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THE REPRESSIVE POLICY OF THE SOVIET TOTALITARIAN AUTHORITIES TOWARDS THE EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHRISTIANS OF UKRAINE

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Abstract

The punitive and repressive machine of the Soviet totalitarian regime worked to destroy politically helpless citizens of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, including religious people who made sacrifices for the sake of their beliefs. A large number of them died in Stalin's concentration camps from diseases and malnutrition, as well as from difficult working conditions. Many prisoners were sentenced to be shot. Their families were harassed by law enforcement agencies, the press, and at work. During the Khrushchev period, after the announcement of the anti-religious campaign and before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the children and grandchildren of former prisoners of conscience filled high-security prisons and penal colonies. The families of prisoners of conscience suffered from the persecution by law enforcement agencies, Party and Komsomol members and other activists at large. Members of the Evangelical Baptist Christians community were subjected to physical and moral torture by the punitive and repressive authorities both during pre-trial investigative actions and in exile

camps, and after serving their sentences. The cruelest conditions for believers were specially created in places of deprivation of liberty, where they were not given timely medical aid in case of illness or injury at work, which led to injury or even death. Regardless of age, gender, and health of prisoners of conscience, they were always used in the most difficult jobs. Convicted believers were also deprived of the following rights offered to other prisoners: visits with relatives and early release for good behavior. The prison administration established additional punishments for keeping religious literature and reading prayers. After the release, most of the prisoners of conscience, despite the loss of health and the constant supervision of the police, the prosecutor's office and the local authorities, continued their spiritual service. Therefore, the fate of many faithful families of the Evangelical-Baptist community became for the citizens of Ukraine a symbol of the struggle for religious freedom and inspired ordinary believers to oppose the atheistic policy of the communist regime. Almost 31 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Putin regime began to actively use the methods of the punitive and repressive machine of the totalitarian system both in relation to its own population and in relation to the citizens of Ukraine, trying to finally to finally liquidate the Ukrainian state and nation.

Keywords: Evangelical Baptist Christians, repressive policy, totalitarian government, prisoners of conscience, Russian aggression against Ukraine, Putin's regime.

Introduction

In the totalitarian system, total control over religion and various religious organizations was very important and allowed the Soviet authorities to unprincipled use of people's sincere faith in God for their own misanthropic tasks.. The relevance of the research lies in the fact that while studying the repressive practices of the Soviet government with the help of which it tried to ruthlessly exterminate any opponents, including religious dissidents, we are now observing in real time the same arsenal of tools (intimidation, terror, blackmail, bribery, murders, persecution, etc.) used in practice by the Putin regime, both against its obedient population and against the citizens of the Ukrainian state.

That is why, understanding the depth of the cynical, cruel and systematic repressive policy of the Soviet totalitarian government towards the Evangelical Baptist Christians of Ukraine will help us to reveal the criminal essence of racism, the modern manifestation of the misanthropic Eurasian fascist totalitarian ideology, which declared its primary task the destruction of the Ukrainian state and the Ukrainian nation. We are also convinced that a comprehensive analysis of a professional comparison of the repressive practices of the Soviet and Putin's misanthropic regimes will contribute to the realization of their related anti-human orientation, both to ordinary Europeans and the so-called "Putinfersteiers," and if possible, will help the population of the Russian Federation see into the abyss they have fallen and what awaits them if they cannot stop and, ultimately, destroy the power of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.

The Fate of the Families of the Spiritual Leaders of the Evangelical-Baptist Community

The totalitarian system brutally dealt with the "politically unreliable,"¹ which in addition to many similar religious communities included the believers of the Evangelical Baptist Brotherhood. They constantly replenished the ranks of convicts in prisons, concentration camps, and correctional labor colonies. Even after serving their penal term, the believers remained under the close supervision of the special services. After the end of World War II, despite Joseph Stalin's officially declared policy of "reconciliation" with most religious denominations, the de facto totalitarian government continued to systematically oppress and persecute believers.

After the death of J. Stalin, partial rehabilitation of political convicts, including prisoners of conscience, began. Many of them, having returned to their families, saw with their own eyes that the system continues its non-constructive policy towards religious communities. The contradiction between official statements and real cases caused indignation and opposition. Some of them began to actively communicate with their brothers and sisters about true freedom of conscience and religion in the Soviet Union.

The bodies of the the State Security Committee (hereafter – KGB) were especially careful to monitor active believers who were engaged in missionary activities, which was prohibited. According to the Russian human rights organization "Memorial," the famous Baptist missionary Oleksii Prokofiev was first convicted in 1941 for counter-revolutionary activities.² After serving his sentence, he was placed under supervision, so at the end of 1953, another arrest took place. This time he was condemned for anti-Soviet activities, "because he declared to many that the Soviet power is not from God, but from the antichrist."³ After his release from prison in 1957, in 1958-59 he again began to visit communities and believers, conducting illegal activities, according to the reports of the leadership of the pro-government leadership of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists.⁴ In total, Alexei Prokofiev spent more than 25 years in camps and exiles.⁵

¹ Soviet punitive and repressive bodies kept operational records of certain categories of persons who were called "politically unreliable" and considered opponents.

²БД "Жертвы политического террора в СССР"; НИПЦ "Мемориал", Москва; БД Красноярского общества "Мемориал". <https://ru.openlist.wiki>. [BD "Victims of political terror in the USSR"; National Research Institute "Memorial", Moscow; Database of the Krasnoyarsk Society "Memorial"].

