

Voices of Courage:

A Comparison of the Treatment of Evangelicals and Dissidents under Khrushchev

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Fall 2021

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Abstract

Nikita Khrushchev's time in power from 1953-1964 has often been thought of as a period of "thaw" in the Soviet Union, as he allowed a certain degree of freedom of expression for artists and writers. However, this view of the Khrushchev "thaw" ignores the blatant human rights violations enacted by the Soviet Union during this time, specifically in its treatment of evangelicals and other dissidents. This work examines Khrushchev's treatment of evangelicals and other dissidents with the goal of refining modern perceptions on Khrushchev's time in office. The timelines and methods of both the anti-religious campaign of 1959-1964 and the anti-dissent campaigns of 1953-1964 are examined and analyzed. The work concludes with a comparison of Khrushchev's treatment of evangelicals with his treatment of other dissidents, concluding that the idea of a "thaw" presents an oversimplified understanding of this period, as it does not account for the difference in Khrushchev's treatment of these two groups.

Voices of Courage

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Introduction

Dominic Erdozain describes the Russian Revolution as “a breathtaking experiment in the reordering of a civilization.”¹ As lofty as this description is, the truth has often been much harsher. The costs of this “experiment” have been high, and the lessons learned from it should not be easily forgotten. Even those periods of apparent leniency, such as the Khrushchev “thaw” from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s, display interesting contradictions that challenge any optimistic views of the Soviet Union. Nikita Khrushchev’s treatment of evangelicals and other dissidents expresses the paradoxical lie of the Khrushchev “thaw,” highlighting the lack of freedom inherent in the Soviet system.

Background

The history of the Soviet Union began in 1917 with the overthrow of the Romanov dynasty and the initiation of a socialist form of government. These events were sparked by a series of strikes and demonstrations beginning on February 23, 1917; over the next several days, the demonstrations grew in size and influence, prompting even tsarist soldiers to join the movement.² With the abdication of Nicholas II on March 2, and his brother’s subsequent refusal to accept the throne, the Romanov dynasty was gone and a new era had begun.³ American

¹ Dominic Erdozain, “Introduction: The Rhythm of the Saints,” in *The Dangerous God: Christianity and the Soviet Experiment*, ed. Domininc Erdozain (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2017), 3.

² Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union From the Beginning to the End* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15-16.

³ Ibid.

newspapers of the time heralded the revolution with joyful shouts. The *Baltimore Sun* cited the event as a “big triumph of democracy” and a “dramatic overthrow of autocracy.”⁴ However, this hopeful spirit was not to last, as the likes of Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin exercised their power on the Russian people. A *New York Times* article from 1989 quotes the calculations of Soviet dissident Roy Medvedev that over 20 million people died under Stalin alone.⁵

By the time of Nikita Khrushchev, the people of the Soviet Union had learned from experience how terrible autocracy could really be. Coming out from the leadership of Joseph Stalin in 1953, “the country was exhausted by war, terror, and poverty.”⁶ Looking back, Khrushchev recognized the devastation of this period, stating that the Russian people under Stalin “were exhausted by the war, starving for food and in desperate need of clothes.”⁷ In addition to dealing with material shortages, the new leaders of the Soviet Union struggled with interpreting the purges and terror of the past several decades in a way which acknowledged the horrors caused by Stalin without implicating themselves in those horrors.⁸

Khrushchev’s Rise to Power

Amid these troubles, Khrushchev slowly emerged as leader of the Soviet Union. His rise to power was, in many ways, unexpected. *The Manchester Guardian*, reporting on March 5,

⁴ Isaac Don Levine, “Big Triumph of Democracy: Revolution in Russia, A Dramatic Overthrow of Autocracy,” *The Baltimore Sun*, March 16, 1917, 1.

⁵ Bill Keller, “Major Soviet Paper Says 20 Million Died as Victims of Stalin: Stalin’s Victims Put at 20 Million,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1989, 1.

⁶ Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 186.

⁷ Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, ed. and trans. Strobe Talbott (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), 12.

⁸ Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 190.

1953, cited the “unanimous conclusion ... that the succession would pass to one of three men ... Georgi Malenkov, Lavrenti Beria, or Mr. Molotov.”⁹ These expectations began to deteriorate, however, over the next several months. By mid-March 1953, Khrushchev was the “senior member of the Central Committee Secretariat.”¹⁰ By July, Khrushchev had conspired with Malenkov to have Beria arrested, followed by his subsequent execution in December.¹¹ Over the next year and a half, Khrushchev slowly worked to increase his own power while reducing Malenkov’s influence, eventually leading to Malenkov’s resignation of the premiership on February 8, 1955.¹² Khrushchev now stood as the leader of the Soviet Union.

General Overview of Khrushchev’s Time in Office

Khrushchev’s era proved to be both a continuation and a deviation from the methods and beliefs of previous leaders. One of his most obvious deviations from the past was the “secret speech” of 1956, a four-hour long denunciation of Stalin, followed by subsequent de-Stalinization efforts. Similarly, Khrushchev supported economic beliefs which, to some, might sound capitalistic. For example, in his memoirs Khrushchev argued for the necessity of “material incentives” for collective farmers, stating that the idea that “our people should be motivated not by money but by ideological considerations” is “nonsense.”¹³ He continued by criticizing Stalin

⁹ Alistair Cooke, “Washington Wonders About Stalin’s Successor: Fears That Malenkov May Follow with More Aggressive Policy,” *The Manchester Guardian*, March 5, 1953, 5.

