

New Soviet Thinking on Religion

JANE ELLIS

Signs of change in the public attitude to religion in the Soviet Union are numerous. Religion is now accepted as a part of national life and is discussed, at least by some, in a completely different way from what was customary as recently as two or three years ago. But it is impossible at present to assess how far this changed attitude goes. Is it a tactical move, designed to relieve pressure on millions of believers while an attempt is made radically to reform the lives of 290 million Soviet citizens? Or is it a sea-change which will persist when, or if, *perestroika* ever becomes a reality? No-one is in a position to say.

All that seems clear at present is that the situation for believers is unlikely to revert to being as bad as it was in Brezhnev's declining years. It is now public knowledge that there are millions of believers and it is accepted that they have a right to their world-view. It would require a reimposition of Stalinism for them to be declared unpersons again. The genie has been let out of the bottle and cannot be forced back in — or, at any rate, not all the way back in.

The foremost proponent of a new and more constructive attitude to religion has been Konstantin Kharchev, the chairman, since 24 January 1985, of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR. One or two journalists may have been more outspoken, or spoken sooner, than he, but Kharchev has now publicly espoused most of the major rights of believers for which dissidents have been campaigning for a quarter of a century. He has a high profile internationally and on overseas trips has repeated emphatically that the new attitude to religion is here to stay. In interviews in the Soviet press, notably with the liberal weekly *Ogonek*, a leading proponent of *glasnost*, Kharchev has stated in more detail what concessions should be made to believers. These concessions are: that believers should be granted equal rights with atheists; that private religious education should be permitted; that juridical personality should be restored to the churches; that churches should be allowed to own printing presses; that state publishing houses should print the

Bible and the Church Fathers, and an end be put to the practice of state registration of churches.¹ These cover the major points for which dissenters have appealed time and again in *samizdat* documents, the authors of some of which paid for their views with imprisonment.

Kharchev's statements cannot necessarily be taken at face value because he has made other, off-the-record, comments of a different nature, to which I shall return below. The fact that he has made so many forceful public statements simply makes it clear that Kharchev has been brought in to give religion a new image. Furthermore, it has become clear of late that he is encountering opposition, perhaps more than initially expected, from at least two sources.

One source of opposition which Kharchev indicated quite unambiguously in his December interview is the local party officials. He said that believers who had illegally been refused permission to register a church by local officials had been reduced to seeking redress from the CRA in Moscow. Claiming that during 1988 the CRA reversed 83 refusals by local authorities to register churches, Kharchev gave a specific example of such an incident in Ukraine, naming the officials who had acted improperly. Overall he gave a strong impression of a man doing his best to bring about change in the face of entrenched local political interests. In this respect, his position is analogous to Gorbachev's in the latter's efforts to reform the economy, for most commentators now agree that Gorbachev initially underestimated the extent of local opposition and therefore the length of time it would take for his policies to bite.

Another source of opposition to Kharchev appears to be in some of the other official bodies concerned in one way or another with religion. This has become evident during the protracted discussions over the new law on religion, which appear to have been going on for two to three years. The bodies concerned in drafting the new law, according to Kharchev, are the CRA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Procuracy and the Academy of Sciences.² It is not known what points of view are being put forward by the different bodies, nor indeed by whom they are represented. Although it is said that representatives of religious groups are being consulted, it is not known what form the consultation takes, to what extent the views of the representatives are influential, precisely which religious bodies are involved, nor, again, who exactly the representatives are. However, Kharchev said in his December *Ogonek* interview that the examination of proposals for the new law 'has been rather drawn out',

¹ *Ogonek* No. 50, December 1988, p. 205.

² For some reason the Academy of Sciences is omitted from the list given in *Ogonek*, but Kharchev said during his visit to Britain that they were involved in the drafting process.

suggesting impatience on his part. There are grounds for thinking that opposition stems from the Academy of Sciences. A draft of the new law prepared by Yuri A. Rozenbaum at the Institute of State and Law, (which is affiliated to the Academy), was published in February 1989. It is far more precise and painstaking than an unpublished version of the law circulated during the same month by the CRA. This suggests that the Academy is considering the new law more thoroughly, and therefore more slowly, than the CRA. Kharchev's impatience is understandable: on his trips abroad it is Kharchev who has to keep explaining why the new law has not been published yet, not the legal experts in their offices busy crossing the CRA's t's and dotting its i's.