³Центральный государственный архив высших органов власти Украины. (1961). Переписка с старшим пресвитером ВСЕХБ на Украине по вопросам относящихся к религиозным культам за 1961 год. Ф. 4648. Оп. 2. Д. 360. Л. 175. [Central State Archive of the highest authorities of Ukraine, (1961). Correspondence with the senior presbyter of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian-Baptists in Ukraine on issues related to religious cults, (1961)].

⁴Ibid., p. 175.

⁵ БД "Жертвы политического террора в СССР"... [BD "Victims of political terror in the USSR"...].

A new wave of repression against the believers of Evangelical Christian Baptists began with the establishment of the sole power of Nikita Khrushchev in the Kremlin. He officially declared an anti-religious course, which involved intensifying atheistic propaganda with the aim of finally destroying all religious communities. Khrushchev's infamous "anti-religious policy" and his legislative initiatives directed against religion and believers, in particular the "Instruction Letter" and "Regulations," issued on behalf of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists in 1960, provoked an opposition movement in the community.

The first to fall into the grip of the communist regime were the opposition believers, who advocated compliance by the Soviet authorities with the laws on freedom of conscience and religion. They were mainly members of the opposition Organizing Committee and unregistered communities. They also became prisoners of conscience in prisons. Thus, according to self-published sources of Evangelical Baptist Christians, in the 1960s alone, 925 believers were on the dock, in particular, 400 were sentenced to short terms, and 525 to longer ones.⁶

The punitive and repressive measures that affected proactive believers and their loved ones forever changed their destinies. Nina Yastrebova (1934-2010), mother of 12 children, member of the Council of Parents of Prisoners since its creation (1964-1969), was placed in a psychiatric hospital of the Kharkiv region for signing the first "Address to All Believers of Evangelical Christian Baptists" dated 23 in February 1964, where she stayed for a month. She was released from coercive medical measures only after the believers appealed to the higher authorities. For 58 years, she was a faithful assistant to her husband, Volodymyr Yastrebov (1952-2010), who was an evangelist in the Kharkiv region. He was imprisoned twice in Soviet colonies for his religious beliefs.⁷

The fate of the family of believing Baptists, the Andrusenkos, became the embodiment of the tragic nature of the anti-religious policy of the communist regime. In particular, Alikhtyna Andrusenko (July 2, 1933-February 28, 2013), mother of five children, member of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners from 1977 to 1988. At the age of four, she lost her father, Mikhey Bdzholyanik, born in 1878, who in 1937 was sentenced to be shot for his religious beliefs by the decision of the Troika of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (hereinafter UNKVS) of the West Siberian Territory. In February 1952, she received baptism

⁶Бюллетень № 2 Совета Родственников узников Евангельских христиан-баптистов в СССР. (Москва. 1971), с. 7. [Bulletin № 2 of the Council of Relatives of Baptist Prisoners in the USSR. (Moscow, 1971), p. 7].

⁷Совет родственников узников евангельских христиан-баптистов. <https://fondsp.cornersafe.net/2459/fondsp/history-pages>. [Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Evangelical Christian Baptists].

in Norilsk. In June of the same year, she married Oleksandr Andrusenko (1926-2012), who was serving 5.5 years in prison for refusing to take up arms. Father Pavlo Andrusenko, born in 1900, was sentenced to be shot for Faith in 1938 by the decision of the Troika of the UNKVS in the Zhytomyr region. Alikhtyna and Oleksandr lived in marriage for 60 years (1952-2012). In 1963, the family moved to Zhytomyr. On October 24, 1966, Alikhtyna was arrested for religious upbringing of children, sentenced to three years and deprived of motherhood, and imprisoned in the Kharkiv women's camp. Her husband with four minor children came to visit the camp.⁸ The camp authorities offered her release; to “make an agreement that you will not join the opposition, visit the registered community and we will immediately let you go home, to your husband and children, but she refused.”⁹

After the release of Alykhtyna Andrusenko, the prosecutor's office announced that she will be under the supervision of law enforcement agencies for the rest of her life. In April 1986, her daughter Lyudmila was arrested and sentenced to 2.5 years for collecting and disseminating information about repression. On January 28, 2013, she passed away at the age of 79.¹⁰

In her autobiography it is written: “The total prison term of my friends is 38.5 years. I served in the Council of Prisoners' Relatives because of the call of my heart. I performed this service until the release of the last prisoner. Looking back at the journey I have made, I say from the bottom of my heart – ‘Praise be to You, God!’”¹¹ So, the fate of three generations of this family became evidence of how the totalitarian regime systematically fought against believers, undermining their health and destroying their lives.

The life of Lydia Vince (March 30, 1907-May 19, 1985) became a symbol of indomitability in the struggle for the rights of believers. Lydia was born on March 30, 1907 in Blagoveshchensk-on-Amur in a family of believers. According to the testimony of her granddaughter Natalia Vince, the grandmother's parents were deeply religious people, parishioners of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist church and raised their five children in the Christian spirit. L. Vince received water baptism at the age of 12. At the age of 15, she was already teaching Bible lessons in Sunday school.¹²

In 1927, she married Peter Vince, who at that time served as a presbyter in the church of the city of Blagoveshchensk. Two years later, when the legislation on religious cults came

⁸Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹²Н. Винс, *О моей бабушке. К 100-летию со дня рождения Лидии Михайловны ВИНС*. [About my grandmother. To the 100th anniversary of the birth of Lidia Mikhailovna VINS]. <http://maxpark.com>

out, the persecution of Christians began. In December 1930, P. Vince, who arrived in Moscow to participate in the plenum of the Union of Christian Baptists as a representative of the Far Eastern Brotherhood, was also arrested. Before the start of the plenum, he was summoned to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (hereafter the NKVS), where he was offered to vote at the plenum for the pastors they needed. P. Vince refused to do so.¹³

A few days later, he was arrested in Moscow and sentenced to three years in labor camps followed by resettlement. After serving this term, he was arrested twice. In 1936, he was arrested again and once again, when the Stalinist constitution was adopted, he was released for a short time. The last time, in 1937, he was sentenced to 10 years without the right to visit and correspond. He never came back.