¹⁰ William J. Thompson, *Khrushchev: A Political Life* (1995; repr., New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1997), 117.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 121-122.

¹² *Ibid.*, 124-141.

¹³ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 114.

for refusing “to acknowledge that fact.”¹⁴ At the same time, Khrushchev continued to reflect the ideology which had given birth to the Soviet Union. Peter Kenez argues that Khrushchev remained a staunch believer in “the superiority of the Soviet political and economic system.”¹⁵

Khrushchev’s internal reforms, although not always successful, could be ambitious and wide sweeping. In the agricultural sector, he raised the prices of products produced on collective farms and lowered the taxes “that the peasants paid on profits from the sale of produce and domestic animals,” providing greater incentives for peasants to develop their land.¹⁶ He also developed the virgin land program, an ambitious project to cultivate previously uncultivated parts of the Soviet Union, especially in central Asia and Siberia.¹⁷ In the industrial sector, he worked to reorganize the economy, including decentralizing industry by placing it under the oversight of 100 local economic councils rather than under economic ministries.¹⁸ In the educational sector, he removed tuition requirements at institutions of higher education and took other steps to make education more accessible to the disadvantaged.¹⁹

Despite these reforms, Khrushchev remained a proponent of the Soviet system, a system notorious for the lack of individual liberty given to its citizens. This system could be especially hateful towards those who disagreed with it, including evangelical Christians and other

¹⁴ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 114.

¹⁵ Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 195.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 211-212.

dissidents. Although Khrushchev's era is often viewed as a time of "thaw" following the harsh Stalinist years, his time in office was far from peaceful for those with the courage to stand up for their views.

General History of Evangelicals in Russia

The evangelical presence in Russia reaches back to the 1860s, when multiple religious movements began to emerge and converge with each other. Heather Coleman points out that the Baptist movement arose separately in Transcaucasia, Ukraine, and St. Petersburg.²⁰ Baptized in 1867, Nikitva Voronin became the first official Russian Baptist, triggering the movement.²¹ At the same time, the *shtundist* movement arose among Russian peasants in Ukraine, heavily influenced by German colonists in the area and their "revivalistic religious meetings."²² A few years later brought the arrival of another evangelical movement in St. Petersburg through the work of an English nobleman named Lord Radstock.²³ Colonel Pashkov, for whom the movement gained the name of *Pashkovism*, assumed leadership and began to engage in a variety of philanthropic and evangelistic endeavors, including the printing of religious literature.²⁴

It was at the initiation of Colonel Pashkov that the Russian evangelical movement of today began to take shape. In 1884 he called a meeting of various evangelical groups, including "shtundists, Pashkovites, Baptists (German and Russian), Mennonite Brethren, and an

²⁰ Heather Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 14.

²¹ Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1981), 33.

²² Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929*, 16.

²³ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 34-35.

²⁴ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 17.

evangelical stream of Molokanism.”²⁵ Although this meeting ended in a police raid, soon afterwards the southern Baptists initiated their own meeting; this not only helped solidify doctrine but is also considered “the founding gathering of the Union of Russian Baptists.”²⁶ This was followed in 1905 by a decree issued by Nicholas II regarding religious toleration.²⁷ However, revolution was in the air and by 1920, evangelicals were under a new government.

Treatment of Evangelicals under Other Regimes

Just as American newspapers hailed the Russian Revolution as a triumph for democracy, some Russian evangelicals looked optimistically at the changes around them. Heather Coleman describes the excitement of Russian evangelicals and their hope that the revolution would work to build Christ’s kingdom and provide a release from the government pressure they had previously been facing.²⁸ And they may have had support for their hopeful predictions. Before the revolution, “interest in the political implications of religious dissidence was long-standing and widespread among liberals, populists, and Marxists.”²⁹ For example, the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party in 1903 recognized the “sectarian movement” as “one of the democratic currents directed against the existing order of things” and encouraged

²⁵ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 17.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

²⁷ *Polnoe Sobranīe Zakonov" Rossīiskoī Imperīi. Sobranīe Tretīe. Tom" XXV. 1905. Otdielenīe I. Ot" No. 25605—27172 i Dopolnenīa* (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia Tipografiia, 1908), 257-258.

²⁸ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 127-128.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

“Party members to work among sectarians for the purpose of attracting them to Social-Democracy.”³⁰

Despite this ‘promising’ beginning, the new Soviet government vacillated in its response to the evangelicals. From 1921-1928, the government allowed sectarians a certain degree of freedom, hoping that this would weaken the Orthodox Church.³¹ Anti-religious propaganda during this period generally focused on Orthodox believers, while portraying Protestants as “hardworking and loyal,” “contributing objectively to the building socialism” despite their ideological misunderstandings.³² Robert Conquest even claims that the January 4, 1919 decree, accommodating religious conscientious objectors, “was enacted largely for their [the Evangelicals’] benefit.”³³

However, the end of the decade brought decisive change. In the years leading up to 1929, the Soviet government slowly began chipping away at the freedoms allowed to believers, largely focusing on the Orthodox Church.³⁴ The period brought a new emphasis on anti-religious propaganda and re-education, as well as clarification about whether believers could be accepted into the Communist Party.³⁵ In 1924 a “state publishing house for anti-religious literature was

³⁰ Robert Conquest, ed., *Religion in the U.S.S.R., The Contemporary Soviet Union Series: Institutions and Policies* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 99.

³¹ Steve Durasoff, *The Russian Protestants: Evangelicals in the Soviet Union, 1944-1964* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969), 78.

³² Philip Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy,” in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (1992; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7.

