

# Anti-communism and Soviet Evangelicals : metamorphoses during the Cold War

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte =  
Revue suisse d'histoire religieuse et culturelle = Rivista svizzera di  
storia religiosa e culturale**

Band (Jahr): **115 (2021)**

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-958545>

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# Anti-communism and Soviet Evangelicals – Metamorphoses during the Cold War

Nadezhda A. Beljakova

In January 1971, a young employee of the office of the All-Union Council of the Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUCECB), compiling a report to the Soviet authorities on the visit to the USSR of another foreigner who came at the invitation of his organization, put the following message in the mouth of his partner in conversation:

«We are working in a country where secularism is widespread and where preaching is very difficult. The number of members of our Churches has not grown in over 25 years. As you know, Wurmbrand put our leading brothers in a very difficult position. The fact is that we know little about your reality. We want to know the truth in order to respond to Wurmbrand when he tells his lies. First and foremost, we are interested in the issue of the <initiative group> members and the development of relations between your Union and Initiative Group, although we do not share their way of thinking.»<sup>1</sup>

These words, according to the report, were spoken by the General Secretary of the Danish Baptist Union and Chairman of the Commission for Religious Freedom of the European Baptist Federation – Knud Wümpelmann – on the first day of his arrival in the Soviet Union at a meeting with the leaders of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians Baptists in the building of the former Reformed Church in Maly Vuzovsky Lane in central Moscow. In this article, we will try to reconstruct the logic that led to the appearance of such a passage in the quoted text and to understand the specifics of the development of relations between the global anti-communist movement and Soviet evangelicals at the turn of the 1960s–1970s.

In this text, we will focus on how the activities of a Romanian-born pastor who went down in history under the pseudonym Richard Wurmbrand initiated and influenced varying processes among the Soviet evangelicals and within their system of communication with the Soviet state authorities, as well as in the development of relations with representatives of the international Baptist community and ecumenical circles.

<sup>1</sup> State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF). f. R-6991. op. 6. d. 431. l 17 and passim. SZRKG/RSHRC/RSSRC, 115 (2021), 57–79, DOI: 10.24894/2673-3641.00082

*The Case of Wurmbrand in the context of the global anti-communist movement history*

According to P. Betts, one of the most remarkable things about the mountain of Cold War historiography is the relatively meager attention accorded to the role and power of religion, at least until very recently.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to D. Kirby's efforts, the religious factor became more visible in the English-language historiography of the early Cold War. Moreover, Christian anti-communism was, according to A. Preston, dominant among American Christians in the initial phase of the Cold War. Now we understand the conventionality of the concept of Anticommunism, which was essentially a label or frame. Varying political identities and motivations, ranging from anarchism to the socialist left to conservative nationalism to Christian movements to the far right-⟨anti-communism⟩ often a convenient label to link up and ⟨unify⟩ wildly divergent interests and groups.<sup>3</sup> As the Cold War raged on, several prominent figures from Eastern European countries appeared in the anti-communist field, who remained unrecorded in the religious landscape of Western countries, but received media resonance on both sides of the Iron Curtain. We are talking about Cardinal Mindszenty and Paștor Richard Wurmbrand. Both of them came from countries that became socialist as a result of the World War II (Hungary and Romania), both declared the incompatibility of Christianity and communism, both were in long-term imprisonment, both spoke in their narratives about the use of psychotropic drugs on them; in relation to both, the concept of «martyrs» was used and an agenda of human rights violations in socialist countries was articulated. The peak of the heyday of Cardinal Mindszenty's media significance came in the late 1940s and 1950s, while he himself was imprisoned, and after the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 in the building of the American Embassy (in the United States, in 1958, the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation was even created). Wurmbrand personally makes himself a media figure and the peak of his fame falls on the later stage of the Cold War, when anti-communist Christian militants left the media agenda.

According to media narratives, Richard Wurmbrand (birth name Nicolai Ionescu, with his Jewish ancestry often being mentioned) was a protestant activist who was imprisoned in Romania from 1948 to 1964 for his religious activities and was released by the Romanian government for \$ 10,000 provided by a group of Norwegian Christians. Wurmbrand's media fame was brought by a hearing in the US Congress, where he showed his wounds received during his imprisonment.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Betts, Religion, Science and Cold War Anti-Communism: The 1949 Cardinal Mindszenty Show Trial, in: Paul Betts/Stephen A. Smith (ed.), Science, Religion and Communism in Cold War Europe, London 2016, 277.

<sup>3</sup> Stéphanie Roulin/Luc van Dongen/Giles Scott-Smith, Transnational Anticommunism and the Cold War: Agents, Activities, Networks, London 2014, 2.

He found a solid base for his activities in the US, where he founded the organization «Christ for the Communist World», renamed in 1990 to the «Voice of the Martyrs». Wurmbrand's unique quality lay in the fact that he organized a mission within the Western religious community and shaped narratives that began to be repeated even in studies that claim to be academic. The editorial staff of the British magazine *Faith and Thought*, devoted to the study of the inter-relation of the Christian revelation and modern research, in the spring of 1968 gave the following explanation to Wurmbrand's popularity:

«Christian people in the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. have been deeply impressed by the testimony of the Rev. Richard Wurmbrand who was imprisoned by the Communist regime in Rumania for fifteen years. The publication of Pastor Wurmbrand's latest book *In God's Underground*, has given readers further insight into the methods of political tyranny in Eastern Europe. Anyone who reads either Pastor Wurmbrand's latest book, or his earlier *Tortured For Christ* will find himself asking again how it is that Communism can theoretically exalt man on one hand, but oppress the individual in the interests of the State on the other. Defection by prominent Christians, resulting in their being used by the Party for furtherance of its aims under a religious guise, is a constant cause for concern. It is a matter for continuing urgency that we should remember all Christians in countries dominated by Communism and help to further the work of such societies as the European Christian Mission, the Eastern European Mission, and others like them.»<sup>4</sup>

This is important evidence of how Wurmbrand's narrative was perceived from the perspective of a Western Christian intellectual of the late 1960s.

In other words (more precisely – from the perspective of church-state relations in the USSR), Wurmbrand's concept boiled down to the fact that the legal church institutions existing in the communist world are instruments/puppets in the hands of atheistic authorities, and that the true Church is the underground Church, whose members – as true Christians – are viciously persecuted by the satanic regime; that is why he proclaimed his mission to become the voice of «voiceless» Christians and this thesis also proved long-lived. «Upon his release in 1964, however, the story of Christian persecution in Eastern Europe was all but unknown beyond the confines of the Iron Curtain.»<sup>5</sup> In some missionary evangelical publications Wurmbrand's apologetic is continuing, but «the case of Wurmbrand» accompanied in research on the history of the Churches in America<sup>6</sup> or transnational evangelical activity during the Cold War is marked by complete silence. The histories

<sup>4</sup> *Faith and Thought Journal of the Victoria Institute*, 97 (1968), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Anna Waltar, *The Life and Legacy of Pastor Richard Wurmbrand*, in: *History of Christianity II: TH 314H. Paper 1*, Whitworth University 2016 <<http://digitalcommons.whitworth.edu/th314h/1>> (15.01.2021).

