UKRAINE

Series on Religion, Nationalism, and Intolerance

UKRAINE

The Legacy of Intolerance

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Working Group on Religion, Ideology, and Peace

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Foreword

The breathtaking changes that have occurred in Eastern Europe and, to a lesser extent, in the Soviet Union over the past two years have brought substantially greater political and economic freedom to these areas. But Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika have produced some unanticipated—and unfortunate—consequences as well. The removal of old restrictions that kept deep-seated religious and nationalist antagonisms in check has allowed those antagonisms to assert themselves vigorously.

Ukraine, for example, has recently been the locus of serious religious conflict. The present hostilities primarily involve three churches of the Eastern Byzantine tradition: the Ukrainian Catholic church (also called Greek-Catholic or Uniate), the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox church, and the Russian Orthodox church. The national churches—especially the Catholics and the Autocephalous Orthodox—were severely suppressed and their clergy persecuted beginning in the 1920s and 1930s. In particular, Catholic and Autocephalous churches and other religious buildings were confiscated and transferred to the Russian Orthodox as part of Stalin's policy of using the Russian Orthodox church as a means of "Russifying" areas like Ukraine. The Russian Orthodox church administered these buildings in close cooperation with the Soviet government until 1987 or so, when Gorbachev began to institute his reforms.

With the liberalization of the policy on religion, Catholics and Autocephalous Orthodox wanted their confiscated property back. However, the Russian Orthodox hierarchy were not inclined to comply. They have never been keen to recognize the legitimacy of the national churches and frequently have described them as nationalist political fronts rather than authentically religious bodies.

This conflict, focusing originally on the dispute over church property, has led to the recent "strife of the churches" in Ukraine. And now the national churches themselves are at odds with each other. Ukrainian Catholics and Autocephalous Orthodox are engaged in their own bitter and potentially violent disputes, sometimes involving the use of church property in western Ukraine. Some members of each side challenge the national loyalty of the other side.

For many reasons, then—including the historical character of religion in this area, the Marxist legacy, and the predilections of Russian Orthodoxy—religion and nationalism are inextricably intertwined. Beliefs about national independence for Ukraine are closely tied to deeply held convictions in favor of liberty of conscience and the right to practice religion free of Russian domination and interference by the Soviet central government. Freedom of religion is seen to depend on freedom of national identity. Whether such beliefs are, finally, "really" religious or "really" nationalist in character appears to be unanswerable.

Moreover, the conflict in Ukraine is fueled by irreconcilable accounts of historical grievances. Each party has its story to tell. Not only are the various stories of how things got to where they are different, at points, they are mutually incriminating. They justify one side and accuse the other. Disagreements over the historical accuracy of opposing accounts are deep and intense. The prospects for modifying some of these antagonistic accounts—these conflicting beliefs—are not altogether encouraging at present.

On the other hand, unless some common story, some inclusive and shared account of past and present, can be reconstructed out

of the diverse and mutually hostile interpretations that characterize the current struggle in Ukraine, the chances for lasting and just peace in that land are not strong.

There are, as a matter of fact, some promising developments. Both in the Soviet government and, perhaps more important, in the Ukrainian national movement that is increasingly attempting to take charge of Ukrainian destiny, efforts at constitutional revision to guarantee religious pluralism and liberty of conscience are already underway.

Indeed, on one level, the Ukrainian case presents a ringing endorsement of the cause of religious pluralism and liberty of belief. The seventy-year campaign of religious discrimination and persecution perpetrated by the Soviet government was, by all accounts, a complete failure. It is now widely and passionately affirmed throughout Ukraine that only a genuine system of religious pluralism and freedom of conscience has a chance of overcoming the legacy of intolerance and the tradition of violence bequeathed for so long to the Ukrainian people.

Certain fundamental alterations have been called for, some of which are beginning to take place. Change is already apparent in the behavior of both the Russian Orthodox church and the Soviet central government regarding the monopoly over religious life they have historically enjoyed, although the present situation is obviously fluid. Perhaps most important of all, at this point, further alterations are still required to reduce the antagonism between the national churches over who most authentically represents the new spirit of Ukrainian nationalism (as the information provided in the afterword makes particularly vivid).

Ukraine: The Legacy of Intolerance is the first report in a six-part study of belief and intolerance sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace. This study is a project of the Institute Working Group on Religion, Ideology, and Peace, which was established to consider (1) how religious and similar beliefs sometimes

contribute to conflict as well as (2) methods for managing such conflict and encouraging peaceful pluralism.