³³ Conquest, *Religion in the U.S.S.R.*, 99.

³⁴ Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy,” 7-13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

established,” while the following year saw an increase in persecution of other Christian denominations besides Orthodoxy.³⁶ However, the climax came on April 8, 1929, with the release of the Law on Religious Associations.³⁷ Remaining in effect until 1990, the law severely restricted the ability of believers to evangelize and engage in society.³⁸

The following years only increased the pressure felt by Evangelicals. In June 1929, the Central Committee authorized the League of Militant Atheists to “launch a campaign to destroy religion.”³⁹ During the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, evangelicals were often labeled as *kulaks* and sentenced accordingly.⁴⁰ Philip Walters briefly summarizes the effect of this persecution: “Taking the decade as a whole ... there can be no doubt that individual believers and religious institutions of all kinds suffered more radically than at any other time in the Soviet period. By the end of the decade, visible religious life had been virtually destroyed.”⁴¹ These harsh tactics were temporarily reversed by a New Religious Policy in 1939.⁴² Influenced by the rise of World War II, this policy relaxed government pressure slightly, giving evangelicals room to breathe.⁴³

³⁶ Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy,” 12-13.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁰ Durasoff, *The Russian Protestants*, 92-93.

⁴¹ Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy,” 16.

⁴² Durasoff, *The Russian Protestants*, 99-102.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Treatment of Evangelicals under Khrushchev

The Khrushchev era marked the beginning of an anti-religious campaign that would last until 1964. Khrushchev wanted to prepare the Soviet Union for the transition from socialism to communism.⁴⁴ A key part of this transition was the removal of religion.⁴⁵ Russian churches began experiencing a slow, but steady, rise in government pressure beginning in the late 1950s.⁴⁶ This pressure developed into the anti-religious campaign of 1959-1964, during which time various methods of harassment and pressure were employed against believers, including public humiliation, pay reduction, refusal of higher education, and even occasionally the removal of parental rights.⁴⁷ Walter Sawatsky identifies several phases in the 1959-1964 anti-religious campaign.⁴⁸

The first phase, lasting from 1959-1961, focused on “Leninist legality.” In essence, the government sought to re-establish the ground that had been lost to the evangelicals during World War II by reverting to the literal letter of previous laws regarding religion in the Soviet Union.⁴⁹ Measures taken by the government included increased anti-religious propaganda, church closures, and the arrest of multiple believers.⁵⁰ An anti-religious poster from 1965 depicts some

⁴⁴ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 134.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States, 1953-1993* (1994; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 24-25.

⁴⁷ Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy,” 22.

⁴⁸ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 137-145.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 137-140.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

of the propaganda methods used. Entitled “Useless Labor,” the poster depicts several very religious looking people (a priest, a patriarch, and two monks) failing in their attempts to prop up a falling church building with huge books entitled “Chemistry,” “Physics,” “History,” and “Astronomy.”⁵¹ In the first half of 1961, the government closed 300 Baptist churches, leading many believers to worry that this would lead to the closure of all churches within three years.⁵² Although these fears did not come to pass, they were not overexaggerated. A *New York Times* article from December 29, 1961 highlights the desperate straits of Soviet churches, reporting 1,500 church closures among both Orthodox Churches and other groups in 1961.⁵³ Powell states that during the Khrushchev era, half of “Russian Orthodox, Baptists, Lutherans, and Catholics” faced church closures.⁵⁴

The second phase, which Sawatsky titles “Resistance and Toughened Legislation,” lasted from 1961-1962.⁵⁵ During this period, a variety of resistance movements arose, including various *samizdats* (or self-publications) and the rise of the *Initsiativniki*, an underground Evangelical church movement.⁵⁶ Indeed, these two movements were closely intertwined, as the *Initsiativniki*

⁵¹ K. Nevler, “Naprasnyĭ trud,” poster, 1965, Keston Digital Archives, <https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/naprasnyi-trud/1064109>.

⁵² Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 131.

⁵³ Harry Schwartz, “Church Closings in Soviet Tallied: 1,500 Were Shut in Year, U.S. Visitors Were Told,” *New York Times*, December 29, 1961, 4.

⁵⁴ David E. Powell, *Antireligious Propaganda in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975), 19.

⁵⁵ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 140-142.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

made increased use of *samizdat* to communicate with each other and organize themselves.⁵⁷ At the same time, the government enacted increased pressure against religious organizations. Perhaps one of the clearest pieces of legislation issued during this time was a March 1961 Instruction which “reiterated and expanded on the list of activities prohibited to religious communities from the 1929 Law on Religious Associations.”⁵⁸ The Instruction made registration more difficult for churches, as well as strengthening the position of the two councils of religion.⁵⁹ A year later, the RSFR legal code was adapted to include three new articles specifically focused on religious activity.⁶⁰

1963 marked the beginning of a third phase. This phase focused on a “differentiated policy” towards religious groups, with some religious groups, often registered congregations, allowed more freedom than others, usually nonregistered congregations.⁶¹ As mentioned above, the concept of church registration emerged in 1929 with the Law on Religious Associations.⁶² Once a congregation reached twenty people, it could apply for registration with the Soviet

⁵⁷ Walter Sawatsky, “Protestantism in the USSR,” in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (1992; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 325.

⁵⁸ Anderson, *Religion, State, and Politics*, 35.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶¹ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 142-143.

