

The Present Religious Situation in Soviet Russia

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ANY investigation into the religious situation in Soviet Russia is met with baffling difficulties (this, for instance, is the case with the important question of statistics), but in this intricate and seemingly confused panorama certain facts stand out clearly.

(1) There seems to be an increase of religious feeling and of religious energy among the people. It would possibly be true to say that it is the manifestation of this, rather than the feeling itself, that has increased.

(2) Methods of anti-religious propaganda and of religious persecution have, to a great extent, failed, and there is disappointment among Bolsheviks as to the results of their struggle against religion.

(3) The Bolsheviks had to adopt some changes in their handling of the religious question. These changes are mainly of a tactical, not of an essential character. Most of them are only means of concealing the real state of things. Although these 'veils' or 'screens' are transparently clumsy they have proved to be effective, and friends of the Soviet Government in foreign countries readily accept them, with no wish for further investigation. In other words, these changes (to a great extent only fictitious) represent a policy of deceit, systematic and intentional, built on a gigantic scale and used by the Bolsheviks to mislead public opinion in foreign countries.

(4) Religious persecution (I use this word not as a metaphor, but with its full meaning) continues in Soviet Russia, although there are some changes in its application.

(5) In the main, the general picture of the official attitude to religion in Soviet Russia is much the same as it has been for five or six years. The difference lies in the greater religious activity of the believers and in the collapse of many of the methods of anti-religious propaganda.

This London

The Editor has asked me to write some articles dealing with the problems of Evangelical Christianity in relation to a particular phase of modern life. The articles will cover: (1) The position in Greater London; (2) Some cameos of Evangelical effort in similar conditions in the provincial cities which have developed their own outside housing townships; (3) A few of the special problems that I have heard about and seen during my investigations.

I want to thank all sorts of people for their help. Clergymen, Roman Catholic priests, Quaker experts, Salvation Army officers, Free Church ministers, and a crowd of municipal authorities have contributed to my knowledge. In every case I have been given ungrudging help. That the result is not better than it is must be reckoned as due to my own inability to make the best use of the material placed at my disposal.

MAURICE WHITLOW

I. LONDON—AND ITS 'OVER-THE-BORDER' CITIES

DURING the last twenty years something like two million people have been taken out of old conditions and put down in entirely fresh surroundings. The great majority of these transfers have been made in such a manner as to uproot families from old and long-established customs and replace them in strange and often unappreciated environments. It is comparatively ancient history now that thousands of youths and girls who had enjoyed street corner life, street corner friendships, and the rowdiness of Hoxton or its equivalent in Liverpool or Leeds, have been dumped into wide spaces and long, orderly streets of Council houses, away from fried fish shops or cheap refreshment bars. They have all too often found that release from the ever-present and watchful eye of the police has not been accompanied by a makeweight of healthy occupation and interest. The result has been morally disastrous. Those responsible for the great transfer of population have been content to shrug their shoulders and remark, with a sigh, 'Well, you cannot make omelettes without breaking a few eggs,' and pass on to the consideration of schemes for another dozen similar building enterprises, with their further supply of 'broken eggs' in the lives of adolescents.