As the basis for the study, the working group will conduct six two-day conferences over a period of two years. The group has already taken up Ukraine, Sri Lanka, and Lebanon; in 1991 and 1992 it will consider Sudan and Nigeria (together), Tibet, and Israel. The cases have been chosen to exemplify different cultural and belief traditions, various geographical and political settings, and diverse types of intolerance. Some of the cases—particularly Sri Lanka, Lebanon, the Sudan, Nigeria, and Israel—are of special interest because at one time or another they have been committed to pluralistic arrangements. All the cases illustrate the ways in which the modern imperatives of nationalism set the context for much of the religious and ideological conflict currently taking place. By focusing on these important examples, the working group should be able to draw some useful conclusions about the causes of this kind of conflict as well as the prospects for peaceful resolution.

Samuel W. Lewis, President
United States Institute of Peace

About the Series

This six-part study of belief and intolerance considers how and why certain religious and similar beliefs create or contribute to hostility and conflict, as well as how and why they are frequently a cause of discrimination and persecution. In addition, it addresses the prospects and techniques for modifying and ameliorating conflicts that involve religious and similar loyalties and commitments. It asks how stable arrangements of mutual respect and forbearance come about. What are the resources, both inside and outside traditions of belief, that encourage "peaceful pluralism" and thereby prevent differences in basic outlook from leading to mistreatment, abuse, and violence?

Such an investigation is squarely within the mandate of the United States Institute of Peace. The Institute is an independent, nonpartisan government institution created and funded by Congress to strengthen the nation's capacity to promote the peaceful resolution of international conflict (or conflict with serious international implications). The Institute pursues its mandate by awarding grants, by appointing scholars and practitioners as fellows, by producing publications and educational programs, and by assembling working groups to share ideas and conduct research.

The study is the project of the Institute Working Group on Religion, Ideology, and Peace. By directing the attention of twenty or so experts to the subject of belief and intolerance, we expect to draw some useful conclusions regarding one aspect, at least, of the causes of serious conflict and the means of resolving it.

The context for this reflection will be six two-day conferences spread over a period of roughly two years. Each conference is devoted to an area of the world where serious intercommunal tension or conflict exists and where intolerance based on religion or belief appears to be a significant part of the difficulty. The working group has already taken up Ukraine (June 1990), Sri Lanka (September 1990), and Lebanon (November 1990). In 1991 it will consider the Sudan and Nigeria (in combination), Tibet, and Israel. Reports on each of these conferences, written by the director of the working group, David Little, will follow in due course.

The inspiration for the study is the momentous set of concerns enunciated in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 1981. In view of the fact, states the preamble, "that the disregard and infringement of human rights and fundamental freedoms of thought, conscience, religion or whatever belief, have brought. . .wars and great suffering to mankind," the General Assembly declares itself to be "convinced that freedom of religion and belief should. . .contribute to the attainment of the goals of world peace, social justice and friendship among peoples. . . ."

Widespread violation of religious liberty and freedom of conscience make such a study urgent. According to current information compiled by the UN special rapporteur on intolerance and discrimination, "infringement of the rights defined in the Declaration against Intolerance seem to persist in most regions of the world. . . . They concern all the provisions of the Declaration."[1]

> The Special Rapporteur is concerned with the persistence of alarming infringements of other human rights arising out of attacks on freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. Noteworthy among them is the growing number of extra-judicial killings that have allegedly taken place in the context of clashes between religious groups or between such groups and security forces. Resorting to violence or the threat of its use in dealing with problems or antagonisms of a religious nature is also a disturbing development which, if unchecked, might endanger international peace.[2]

> The most important factors hampering the implementation of the Declaration are: the existence of legal provisions that run counter to the spirit and letter of the Declaration; practices by governmental authorities, contradicting not only the principles embodied in international instruments but even provisions enshrined in domestic law which prohibit discrimination on religious grounds; the persistence of political, economic and cultural factors which result from complex historical processes and which are at the basis of current expressions of religious intolerance (p. 56).

In some instances, a state's constitution extends special privileges by conferring official status on one religious or ideological group. In others, special legislation favors one or more religions to the detriment of excluded groups, and in extreme examples, certain religions or denominations are declared to be unlawful and members are punished for belonging to those groups or practicing their tenets (p. 11).