⁶² Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy,” 13-14.

government, allowing its activities a certain degree of legality.⁶³ However, registration also meant that a “list of all the members was maintained by the local state authorities.”⁶⁴

Understandably, the government strongly pushed for registration of churches, while certain churches, also understandably, resisted this pressure. Indeed, Walters suggests that the differentiated policy of 1963 policy may have been used to place pressure on unregistered churches to encourage them to “observe the same conditions as those already agreed to by ‘official’ Baptist congregations.”⁶⁵ This strategy of ‘divide and conquer’ would continue even past Khrushchev’s time in office, with the official registered churches treated with much greater leniency than the unregistered churches.⁶⁶ For example, Anderson points out that “unregistered communities” often bore “the brunt of the attack on services.”⁶⁷

Sawatsky describes the fourth phase, taking place in 1964, as a time of reevaluation. During this period, government tactics focused more increasingly on atheistic education, while at the same time reversing some of the more aggressive attacks against believers.⁶⁸ As part of this new focus, the Institute of Scientific Atheism was established in early 1964 with the goal of controlling “all the atheistic indoctrinational activities of the institutions of higher education and the institutions connected with the various Ministries of Culture.”⁶⁹ Moreover, atheistic

⁶³ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 60-61.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁵ Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy,” 22.

⁶⁶ Sawatsky, “Protestantism in the USSR,” 326.

⁶⁷ Anderson, *Religion, State, and Politics*, 59.

⁶⁸ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 143-144.

⁶⁹ Durasoff, *The Russian Protestants*, 230.

education was not targeted solely at institutions of higher education. For example, an article from 1964 “singled out the need to eradicate the organised teaching of religion to children.”⁷⁰ The importance of atheistic education would be emphasized in the upcoming years; so much so, that Anderson suggests that it was the emphasis on “atheist work” during this period which would establish the foundation for religious policy in the years following Khrushchev.⁷¹

Despite these gross attacks against the rights of believers, historians struggle to find any major legislation regarding religion during this time. Indeed, Anderson points out that the 1959-1964 anti-religious campaign is marked by a lack of major religious legislation.⁷² New religious policy was “facilitated by decisions at Party Congresses, and put into effect through decrees, many of which remained secret, and oral instructions, leading to a whole gamut of selective discriminatory practices known as ‘*administrirovanie*’.”⁷³ Many of the decision-making processes appeared to take place in the shadows, working through various government channels to accomplish their goal. For example, during the brief 1954 anti-religious campaign, various entities, including the Ministry of Culture, state publishing houses, and education ministries, were encouraged to increase the amount of atheistic education and anti-religious propaganda.⁷⁴

State pressure had a significant impact on the daily lives of believers, affecting almost every area of their lives, from church services to birthday parties. Sometimes believers were

⁷⁰ Anderson, *Religion, State, and Politics*, 20.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷³ Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy,” 20.

⁷⁴ Anderson, *Religion, State, and Politics*, 30-31.

merely restricted from certain opportunities. For example, a believer shared in an interview how she was blocked from entering the university by an unfair grade on her high school graduation certificate.⁷⁵ At other times, Soviet pressure forced evangelicals to compromise their beliefs, such as with the doctrine of pacifism. In the 1920s, the Evangelical Christians and Baptists “passed resolutions, under official pressure, in favor of military service,” despite the fact that pacifism was deeply intertwined with the beliefs of many Russian evangelicals.⁷⁶

However, government persecution could also encourage believers to adapt to their surroundings in creative ways. For example, the greetings exchanged during the service were not only a way for believers to stay connected with those from other cities but also a clever way for traveling preachers to navigate laws restricting them from preaching outside of their churches.⁷⁷ A traveling preacher might give a greeting from Paul, continuing with a 20-minute sermon about what the Apostle Paul had said in his epistles. Similarly, evangelicals navigated restrictions on religious education and evangelism by integrating their faith into everyday activities. For example, a birthday party might function as a Sunday School, while marriages and funerals served as opportunities for evangelism.⁷⁸

Just as under other political leaders, Soviet evangelicals struggled to adapt and express their faith under Khrushchev. This balancing act was often difficult and divisive, as is especially evident in the rise of the *Initsiativniki*, one of the starkest examples of how state pressure can

⁷⁵ Eva Dyck, interview by Nadezhda Beliakova, Berlin, Germany, April 27, 2014, <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/protestantism/section/interview/?section=children&interview=AHI025883-1-35-1C>.

⁷⁶ Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), 371.

⁷⁷ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 69-70.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

affect believers. The *Initsiativniki* (or “initiatives”) movement began in 1960-1961, as a result of state pressure put on the existing evangelical church structure. During this time, the All-Union Council of Evangelical Baptist Churches (AUCECB) revised their church statutes to bring them “into line with the 1929 legislation on religion.”⁷⁹ They sent these revisions to the senior presbyters of the council, along with a “Letter of Instruction.”⁸⁰ These two documents soon became the heart of a conflict that would eventually lead to a split in the union and the creation of a separate union led by the *Initsiativniki*.⁸¹

What was it in these documents that made them so divisive? The letter spoke against “unhealthy missionary tendencies,” forbade the baptism of children under eighteen years old, and forbade church members from attending services outside of their own communities.⁸² Such phrases and commands understandably provoked many church members, but the AUCECB was not merely acting out of callousness or disdain towards long-held evangelical beliefs. Sawatsky points out that “AUCECB officials eventually admitted that they had been forced to issue the new statute.”⁸³ Placed in a difficult position between church and state, the leaders of the AUCECB were forced to make a very hard decision.