As his son Giorgiy Vins wrote:

Finally, in 1995, almost 60 years after my father's second arrest, the KGB agreed to my request to give me the opportunity to review the case materials. My father's case - 450 pages. Reading it, I learned for the first time that on August 26, 1937, my father was executed by firing squad. At that time, he was 39 years old. For almost 60 years, the Soviet authorities kept it a secret.¹⁴

After the man's arrest, the pursuit of L. Vince did not stop. She was deprived of her job and place of residence, and demanded that she renounce her husband and his surname. In order to find a job, she had to move to Ussuriysk.

This is what L. Vince remembers about life in this city:

In Ussuriysk, I was summoned several times for an interview with an investigator of the State Political Administration (hereinafter referred to as the State Political Administration). He told me: "You must divorce your American missionary husband and change your last name. And if you do not agree, then you will be sent to the Far North as the wife of a prisoner. It's in our hands!"¹⁵ I flatly refused their offer. At work, the head of the office, a deeply decent person, also called me to him for a conversation. He told me: "We received an order from the DPU to release you. I'm very sorry, but I can't help you. And I also learned that you need to be sent to a settlement in the north, if you don't agree through the newspaper to renounce God and divorce."¹⁶ In Ussuriysk, I was summoned to the State Political Department (hereafter - DPU) several times. He told me: "You must divorce your American missionary husband and change your last name. And if you do not agree, then you will be sent to the Far North as a prisoner's

¹³Служение ближним (строки биографии). Вестник Истины. № 3. 1985, с. 13. [Service to others (lines of the biography). Messenger of Truth. № 3. 1985, p. 13].

¹⁴Г. Винс, Шестьдесят лет спустя...[Sixty years later...]. Л. Коваленко, Облако свидетелей Христовых 5-е издание (72 биографии с фотографиями). (Киев: Центр Христианского Сотрудничества, 2006), с. 13. [Cloud of Christ's Witnesses 5th edition (72 biographies with photographs), (Kyiv: Center for Christian Cooperation, 2006), p. 13.].

¹⁵Г. П. Винс, Тропюю верности. 2 изд., перераб и доп. (Санкт-Петербург: Библия для всех, 1997), 308 с. С. 105. [Path of fidelity. 2nd ed., revised and additional. (St. Petersburg: Bible for All, 1997), 308 p. P. 105].

¹⁶Ibid., p. 105.

wife. It's in our hands!"¹⁷ I categorically refused their offer. I was also called to work by the head of the office, a deeply decent person. He told me: "We received an order from the DPU to dismiss you. I'm sorry, but I can't help you. And I also learned that you must be sent to a settlement in the north, if you do not agree to renounce God through a newspaper and divorce."¹⁸

In the post-war years, together with her son Georgiy, she moved to Kyiv. In the 1960s, L. Vince and his son joined the unregistered community of Evangelical Christian Baptists (hereafter ECB). They supported the call for the convening of the Extraordinary All-Union Congress of the ECB Church. G. Vince joined the work of the organizing committee in August 1963. And in May 1966, he was arrested and sentenced to three years. After his arrest, L. Vince became a member of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of the ECB, and was later elected its chairman.

According to Nataliya Vince:

The door of our house was open to anyone who suffered and was driven away. At any time of the day, a sister could come to us from near or far from a huge country and inform us about the arrest of her husband, brother or relative. In our house, she found sympathy, support and comfort. Grandma prayed with her, gave advice, and wrote letters to her superiors with requests. A little later, young sisters joined, who helped the grandmother in this matter. She directed them to the families of prisoners who were in almost all republics of the Soviet Union. The grandmother told them, for example, like this: "Go to Siberia, here are the addresses of the prisoners' families and look with a woman's eye: do they have a leaking roof, do they have clothes, food, do they need help from the church, and so on." And in this way, it was a real support for every family.¹⁹

In 1970, she herself was arrested and sentenced to three years. According to the recollections of Nataliya Vince:

When my grandmother was almost 64 years old, the police and KGB officers knocked on our house, searched and arrested her. Her only fault is helping the families of prisoners. After the trial, she was sent to a labor camp in Kharkov, it was both good and bad: in the labor camp, the conditions were better - normal food and tolerant attitude of the superiors, but the bad thing was that the grandmother was of retirement age and it was very difficult for her to work physically. And over time, what she was very afraid of happened: she was transferred to another camp, which was outside the city, in the area of a landfill and chemical plants. In the summer, the prisoners suffocated from the heavy air, and in the winter, they suffered from the cold. My grandmother had kidney problems and often had to go to the toilet in the yard. In winter, at night, you had to get dressed and walk through the entire area. Snow and wind blew into the toilet through large cracks. This aggravated the illnesses of the prisoners. Although no one beat or abused them in the camp, the conditions were so difficult and sometimes unbearable that it was very difficult to endure them.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁹ Н. Винс, О моей бабушке... С. 1. [About my grandmother... P. 1].

²⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

In 1973, on the day of her release, Lydia Vince was so weak that the prisoners led her by the hands to the gates of the camp. For several months she could not walk and was lying at home. The situation as a whole has not changed. There were the same difficulties, persecution, searches and arrests of friends. The sisters of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners continued their service. After a few months at home, she got a little stronger physically. And she was faced with a new choice: to stay away from the service or to join it again. And this meant prison again, since she could not count on the mercy of the authorities. She decided to once again become part of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners and continued this service for several years.²¹

In 1974, Grigori Vince was arrested a second time and sentenced to five years in the camps and five years of exile. But in April 1979, after serving the camp term, he was stripped of his citizenship and deported to the United States. In June 1979, Lydia Vince and her family left to live with her son. At first, she settled in Los Angeles (California), where she became a member of the Bethany Russian Baptist Church and constantly testified about the persecuted members of the Evangelical Baptist Brotherhood. In 1981, she moved to her son in the city of Elkhart (Indiana) and lived there until the end of her days. And no matter how bad her health was, Lydia Vince always went on the road to talk about the situation of believers in the USSR. "Don't pass their reception!" "Pray for those who are suffering!" Her speech ended with this call to prayer and a request for persecuted Christians.²² So, the thorny fate, religious and human rights activities of Lydia Vince and her family testified that the believers of ECB, not sparing strength, health, and even life, defended their right to freedom of conscience and religious beliefs. Lidia Vince not only became the mouthpiece of a human rights organization, but also managed to organize real material support for large families of religious prisoners of conscience.

Difficult tests also befell the family of the Kozorezovs. The life of Oleksandra (1936-2006) changed in 1956, when she was baptized in the ECB community in Kyiv. In 1957, she married O. Kozorezov, the future evangelist of the Council of Churches. He spent 12.5 years in chains preaching the Word of God. Like most families of the Evangelical-Baptist brotherhood, their family had many children (10 children).

²¹ Ibid., p. 1.

²² *Служение ближним (строки биографии)...* [Service to others (lines of the biography).... P. 34-35].

In 1966, the man was arrested for participating in the May All-Union delegation of the ECB in Moscow and sentenced to three years. From 1966 to 1978, Oleksandra Kozorezova was a member of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners, and from 1979 its chairman. Wife of a prisoner of conscience, author of many letters, telegrams, appeals to the government, editor of the Bulletin.

According to O. Kozorezova's memoirs:

In 1967, the Council of Relatives of Prisoners sent a statement to the United Nations (hereinafter – the UN). A criminal case was opened against me under Article 1901 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (hereinafter - the RSFSR) (slander on Soviet reality). They decided to take the children and place them in a boarding school. Together with my 8 small children, I secretly left Omsk, they lived illegally in the families of believers until my husband was released in 1969. In 1975, the family moved to the city of Voroshilovgrad. In 1976, the KGB authorities warned me that a criminal case would be opened if I did not stop serving in the Council. In 1980, a criminal case was opened against my husband and me, surveillance and wiretapping were established at the house. On December 15, 1980, there was a threat of my arrest, and for the sake of serving in the Council, I was forced to leave home with my youngest son, leaving the other children to my 76-year-old mother. On December 26, 1980, the man was arrested and sentenced to three years. On August 21, 1981, a trial was held in Voroshilovgrad, I was sentenced to 3 years of probation.²³

Having opened a criminal case against O. Kozorezova, she wrote to the government: "I cannot stop the case of the petition while there is at least one prisoner of conscience in the Soviet Union, while believers are persecuted."²⁴ In November 1980, on the way to a Council meeting, O. Kozorezova was detained in Kharkiv at the bus station. At the police station, she quickly put a piece of paper with addresses in her mouth. She was attacked by two men (one in civilian clothes, the other in a police uniform). She fell. One clenched her jaws, the other knocked out her teeth with a hard object. They pressed on the neck near the jaw... She screamed through her teeth. The men cursed in frustration and said: "Swallowed." She was dragged to the police. On the way, she finally swallowed a piece of paper with addresses. After a thorough search, she was released. At two o'clock in the morning, she arrived at the meeting place. The sisters, seeing her swollen face, bruises on her cheeks and neck from a fight with men, tearfully prayed to God for the protection of the workers of the Council of Prisoners' Relatives. O. Kozorezova continued her intercessory service until the release of the last prisoner in 1988.²⁵

²³ *Совет родственников узников евангельских христиан-баптистов*
<https://fondsp.cornersafe.net/2459/fondsp/history-pages>. [Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Evangelical Christian Baptists].

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

The Rytikov family made a great contribution to the struggle for the rights of believers. Galina Rytikova, born March 7, 1937, baptized in 1955. In 1957, she married Pavel Rytikov (1930–2013). In 1962, P. Rytikov was ordained as a presbyter of the ECB community in Krasnodon. They had 10 children. P. Rytikov is a long-term prisoner, 12.5 years in the camps and 10 years illegally.²⁶ For more than 20 years, Galina Rytikova raised 10 children in a religious spirit without her husband. She was a member of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners (1968–1988). Since 1970, the family's address has been the "mail box" of the Prisoners' Council, where all petitions and reports from the ECB communities about persecution were received. G. Rytikova was responsible for information about prisoners from Ukraine and their families.²⁷