Beyond legislative provisions, government practices and policies frequently violate the terms of the declaration by encouraging disparagement of specific groups by means of the state-controlled media, educational policy, or denying in practice any legal status or legal protection to the members of a religion not recognized officially. Governments sometimes tolerate and even encourage abuses perpetrated by one group against another, or directly interfere in the practices and activities of certain religious bodies (pp. 11–12).

Finally, political, economic, and cultural factors frequently breed distrust and bigotry.

> Norms, judgments, prejudices, superstitions, myths, and archetypes whereby we model our behavior in society and which are culturally transmitted from generation to generation, as well as anachronistic and unjust economic structures that result in regional majorities of human beings sunk into misery and ignorance, all foster the germination of dogmatism, intolerance, and discrimination, and with it persecution and armed aggression. These norms, judgments and prejudices, which give rise to deep feelings and to the transformation of unfocused emotions into sharp feelings that condition our ideas about equality among human beings, as well as tolerance and respect for the ideas and feelings of others, are a product of societal forces. This means that in order to eliminate discrimination and intolerance in all their forms there must necessarily be a change in attitude of the human being which will be a product of the needed social changes and psychic transformations of individuals.[3]

The declaration is clear that all forms of basic belief, and not just religious belief, are explicitly protected. People may not be punished or discriminated against, regardless of whether their basic beliefs are religious.[4]

However, the declaration is not altogether clear or consistent about the exact meaning of intolerance.[5] At one point, intolerance is synonymous, and used interchangeably, with discrimination (see Appendix, article 2.2). To discriminate, according to the declaration, is to impose a restriction or preference "based on religion or belief" that denies basic human rights and freedoms, such as freedom of expression, freedom of worship, equal access to public facilities, and so on. It is presumed, incidentally, that the declaration also prohibits persecution, or the direct infliction of severe injury or distress, as simply an extreme form of discrimination.

At another point, however, the declaration suggests that intolerance and discrimination are different things. The title itself speaks of "the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance *and* of Discrimina-

tion'' (emphasis added). What is more, states are obligated under the declaration to prohibit discrimination legislatively, but they are urged ''to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance'' (see Appendix, article 4.2), as though they were dealing with distinct phenomena.

Perhaps the proper interpretation is that, strictly speaking, intolerance refers to motives and attitudes, whereas discrimination refers to acts. Accordingly, ''intolerance describes the emotional, psychological, philosophical and religious attitudes that may prompt acts of discrimination. . . .''[6] This formulation raises the related question whether the outward expression of intolerant attitudes—such as taunting, insulting, or inflaming people because of belief—while not constituting actual discrimination as such, is still prohibited under the declaration insofar as it may be shown to incite discrimination. Such a proposition, of course, poses standard perplexities concerning the proper limits of free speech.[7]

Bearing the proposed distinction between intolerance and discrimination in mind, it will, in this study, nevertheless be convenient (and not altogether inconsistent with the declaration or with ordinary usage) to use the word *intolerance* occasionally in a less refined and more inclusive way to cover acts of discrimination (and persecution) as well as motives and attitudes that incite to such action. In that sense, *intolerance based on religion or belief* may at times refer to abusive practices as well as to the feelings and dispositions behind those practices.[8]

It is important to emphasize the specific and rather elaborate sense in which the word *intolerance* is used in the declaration to counteract the lingering suspicion that the very notions of tolerance and intolerance are outmoded and need to be replaced. The word *tolerance* recalls, it is said, arrangements in which a majority merely indulges certain unconventional beliefs as a matter of sufferance, not of right. On that basis, adherents are hardly given equal respect or treated without discrimination. According to this older notion, those unwilling to bear with such an indulgent system would be

called intolerant. But under contemporary conditions, the idea of intolerance appears to convey considerably more than that.[9]

However accurate this observation may be historically, the concept of intolerance as specified in the declaration prohibits all arrangements that rest on or produce attitudes or conditions of serious discrimination or the inferiorization of certain groups because of religion or belief. By implication, the idea of tolerance would exclude any such attitudes and conditions.

A central objective of the project, then, is to test carefully and thoughtfully the twofold proposition that intolerance, as described, contributes substantially to wars and great suffering and that its modification or elimination helps to promote justice, solidarity, and peace.

Approach

The comparative study of intolerance and belief, such as is described here, has not been taken up elsewhere. It represents, it is hoped, a distinctive complement to related work in regard to nation building, communal conflict, and human rights.