<sup>6</sup> Paul Mojzes (ed.), *North American Churches and the Cold War*, Michigan 2018.

of human rights organizations in Great Britain only state that Wurmbrand's rhetoric was distinguished by significant radicalism.<sup>7</sup> According to *The Guardian*: «He confronted Christian leaders round the world, pouring open scorn on the diplomatic niceties which they claimed should govern any dialogue with the communist authorities or church representatives from eastern Europe.»<sup>8</sup>

We understand that Wurmbrand occupied a certain place (although it can be argued as to its specifics) in the palette of anti-communist leaders of the 1960s and 1970s. However, his phenomenon as a successful media character who transcended the boundaries of traditional churches/denominations and uses the techniques of a popular media activist needs further research. We know that he was able to quickly establish a publication activity aimed at Western readers in order to raise funds for the organization *Christian Mission in the Communist World* (created in Germany in 1969), which published the *Voice of Martyrs* bulletin with stories of persecution for the faith, photographs and addresses of prisoners of the communist camps, and promises to provide Bibles to all countries where there are restrictions on the distribution of religious literature. His activity was not specifically focused on the USSR, but the emerging protest movement of the Initiative group who found themselves outside the boundaries of legality in the USSR and who could be interpreted as «underground church» attracted his attention. Wurmbrand did not confine himself to focusing exclusively on the illegal evangelical movement in the USSR. With the help of the *Voice of the Martyrs* bulletin, campaigns were organized in support of the Orthodox Moscow-based priest Gleb Yakunin, the Baptist pastor Georgy Vins (SC ECB), the Baptist from Latvia Janis Rozhkalns and dozens of other prisoners of conscience in the former USSR.

### *Representatives of Evangelical Christians of the USSR in the Soviet and International Landscape and Changes in the 1960s*

Before continuing this narrative, let us briefly describe the specifics of evangelical landscape in the USSR in the 1970s. In the article the term «evangelicals» is used as «container concept». Their largest group, the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (ECB), consisted in the past of two evangelical movements with many similarities and some differences: the Baptists and the Evangelical Christians. The first ones appeared in the country in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century; the second ones began to act as an independent confessional group in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Hurst, *British Human Rights Organizations and Soviet Dissent, 1965–1985*, London 2016, 124.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Bates, Pastor Richard Wurmbrand. Cleric driven by missionary zeal despite years of persecution in communist Romania, in: *The Guardian* 16. Marz 2001. <[www.theguardian.com/news/2001/mar/16/guardianobituaries.stephenbates](http://www.theguardian.com/news/2001/mar/16/guardianobituaries.stephenbates)> (10.01.2021).

In 1944, under the pressure of the state, both groups united to form the AUCECB. This union later was joined by some Pentecostals (1945) and Mennonites (1963). In 1961, the Council of ECB Churches (SC ECB) broke away from it. Thus, the AUCECB united most of the country's evangelicals (late-protestant or free-churches) although some remained outside of this organization.

It is important to understand that evangelicals of different kinds were legalized in the USSR during the World War II, with their center being established in Moscow. For the first time in the history of Russia, the structure of «Evangelical Christians», traditionally perceived as sectarians, was legalized as a centralized organization. It is difficult to say that the evangelicals were equal in rights with parishes of the Orthodox Church: within authoritarian state, everyone, was under strong pressure, and the evangelicals were under special hostile control, that however did not prevent their communities from growing.

According to state agency statistics, the religious landscape of the USSR by 1970 looked so:<sup>9</sup>

<i>Religion / Churches</i>	<i>Number of registered/unregistered communities</i>
Russian Orthodox Church	7265/48
Georgian Orthodox Church	45
Catholic Church	1019
Lutheran Church	412/142
Armenian Church	31
Reformed Church	86
Methodist Church	11
Old believers	331/174
Muslims	314/645
Jewish	92/129
Evangelical Christians-Baptists	1973/979
Adventists	167
Molocans	33/91
Mennonit	9
Pentacostals	5
Buddists	2
<i>All: 16187</i>	<i>11795/4392</i>

However, in the context of the unfolding confrontation of the Cold War and increasing pressure within the country, the peacekeeping and pacifism of Soviet evangelicals turned out to be unclaimed. The Baptists were perceived by the top Soviet leadership as «scabs on the body of Soviet society» (K. Voroshilov's ex-

<sup>9</sup> As non-registered in Soviet State communities in this report are named: Council of Churches ECB (435 communities); Pentacostals (942); Jehovah's Witnesses (459); Adventisten-Reformisten (53), another sects more than 200. The data are from Report of the Council for Religious Affairs for Politburo of ZK KPSU of 1970. RGANI.

pression). The authorities' apprehension was caused by the growing eschatological sentiments, which were typical for American evangelicals, who, moreover, harshly criticized the authorities for inciting war. Miriam Dobson stresses that the eschatological essence of the perception of the nuclear threat by Soviet evangelicals was at odds with the official Soviet peacekeeping agenda. It recorded the distrust of Stalinist leadership towards the leadership of the AUCECB, the unwillingness to use their peacekeeping potential (it seems that this is why the evangelicals were not included in the Soviet Peace Committee) in the second half of the 1950s, and that is precisely why the international activity of Soviet evangelicals was literally frozen.<sup>10</sup>

«In October 1950, Jacob Zhidkov attended the «partisans of peace» congress held in Moscow and spoke on the radio, telling listeners that Evangelical Christians Baptists were not only praying for peace but actively taking part in the struggle to achieve it. In May 1952, he was invited to a conference bringing together all churches and religious organizations in the USSR to pursue the peace cause.»<sup>11</sup>

More notable changes in international activities began in the mid-1950s. In 1954 (after the death of Stalin and in the context of the search for a new course in the USSR's international policy), the Chairman of the Council for Religious Cults Ivan Polyansky appealed to the country's leadership with a request to allow the visit of the Chairman of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Townley Lord and Associate Secretary of the BWA Walter Lewis. This was the first visit to the USSR by Baptists of this rank and level: having arrived as an official delegation, they visited a number of cities that were closed to foreign tourists; a special plane<sup>12</sup> was even used to take them around the country. Following the visit, TASS circulated T. Lord's statement that Baptists in the USSR «enjoy complete freedom of religion», and that his numerous conversations «in houses of prayer showed that people in the Soviet country are full of a pronounced desire for peace.» In the same year, the General Secretary of AUCECB A.V. Karev went to Norway.<sup>13</sup>

Since the mid-1950s, the priorities of Soviet foreign policy began to change. N.S. Khrushchev advocated a relaxation of international tension; he tried to attract various peacekeeping forces to the side of the Soviet Union. This, in turn, intensified the use of the potential of cultural diplomacy, promoted the development

<sup>10</sup> Miriam Dobson, Protestants, Peace and the Apocalypse: The USSR's Religious Cold War, 1947–62, in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53/2 (2018), 361–390.