Their decision, in turn, sparked the *Initsiativniki* to break away from the union. However, the protest movement did not begin with a new union; it began with a letter. Responding to the

⁷⁹ Anderson, *Religion, State, and Politics*, 64.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ludmilla Alekseeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 202-203, ACLS Humanities Ebook.

⁸³ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 179.

church statute revisions and the “Letter of Instruction” sent out by the AUCECB, several members drafted and sent a response letter.⁸⁴ Not content with merely stating their dissatisfaction to the church leaders, they sent a letter to all of the evangelical churches, encouraging them to seek sanctification, as well as calling for a national congress of believers.⁸⁵ The following year, the *Initsiativniki* began moving towards the creation of a separate union by establishing an organizing committee (*Orgkomitet*) for that purpose.⁸⁶

Khrushchev’s Treatment of Other Dissident Groups

Before discussing any idea, it is important to first define that idea in order to escape any confusion or broadness in exploring the topic. The same is true of the term “dissident,” which can carry a variety of meanings. The online Cambridge Dictionary defines a dissident as “a person who publicly disagrees with and criticizes his or her government.”⁸⁷ Robert Hornsby uses a similar definition and states that “a dissenter ‘...does more than simply disagree and think differently; he openly proclaims his dissent and demonstrates it in one way or another to his compatriots and his state.’”⁸⁸ Both of these definitions, when combined, provide the basic

⁸⁴ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 178.

⁸⁵ Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian-Baptists, “Pervoe Poslanie,” *Dokumenty Initsiativnoi Gruppy i Orgkomiteta po Sozybu Vsesoiuznogo S"ezda Tserkvi Evangel'skih Kristian-Baptistov, Soveta Tserkvei EHB (Avgust 1961 – Mai 1966)*, Keston Digital Archives, Baylor University, <https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/dokumenty-initsiativnoi-gruppy-i-orgkomiteta-po-sozyvu-vsesoiuznogo-sezda-tserkvi-evangelskikh-khristian-baptistov-soveta-tserkvei-ekhb-avgust-1961-g.-mai-1966-g./1056346?item=1056357>.

⁸⁶ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 141.

⁸⁷ *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. “dissident,” accessed September 4, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/dissident>

⁸⁸ Robert Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev’s Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 13.

definition that will be used in this paper to define a Soviet dissident as someone who not only disagreed with the Soviet government but took steps to express this disagreement, whether through sabotage, *samizdat*, or violent protests.

General History of Dissent in Russia

Although there have always been those who resisted the Russian government, this work will focus on the *intelligentsia* as one of the earliest forms of dissent in Russia. Shatz argues that “the present-day Soviet dissidents are in many ways the intelligentsia’s spiritual heirs.”⁸⁹ Indeed, Bergman describes how many modern Soviet dissidents looked back to the *intelligentsia* for inspiration and comfort.⁹⁰ Who were the intelligentsia? Shatz defines them as “the educated critics of the Russian political and social order,” originating due to the westernization measures of Peter the Great.⁹¹

Dissent is an anomaly in a communist state, and the Soviet Union is no different. Powell states matter-of-factly, “The Soviet government has, of course, always been intolerant of dissent.”⁹² This intolerance has expressed itself both in legislation and in outright brutality in various forms and to varying degrees of intensity from the beginning of the Soviet Union to modern Russia. For example, Powell cites a 1917 decree which “authorized the closing down of

⁸⁹ Marshall S. Shatz, *Soviet Dissent in Historical Perspective* (1981; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12.

⁹⁰ Jay Bergman, “Soviet Dissidents on the Russian Intelligentsia, 1956-1985: The Search for a Usable Past,” *The Russian Review* 51, no. 1 (January 1992): 22, <https://doi.org/10.2307/131244>.

⁹¹ Shatz, *Soviet Dissent in Historical Perspective*, 13-14.

⁹² David E. Powell, “Controlling Dissent in the Soviet Union,” *Government and Opposition* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 86.

opposition newspapers as an ‘emergency measure’.”⁹³ The following year brought the Soviet constitution, along with further restrictions on “freedom of speech, association and assembly to those who did not support the new order.”⁹⁴

At the same time that the new Soviet government was refusing dissent outside of the Communist Party, it was allowing it within the Communist party. Schapiro points out that although Lenin harshly resisted any opposition from other political parties, he allowed freedom of dissent within his own party, with party members allowed to criticize each other and even their leaders.⁹⁵ This is an interesting contradiction in the early history of the Soviet Union. However, it was not to last. Schapiro marks the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921 as the beginning of a ban on dissent.⁹⁶ This ban apparently arose due to leaders’ perceptions of the conflict within the party itself.⁹⁷

Under Stalin, dissent of any kind was harshly condemned and many were imprisoned and executed under the “Great Purge.” However, in examining the “Great Purge,” caution should be taken in attempting to view it as merely a removal of dissident elements from the Soviet population. Sarah Davies wisely cautions historians against viewing every “dissonant view”

⁹³ Powell, “Controlling Dissent in the Soviet Union,” 87.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Leonard Schapiro, “‘Putting the Lid on Leninism’: Opposition and Dissent in the Communist One-Party States,” in “The Dead End of the Monolithic Parties,” special issue, *Government and Opposition* 2, no. 2 (February 1967): 182-183.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 184-185.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 185-186.

expressed during the Stalinist period as an example of “unequivocal opposition.”⁹⁸ She points out that such a viewpoint merely places historians in the same category as the Soviet government, which would as easily condemn a man for an anti-Soviet joke as for true anti-Soviet behavior.⁹⁹