The study is not envisioned as a rigorous social-scientific exercise replete with quantified results aimed at verifying some comprehensive theory of intolerance. The subject matter is so complex and varies so from place to place that it appears at this stage to defy any such aspiration. A more exploratory, informal, and open-ended approach seems preferable.

Moreover, whatever explanatory account is finally adopted for why people believe as they do and what they make of their beliefs, there is no substitute for first determining carefully what those beliefs are and how believers themselves understand, defend, apply, and are disposed to alter their beliefs. Unless that job is done well, explanatory accounts will be deficient. In short, the study takes seriously the subjective meaning of belief as expressed by participants and informed observers of the areas to be examined.

It should also be said that—for working purposes, at least—a *belief* shall be understood as a state of mind disposed to regard a proposition or set of propositions as true. *Belief that* something is true seems to be a necessary condition for holding a belief, however expanded the idea may become when people talk, as they often do in discussions of religious and ideological matters, of *believing in* someone or something. The kind of special trust, confidence, or commitment usually associated with basic or fundamental beliefs of a religious or related sort seems to presuppose that those beliefs are taken to be true in the first place.[10]

This emphasis on belief does not mean that the investigation is indifferent to material factors, such as the motive to protect or achieve sheer economic or political advantage for one's group. These factors are sometimes understood to be external to the core doctrines of the respective belief traditions and to condition in various ways the connections between belief and intolerance. Part of the task of the study will be to detect and trace those connections, at least informally and suggestively, insofar as they exist.

Such a task is, of course, notoriously complicated, because basic religious and other beliefs so readily become entangled with questions of ethnic, economic, and national identity and competition. On the one hand, religious or other basic beliefs are occasionally manipulated in the service of political or economic interests. Machiavelli's famous advice to princes comes to mind:

> It is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, sincere, religious, and also to be so; but you must have the mind so disposed that when it is needful to be otherwise you may be able to change to the opposite qualities. . . . A prince must take great care that nothing goes out his mouth which is not full of the above. . .qualities, and, to see and hear him, he should seem to be all mercy, faith, integrity, humanity, and religion. . . . [N]othing is more necessary than to seem to have this last quality. . . . Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are. . . . A certain prince. . . never does anything but preach peace and good faith,

> but he is really a great enemy to both, and either of them, had he observed them, would have lost him state or reputation on many occasions.[11]

On the other hand, religion or similar beliefs typically play an active and prominent part in defining group identity and in picking out and legitimating particular ethnic and national objectives. For example, political and economic competition among groups is frequently couched in religious terms, and attitudes toward members of other groups and ways of treating them are themselves understood religiously.

Max Weber reminds us of "the need of social strata, privileged through existing political, social, and economic orders, to have their social and economic positions 'legitimized.'" Groups "wish to see their positions transformed from purely factual power relations into a cosmos of acquired rights, and to know that [those rights] are thus sanctified."[12] The fact that human beings seem compelled to evaluate given political and economic arrangements in reference to sacred or cosmic standards suggests that religious and related beliefs play a special role in human experience and are more than simply the function of some prior material or external condition.

If religion and like beliefs were but the function of something else, it remains to be explained why conflicts over political legitimacy so readily and so recurringly get expressed in religious and similarly ultimate categories, and why those categories continue to have such wide and vital appeal. Why, exactly, does the struggle for dominance in so many places—in the Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Ukraine, Israel—have such a conspicuous and enduring religious dimension?

These considerations support the importance of attending explicitly to religious and similar beliefs in a study of intolerance while not losing sight of whatever conditioning circumstances are found to be relevant. This sort of orientation seems important in respect

to understanding not just the sources of intolerance, but also the means for modifying or eliminating them.

One way of refining this kind of investigation is to develop a typology of possible relations between belief and intolerance that accommodates and helps to clarify the complexity of subject matter that has already been alluded to. The following is a preliminary attempt.

The general distinction between belief as a *target of* intolerance and belief as a *warrant for* intolerance is suggested by what have been called the twin principles of the UN Declaration against Intolerance: the principle of "the freedom to manifest religion or belief, stated in Article 1," and the principle of "the freedom from discrimination based on religion or belief, set forth in Article 2."[13]

The first principle is designed to protect people from becoming targets of intolerance—that is from being disadvantaged, confined, or injured for holding and expressing certain beliefs and for performing certain practices. While the way beliefs and practices are perceived varies according to circumstance, three general categories of belief as a target of intolerance may be enumerated: the unorthodox, the politicized, and the seditious.