<sup>11</sup> Dobson, Protestants, Peace and the Apocalypse (see note 10), 368.

<sup>12</sup> Prebyvanie delegacii Vsemirnogo Sojuza Baptistov v SSSR [Stay of the delegation of the World Baptist Union in the USSR], in: *Bratskij Vestnik*, 3–4 (1954).

<sup>13</sup> Nikita Pivovarov, What Kind of Religious Persons Were Invited to the USSR, and Who Was Allowed to Go Abroad (1943–1985) (in Russian), in: *Gosudarstvo, religii, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom*, 35/1 (2017), 185–215 ПГАНИ. Ф. 3. Оп. 60. Д. 27. Л. 102.

of relations with public and cultural organizations. Therefore, representatives of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, persistently suggested using the potential of religious organizations in the international arena. The image of the USSR as an atheistic state – battling religion and discriminating believers – seriously weakened the possibilities for the cultural and ideological promotion of socialist ideas, especially in third world countries. From the perspective of the Soviet Union, the religious factor played a significant role in the information war against the USSR and was dubbed as «clerical anti-communism». Soviet diplomats drew attention to supra-confessional (ecumenical) international religious organizations of Western Europe and America that formed during the post-war period. They not only showed their importance in the international arena, but saw the perspective of using them as alternative channels of communication between two opposing political camps.<sup>14</sup>

In the context of the subject, it is important to understand that if directives approved by the top party leadership served for the development of international activity along Russian Orthodox, Muslim and anti-Vatican lines, there were no special documents on the expediency of the international activities of the AUCECB. However, gradually the representatives of the AUCECB started travelling more, and this was due to the «climate change» in American religious communities. The change in the attitude to international relations of the AUCECB and the shift towards inviting visitors through this organization is reflected in the approval by the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) in 1956 of a route for foreign tourists, which involved visiting the houses of prayer of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in different regions and Soviet republics.

During Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign in the USSR (which had a pronounced anti-sectarian character and presented the evangelicals *en masse* as fanatics), a protest movement of evangelicals emerged, which was structured around the «Initiative group» and leads to a split in the evangelical movement. The Initiative movement, which gained worldwide fame thanks to a successful petition campaign, used the concept of the True (Underground) Church, which stood in opposition to the official Church governed by the Soviet leadership. Through the English-language publications of Michael Bordeaux, the Western world quickly became aware of the faith martyrs who were betrayed by to the official leadership of the Union. So, the schism and confrontation among the Russian evangelicals immediately acquired an international dimension. The leadership of the alternative Union (Council of Churches of the ECB) and a unique women's organization

<sup>14</sup> Nadezhda Beljakova/Nikita Pivovarov, Religious Diplomacy of the Soviet Union during the Cold War (the Time of N.S. Khrushchev and L.I. Brezhnev). Outlines of global transformations: politics, economics, law, 11/4 (2018) 130–149. (In Russian).



– the Relatives Council of the ECB Prisoners<sup>15</sup> occupied a unique place in Cold War communications: information about the persecution of members of unregistered communities in the Soviet Union gained greater trust,<sup>16</sup> immediately making its way into the international press and becomes the subject of discussion as groups of believers (who – in one way or another – identified themselves with the religious processes behind the Iron Curtain), international human rights organizations and sometimes even members of governments.

In modern Russian historiography, on the basis of the internal documentation of the USSR, there is a consensus that even before Khrushchev's resignation, the central government began to realize the ineffectiveness of «engaging in administrative measures of struggle» with religious organizations, which provoked the response of «desperate resistance» by the believers. Moreover, the Supreme Court of the USSR in 1965 recognized the fact of religious persecution; it was recorded that from 1961 to 1965 about 1200 people were convicted for their religious beliefs, and a review of a number of cases of believers was initiated.<sup>17</sup>

The «Brezhnev turn» in the Soviet state's relation towards the Church and believers can be characterized as the change of policy, when the government once again began to recognize loyal religious organizations as subjects who had the right to enjoy all the advantages and protection that «socialist legality» guaranteed. An important condition for the existence of religious communities was the demonstration of political loyalty by the top leadership of the main confessions. Researchers traditionally classify AUCECB as the main confessions that have successfully demonstrated «loyalty», while their opponents, supporters of the alternative Union, were dubbed «church dissidents». Considering the phenomenon of the religious landscape development and the new rise of religious dissidence in the Brezhnev era, the restraint of the Soviet leadership becomes obvious in its relation towards the Church oppositionists, who openly demonstrate their opposition to Soviet religious policy and deliberately went under the marker of «anti-Soviet», entering open conflicts with the state, for example, through demonstrative religious education of children. It is impossible to understand the specifics of communications within the Soviet landscape without an international component to which all parties appealed.

<sup>15</sup> Nadezhda Beljakova/Miriam Dobson, Protestant women in the late Soviet era: gender, authority, and dissent, in: *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 58/2 (2016), 117–140.

<sup>16</sup> S. publication of April French about a debate between Bourdeaux and Fletcher, how much credence can be given to religious samizdat: April French, Michael Bourdeaux, the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism, and the Defense of Religious Liberty, 1959–1975, in: *Gosudarstvo, religii, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom*, 35/1 (2017), 216–243 (In Russian).

<sup>17</sup> GARF. f. R-6991. op. 6. d. 173. l. 175.

The leadership of the AUCECB continued the work begun in the mid-1950s, mobilizing its efforts to enter the international media space with the use of – among other things – the potential of foreign structures of co-religionists, emigrant Baptist organization, and the international Mennonite community.<sup>18</sup> In their reports, the representatives of the AUCECB showed the importance of establishing contacts and a sharp ideological struggle around their initiatives. Thus, after a trip to the United States in 1965, the AUCECB delegation spoke in detail about the speeches of anti-communist forces that did not want to let Baptists from the USSR onto the public American platforms and sought to discredit their peace-keeping initiatives. Carl McIntire's publications, in which Russian Baptists were called slaves carrying out the will of their Moscow slave owners, were translated into Russian and sent to the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA).<sup>19</sup>

Signals that the split within the Evangelical-Baptist society of the USSR acquired an international resonance and entered the media agenda manifested themselves in Soviet state documents as early as 1965. In June 1965 the KGB signaled to the Politburo about the need to use international relations to compromise the leadership of the «Initiators» in the eyes of foreign Baptist communities, in order to exclude the possibility of official international recognition of the «Organizing Committee».<sup>20</sup>

Signals to top authorities were accompanied by proposals to expand the activity of the AUCECB leaders in their struggle against the rising popularity of the «underground» (unregistered) church. The CRA kept the translation of a publication from the *New York Times* from July 20<sup>th</sup> 1967 about the Initiativniki and their trial, which was covered in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Kirgizia*.<sup>21</sup> In February 1968, the head of the US Department of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent to the Council for Religious Affairs materials distributed by the American Council of Christian Churches. These materials on behalf of the American Council of Christian Churches (signed by M.G. Reynolds) were addressed to A.N. Kosygin and N.V. Podgorny and sent to the address of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The main body of the text was compiled by the son of the repressed Soviet

<sup>18</sup> Johannes Dyck, Mennonites in North America and the USSR in the Mid-1950s: Small People and Big Politics, in: *Gosudarstvo, religii, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom*, 35/1 (2017), 123–146.