Kharchev's exceptional frankness in this interview suggests that he is trying to force the pace. Possibly he is hoping to cut the ground from under his opponents' feet by making public the lack of success in solving problems of believers' rights to date. Their bureaucratic obstruction is preventing him from doing the job he was brought in to do, that is to back up the new image given to religion with some legal guarantees. Whatever his personal convictions about the role of religion may be, the question of his career must be pressing. To quit for another job before the new law is adopted, leaving the task to a successor, could be construed as an admission of failure.

One proposal in Kharchev's December interview not reflected in either of the two draft laws so far produced is the abandonment of the principle of registration of places of worship. Both drafts retain this, although in different forms. Rozenbaum's draft proposes that the statute (*ustav*) of a religious community should be registered, rather than the community itself. This implies that once the statute of a given community has been accepted, others with the same statute should find registration relatively easy. Rozenbaum also says that, if refused permission to register by local authorities, believers may take their case to court. The CRA's version makes itself the final court of appeal, which might be acceptable in the present climate but offers insufficiently firm safeguards for the future. But believers may well be disturbed by the fact that registration is still a sanctioning act by the state, not a simple recognition that a community exists.³ In general, the two drafts agree on the broader freedoms to be offered to believers, such as were outlined in Kharchev's interview, if they are read in the spirit of Gorbachev's dictum that 'everything which is not forbidden is permitted'. Several disagreements on narrower issues remain to be resolved. A spokesperson for the CRA, contacted by

³Rozenbaum's draft was published in *Sovetskoye gosudarstvo i pravo* No. 2, 1989. The CRA's draft is an unpublished typescript received at Keston College; the CRA has confirmed by telephone that they originated it. For a commentary on the two drafts see *Keston News Service* No. 320, 2 March 1989.

telephone, emphasised that its version was a working document, not a final one, and that changes on matters of principle could still be made, possibly including some of Rozenbaum's points.

One point, therefore, which may still be under discussion, is Kharchev's comment that the role of the CRA itself should change as a consequence of the abandonment of registration of places of worship. He envisages in such circumstances no further role for the CRA's commissioners (*upolnomochennye*) and the transformation of the CRA itself into a permanent commission of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet: from an organ of administration (*upravleniye*) into an organ of 'people's power' (*narodovlastiye*). It could have counterparts at republican level. All questions concerning church-state relations would be resolved by members of the local Soviet of People's Deputies, elected by the people. The decisions of the commission, in a state governed by the rule of law, would be binding on all.

This is an interesting and unusual proposal. It is unexpected to find any bureaucrat proposing a diminution of the powers of the organisation he is running (reinforcing the impression, hinted at above, that Kharchev may have his eye on other jobs). But the most curious feature of this very liberal-sounding statement is that it conflicts with what he says earlier in the interview about the reactionary behaviour of local officials. Loosening of central control and giving more power to local soviets would, by this logic, make matters *worse* for at least some believers. The commission, if I interpret Kharchev's words correctly, would establish general principles, but local conflicts would be resolved locally. The granting of juridical personality to religious communities would mean that believers could take their case to court if they were dissatisfied with the decisions of local party officials. The question then arises as to how much confidence believers would have in the courts, and this is something that would vary widely from one area to another. The question of believers' final right of appeal — either to the courts or the CRA in Moscow — in disputes over registration of places of worship is therefore a crucial one. It is likely that in the discussions about this question, the intractable problem of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church is a major issue.

The campaign for the legalisation of the Ukrainian Catholic church, outlawed since 1946, has been growing in strength since *glasnost*' was proclaimed. There have been public gatherings involving thousands of people in western Ukraine, the church's heartland. The question is a thorny one because it concerns not only church-state relations but relations between the Eastern-rite Catholics and the Russian Orthodox Church. If the Ukrainian Catholic Church were legalised, it is likely