Treatment of Dissidents under Khrushchev

Hornsby argues that the dissent of the Khrushchev era should be viewed as more than simply a prelude to later dissident groups under Leonid Brezhnev.¹⁰⁰ The dissident events of the Khrushchev era contain “too many significant points of distinction for us to regard Khrushchev-era dissent as simply an embryonic form of the subsequent human-rights movement.”¹⁰¹ These movements were especially distinct in the diversity which they expressed, “both in the social origins of protesters and the behaviours they engaged in.”¹⁰²

A record of a conversation between two government officials in 1953 highlights the diversity of Khrushchev-era dissident actions. The General Consul of the USSR in Cluj explained in a conversation with the First Secretary of the Regional Party Committee of the Romanian Work Party a variety of “anti-Soviet actions.”¹⁰³ Interestingly, the perpetrators of these activities came from a variety of backgrounds, ranging from Catholics and Pentecostals to

⁹⁸ Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 185-186.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

¹⁰⁰ Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev's Soviet Union*, 3.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Record of Conversation of General Consul of the USSR in Cluj L. P. Akulov with First Secretary of the Regional Party Committee of the RWP of the Magyar Autonomous Region L. Chupo about Inter-Ethnic Problems, Attitude to the Catholic Church, and Other Issues, March 20, 1953, Wilson Center Digital Archive, trans. Svetlana Savranskaya, para. 7, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118467>.

a professor and a “worker of a forest farm.”¹⁰⁴ Their actions also expressed a variety of protest methods, from calls for pacifism to a refusal to wear red clothes anymore, “because Stalin’s time had passed, and it would be over with Communism very soon.”¹⁰⁵ Finally, these dissidents were diverse in their reasons for protesting the existing government. In addition to reporting on religious dissidents, such as Catholics and Pentecostals, the First Secretary also included a list of three “nationalist groups” at a university in the area.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, nationalist movements played a large role in the dissent of this era. Ludmilla Alekseeva states that “national and religious” dissident movements were “the most widespread and active.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, she identifies the first protest movement as being nationalistic in nature, specifically focusing on the movement in the 1950s spurred by the Crimean Tartars who had been removed from Crimea and were seeking to return there.¹⁰⁸ Similar nationalistic movement arose in Ukraine in the 1960s, with the goals of resisting “the Russification of the republic” and insisting on “equal rights and democratization for the Ukraine.”¹⁰⁹

However, the fact that these people resisted the Soviet government did not mean that they disagreed with the essential ideology behind the Soviet system. Alekseeva is quick to point out that many of these early “dissidents” were still essentially Marxists in nature: “Although they

¹⁰⁴ Record of Conversation, para. 4-10.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., para. 13.

¹⁰⁷ Alekseeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

rebelled against the existing system in spirit, they continued, nevertheless, to evaluate it in Marxist terms, to analyze it using Marxist methods, and to search for ways to change it within the framework of a Marxist system.”¹¹⁰ Similarly, Hornsby points out that protests were often sparked by specific people or incidents, not by the Soviet system itself.¹¹¹ However, this Marxist idealism was soon to change. Hornsby identifies a shift in dissident perspectives from the 1950s to the early 1960s, arguing that earlier dissidents tended to be more idealistic, while later ones “advocated major political change and even violent resistance.”¹¹²

The Khrushchev period saw a growth in the use of self-publication, or *samizdat*, as a vital tool of dissent. This tool has already been mentioned in connection with the *Initsiativniki*, but its role in other dissident movements was also important. *Samizdat* was, essentially, a form of self-publication that allowed dissidents to spread their ideas freely without government control through a system of diffusion, wherein each person created a copy of the original document and passed the copy on to others.¹¹³ Although poetry served as the initial impetus for *samizdat* in Russia, *samizdat* soon expanded to include “essays, short stories, and articles.”¹¹⁴ The journal *Syntax*, published in 1960, is “often considered the first *samizdat* journal.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Alekseeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 10-11.

¹¹¹ Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev's Soviet Union*, 11.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹³ Alekseeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 12.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

How did Khrushchev respond to these examples of dissent? Just as in other policy areas, Khrushchev's response to dissent employed both a continuation with the goals of the past and new methods. Indeed, it is Khrushchev's deviation from the past that has earned him a place in the memory of the American people. Khrushchev's loosening of regulations came to be known as a cultural "thaw," allowing a certain degree of freedom for Soviet artists and writers. Indeed, he personally supported the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.¹¹⁶ Speaking to the mechanics of this transition, Sakwa states, "Under Khrushchev the secret police apparatus was partially dismantled and the relaxation allowed the thaw to begin."¹¹⁷ Interestingly, Sakwa argues that Khrushchev even supported cultural opposition to the extent that it criticized the Stalinist regime and helped "strengthen his position against the conservatives."¹¹⁸ Perhaps Khrushchev hoped that by allowing a degree of freedom, he would be able to distance himself from the Stalinist past, gaining a positive reputation not only in the eyes of his own people but in the eyes of the West as well.

However, this "thaw" could be easily misinterpreted and broken for Khrushchev's own benefit. Indeed, Hornsby argues that the perception of the 1950s and the 1960s as a time of "thaw" is misleading, distracting from the thousands of dissidents jailed for their views.¹¹⁹ Over

¹¹⁶ Lee Congdon, *Solzhenitsyn: The Historical-Spiritual Destinies of Russia and the West* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2017), 46-47.