<sup>19</sup> Copies are discovered in the archive of L. I. Motorina. Translation was done by K.V.P. (Pilipyuk) from an «American newspaper «Miami Beach Views»» from 6/28/1965 and 6/30/1965.

<sup>20</sup> Andrej Savin, «Many doesn't even consider the possibility, that the cultist could be an honest man». Brezhnev's turn in anti-religious policy and russian protestantism (1964–1966), in: *Vestnik TvGU. Serija «Istorija»*, 4 (2016), 67. (In Russian).

<sup>21</sup> GARF. f. R-6991. op. 6. d. 150. l. 129.

Pentecostal leader, P. Voronaev. Attached here was an article from the British newspaper *The Observer* dated November 19th 1967, which described a letter from the Relatives Council of the ECB Prisoners sent to the UN Secretary U Thant.<sup>22</sup> These texts reported on the lack of freedom of religion in the USSR, an extremely cruel attitude towards believers and the presence in the USSR of a strong Church, persecuted by the authorities and forced to actively lead its life in the «underground».

In March 1968, a representative of the USSR Embassy in Great Britain reported a detailed conversation with Dr. Mervyn Stockwood (Bishop of Southwark, south-east London). Stockwood, positioned himself as a leftist and a supporter of the socialists; he authored a book about his visit to the USSR in 1953. Describing his participation in foreign policy events, Stockwood said that in August 1968, in London, there will be a meeting of religious leaders of different countries and that there are intentions

«to raise at this meeting the question of «religious persecution» in the Soviet Union. For these purposes, as he heard, it is intended to use, in particular, the materials contained in two books: in the book *Christians in Modern Russia*, which was authored by Nikita Struve and which was first published in French in 1963, and then in English in 1967, and a book by Michael Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, published in English in 1968.»<sup>23</sup>

It seems that the regularly sent materials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the importance of combating the underground church concept in the USSR served as an impetus for the intensification of the international activity of the AUCECB in the fight against Richard Wurmbrand, which was recorded by the representatives of the USSR as a rather important figure in the anti-communist movement. Against Wurmbrand, the efforts of the AUCECB are cooperating with the Council for Religious Affairs. In August 1970, the head of the Council for Religious Affairs V. Kuroyedov tried to obtain materials from his Romanian colleagues confirming Wurmbrand's cooperation with the Nazi regime.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 190. l. 128.

<sup>23</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 151. l. 28–29.

<sup>24</sup> V. Kuroyedov sent the following letter to the Soviet Ambassador in Romania V. I. Drozdenko: «In August 1970, during the stay in the USSR of representatives of the Department of Cults under the Council of Ministers of the SRR G. Nenciu and E.K. Munteanu, at a meeting of the heads of government bodies of the socialist countries on religious issues, Comrade Ninchiu handed us materials in Romanian about the former Romanian citizen Richard Wurmbrand, in particular, a copy of his statement to the investigation recognizing his criminal activities committed in Romania during the bourgeois period (cooperation with Siguranța, delivery to her of the Social Democrats known to him, etc.). Copies of these materials were certified on 6/3/1970 by the notary office of Bucharest, however, they do not have Wurmbrand's personal signature. In 1964, Wurmbrand was amnestied and left Romania for the United States with his family. Due to the fact that Wurmbrand has recently launched active anti-Soviet activities abroad, the

For the leadership of the AUCECB, in turn, the expansion of international activity was vitally important. The leaders of the All-Union Council of the ECB understood the vulnerability of their own position: they were criticized from within the community of believers for fulfilling the requirements of the authorities to limit religious activity, and the frontrunners of the emerging alternative structure declared the illegitimacy of the leaders of the ECB. Putting forward the concept of expanding the international activity of the religious organizations of the USSR to combat anti-Soviet statements gave new perspectives for the leadership of the AUCECB. The development of international relations, in addition to providing the freedom of conscience in the USSR and the superiority of socialism, was supposed to contribute to substantiating the legitimacy of the legal organizational structure of Evangelical Christians in the USSR and specific key figures in its leadership: the chairman of the AUCECB J.I. Zhidkov, Secretary of the AUCECB and Chief editor of the *Fraternal Messenger (Bratskiy Vestnik)* A.V. Karev, the Presbyter of the Moscow ECB Church M.Y. Zhidkov; among the figures of the secondary importance were the deputy Secretary General A.I. Mitskevich, Secretary of the International Department of the AUCECB K.V. Pilipyuk, and S.T. Timchenko.

Thanks to the numerous surviving documents on the relationship of the Council for Religious Affairs with the leadership of the AUCECB, we see that international activity became the sphere through which religious leaders gained many levers of influence. For example, one can examine the reports of the church leaders themselves on the accomplished work (this phenomenon has yet to receive its proper historiographic consideration), which became the key tools in the formation of ideas of Soviet officials on the effectiveness of the international work by representatives of Soviet-based Churches. This is extremely important for the understanding of the processes unravelling in the system of religious communication along the religious lines during the 1970s. The fact is that after each meeting with foreigners – whether a reception of a delegation or a foreign trip – the participants of the meeting compiled detailed reports on the people with whom the representatives of the AUCECB met, what topics were discussed and how the representatives of the AUCECB pursued the line in the interests of the Soviet state in the ongoing information war.

Council for Religious Affairs would like to use the materials handed over to us to compromise Wurmbrand. For this purpose, it is advisable to obtain from friends a photo cliché (or blueprint) of Wurmbrand's written statement to the investigation dated February 1, 1950, with his personal signature, and to obtain the consent of friends to publish this statement. If the Romanian comrades do not consider to transfer these materials to us, please find out if they intend to publish these materials themselves.» (GARF. f. R-6991. op. 6. d. 453. l. 174).

The art of forming a message or a «signal», meant to be heard and understood in the correct way and translated by the Church leadership, was developed by representatives of the Soviet evangelicals, as they evolved in their international activity. These messages, with varying degrees of skill, were packed inside the texts of multi-page reports, arriving in hundreds of sheets annually to the Council for Religious Affairs archive. Apparently, there was generally quite a strong spirit of solidarity within the leadership of the AUCECB, and they could draft joint reports, signing them on behalf of all members of the delegation. It seems that these people were direct mediators, interpreters of the international Baptist agenda for Soviet officials, since Soviet officials did not have any means of verifying the reported information. The analysis of the reports of the All-Russian AUCECB at the turn of the 1960s–1970s showed how the «Wurmbrand case» in conjunction with the Initiative movement was used as an argument for increasing the international activity of the AUCECB.