that a large number of what are at present Orthodox churches in western Ukraine would go over to the Ukrainian Catholic Church, to the detriment of the Orthodox Church. It is thought therefore that the Moscow Patriarchate may be expressing opposition to legalisation, whilst the Ukrainian party officials in Kiev appear also to oppose it. The main reason for the enforced incorporation of the Ukrainian Catholics into the Russian Orthodox Church after the war was that it was identified with Ukrainian nationalist aspirations, which Stalin was determined to quash. The party leadership may fear a revival of such feelings in western Ukraine, which did not become a part of the Soviet Union until the end of the war. Furthermore, Ukraine is the Soviet republic where Gorbachev's reforming policies have made least headway: the party chief, Volodymyr Shcherbyts'ky, is the last remaining Brezhnevite in the Politburo. Although there is a good deal of nationalist feeling in Ukraine, it has not been expressed with nearly as much fervour as the nationalist sentiments of the smaller Baltic and Caucasian republics, and this is at least partly due to continuing repressive behaviour by the party. All this means that opposition to the legalisation of the Ukrainian Catholic Church comes more from Kiev than from Moscow.⁴

This affects the question of registration. It is probable that most believers would prefer Rozenbaum's proposal in his draft of the new law that the final right of appeal in cases of conflict should be to the courts. The alternative, that the final right of appeal should be to the CRA in Moscow, gives believers less secure longterm guarantees of their rights (even though the CRA at present is more willing to register churches than some local authorities). But Ukrainian Catholics feel that they would have a better chance of a fair hearing in Moscow than in Kiev.

It seems likely that the CRA and other concerned bodies in Moscow would wish to legalise the Ukrainian Catholic Church, or at any rate find some formula which would allow it to register churches for worship. Legalisation would remove one of the major thorns in Kharchev's side. It would fit in with the new more favourable attitude towards religion and would eliminate a major obstacle to a papal visit to the Soviet Union. But neither the obstructiveness of the Ukrainian party nor the interests of the Moscow Patriarchate are going to disappear in order to allow this to take place.

An interim step on the way towards possible legalisation appears to be being taken: and that is to build up the Russian Orthodox Church as much as possible in advance, both in western Ukraine and in general. Spokemen quote differing figures for the number of

⁴For an examination of the situation of the Ukrainian Catholic Church see 'The Church in Ukraine' on pp. 152-156 of this journal.

Orthodox churches that have been reopened but, extrapolating from conflicting statistics, it seems possible that of between 700 and 800 reopened during 1988, as many as a quarter may have been in Ukraine.⁵ This reflects the distribution of Orthodox churches within the Soviet Union and might, therefore, have been expected, but it does appear that an effort is being made to open Orthodox, and not Catholic, churches there. This is borne out by comments from the head of the Ukrainian CRA, N. Kolesnik. He has claimed that 430 Orthodox churches were opened in Ukraine during 1988, a much higher figure than any other cited. The 'overwhelming majority' of them, said Kolesnik, were in western regions of Ukraine, 'above all, L'viv, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk, that is in the area which in its time was a bulwark of the Uniates'. Referring to mail received by the CRA, he says: 'In hundreds of statements, signed by tens of thousands of citizens living in the regions indicated, there is a request to register precisely an Orthodox society, and not that of some other religion.'⁶ However, other reports reaching the West from sources in western Ukraine speak of local authorities forcing believers to register Orthodox churches against their wishes.⁷

It is difficult to disentangle precisely what is going on, and why. Kolesnik could not have made it clearer that local authorities wish to register Orthodox churches in order to deny them to the Catholics. But the example Kharchev gave in his December *Ogonek* interview of a case where the Moscow CRA had overturned the unjustified refusal of local officials to register an Orthodox church came from precisely the area in question, Ternopil region. Kharchev's motive for registering Orthodox churches in this area is presumably to assuage the fears of the Moscow Patriarchate by building up the Orthodox presence there, before allowing Eastern-rite Catholic churches to register at a later date.

In general terms also the Russian Orthodox Church is being given a very high profile in the country. Nearly all the favourable comments in the press, referred to above, and most of the photographs, are related to Russian Orthodox believers. Kharchev's *Ogonek* interview is devoted almost entirely to the Russian Orthodox Church. Even when he discusses new legislation and other measures which would

⁵ Kharchev stated on 12 January 1989 that 810 Orthodox churches were opened during 1988. Patriarch Pimen stated on 30 December 1988 that 'over 700' Orthodox churches had been opened in the past year. Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk has given varying figures. In January 1989 he said that 723 parishes had been opened or reopened during 1988, 200 of them in Ukraine. Earlier that month he had said that 697 parishes had 'resumed their activities'. Elsewhere he is quoted as saying that 800 churches were opened during 1988, 200 of them in Ukraine. See *Keston News Service* No. 318, 2 February 1989, p. 9.