In May 1978, "medical workers" came to her home with the aim of placing her in a psychiatric hospital. She was forced to leave home with three small children, leaving six children at home. On the second day after her escape, the ambulance came again with medical workers. They thoroughly searched the house, outbuildings, interviewed the children and, not finding Galina, left. For seven months, she and her children hid from persecution in various cities of the USSR in the families of believers. In August 1979, husband P. Rytikov and son Volodymyr were arrested for organizing a camp for children from prisoner families called "Forest Church," and were sentenced to three years. At this time in 1980, the Krasnodon prosecutor filed a lawsuit to deprive Galina of her parental rights in relation to six children aged from three months to 15 years due to the fact that the children "are brought up in religion, which is contrary to the interests of educating the younger generation in country." There was a threat that the court would take away her children and hand them over to the state for upbringing. G. Rytikova left her hometown with her children. For nine months, she was forced to flee with her children from persecution.²⁸

In the 1970s, repressions against the believers of the ECB of the Ukrainian SSR did not stop, in particular, according to the Bulletin, only from December 13, 1970 to April 11, 1971, four people were arrested and sentenced to various terms of punishment, and from April 11 to July 15 In 1971, three believers were re-convicted.²⁹ The most resonant was the arrest on

²⁶Бюллетень № 7 Совета Родственников узников Евангельских христиан-баптистов в СССР. (Москва. 1972), с. 4-5. [*Bulletin № 7 of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR.* (Moscow. 1972), p. 4-5].

²⁷Совет родственников узников ... [*Council of Relatives of Prisoners...*].

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹Бюллетень № 1 Совета Родственников узников Евангельских христиан-баптистов в СССР. (Москва. 1971), с. 12-15. [*Bulletin № 1 of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR.* (Moscow. 1971), p. 12-15].

December 21, 1971, of the presbyter of the Kryvyi Rih Church, Fedor Petrakov, a 68-year-old disabled person of the second group, who returned in April 1971 after a 5-year imprisonment under strict regime.³⁰

The communist regime persecuted whole families of believers for believing in God. On November 14, 1971, Nelly Leonardivna Shimanska was arrested, whose father L. I. Szymanskyi was arrested in Rivne in 1937, and then physically destroyed in the camps, and the mother of N. I. Shymanska, was arrested by operatives of the Ministry of State Security (hereafter MGB) in 1949 for nine months, she released herself already paralyzed and died soon after.³¹

Trials of believers were held in the cities of Odessa, Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, and Khmelnytskyi. In 1972, the list of those arrested only increased, in particular, 15 believers were convicted under Article 138 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR, who received from 2.5 to three years of general regime camps.³²

From July 5 to 19, 1973, in the city of Saky, Crimea region, a trial was held against the believers of the ECB, P. M. Shokhoi, I. L. Budzinovskyi, G. A. Romanovych, and I. A. Zdorov. The defendants were charged under Articles 138 Part II and 209 Part I of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR. They were accused of visiting other communities, gathering illegally, bringing children to church services, not allowing children to join pioneers, the Komsomol, not allowing them to watch TV, etc., purchasing wind instruments for the orchestra, and creating a mutual aid fund. P. M. Shokha, the father of 10 children, was accused of participating in a delegation of believers, which in 1966 was near the building of the Central Committee in Moscow. He was tried again on July 17, 1962, he was sentenced under Article 209 to four years in the camps and three years in the settlement. On July 19, 1973, the sentence was read: P. M. Shokha five years of strict regime camps and five years of exile; G. A. Romanovych four years of the general regime and four settlements; I. A. Zdorov four generals and four settlements; Budzinovsky to three years of the general regime. After this process, eight more believers were tried for not testifying against their brothers in faith. Everyone was sentenced to three months of forced labor.³³

³⁰Ibid., p. 15.

³¹Бюллетень № 8 Совета Родственников узников Евангельских христиан-баптистов в СССР. (Москва. 1972), с. 3. [Bulletin № 8 of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR. (Moscow. 1972), p. 3].

³²Бюллетень № 10 Совета Родственников узников Евангельских христиан-баптистов в СССР. (Москва. 1972), с. 33-37. [Bulletin № 10 of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR. (Moscow. 1972), p. 33-37].

³³Ibid., p. 27

Already in 1976, the list of prisoners of conscience increased to 20 people, in particular, four believers were re-sentenced to five years of strict regime (H. P. Vince, M. G. Boyko, V. M. Dubovyk, and P. M. Shokha), eight believers received five years of strict regime. And seven people received four years of the general regime and, accordingly, one believer received 2.5 years of the general regime.³⁴

In 1981, all members of the ECB Council of Churches were arrested, except for Kryuchkov, who had been in hiding since 1971. The scale of judicial repression against unregistered ECB communities can be judged by the following figures: as of May 1982, 158 Baptists were arrested, which accounted for half of all religious prisoners of conscience in the USSR. Only in the Ukrainian SSR in 1980-1981, 28 believers of the ECB were convicted.³⁵

Despite the promised democratization in 1985, the communist regime continued to repress and detain active believers of unregistered communities almost until the end of the 1980s. The punitive and repressive machine of the USSR stopped only at the end of the 1980s, when the last prisoner of conscience was released from prison.

Consequently, the fate of many faithful families of the Evangelical-Baptist brotherhood became for the citizens of Ukraine a symbol of the struggle for religious beliefs, inspiring ordinary believers to resist the atheistic policy of the communist regime.

The Position of Prisoners of Conscience by Deprivation of Liberty and After Serving their Sentence

With the beginning of N. Khrushchev's atheistic campaign, the prisons of the communist regime were filled with prisoners of conscience. According to KGB Colonel Sekarev, believers had a negative influence on criminals. According to the established practice, all those convicted both for domestic crimes and for violating the legislation on cults are serving their sentences in general correctional and labor colonies. Convicted believers communicate freely with other prisoners, carry out religious propaganda among them, and receive the necessary literature through their relatives.³⁶

³⁴Бюллетень № 39 Совета Родственников узников Евангельских христиан-баптистов в СССР. (Москва. 1977), с. 39-45. [*Bulletin №39 of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR*. (Moscow. 1977), p. 39-45].