Thus, the need to establish systematic communications with foreign «fellow believers» in Western Europe and America was associated with the need to fight the influence of the discourse of «Initiativniki» who questioned the authority of Soviet-based legalized Baptists. The scale and seriousness of the claims that were made against the leadership of the AUCECB by the international Baptist and Ecumenical communities, become clear from the report compiled by the AUCECB in connection with the visit to the USSR in March 1968 of the head of the WCC «Faith and Church Order» Commission Lukas Vischer. According to his report, at the Assembly in Uppsala, the issue of the Baptist position in the USSR could be brought up for public discussion and, according to the author of the report, Vischer also raised the question on the legitimacy of the AUCECB: «He raised the direct question on who should be seen as the legal leaders of the Baptists – the AUCECB or the Church Council of the ECB. He was replied that it was the AUCECB, which elected at the 1966 Democratic Congress.»<sup>25</sup>

The understanding of the importance and necessity of the media component is constantly present in the texts of the AUCECB representatives. In December 1966, a member of the AUCECB I. Orlov, having contacted the editor of *LIFE* magazine Peter Young, prepared thorough answers to his questions with detailed information about the history of the evangelical movement in Russia, starting with the immigration of the Mennonite Germans to Russia under Catherine II.<sup>26</sup> When traveling in August 1969 to a meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC, which was held in Canterbury, the first thing the delegation did was meet with V.

<sup>25</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 259. l. 17–18.

<sup>26</sup> Answers to questions from *LIFE* magazine correspondent (private archive of L. I. Motorina).

Bottoms, editor of the *Baptist Times*. According to the delegation members' report:

«During the meal, Bottoms said that in April of this year he managed to get the issue on the situation of Baptists in the USSR off the agenda of the annual assembly of the British Baptist Union (during one of the Council meetings). He was supported by the General Secretary of the Baptist Union David Russell, and also by Dr. E. Payne, and only 1/3 of the members of the Council of the Baptist Union were in favor of including this issue in the vote. V. Bottoms gave us the layout of the article by M. Bordeaux about the complaint of the Orthodox community from the city of Gorky and about the imprisonments of the Baptists, saying that this article was a reaction to a short statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury M. Ramsey. Later E. Payne<sup>27</sup> gave us a 10-line copy of this statement and assured us that this issue would not be discussed, of which he convinced Dr. Y. Blake; Dr. E. Payne kept his word. He was presented with an expensive souvenir-box with a the depiction of the churches of Zagorsk.»<sup>28</sup>

The struggle against the influence of the Initiativniki' «anti-Soviet propaganda» in the international arena was linked with the need to neutralize anti-communist initiatives in the evangelical environment and, as the internal documents between the AUCECB and Council for Religious Affairs clearly shows, at the turn of the 1960s–1970s the figure of Wurmbrand becomes a key subject.

#### *Wurmbrand in the International Communications of the AUCECB*

The key component of the forming narrative on the part of the leadership of the AUCECB was the message on the importance of the international activity of the AUCECB that was necessary in order to neutralize anti-communist initiatives and the discourse of the «underground Church». In the 1970s the AUCECB continued to develop its unprecedented activity: from January 21<sup>st</sup> to February 10<sup>th</sup>, a delegation consisting of the Vice-Chairman of the AUCECB S.T. Timchenko, Deputy Head of the International Department of the AUCECB I.M. Orlov and Department Secretary K.V. Pilipyuk traveled to the United States, where discussions of the concept of the «underground church» and «underground evangelization» were mentioned only in passing. However, starting from the very first page of the report on the trip of the AUCECB delegation to the FRG, England and Holland in April–May 1970 the name of Wurmbrand is mentioned repeatedly. It should be noted that the delegation consisted only of representatives of the AUCECB – A.I. Miskevich, M.P. Chernopyatov, K.V. Pilipyuk, who communicated directly with the leaders of the Baptist associations of the aforementioned countries in German and

<sup>27</sup> E. Payne's visit took place in 1964. He published his impressions in «Baptist Time» magazine

<sup>28</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 259. l. 176.

English (only Pilipyuk spoke English, as follows from the report). The mention of Wurmbrand and his harmful activities came from representatives of the Baptists from both Germany and England.

«In a conversation, G. Claas (he was named in the report as the General Secretary of the Baptist Union of the FRG) told us that Wurmbrand was holding meetings throughout the FRG, talking about the allegedly terrible persecution in Romania and the USSR. Then he talked about the needs of believers in Romania, and also that he allegedly sends Bibles to China from the island of Formosa on air balloons, with 40% of them falling into the sea, 25% into lakes, 15% being destroyed by the communists and only 10% finding their way to believers [...] Thus, the Bibles are not worth 10 marks, but 100 marks. In one evening, Wurmbrand collected 70,000 marks. He was in Hamburg and gathered many people. There were also students from the Hamburg Seminary at the meetings in Hamburg. They said that *Wurmbrand condemned in his speeches the Baptist Union of Germany*, including the General Secretary Claas, the Treasurer Reihard, claiming that they were bribed by the communists, because they do not help prisoners in Romania and the USSR. Wurmbrand told Claas that he wants to meet. Dr. Claas took one witness with him just in case. Claas asked Wurmbrand why he was slandering him. Wurmbrand began to deny it, saying that he never slandered him and that it must have been someone else. But Claas pointed out that it was useless for Wurmbrand deny it, since his speech was recorded on a tape recorder. Claas told Wurmbrand that the Baptist Union could not work with Wurmbrand, since he was not engaged in religious, but political activities. Claas said that Wurmbrand assured everyone in his speeches that he alone can supply China, Romania and the USSR with Bibles. Many believe him and provide him with significant funds. Wurmbrand, not having received approval from Claas, left without saying goodbye.»<sup>29</sup>

Describing their trip to the Federal Republic of Germany, representatives of the AUCECB reported on their speeches in the local Baptist communities. For example, in Oldenburg, the representatives of the AUCECB talked about the harmful activities of the «Initiativniki», as well as about «the destructive activities carried out by Wurmbrand, Bourdeaux, etc. They are not conducting religious activities, but political ones, stirring up anti-Soviet elements. They allegedly collect funds for believers in the USSR, but no one receives them and no one wants to receive from Wurmbrand.»<sup>30</sup> At the same time, the report provided details showing the lack of unity within the community of free Churches in Germany. For example, the authors of the report drew attention to the remark of Dr. Brand from Berlin, who said that Wurmbrand offered 60000 marks to the journal *Light in the East*, but representatives of the society refused to accept and said that they were against the humiliation of their brothers by Wurmbrand, that they knew Russian brothers and fully trusted them.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 338. l. 120–121.

<sup>30</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 338. l. 120–127.

<sup>31</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 338. l. 120–128.