¹¹⁷ Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 202, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹¹⁹ Robert Hornsby, "The Outer Reaches of Liberalization: Combating Political Dissent in the Khrushchev Era," in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964*, eds. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic (New York: Routledge, 2011), 75, ProQuest Ebook Central.

the course of Khrushchev's time in office, the authorities gradually refined their methods of repression.¹²⁰ For example, Hornsby argues that during the 1950s, government response to dissidents was often marked by what he calls a "'firefighting' approach."¹²¹ Indeed, the imagery of a firefighter, hastily trying to put out random flames as they burst out of the ground, could help explain some of the randomness which is sometimes present when examining Soviet actions. However, this approach was gradually replaced by "a more sophisticated and less outwardly repressive approach" by the late 1950s.¹²² Soviet response to dissidents may have varied from the Stalinist period in form and, to some extent, in intensity, but the goals remained the same.¹²³

Khrushchev's "secret speech" denouncing Stalin serves as the first key moment in the story of his interaction with dissent. Indeed, multiple scholars agree that it was Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin that paved the way for greater freedom, allowing dissidents to feel that perhaps their words would not be as harshly judged as before. For example, Alekseeva states that, although there were examples of religious and nationalistic dissent in the pre-revolutionary period, these movements truly began after Stalin's death in 1953 and especially after the "secret speech."¹²⁴ Similarly, Hornsby maintains that Khrushchev's "secret speech" was the starting point for dissent among the intelligentsia, who saw in the speech a denunciation of "rule by

¹²⁰ Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev's Soviet Union*, 5-6.

¹²¹ Hornsby, "The Outer Reaches of Liberalization," 61.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 68.

¹²³ Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev's Soviet Union*, 5-6.

¹²⁴ Alekseeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 3-7.

terror” and “an assurance that there would be no return to full-blooded Stalinism.”¹²⁵ However, he interestingly points out that the effect of the “secret speech” on dissent can be overestimated, as the “secret speech” most directly influenced the intelligentsia rather than “other sections of the population.”¹²⁶ Whether the impact of the “secret speech” was large or small, it is certain that the speech *did* have an impact on the actions of dissidents.

If the period following the “secret speech” was marked by a lightening of restrictions on dissidents, the period following the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was likewise marked by an increased attack on freedom of expression. Khrushchev feared that the protests in Hungary would spark similar protests in other Eastern European countries and perhaps even in Russia.¹²⁷ This could not be allowed. On December 19, 1956, a secret letter was sent throughout the Communist Party with the purpose of suppressing “attacks by anti-Soviet enemy elements.”¹²⁸ Hornsby argues that it was the Hungarian Revolution that provided the “immediate impetus” for Khrushchev’s sudden suppression of dissent at this time.¹²⁹

The Soviet government used a variety of methods to discourage dissent, ranging from media attacks to imprisonment. Government-directed journals and newspapers would occasionally release stinging condemnations of certain actions or people with the goal of

¹²⁵ Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev’s Soviet Union*, 4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²⁷ Hornsby, “The Outer Reaches of Liberalization,” 64-65.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

intimidating them into silence.¹³⁰ For example, a *Washington Post* article from 1962 reports on the public disgracing of certain young poets in the publication *Komsomolskaya Pravda*.¹³¹

Co-workers, friends, and even KGB agents would join the cry against dissent, pressuring dissidents into silence. According to Hornsby, “Members of any given collective were increasingly expected to take an active interest in the ideological lives of their fellow members...”¹³² And, of course, “taking an interest” could take a variety of forms. If the pressure of co-workers and friends was not enough, the pressure of a “prophylactic chat” might be applied. A key component of the “prophylaxis” highlighted by Khrushchev in his speech at the 21st Congress, the “prophylactic chat” was essentially an uncomfortable conversation between an individual and a KGB agent, meant to dissuade the individual from dissident conversation and behavior.¹³³ During these “chats,” the agent “questioned his targets, manipulated or intimidated them into confession, and warned that if they committed another crime, they would be severely punished.”¹³⁴

If a dissident resisted even the “friendly” influences of those around him, he could be sentenced to imprisonment, or worse. In spite of de-Stalinization, the Khrushchev period saw a

¹³⁰ Hornsby, “The Outer Reaches of Liberalization,” 71.

¹³¹ Victor Zorza, “Moscow Bears Down on Dissident Young Poets,” *The Washington Post*, January 28, 1962, A20.

¹³² Hornsby, “The Outer Reaches of Liberalization,” 72.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

¹³⁴ Edward D. Cohn, “Coercion, Reeducation, and the Prophylactic Chat: *Profilaktika* and the KGB’s Struggle with Political Unrest in Lithuania, 1953-64,” *The Russian Review* 76, no. 2 (April 2017), 274. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/russ.12131>.

record number of arrests when compared to the rest of the “post-Secret Speech era.”¹³⁵ However, imprisonment was not the worst that could happen to a dissident. The 1950s and 1960s provide evidence of dissidents being confined to psychiatric wards, a fate which most dissidents viewed as worse than imprisonment, as their sentences could be of indefinite length.¹³⁶ Added to the frustration, they could often be denied the right to represent themselves in court.¹³⁷

However, Khrushchev’s own government soon reversed the anti-dissident campaign. In 1958, the Supreme Court presented a report in which they argued that the campaign had been poorly handled.¹³⁸ It had mis-labeled and over-sentenced Soviet citizens who “should not have been branded ‘anti-Soviet’.”¹³⁹ Of course, this presented a problem: How were officials to correctly identify ‘anti-Soviet’ behavior without a clear definition of what that meant? The Supreme Court soon followed their report by a resolution defining what ‘anti-Soviet’ behavior truly was, as well as a subsequent “Law on State Crimes.”¹⁴⁰

This subsequent “legalization” of the anti-dissident process was not to be the last change to face dissidents as they grappled to survive. In July 1962, a report was issued reviewing the government’s progress against dissent.¹⁴¹ It argued that, although progress had been made,

¹³⁵ Hornsby, “The Outer Reaches of Liberalization,” 66.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 74 and Rebecca Reich, *State of Madness: Psychiatry, Literature, and Dissent After Stalin* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2018), 60-61.

