily for work

despite having temperatures of up to 40° Celsius.

In the Kiev Investigation Prison, her condition is said to have improved slightly. Food is better, and she has been allowed two visits from her mother and a further two from her husband, both of whom she had not seen since September 1983. She has been under pressure from the authorities (possibly as a result of publicity in the West) to plead for clemency to secure her release, but she has refused to do so or to permit relatives to act on her behalf. She continues to hold that she was tried illegally in the first place and that any appeal would be inappropriate, irrespective of the seriousness of her heart condition.

Irina Ratushinskaya has 3½ years of camp and five years' internal exile still to serve.

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The Hare Krishna Movement in the USSR

One of the more recent manifestations of the revival of interest in religion amongst Soviet youth has been the spread of Eastern religions and associated practices such as yoga. Of these teachings, perhaps the most influential has been that of the Hare Krishnas. The origins of this movement in the USSR can be traced back to 1971 when their spiritual leader, Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, visited Moscow. Though refused permission to lecture, he was able to initiate one young Russian into the teachings of Krishna Consciousness. For the rest of the 1970s this man, Anatoli Pinyayev, was to travel the Soviet Union spreading the teachings of the movement.

Added impetus was given by the 1979 International Book Fair held in Moscow, where a considerable quantity of Krishna literature was on display and was eagerly examined by many Muscovites. The following year Swami Visnupada, the Krishna leader responsible for the Soviet Union, paid a visit to the USSR. Adherents of the movement were able to organise a meeting in the Riga House of

Culture, but the meeting was broken up by the KGB and those present were interrogated.

The first arrest came in 1981 when Yevgeni Tretyakov from the town of Krasnoyarsk was sentenced to one year in camp on charges of "parasitism". In a report on his trial appearing in *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya* (Socialist Industry), it was claimed that he had been introduced to the teachings of Krishna Consciousness by Anatoli Pinyayev. Such an attack in the press usually ensures that sooner or later the person mentioned will be arrested, and in April 1982 Pinyayev also was charged with "parasitism". The investigating authorities, however, sent him to Moscow's Serbsky Institute for psychiatric examination, and the doctors ruled him not responsible. Interned in an Ordinary Psychiatric Hospital in Moscow, Pinyayev escaped in May and spent nearly a year in hiding before being recaptured. This time he was placed in the Smolensk Special Psychiatric Hospital (SPH), and was forcibly treated with drugs. Krishna supporters claim that such treatment affects them to

a greater extent than it would other people because their systems are "purer" as a result of abstention from all intoxicants, including tea and coffee.

At various times since 1981 Hare Krishna groups in the USSR have sought to form legal religious associations. A Moscow group led by Sergei Kurkin and Vladimir Kritsky was informed by local officials that so long as they were not registered the KGB would continue to break up their meetings. Yet when they did apply, registration was refused on the grounds that they were "ideologically deviant". Soon after this both leaders were arrested and charged under Article 227 of the RSFSR Criminal Code ("infringement of the person and rights of citizens under the guise of performing religious rites"). In late 1982, Kritsky was sentenced to four and a half years and Kurkin to two and a half years in labour camp.

From 1982, the Soviet press began to take an interest in the Hare Krishna movement, with accounts of the trials of devotees appearing in a number of papers. One of these, *Nedelya* (The Week), alleged that Krishna activities in the USSR were funded and directed by the CIA in an effort to undermine the spiritual unity of the Soviet people. The Hare Krishnas were also discussed in more specialist atheist publications, although these tended to concentrate on the movement's activities in the West and ignored their existence in the USSR. In 1983, *Nauka i religiya* (Science and Religion) carried an article under the title "This Strange World of Hare Krishna", which pointed to the allegedly harmful consequences of involvement in the movement. In particular, it suggested that the combination of repetitive chanting of mantras and poor diet — Hare Krishnas are vegetarians — led to mental and physical breakdown.

Throughout the first half of the 1980s, individual adherents were subject to repression, and this appears to have been stepped up in late 1984. In October of that year, police raided the homes of Krishna devotees in the Stavropol' region village of Kurdzhino, and in trials the following

year nine were sentenced to terms in labour camp of between one and five years.

During 1985 a series of police raids in Armenia revealed that the movement had considerable strength in this small republic. Meetings organised by Hare Krishnas were regularly disrupted, and leading activists warned of the illegality of their actions. To improve their situation, a number of those involved organised a campaign for the registration of their movement as a *bona fide* religious association. In accordance with the law, twenty of them submitted an application to the Armenian Council for Religious Affairs. No response to this request was forthcoming, but in July searches were carried out in the homes of signatories, and over sixty individuals were interrogated. In November, four of these were arrested and a fifth, Sergei Kasyan, was diagnosed as suffering from "Krishna mania" and was interned in a psychiatric hospital. The trial of the arrested Hare Krishnas began in February 1986, but was disrupted when the accused started a hunger strike on the grounds that they were not being permitted the vegetarian diet necessitated by their beliefs. The court called for a psychiatric report and this ruled the defendants responsible, but the prosecutor contested the decision and they were transferred to a hospital for further examination.

From the trial accounts reaching the West in recent years, it appears that the Hare Krishna movement has spread to many parts of the USSR. Initially, they avoided drawing attention to themselves, but repeated harassment led them to take seriously official requests that they register as legal religious associations. This, however, served to reveal to the authorities the more active members of the movement, and laid them open to persecution as belonging to a movement considered undesirable by the authorities. At the time of writing, Keston College knows of 34 Hare Krishnas imprisoned for their beliefs, but there are almost certainly more.

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