On his arrival in England, he met there with the Vice-President of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Payne in Oxford (this meeting took place after a reception in London in Parliament and a dinner with the chairman of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Sir Cyril Black), the members of the delegation felt it necessary to tell that

«Dr. Payne showed us a letter from the Council of Prisoners' Relatives *he received from Bourdeaux*<sup>32</sup> with a list of the Initiativniki in custody. Dr. Payne told us that Wurmbrand is a very harmful figure. He writes a lot. People, without any understanding of the situation, read his books. But the British are suspicious of him. He will not be able to raise much funds in England. Wurmbrand intends to travel to Japan for the World Congress. Dr. Payne also said that «it is also bad that Bourdeaux, having received a letter from the Initiativniki, prints and sends letters from the Council of Prisoners to a great number of people.»<sup>33</sup>

Wurmbrand's activities were also discussed in Finland in the 1970s. According to the report, the Secretary of the Finnish Baptist Union, who visited the USSR in 1969, handed over the Finnish magazine *Light to the East*, No. 2, 1970, published in Finland in Finnish with photographs of services «in the catacombs», to the representatives of the AUCECB.

«Kolomainen said that in his speeches and articles, Wurmbrand very often distorts reality when it comes the life of believers in the Soviet Union and depicts the supporters of the Council of Churches as heroes of faith and as those who truly suffered for Christ. As for the level of trust of the believers in Finland towards Wurmbrand's articles, many do distrust him since, having visited the Soviet Union, they did not see anything resembling to what he speaks of and writes about. [...] Kolomainen said that after a trip to the Soviet Union, he and Edstrem visited many churches in Finland and gave truthful accounts about the life of believers in our country, showing photographs taken by him during his visit to the USSR.»<sup>34</sup>

The figure of Wurmbrand and his concept of the «underground church» also becomes key with regard to accompanying international figures of the Evangelical-Baptist movement within the USSR. Let us illustrate our thesis with the visit of Knud Wümpelmann. At the time of his first visit to the USSR in 1971, he was the General Secretary of the Danish Baptist Union and the Chairman of the European Baptist Federation's Commission for Religious Freedom. In addition to the official report in the journal *The Fraternal Messenger* (Bratskiy Vestnik) about the trip, the minutes of the conversation with Wümpelmann, recorded during two meetings with the official leaders of the AUCECB, and a report on accompanying him throughout the country were found. These documents were drafted by the official representatives of the Soviet Baptists (specifically: by an employee of the

<sup>32</sup> Handwritten note in the margin: What is he currently doing in USA?

<sup>33</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 338. l. 132.

<sup>34</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 338. l. 208.



AUCECB, Kulikov, as we deciphered his initials) and transferred to the Council for Religious Affairs, which oversaw the religious organizations. During his trip to the USSR, Wümpelmann made a tour through the USSR, accompanied by the leaders of the AUCECB of the second rank: A.I. Mitskevich and M. Ya. Zhidkov. He visited Moscow and Leningrad, and also Ukraine (Kiev), Belarus (Minsk), and Estonia (Tallinn). In addition to the ECB communities, he visited cultural heritage sites. The detailed reports contain a list of sights visited by the Baptist delegation in each city, and are of interest from the point of view of the development of «cultural» tourism in the USSR,<sup>35</sup> but are not directly related to the concept of the «underground church». For our research, important are visits to legal Baptist communities in different parts of the USSR and the fact that Wümpelmann's trip began and ended with talks in the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians Baptists, whose office was located in the premises of the Central Moscow Church of the ECB in Maly Vuzovsky Lane. The passage I quoted at the beginning of the article refers to the first meeting in the AUCECB and was the first remark uttered by Wümpelmann, according to the report.

Wümpelmann traveled through a number of cities and towns of four republics of the Soviet Union, attended a number of prayer meetings, the premises of which were overflowing with believers. The report emphasizes that the premises did not accommodate everyone who wanted to pray; there were many young people and children among the worshippers. Wümpelmann was sure to be told that these communities are part of the AUCECB and are registered with state authorities.

According to the analyzed report, the guest, during conversations with Baptists or Pentecostals of different levels, repeated like a spell: «I want you to understand me correctly. We want to know your reality so that we can object to Wurmbrand when he lies about you.» While in Kiev, he stated:

«I am interested in your community life and in the life of those who have separated themselves, because a lot of false information has been transmitted to the West. Last year, Wurmbrand argued in an interview that in the Soviet Union there was only one open Baptist congregation in Moscow meant to be shown as propaganda for foreign tourists, and that the real Baptist Church in Russia was driven underground.»

In the final conversation, he said: «Time has brought us closer. I understood your conditions much better. For me personally, this visit was an inspiration. I pray that the West will have the proper coverage of your reality.»

Analyzing the text of the report on Wümpelmann's trip, it seems necessary to pay attention to the following nuances, which the author of the report emphasizes:

<sup>35</sup> Vardan Bagdasaryan (ed.), *Sovetskoe zazerkal'e. Inostrannyi turizm v SSSR v 1930–1980-e gody* [Soviet looking glass: foreign tourism in the USSR in the 1930s and 1980s], Moscow 2007.

First of all, Wümpelmann admires the spirit and activity of believers in the USSR. Overcrowded churches/houses of worship, with a great number of worshippers being a striking feature of Soviet religiosity. He takes numerous photographs to show Western believers (among whom secular tendencies were intensifying) the religious activity and the booming spiritual life in the Soviet Union.

«Several years ago (said Wümpelmann in Leningrad) a pastor from Denmark visited the Soviet Union. He had several Bibles with him, which he began to distribute in your country in the wrong place, for which he was invited to go to the police, where the existing legislation in your country was explained to him. When he returned to Denmark, he brought many photographs of churches and published a book *«Closed and Empty Churches in the Soviet Union»*, and illustrated it with his photographs [...] When the pastor came from your country, he showed photographs with closed and empty churches, and I will show pictures of open and crowded Baptist churches.»

Indeed, books illustrated with photographs of closed and destroyed churches come across in different collections. However, the subject of photographs should be perceived not only in the context of competition for an expert position between Western religious leaders, but also from the internal Soviet realities: photography by foreign tourists in the USSR was a constant subject of «headaches» and proceedings within the Soviet authorities. Photographs of «sectarian» gatherings and the surrounding areas around houses of worship could have unexpected effects and problems within the Soviet government. Therefore, the authors of the reports sought to legalize the filming and photography of their guests.

Secondly, Wümpelmann emphasizes the activity of youth and children in the Baptist churches of the Soviet Union as an important quality and sign of resilience of Soviet Baptists, their skillful work with young people and the absence of secularizing tendencies among the new generation of believers. However, in the Soviet context, this story was perceived differently. The fact is that the religious education of children and youth was a criminal offense, and trials were periodically held across the country against those who organized illegal children's Sunday schools or youth camps. Meanwhile, representatives of the communities of the illegal Baptist structure – the «Council of Churches» made the religious education of young people a principal point of their public activity and thus merged with the international mission of «Underground Evangelization».

