Eleanor Roosevelt's Day

Does Russia Have Freedom of Religion?

MEMPHIS, Tenn.– In Russia the Communist Party government has tried to give the people a feeling that the party replaces religion and the feeling the people have about Lenin is somewhat like the worship of a saint

That was the impression I received while in Russia.

Beyond the feeling they have for family and friends, people need something to hold onto In Russia, the long line that slowly wends its way daily to the tomb of Lenin every day it is open seemed to me actually the expression of this need for worship which is in every human soul.

¶ Services

IS there freedom of religion in the Soviet? While there, I tried to get the answer.

I attended a service in the Baptist Church in the outskirts of Moscow—the only church where young people seemed to be in great numbers. The minister told me they were quite free to train young people for the ministry and to conduct services. Of course they are only a small sect--numbering about one quarter of a million--but they are growing, I was told, at the rate of 20,000 a year.

The old Orthodox religion is also allowed to conduct services, but many of the old churches have become museums.

In Leningrad I visited a church where on the lower floor just a prayer service, with people wandering in and out, was being conducted. On climbing laboriously up two flights of stairs, we found a full service was being conducted with beautiful singing. In the case of the Orthodox church, however, the congregation seemed to consist largely of older people, many old women and men, and they toiled up those flights of stairs faithfully, stopping at every icon on the stairs to say a prayer.

Outside of Moscow I visited Zagorsk, which has been a holy city and where there is a 16th Century monastery and two lovely churches and other buildings dating from the 16th and 18th Centuries. St. Serge is buried there, and inside the church, where his tomb is, there is a constant service. Again, most of the worshipers looked like older women. I was astonished to hear their singing, which was remarkably beautiful.

Here the Greek Orthodox Church has a seminary and academy and I was told that 220 students were entering the seminary in the next semester. Students must enter between the ages of 18 and 40, but they must have had 10 years of previous schooling

Their education, board and lodging are free. The patriarch at the head of the Greek Orthodox Church supports the academy and seminary and all the churches by voluntary gifts from people who are still faithful to their religion.

¶ Catholics

My secretary, Miss Maureen Corr, attended a Roman Catholic church in Moscow and in Leningrad and was saddened by the fact that there seemed to be only older people present.

Attendance at the synagog and the training of a limited number of rabbis is also allowed, but no Hebrew school for children existed in Moscow.

I understand that no Communist Party member can attend church, so evidently the general opposition of the government to church attendance possibly influenced a great many of the people

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Boardman ✓
Belmont ✓
Mohr
Parsons
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