³⁵Б. Захаров, Рада родичів в'язнів євангельських християн-баптистів. <http://museum.khpg.org/>. [*Council of Relatives of Evangelical Christian Baptist Prisoners*].

³⁶Отраслевой государственный архив Службы безопасности Украины. Дело № 20 с планами и справками по линии церковников и сектантов (1962 г.). Д. 1423. Л. 46. [*Branch State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine. Case № 20 with plans and information on the line of churchmen and sectarians* (1962)].

According to Sekarev, the KGB knows the facts of the release from the camps of former criminals who, while in prison, joined the "sects" of Pentecostals and Baptists, engaged in active illegal religious activities. They began to occupy a leadership position in religious communities. In order to prevent the further growth of illegal communities at the expense of prisoners, the KGB colonel proposed to create a special colony in Ukraine for all convicted "church members and sectarians" and to strengthen control over them.³⁷

Therefore, the treatment of prisoners of conscience of the ECB in places of deprivation of liberty was extremely cruel, as evidenced by the numerous petition letters (published in self-published newspapers) to the higher authorities and law enforcement agencies to their relatives requesting the authorities to soften the conditions of detention of prisoners and pardon those who lost their health in the camps.

A great deal of work was done to publicize the information about the treatment of arrested and imprisoned believers by the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of the ECB, which sent letters of appeal to the highest authorities of the USSR and international organizations with a request to soften the conditions of their detention. Thus, the Council sent numerous letters to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR A. N. Kosygin and the Prosecutor General of the USSR R. A. Rudenko, in which they reported about the violation of rights and the cruel treatment of the camp administration of the imprisoned believers.

In the 1970s, letters with a similar content were sent en masse to the authorities, testifying to systematic repressive measures against members of the ECB in prisons and camps. For example, in 1972 the Bulletin contained facts and figures about deaths in the camps. In a letter to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR A. N. Kosygin, relatives of the prisoners draw attention to the fact that elderly prisoners with chronic diseases are kept in harsh camp conditions. According to the Bulletin, eight ministers of the church died in prison in the last eight years. Most of them were elderly people, up to 80 years old, with chronic heart diseases.³⁸

Sick and elderly prisoners were deliberately not provided with timely medical care. It was reported that,

the 63-year-old head of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of the ECB, Lidia Vince, was in a serious condition in the camp of military unit 308/34 in Dniprodzerzhynsk, Dnipropetrovsk region. She was very sick, there is no hope that she will be able to serve a 3-year prison term.³⁹

³⁷Ibid., p. 46.

³⁸Бюллетень № 10 Совета родственников... 1972, p. 9-10. [*Bulletin №10 of the Council of Relatives...1972, p. 9-10*].

³⁹Ibid., p. 11.

Not only elderly believers suffered in prison, but also young people. In one of the letters to the authorities, the mother of 18-year-old V. Zinchenko, sentenced to two years for believing in God, wrote that her son fell ill with rheumatism in the Sokyryan camp of the Chernivtsi region, RU 328/. 67-A, working in harmful production, and was completely exhausted.⁴⁰ The harsh conditions of imprisonment affected the health and body of the young Christian preacher of the Zhdanov local church Mykola Ivanovych Melnikov, born in 1941, who died on August 10, 1972 in the city of Zhdanov after nine years in the camps.⁴¹ Cases of bringing believers to physical exhaustion in the camps became systematic throughout the territory of the Soviet Union.

Numerous appeals of the EHB regarding illegal arrests and ill-treatment of its members in places of deprivation of liberty to the higher authorities of the Soviet Union and Ukrainian SSR had no positive results. Therefore, in the 1970s, on the advice of the active Council, relatives of prisoners of conscience began to send letters of appeal to international organizations, in particular to the International Committee of the Red Cross, to the Committee for the Protection of Human Rights of the United Nations, to the Secretary General of the United Nations Kurt Waldheim about the intolerable conditions of detention of their relatives in Soviet camps.

In one of the letters, the parents of P. I. Tkachenko, born in 1952, convicted for believing in God, mutilated in the camp conditions, appealed to the executive committee of the Union of the Red Cross and Red Crescent of the USSR indicating that their appeals to the leadership of the Soviet Union remained fruitless.

As the parents of the prisoner point out,

Since, as we can see, the leadership and the executive committee of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union and the Central Committee of the Ukrainian SSR primarily serve the line of the party, which is aimed at fighting religion, and not for humane treatment of people, regardless of their worldview, we ask the executive committee of the Union Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to create a commission to take appropriate measures. The condition of our son, who was severely injured in prison, continues to deteriorate. Doctors admit that sanatorium-resort treatment is necessary. In prison conditions, they are powerless to do anything, so treatment is not carried out at all. But to our letters, a copy of which we attach, we receive only a series of clichéd answers, the essence of which is reduced to the forwarding of our letter by one institution to another, and in the end the letter ends up for consideration in the hands

⁴⁰Бюллетень № 2 Совета родственников узников Евангельских христиан-баптистов в СССР. (Москва. 1971), с. 4. [Bulletin No. 2 of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR. (Moscow. 1971), p. 4.]