⁶ *Izvestiya*, 1 February 1989.

⁷ *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 5 March 1989, p. 2 (see *KNS* No. 319, 16 February 1989, p. 4).

affect all religious believers, he refers to them only in passing, and his examples and illustrations all concern the Orthodox. Russian Orthodox clerics also had a leading position among candidates nominated to the Congress of People's Deputies in March: they included Patriarch Pimen, Metropolitan Alexi of Leningrad, and Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk. Other candidates were Catholicos Vazgen of Armenia and at least one Islamic leader, but there were no other successful Christian candidates from the European part of the Soviet Union. The one priest known to have stood was an Orthodox priest from Estonia who was one of three unsuccessful candidates for his seat.⁸ Russian Orthodox representatives continue to be highly visible internationally. At home, Orthodox prelates have made a number of appearances on television. Metropolitan Pitirim has given a talk at the Higher Party School in Moscow.⁹ There have been reports of Orthodox priests going into schools in Moscow to talk to children and one, Fr Alexander Men', has been the subject of an article in a French Christian magazine: photographs show him in his cassock, surrounded by school-children.¹⁰

There are of course a number of reasons for the Orthodox Church to have such a high profile, not only the question of the possible re-emergence of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. A major one is the international spotlight that was focused on it during the millennium celebrations last year. There are other obvious factors: it is the largest church by far in the country; its historical roots in Russia are deep and its influence on culture strong and, therefore, has a strong appeal for the influential Russian nationalist movement. For all these reasons it is inevitable that the Russian Orthodox Church should have a more prominent role than other churches in the new climate. Nonetheless, it may be that it would not have had as much favourable publicity in the media were it not for the need to compensate it for the forthcoming loss of support in the part of the Soviet Union which has a denser concentration of churches than any other.

Independent thinkers within the church, however, take a rather more jaundiced view of the prominent public role now played by church leaders. Their general view is that in fact church leaders have been slow to take advantage of new opportunities and have not exploited them to their full potential. According to this view, Orthodox church leaders suit the state's purposes very well because of their traditional compliance and lack of initiative. In part it derives from the Byzantine tradition of 'symphony' between church and state,

⁸ *Moscow News* No. 12, 19 March 1989, p. 6.

⁹ *Keston News Service* No. 322, 30 March 1989, p. 16.

¹⁰ *La Vie* No. 2262, 5-11 January 1989, pp. 14-17.

but more important are the decades of oppression by the Soviet state during which a compliant hierarchy became an instrument of the church's captivity. The leadership therefore consists of men who reached their present position precisely because they could be relied upon not to speak out and not to take initiatives. Some may think that activists within the church are being unfair: after all, church leaders have now begun to speak out more openly about some of the problems facing the church, notably at the Local Council of June 1988.¹¹ But the critics point to the fact that this did not happen until a good two years or more after *glasnost* had been introduced, and that church leaders in their pronouncements have always lagged behind what has been published in sections of the Soviet press. There are those who maintain that the pace is being set by the state, not the church, and that church leaders who speak out about problems are doing so at the instigation of reform-minded officials and not on their own initiative. (This summary of the views of church activists is based on conversations reported by visitors to the Soviet Union and on those held in the West with activists who have been able to travel abroad on private visits.)

The consensus among independent church thinkers, then, would appear to be that the prominence given to the Russian Orthodox Church amounts to no more than a new form of control over it. Any statements they may make about the church's problems serve one of Gorbachev's main purposes, that of discrediting the 'years of stagnation' under Brezhnev. The fact that they can make such criticisms, and their growing prominence in national life, serve to underline the fact that things are getting better for the church. In a sense, then, Orthodox church leaders continue to perform the same function that they performed under Brezhnev, although in changed circumstances.