¹³⁷ Reich, *State of Madness*, 61.

¹³⁸ Hornsby, “The Outer Reaches of Liberalization,” 67.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 67-68.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 70.

additional steps were necessary.¹⁴² A newspaper article from 1963 reports on a speech by Khrushchev, in which he demanded “absolute adherence to the party line in ideological questions. No more deviations from Socialist realism will be tolerated in literature and the performing and fine arts.”¹⁴³ This new attack on dissidents spoke to the lie of the Khrushchev “thaw.”

Comparison

Both evangelicals and other dissidents paid a price for their determination to express their beliefs, but did Khrushchev respond to these two groups in the same way? Overall, the Soviet government during the Khrushchev period tended to adopt a differentiated approach in addressing dissident behavior. Hornsby suggests that the government could treat dissidents differently, based on the source of their complaints and how easily these complaints could be addressed.¹⁴⁴ For example, dissent and protests on the parts of workers generally grew out of “material discontent”; the government responded to this discontent by bettering living conditions.¹⁴⁵ By contrast, the dissent of the intelligentsia focused on political disagreements which could not as easily be resolved: “As such, their grievances were mostly ignored or suppressed...”¹⁴⁶ Moreover, Hornsby states that the Soviet government, “implicitly differentiated between religious, nationalist and political dissent, hardly ever clamping down on more than one

¹⁴² Hornsby, “The Outer Reaches of Liberalization,” 70.

¹⁴³ Seymour Topping, “Party’s Dictate Stuns Russians: Some View Ban on Dissent as Return to Stalin Era,” *New York Times*, March 12, 1963, 3.

¹⁴⁴ Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev’s Soviet Union*, 3-5.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

of the three at any given time and often employing distinct methods to deal with each of them.”¹⁴⁷

In summary, the timing and methods used by the Khrushchev government against evangelicals and other dissidents differed from each other.¹⁴⁸ The anti-religious campaign of 1959-1964 is steadier both in its intensity and its length than comparable examples of anti-dissident campaigns during the same period. For example, although there were variations in methods and, to some extent, in intensity, the anti-religious campaign continued unabated for the period of 1959-1964. By contrast, the anti-dissident campaigns of the Khrushchev era seem to be marked by a greater sense of ebb and flow. These variations could very likely stem from the natures of religious and non-religious dissent. For example, Hornsby argues that “many acts of protest resulted from anger at very specific events or individuals rather than rejection of the Soviet system as a whole.”¹⁴⁹ Especially during the early ‘firefighting’ days of anti-dissident propaganda, the random nature of dissent would most likely result in a relatively random response to it.

Similarly, both the anti-religious and the anti-dissident campaigns contained elements apparently unique to both. For example, during the anti-religious campaigns, there were several rumors of parental rights being withdrawn from evangelical parents.¹⁵⁰ If the same method was used against dissidents, it did not provoke enough of a response to be mentioned in scholarly

¹⁴⁷ Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev’s Soviet Union*, 15.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵⁰ Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy,” 22.

works. Similarly, while confinement to psychiatric wards was a method used against non-religious dissidents, this method does not appear to have been mentioned in scholarly works describing the treatment of evangelicals.

However, historians should express caution in whole-heartedly accepting Hornsby's argument, as the anti-religious and anti-dissident campaigns do contain a great deal of similarities, especially in the methods used. For example, both campaigns employed media attacks, public humiliation, and imprisonment as persuasive tactics to silence dissent. Moreover, both campaigns expressed a certain degree of differentiation in how they treated subcategories of dissidents, such as the government's differentiated treatment of registered and unregistered congregations in the early 1960s.

Conclusion

This comparison of Khrushchev's treatment of evangelicals and other dissidents highlights that the idea of the Khrushchev "thaw" can be misleading, as it does not account for the complexities of this period of Soviet history. Khrushchev displayed a significant amount of inconsistency in his behaviors towards different dissident groups. The 1950s-1960s were a time of both thaw and hardening, freedom and persecution, often in varying degrees at varying times to varying groups. His policies towards dissidents often vacillated, influenced by world events, popular opinion, and political agendas, especially in the case of intellectual dissidents.

Moreover, implying that the entire period was a time of "thaw" risks missing not only the complexities of this era but also the stories of those living under it. Historians may choose to focus on Alexander Solzhenitsyn, allowed to release his bold critique of the Stalinist era, and ignore those dissidents who suffered due to their critique of the Khrushchev era or those

evangelicals who had been suffering, with little respite, from the very beginning of the Soviet Union. A more balanced view of the “thaw” will hopefully encourage historians to discover and share these new stories of lesser-known dissidents.

Finally, by simplifying the story of an entire decade into one word, historians risk engaging in poor scholarship. History is often messy, and a simple explanation can be very tempting. When an entire period is simplified into one word, this temptation becomes even stronger. Historians may inadvertently ignore certain facts because they do not fit into the narrative of a “thaw” and complicate the story being told. However, these facts are still a part of the Soviet story and should be highlighted.

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