⁴¹Бюллетень № 10 Совета родственников узников... 1972, с. 9. [Bulletin №10 of the Council of Relatives...1972, p. 9].

of those whose actions actually require investigation, because they are criminal. Can they deny their own actions? ⁴²

In another letter to the head of the executive committee of the Union of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the parents mention the diagnosis of P. I. Tkachenko's son:

a fracture of the left hypochondrium, a rupture of the symphysis, a bruise of the lumbar-sacral spine. Contusion of the left kidney. After seven months of treatment, he was recognized by the medical commission as a disabled person of the 2nd group. All this is very disturbing, to this is added the gradual loss of sensitivity and vitality of the left part of the body. Obviously, a seriously damaged nerve. His condition is close to paralysis and not far from death. And those who have no right to be indifferent, calmly contemplate it. Perhaps, at your request, the doctors will give an assessment of our son's health. We ask you to create a medical commission that would be able to objectively ascertain the fact of a serious health condition and petition for his release. We seriously fear that our son may not live to the end of his term, let us add that only the guilty need amnesties. Yours sincerely: father, mother, two sisters, brother. The rest of our 5 minor children join in on this. December 14, 1975. ⁴³

The situation of convicted prisoners of conscience was complicated by the fact that, unlike other prisoners, they were deprived of the right and opportunity to use visits, transfer and early release for good behavior, etc. In particular, Fyodor Akymovych Payunov, who was sentenced to five years of a strict regime, was denied a personal visit with his family for 12 months, and the whole reason for the denial was that he and his family are believers. This is what the head of the Korchagin camp said to Payunov's wife: "There is no reason, it's just that other convicts were given visits with relatives." ⁴⁴

Prisoners of faith suffered the most from hard labor, which eventually led to mutilation and sometimes death. Thus, Petro Pichyny, the father of six children, sentenced to five years in the camps, served his prison term in unbearable conditions in the city of Sokyryana, Chernivtsi region, institution RS 328-67. He worked in a quarry in conditions of constant humidity.

His letter states:

The work is very difficult, the norm is that one person carries 800 tiles weighing 25-30 kg each. I can't feel my arms or legs, my whole body is not mine. And today I have to go back to work for the 3rd shift. After coming from the shift, I am called to the operational department and they say: "Haven't you figured it out yet?" And they scolded me obscenely. And the squad commander immediately greeted me with abuse and

⁴²Бюллетень № 32 Совета Родственников узников Евангельских христиан-баптистов в СССР. (Москва. 1976), с. 8-11. [Bulletin № 32 of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR. (Moscow. 1976), p. 8-11].

⁴³Бюллетень № 10 Совета родственников... 1976, с. 8-11. [Bulletin №10 of the Council of Relatives...1976, p. 8-11].

⁴⁴Бюллетень № 10 Совета родственников... 1972, с. 9. [Bulletin №10 of the Council of Relatives...1972, p. 9].

spoke to me in such a way that I cannot tell you everything; that I left you, that I am connected with America and receive illegal literature. Nothing can be seen in the mine due to the dust, which contains 80% lime. All this impacted on the body. My hands were covered in blood and started to burst. I showed them to my boss and asked him to transfer me to work in a specialty, but I probably won't live to see it. Recently, I was being prepared for parole, but as a rule, Christians are not released. Because it is scary to give up God and get temporary freedom. Therefore, instead of my will, I was sent to the stage. You have no idea what it is. I was on the road for 24 days. I was imprisoned in Voroshilovgrad, Kharkiv and Lviv prisons. I thought I wouldn't make it. After all, it is summer; and we were stuffed into "funnels" and wagons. It wasn't raining, but we were soaked from head to toe. There were whole puddles of water under our feet and it was all our sweat. We were suffocating. My head was spinning terribly, I felt nauseous. We were treated like cattle.⁴⁵

Prisoners who were serving repeated sentences for believing in God were subjected to the greatest torture. The prison administration tried to create unbearable conditions for them in order to not only morally break their spirit, but physically cripple or even destroy them. The story of Yury Mikhalkov, who was arrested for the third time on March 17, 1972, and sentenced to three years in strict regime camps is illustrative. As a sign of protest against the illegal arrest and conviction, Yu. Mikhalkov refused to eat for 11 days. The prison administration began force-feeding the barely alive prisoner, which was accompanied by the use of physical force, which left numerous wounds and bruises on his body. After being transferred to Novosibirsk, Mikhalkov was placed on death row for three months, then in a solitary confinement cell which resembled a freezer for five days. After Mikhalkov was transferred to the Ivdel camp management No. 240/4 of the Sverdlovsk Region, he was again thrown into a solitary confinement cell for 10 days. When Yuri's parents came to see him, the head of the camp declared: "We will squeeze everything out of him. And it does not matter how he gets his head chopped off here." Letters from him are not passed and they are not allowed to him.⁴⁶

In addition, convicted believers in the camps were subjected to additional punishment for praying and singing Christian hymns. They were also forbidden to keep and read the Bible, which was a severe test for a true Christian. For example, relatives of the convicted believer P.P. Andryushchenko from Voroshilovgrad sent a letter to the Ministry of Internal Affairs with a request to allow him to keep religious literature with him.

The Ministry's response to this request was as follows:

The Political Department of the Correctional and Labor Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR believes that the administration of the institution UL-314/32 did the right thing by prohibiting your husband, convict

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 11-12.