Support for the view of church leaders as too compliant to the wishes of the state was provided in a 'leaked' speech made by Kharchev to party activists at the Higher Party School in Moscow in March 1988. He appealed to his audience to help him in developing a new policy on relations between the party and the church, which had been left to sort itself out during the times of repression and of stagnation on the (mistaken) assumption that religion would die out by itself. A major theme of the speech was the need for party control over the church:

According to Lenin the party must keep all aspects of citizens' lives under its control, and since there is nowhere to put believers

¹¹Helen Bell and Jane Ellis, 'The Millennium Celebrations of 1988 in the USSR', *RCL* Vol. 16 No. 4, 1988, pp. 312-19.

and our history has shown that religion is serious and long-lasting, then it is easier for the party to turn a sincere believer into someone who also believes in communism. This is the task which faces us: the education of a new type of priest; the selection and placing of priests is a matter for the party.

Reviewing past efforts in this direction, Kharchev had this to say: 'We have achieved our greatest successes in control over religion and suppression of its initiatives in the midst of the priests and bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church.'¹²

I have space here only to touch upon the important question of the link between religion and nationalism, which deserves more thorough examination. Suffice it to say that, as pressure has been eased and the constituent nationalities of the USSR have demonstrated a vitality adequate to lead to the break-up of the Soviet Empire, religious activists have in some areas been in the forefront of political activity. This applies above all to the three small Baltic nations and the three small Caucasian nations. Less overt activity has been reported from the five Central Asian, Islamic, republics, but their resistance to rule from Moscow is in any case a matter of record. Moldavia is demonstrating nationalist aspirations in the form of demands for the Latin, rather than the Cyrillic, alphabet to be used, though without a significant religious element. Protest here is muted because the population of the republic has no desire to rejoin its ethnic and linguistic ally, Romania, currently one of the most repressive regimes between the Atlantic and the Pacific.

This leaves the three Slavic republics, Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia. In Ukraine, religion plays an interesting role. Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism all have their strongest base in this republic, in terms of both numbers of believers and numbers of places of worship. Opinions differ as to the strength of Ukrainian nationalism and anti-Russian feeling. While Ukrainian nationalists undoubtedly exist, it may be that their numbers — in a population of 50 million, nearly one-fifth of the population of the USSR — are not sufficient to sway the mood of the republic in the way that is possible in, for example, Lithuania or Georgia. To the extent that nationalist sentiment does exist, it is to a large degree identified with the Ukrainian Catholic Church and those who support the re-formation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. So the Catholics and Orthodox in Ukraine represent a sector of the population with nationalist aspirations, whereas in the other republics mentioned they form part of the unified national consciousness.

¹² *Russkaya mysl'*, 20 May 1988, p. 4.

The link between nationalism and religion in Russia is potentially as important as in any of the other republics, but less obvious because of the sheer size of the population and the geographic spread of the country. Nationalists support the Russian Orthodox Church as a major component of the country's heritage and culture. This lends the church support as it attempts to regain its position of influence, but carries the danger that the church might find itself shackled to a conservative, reactionary force. These forces manifest themselves principally in the organisation *Pamyat'* (Memory) from which the church leadership has publicly dissociated itself¹³ but the danger nonetheless persists.

The one exception to this intermingling of religious and nationalist interests is the very russified republic of Belorussia, which, although there have been some recent demonstrations, has shown itself by comparison to be a hotbed of indifference.

If the present new thinking on religion does in fact persist and become established, then the present time may mark the inauguration of the third major phase in the attitude of the Soviet authorities towards religion. The first, pre-war, phase was an all-out attempt to annihilate religion, which failed. During the second, post-war phase, in recognition of this failure, the aim was to keep religion above ground, under the vigilant eye of the party, but to hedge it about with so many restrictions as to stifle it — in other words, to speed up the process of 'withering away' predicted by Marx. (In this scheme of things, Khrushchev's five-year anti-religious campaign is viewed as an aberration in the post-war phase, not as a phase itself.) The impulse for the opening of a third phase, if such it proves to be, is simply the recognition that religion is here to stay. In Kharchev's words, religion is 'serious and long-lasting' and therefore the party has got to decide what to do about it. If after 70 years there are still many millions of believers, if most religious groups are maintaining their numbers or growing, and if young people are being attracted to religion, then it is obvious that communist party policy on religion has been misconceived. Some party members are now prepared to recognise this, while others appear to be still determined to build a future without religion. Much of the current inconsistency in the treatment of believers is due to the fact that the party has not yet made up its mind.