Thirdly, the readers of the report on Wümpelmann's visit are reminded of the importance of visiting regional communities by foreign guests. However, readers are also being sent a signal about the negative situation in the regions and the persecution conducted by local authorities against the loyal, registered Baptist communities. Thus, after the report on Wümpelmann's visit to the ECB community in Kiev, the compiler of the report placed a note:

«Pastor Wümpelmann was delighted with the premises of the community in the Darnytskyi district of Kiev, as well as with the choral singing and orchestra. The prayer room is truly the best meeting house in Kiev. No one would be ashamed when showing it to foreigners. But it is not entirely possible to bring foreigners there at the present time, given the anxiety that this community is experiencing. The community leadership told us that during the service, when we were present at this meeting, there were security service officers in disguise. Before the end of the meeting, one of the visitors, leaving the prayer house, was detained by them with various questions why and why he attends the meetings... .»

Further on, the report tells about the pressure of the Assistance Commission, the drawing up of acts on the presence of children at church services and the constant pressure that the registered community, which is part of the AUCECB, is experiencing from the city administration. This «signal» was read and marked with a pencil in the Council for Religious Affairs.

Fourthly, according to the report, Wümpelmann constantly talked about what kind of misinformation exists «in the West» about Soviet Baptists. Wurmbrand's name is used over 10 times in the report, and Wümpelmann insists that more visitors should be invited through the official Baptist Union. The struggle against Wurmbrand is not a problem for Soviet Baptists, but is rather the agenda of the world's Baptist structures. Wurmbrand's criticism (besides political) also has an inter-denominational dimension. In particular, Wümpelmann criticized Pentecostals in Denmark for publishing Wurmbrand's book. We need to understand that there was a tensely competitive relationship between Baptists and Pentecostals. In addition, Pentecostals in the Soviet Union were deprived of the opportunity to register in a separate religious structure and could exist only within the AUCECB. The articulation of Pentecostal issues further emphasized the importance of the official leadership of the Union. Pentecostals were also on the international agenda and were participating in increasingly complex communications, which were also dragged into Soviet evangelicals. For example, in Moscow at the end of February 1970, C.E. Greenaway (Secretary of the Foreign Mission of the General Council of the Assemblies of God), who came to the AUCECB to convey an invitation to the World Pentecostal Conference and, according to the report, told the interlocutors that «their General Council is adamantly fighting against the so-called» «underground evangelization» [...] therefore it would be very valuable if delegates from the USSR, by their presence and their speeches, denied the existence of the so-called «underground church» in the USSR.<sup>36</sup>

Concluding the episode of Knud Wümpelmann's visit to the USSR in 1970, it should be noted that his visit was perceived as a success and he became a regular guest of the USSR (before the collapse of the Soviet Union, he went east of the

<sup>36</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 338. l. 44.

Iron Curtain about 20 times). Wümpelmann's career was also successful in the Baptist movement. From 1978 to 1980 he was elected President of the European Baptist Federation, EBF General Secretary from 1980 to 1989, and President of the Baptist World Alliance from 1990 to 1995.

### *Conclusion*

A new round of international activity of the official union of the AUCECB is associated with the development of the anti-communist movement and the articulation of the discourse of the «underground church» at the level of international religious organizations, the UN, and even state governments. The figure of the non-confessional Pastor Wurmbrand, forgotten in the historiography of the Cold War, shows the experience of religious leaders entering the newly emerging media space of the second modernity and new rounds of tension/communication within the evangelical community. Using the anti-communist narrative of Pastor Wurmbrand, Soviet evangelicals were able to negotiate with the Soviet leadership about their own international activity. The numerous details of the international communications of Soviet evangelicals, set out in this article, are intended to show the complexity and multi-level of religious contacts and raise the question of how it is possible to reduce the figures of Soviet religious leaders to the «executors» of the Kremlin's plans.

The development of the international activity of Soviet Baptists coincides with a change in the configurations of the intra-Baptist world. In 1970, William Tolbert, adviser to the President of Liberia, became President of the Baptist World Alliance. Such a shift in emphasis towards the Third World countries could not but have an impact on the interpretation/expansion of ties with the peoples of Africa, ecumenism, peacemaking, responsibility for the implementation of state laws. Tolbert visited the Soviet Union through the AUCECB in May 1970.<sup>37</sup>

The AUCECB suggested Baptist international structures, discrediting the concept of the «underground church», which was popular by any guest who was interested in religious life behind the Iron Curtain. Accordingly, in order to expose this concept in line with «counter-propaganda» work, the leadership of the official (legal) Baptist Union received from the top Soviet party headship the «go-ahead» to increase the number of invitations to the USSR to familiarize influential Western religious leaders with the «real state of affairs». By inviting international religious protagonists on a tour of the registered communities, the leadership of the AUCECB, firstly, showed the existence of a powerful legal church in the Soviet Union; secondly, it received confirmation of the legitimacy of the official church

<sup>37</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 338. l. 146–172.

leadership. Emphasizing the large number of registered ECB communities, the abundance of their members, the number of young people and children in each community was supposed to serve as the main argument against the concept of the «underground communities». Members of the underground communities were presented, on the one hand, as marginal, specific, small groups that were in conflict with both the official church representatives and society. The trips abroad of the leadership of the AUCECB were an important means of creating a united front of the official leadership in the fight against the emergence of non-confessional public figures, exposing the mission, competing with the official church structures, and fighting along the charismatic vector. At the same time, the leaders of the official church structures in the Western world received a new platform and considered the process of secularization in a new way. As Dr. Mierau, a professor of medicine from Winnipeg, told Krieger, a representative of the AUCECB in 1970: «We are glad that in the Soviet country, which many of us represent only as a godless country, there are many young people who find meaning in life by believing in God.»<sup>38</sup>

The main research source was the contact reports compiled by the official Church leadership. This special genre of communication of religious figures with representatives of the Soviet secular state requires a special methodology for analysis. We can see that the reporters were working in a specific coordinate system. For example, religious contacts are highly politicized and religious contacts were at the forefront of an ideological/information war. That is, the compilers of the reports constantly emphasize the importance of their activities, convey to the reader the idea that religious diplomacy was a kind of «front line» in the Cold War. Consciousness and perception of the Western guests, according to the texts of the reports, are as dichotomous as that of the Soviet. They also divide the world into friends and foes. However, religious activists of the West alien to the socialist society can be won over to the side of the Soviet Union, turning the «costs» and «remnants» of the internal life of the USSR in its favor. Moreover, religious leaders from another world, with the right work and convincing dialogue with them, can join the ideological struggle against disinformation from the enemies of the USSR and contribute to the formation of a positive image of the USSR, expose the concept of an «underground» Church, talking about an active legal religious life and an abundance of loyal believers in the USSR.

For Western visitors, touring the USSR, acquaintance with religious life and communicating new nuances became a certain form of «capital» in the Western religious world (and a form of extreme tourism). According to the report contained in one of the files on the visit of the representative of the Southern Baptist

<sup>38</sup> GARF. f. 6991. op. 6. d. 259. l. 127.