P.P. Andryushchenko to keep religious literature with him. He can use it after his release from prison. Deputy head of the political department of the Correctional Labor Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR. Signed by B. Milyutin.⁴⁷

In the camps, not only every step of the prisoners of conscience was strictly controlled, but also their words and personal correspondence. First of all, their correspondence with relatives was subject to meticulous censorship. If the letter contained words from the Bible, it was destroyed, paragraphs of religious content were obscured with black ink. Oleksandr Kozorezov, a church minister in Omsk, sentenced to five years in prison, having a family of nine children and a wife, often did not receive letters from his family and the family from him, the reason being the religious content of the letters. During a conversation with Kozorezov's wife, Major Suvorov told her not to quote words from the Bible in her letters to her husband, otherwise her letters would not be given to him, or all texts from the Bible would be deleted from them. "The result of Suvorov's warning is already effective. In the letter received from the husband, the words: "I greet you all with the love of our Lord Jesus Christ," are crossed out in black paint,"⁴⁸ reads one of the Bulletin's messages. Almost all wives received similar warnings from the camp authorities prisoners of conscience.

Having been released after serving the sentence, the local law enforcement agencies continued to terrorize the believers. First, local authorities quite often refused to allow believers to live near their families, instead requiring them to stop their religious activities. They were also placed under constant surveillance as serious criminals. Such cases were repeated with almost all believers who came out of prisons. Thus, "on August 22, 1972, after serving three years, the young Christian Vera Maksimivna Demina was released from prison. Immediately, the authorities of the city of Zmievo began to terrorize her: they did not issue her a passport, but demanded a two-week employment contract. In the extreme case, they threatened the released with a lawsuit for idleness."⁴⁹

In the city of Krasnodon, former prisoners Pavlo Rytikov and Petar Pichny, who served five years in prison each, were placed under surveillance after being released from prison in November 1973, their fingerprints were taken, and their photographs were taken. Sheverev, the deputy chief of criminal investigation in the city of Krasnodon, said: "We will imprison him

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 11-12.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 12.

within a month. Attending prayer meetings is a violation of public order."⁵⁰ The police announced surveillance of ex-head of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners, 67-year-old Lydia Vince, who was released on December 1, 1973 after three years of imprisonment.⁵¹

At the beginning of the 1980s, with the change of political power in the Kremlin, there was a partial relaxation of the anti-religious policy. However, in general, the atheistic course remained unchanged. The communist regime continued to persecute the leaders and rank-and-file members of the ECB. From the second half of the 1980s, with a significant weakening of the command-administrative system, there was a change in religious policy regarding convicts and punishment for religious beliefs.

Therefore, members of the ECB brotherhood were subjected to systematic persecution by Soviet law enforcement agencies with the aim of discrediting them. Representatives of punitive and repressive bodies paid considerable attention to the complex agency work with religious authorities, since in many cases it was their sacrificial service that supported the activities of ECB communities.

For members of the ECB brotherhood convicted for religious activities, the cruelest conditions were created in places of deprivation of liberty with the aim of their physical destruction or moral and spiritual despair. Despite the enormous physical and moral torture by the Soviet penal and repressive authorities, the vast majority of prisoners of conscience, after serving their sentences and returning to their families and religious communities, continued to preach the Word of God.

Conclusions

The punitive and repressive machine of the Soviet regime worked to destroy politically insignificant citizens of the USSR, among whom were also religious authorities who made many sacrifices for the sake of their religious beliefs. Many of them died in Stalin's concentration camps from disease and malnutrition, as well as due to difficult working conditions. A large number of prisoners of conscience were executed. Their families were subjected to repression by law enforcement agencies, the press, and at work. After the proclamation of the anti-religious campaign by Khrushchev and before the collapse of the USSR, children and grandchildren of former prisoners of conscience filled high-security

⁵⁰Бюллетень № 13 Совета Родственников узников Евангельских христиан-баптистов в СССР. (Москва. 1974), с. 5. [*Bulletin №13 of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR.* (Moscow. 1974), p. 5].

⁵¹Ibid., p. 5.

prisons, penal colonies, and prison settlements. Families of prisoners of conscience suffered from the persecution of law enforcement agencies. However, the families of prisoners of conscience remained faithful to their religious beliefs and became a symbol of spiritual resistance to the totalitarian regime.

Evangelical Baptist Christians were subjected to physical and moral torture by punitive and repressive authorities both during pre-trial investigative actions and in correctional camps and after serving their sentences. In places of deprivation of liberty, cruel conditions were specially created for believers. Regardless of age, gender, and health, prisoners of conscience were always used in the hardest jobs. Quite often, convicted believers were deprived of family visits, transfers and early release for good behavior. The prison administration imposed harsh punishments for keeping and reading religious literature and prayers. After serving the sentence, despite the loss of health and constant supervision by the police, the prosecutor's office, and local authorities, prisoners of conscience continued their spiritual service.

Almost 31 years after the collapse of the USSR, the Putin regime began to actively use again the activities of its punitive and repressive machine, both in relation to its own population and in relation to the citizens of Ukraine, trying to finally solve the Ukrainian issue, namely, to finally liquidate the Ukrainian state and the Ukrainian nation.

That is why, understanding the depth of the cynical, cruel and systematic repressive policy of the Soviet totalitarian government towards the Evangelical Baptist Christians of Ukraine will help us to reveal the criminal essence of racism, the modern manifestation of the misanthropic Eurasian fascist totalitarian ideology, which declared its primary task the destruction of the Ukrainian state and the Ukrainian nation. We are also convinced that a comprehensive analysis of a professional comparison of the repressive practices of the Soviet and Putin's misanthropic regimes will contribute to the realization of their related anti-human orientation, both to ordinary Europeans and the so-called "Putinfersteiers," and if possible, will help the population of the Russian Federation see the abyss into which they have fallen and what awaits them if they cannot stop and, ultimately, destroy the power of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation.

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