The first category, *unorthodox belief,* refers to a religious or ideological belief perceived as intolerable from the point of view of the orthodox belief system. The second category, *politicized belief,* refers to a religious or ideological belief perceived as threatening the existing polity simply by virtue of recommending an alternative government structure or character. *Seditious belief,* finally, refers to a religious or ideological belief perceived as constituting incitement to active rebellion against an existing government.[14]

The second principle of the UN Declaration against Intolerance is designed to prevent people from using religion as a warrant for perpetrating acts of intolerance—that is, disadvantaging, confining, or injuring others in the name of a certain religion or belief. Belief as a warrant for intolerance refers to a belief held by a dominant group that is taken to entitle that group to act intolerantly toward others.

Primary Concerns of the Study

Sensitive to these categories and distinctions, this study has been conceived in light of three primary concerns:

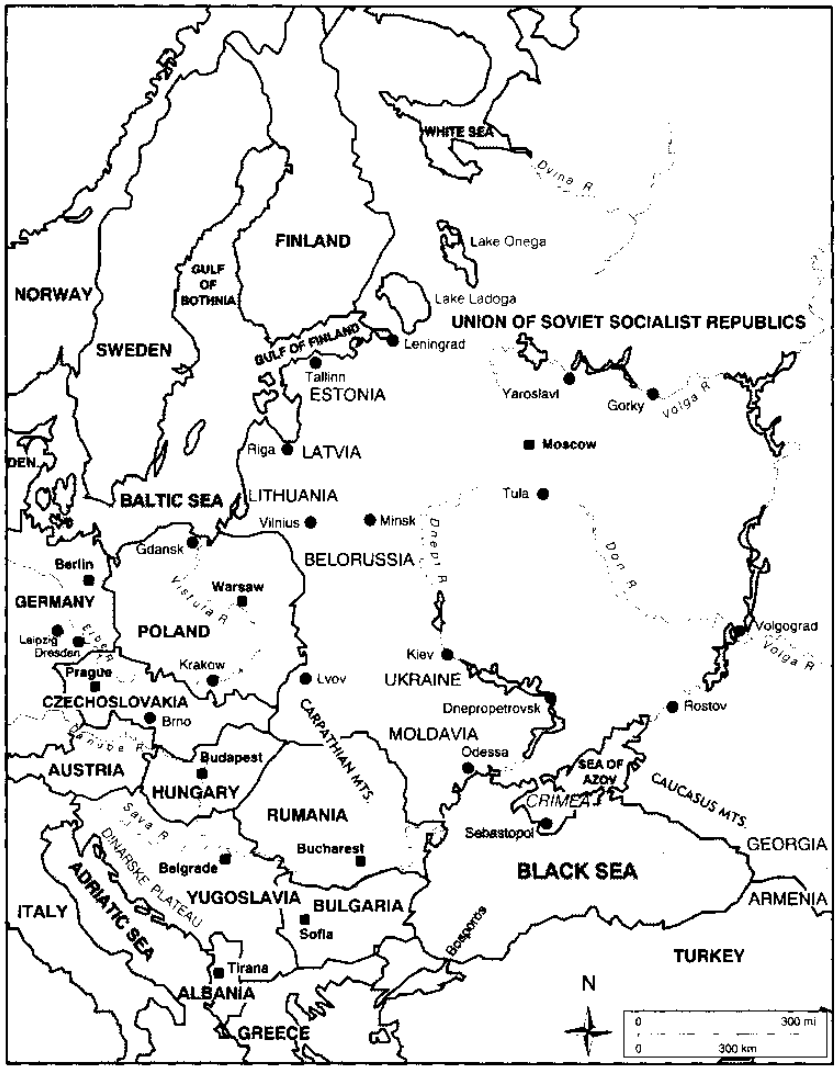
1. To identify the character and degree of intolerance in each respective setting: Is belief the target of discrimination or persecution or both? What sort of belief is targeted (unorthodox, politicized, seditious)? What form does discrimination or persecution take? Is belief a warrant for discrimination or persecution?

2. To identify and analyze the justifications (religious or nonreligious) for intolerant treatment, as well as the responses of those subject to such treatment. (Here the various connections among belief and political legitimacy, ethnic identity, and national identity would be relevant.)

3. To determine the degree to which existing beliefs (and their justifications) may be treated more tolerantly if they are the target of intolerance and may become more tolerant or "pluralistic" if they are a warrant for intolerance.

Ukraine

Eastern Europe



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