Convention of the USA John Moore in 1973, «in addition to the rich impressions of visiting cities and churches, the guests were pleased that they were not taken, as Moore put it, along the well-trodden path, but showed something new». They strove to gain new, exclusive knowledge about religious life in the USSR and were happy to join the increasingly complex configuration of the Cold War information field, fighting, among other things, with their competitor in the English-speaking world – Richard Wurmbbrand.

#### *Anti-communism and Soviet Evangelicals – Metamorphoses during the Cold War*

This article focuses on the tendencies and trends in the development of international contacts of Soviet evangelicals at the turn of the 1960s–1970s. The 1970s are a special period in the history of Cold War communications, when the number of actors increases, and the international public human rights organizations acquire a new meaning. The focus of this study will be aimed at examining at the formation of a «response» to anti-communist initiatives from the intra-Soviet context of church-state relations. Based on the analysis of reports compiled by the staff of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUCECB), we will show how the Baptist leaders in the USSR sought to win over the interest of the Soviet leadership with their international activities. We suggest that the struggle against the anti-communist movement (literally personified, at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, by the figure of Richard Wurmbbrand, reflected in the Soviet Baptist sources) was an important pretext, thanks to which the international contacts of Soviet Baptists were activated. Moreover, thanks to the struggle against the concept of the «underground church» within the USSR, the geographical area open to visits by evangelical delegations expanded, and the number of registered ECB communities that were meant to be «shown» to foreigners noticeably increased.

Soviet Evangelicals – 1960s/1970s – church-state relations – Richard Wurmbbrand – «underground church» – USSR.

#### *Antikommunismus und sowjetische Evangelikale – Metamorphosen während des Kalten Krieges*

Dieser Artikel konzentriert sich auf Tendenzen und Trends an der Wende von den 1960er zu den 1970er Jahren in der Entwicklung der internationalen Kontakte der sowjetischen Evangelikalen. Die 1970er Jahre sind eine besondere Periode in der Geschichte der Kommunikation des Kalten Krieges, in der die Zahl der Akteure zunimmt und die internationale Öffentlichkeit/Menschenrechtsorganisationen eine neue Bedeutung erhalten. Der Fokus dieser Studie wird darauf gerichtet, die Genese einer «Antwort» auf antikommunistische Initiativen aus dem innersowjetischen Kontext der Kirche-Staat-Beziehungen heraus zu untersuchen. Auf der Grundlage der Analyse von Berichten, die von den Mitarbeitern des All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUCECB) zusammengestellt wurden, werden wir zeigen, wie die Baptistenführer in der UdSSR versuchten, mit ihren internationalen Aktivitäten das Interesse der sowjetischen Führung zu gewinnen. Wir gehen davon aus, dass der Kampf gegen die antikommunistische Bewegung (an der Wende der 60er und 70er Jahre wurde dies anschaulich über die Figur des Rev. Richard Wurmbbrand verkörpert, was sich in den Materialien der sowjetischen Baptisten widerspiegelt) ein wichtiger Vorwand war, aufgrund dessen die internationalen Kontakte der sowjetischen Baptisten in Gang gesetzt wurden. Dank des Kampfes gegen das Konzept der «Untergrundkirche» innerhalb der UdSSR erweiterte sich zudem das geographische Gebiet, das

für Besuche evangelikaler Delegationen offen war, und die Zahl der registrierten ECB-Gemeinden, die dem Ausland «gezeigt» werden sollten, stieg merklich an.

Sowjetische Evangelikale – 1960er/1970er Jahre – Beziehungen zwischen Kirche und Staat – Richard Wurmbrand – «Untergrundkirche» – UDSSR.

*L'anticommunisme et les évangéliques soviétiques – Métamorphoses pendant la guerre froide*

Cet article se concentre sur les tendances du développement des contacts internationaux des évangéliques soviétiques au tournant des années 1960–1970. Les années 1970 constituent une période particulière dans l'histoire des communications de la Guerre froide, lorsque le nombre d'acteurs augmente, et que les organisations internationales publiques de défense des droits de l'homme acquièrent une nouvelle signification. L'objectif de cette étude sera d'examiner la formation d'une «réponse» aux initiatives anticommunistes à partir du contexte intra-soviétique des relations entre l'Église et l'État. Sur la base de l'analyse des rapports compilés par le personnel du All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUCECB), nous montrerons comment les dirigeants baptistes en URSS ont cherché à gagner l'intérêt des dirigeants soviétiques par leurs activités internationales. Nous suggérons que la lutte contre le mouvement anticommuniste (au tournant des années 1960 et 1970, elle était littéralement personnifiée par la figure du révérend Richard Wurmbrand, ce qui se reflète dans les documents des baptistes soviétiques) était un prétexte important, grâce auquel les contacts internationaux des baptistes soviétiques ont été activés. En outre, grâce à la lutte contre le concept d'«Église souterraine» en URSS, la zone géographique ouverte aux visites des délégations évangéliques s'est étendue, et le nombre de communautés ECB enregistrées, destinées à être «montrées» aux étrangers, a sensiblement augmenté.

Évangéliques soviétiques – années 1960/1970 – relations entre l'Église et l'État – Richard Wurmbrand – «Église souterraine» – URSS.

*Anticomunismo ed evangelici sovietici – Metamorfosi durante la guerra fredda*

Questo articolo si concentra sugli sviluppi dei contatti internazionali degli evangelici sovietici a cavallo tra gli anni '60 e '70. Gli anni '70 sono un periodo particolare nella storia delle comunicazioni della Guerra Fredda, quando il numero di attori aumenta e le organizzazioni internazionali pubbliche per i diritti umani acquistano un nuovo significato. Questo studio si sforzerà di esaminare come nel contesto delle relazioni intra-sovietiche tra Stato e Chiesa fu formulata una «risposta» a iniziative anticomuniste. Sulla base dell'analisi dei rapporti compilati dai membri del Consiglio dell'Unione dei Battisti Cristiani Evangelici (All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists, AUCECB), mostreremo come i leader battisti in URSS cercarono di conquistare l'interesse della direzione sovietica con le loro attività internazionali. Sugeriamo che il conflitto con il movimento anticomunista (che cavallo degli anni '60 e '70 fu letteralmente personificato dalla figura del reverendo Richard Wurmbrand, fatto che si riflette nei materiali dei battisti sovietici) fu un pretesto importante grazie al quale furono attivati i contatti internazionali dei battisti sovietici. Inoltre, grazie alla lotta contro il concetto di «chiesa sotterranea» all'interno dell'URSS, l'area geografica aperta alle visite delle delegazioni evangeliche si espanse e il numero delle comunità registrate dei BCE che dovevano essere «mostrate» agli stranieri aumentò notevolmente.

Evangelici sovietici – anni '60/'70 – relazioni chiesa-stato – Richard Wurmbrand – «chiesa sotterranea» – URSS.

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