In this context it is of interest that the Academy of Sciences is undertaking a major project to review the role of religion throughout the world, excluding the USSR. The study, planned to last for ten to 15 years, is based on the premise that by the year 2000 an estimated three-quarters of the world's population will adhere to some kind of

¹³ *Moscow News* No. 38, 20 September 1987, p. 13.

religion. Since religion has not declined in modern society, an urgent reappraisal is necessary. Among other things, the study will focus on the emergence and development of world and indigenous religions, the development of religion in modern society, in both capitalist and developing countries, and religion as a means of influencing the masses. The proposal for the study project says that an understanding of religion and its role is essential in the assessment of the development of societies from the earliest times. The motivation for the study is to increase historical knowledge and promote the formation of an atheist world-view, preventing an unhealthy interest in mysticism, pre-revolutionary literature and the publications of the Moscow Patriarchate.¹⁴

The survival and growth of religion in a communist society has been an obvious factor in Soviet life for the last 20 years or more. It has taken the opening-up of Soviet society under Gorbachev to make it possible for the obvious to be stated publicly. But it is not just a question of *glasnost*' enabling the unspeakable to be spoken. There seem to be two motives for re-evaluating the role of religion. The first is pragmatic, and may have only short-term significance. The second goes deeper, and could possibly have long-term consequences.

The pragmatic motive for a relaxation of the official attitude to believers is that Gorbachev needs their support. Believers are voters, and it is now officially admitted that as many as a quarter of the Soviet population are believers (the true figure may be even higher). Among the sectors of Soviet society whose support Gorbachev must have if his policies are to succeed, believers are probably the most numerous. This raises the question as to whether the concessions being made to believers are a tactical move designed to shore up the position of reformers or the start of a long-term policy. Given the uncertainty of the situation in the Soviet Union, it is probable that no-one knows the answer to this question.

The second motive for re-evaluating religion is one that takes religion seriously, to some extent on its own terms, and recognises that it has some inherent value and usefulness. This is usually expressed in terms of the help that the church can give in tackling the many pressing social problems which Soviet society faces. Believers are now able to engage in charitable activities, principally helping in hospitals. Soviet press articles often mention the need for compassion and mercy to those in need (particularly following the Armenian earthquake) and the contributions made by believers are sometimes mentioned favourably in this context. It is no longer axiomatic that the party and the party alone can solve all problems. But underlying the concern about social problems there may be a more deep-seated need to

¹⁴ A copy of the proposal is in Keston College archive.

harness the forces of religion. It is known that religion can motivate people to do things which otherwise they would not choose to do. There appear to be those in the Soviet Union who are contemplating the idea of seeing if religion can motivate people to get the country moving again. A major question is why there is not more enthusiasm for Gorbachev's reforms. Lack of economic progress to date — the fact that there is still not much to buy in the shops — is an obvious factor, but is it sufficient to explain the widespread apathy and cynicism to which so many commentators point? Gorbachev may not be perfect, the theory runs, but he is a lot better than his predecessors and the best that the Soviet people can hope for for a long time to come. So why do his policies not command more support? Some say that the people (particularly in Russia — less so in other republics) have been so beaten down, so repressed over the decades that they lack the will even to stand upright when the opportunity is offered them. They are without will, without hope, without even the desire to improve their situation, and jealous of those who do try to do so. If there is to be any hope for the future, some motivating force must be found. Possibly religion, under the careful supervision of the party, could be the answer. Since the problem appears to be most acute in Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church is the most suitable vehicle for such aspirations. It could help to promote morality and to fill the spiritual vacuum which communism (despite repeated exhortations in the Soviet press) has failed to fill. In other words, this is god-building, not god-seeking.¹⁵

If this view is being seriously entertained, then it amounts not to contemplating freedom of religion, but to a different method of using state-controlled religion for the purposes of the party. But it could conceivably be the thin end of the wedge. If the churches are given more freedom, it may be discovered that faith in action has a momentum all its own. Party theorists approach religion as a combination of a set of ideas and of more or less influential institutional bodies. What will they do when the Holy Spirit begins to make his presence felt?

¹⁵Irena Maryniak has pointed out that god-building (not god-seeking) is a theme in contemporary Soviet prose. She suggests that, for example, Chingiz Aitmatov in his novel *The Scaffold* resurrects, whether consciously or not, the god-building ideas of Gor'ky and Lunacharsky. *RCL* Vol. 16 No. 3, 1988, pp. 227-36 (especially pp. 233-36).