

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HELSINKI ACCORDS**

# **CSCE To Examine Repression Against Evangelicals in Former Soviet Union**

**February 1994**

**Briefing of the  
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe  
Washington, DC**

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# **BRIEFING ON REPRESSION AGAINST EVANGELICALS IN FORMER SOVIET UNION**

**Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

**Wednesday, February 16, 1994**

**Washington, DC.**

The Commission met in room 2226 of the Rayburn House Office Building, South Capital Street and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC, at 10 a.m., Hon. Christopher H. Smith, Chair, presiding.

Present: Hon. Christopher H. Smith.

Also present: Lauren Homer, Boris Perchatkin, and Edward Zawistowski.

Mr. Smith. Thank you.

First of all, I want to welcome all of you to this briefing. My name is Congressman Chris Smith. I'm the ranking Republican on the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. On behalf of Congressman Steny Hoyer and Dennis DeConcini and other members of the Committee, welcome to this briefing.

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe briefing comes at a very important time. The Nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union so long under the domination of Communism, are experiencing new opportunities for democratic, social and economic reforms. However, they are at the same time experiencing renewed tensions based on nationality and religion. Many people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds who had cooperated in the dissident movements under the Communist regimes are now finding themselves separated and often in conflict. Although state sponsored atheism and religious repression has, apparently, ended in many ways, many religious minorities still find themselves at a tremendous disadvantage. Properties have not been returned, many religious activities are simply not tolerated, and there are even reports of violence directed toward religious minorities.

The rise of extreme nationalism in many of these countries may be one reason for this rise in religious intolerance. Quite often religious identification is paralleled with national identification; to be X is also to be Y. Religious minorities come to be viewed as different or foreign and become the targets of repression, discrimination and violence.

Legal reforms bogged down in political instability have often not provided the protections that religious minorities had hoped for. Last year, for example, the Russian Parliament was considering and moving very quickly on religious laws which would have restricted rather than liberated the activities of religious minorities and foreign mission-

aries. Many of the statutes were reminders of the Communist control over religious activity, others actually went beyond it. Even now there are still few legal reforms which adequately protect the free expression of religion in many countries.

Not every nation of Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union are experiencing these problems, nor are they particular to this region of the world. However, today we have an opportunity to focus our attention on some of the problems which continue to surface in these countries. As we look for ways to support them in their reform process, we must honestly and openly assess the current situation and encourage dialogue to enable them to continue on the path of reform and protect and promote human rights and religious liberty.

I am very pleased and very happy on behalf of the Helsinki Commission to welcome our guests who will share with us their knowledge and their experience. Mr. Boris Perchatkin was a political prisoner under the Soviet regime. He has been active in the fight for religious liberty and tolerance both under Communism and now during this time of reform and transition. He represents the Russian-American Institute for Adaptation, which monitors religious activities in Russia.

He is joined by Mr. Edward Zawistowski, also of the Russian-American Institute for Adaptation.

Ms. Lauren Homer is also here with us today, and is a Director of the Law and Liberty Trust which promotes legal reforms and religious liberty in the former Communist countries. Ms. Homer is well known both here and in the former Soviet Union for her work with religious believers and legislators who are developing laws to ensure religious liberty.

I want to thank all of our panelists in advance and, Boris, if you would be so kind as to begin and perhaps we can move from left to right on that.

**Mr. Zawistowski.** Mr. Perchatkin will begin in Russian with my translation and then I'll read one of his statements which we've translated into English.

**Mr. Perchatkin.** I have been involved in the issues of religious freedom in the Soviet Union for 15 years now. I was forced in 1988 to move to the United States. Given the fall of Communism, we all thought that the persecution for religious motives in the Soviet Union had ceased to exist, but it turns out that it was very far from the truth. We were all mistaken.

Especially in the last two years we have come to believe that the condition of religious believers in the republics of the former Soviet Union has become even worse, and our institute has been carrying out investigations in this area for about five months.

Personally, I have spent about two months in the former republics of the Soviet Union. I have conducted more than 200 interviews. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to conduct interviews with some people because they were already killed. If earlier they used to put us in prison, now they simply kill us. We have testimony of murders in the last two years of around 200. Every year they kill approximately on the average of a 100 people. In the last two months were murdered around 15.

We are presenting some facts of murders with the names of the people. These are simply facts that we have been able to verify personally several times over. Unfortunately, about this nothing is said in the United States and very little is said in Russia. Our organization is, unfortunately, very small and has limited abilities. Unfortunately, our biggest problem is access to the mass media.

Unfortunately, earlier there were very many organizations that took an active interest in the situation of religion in the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, now these organizations either don't exist any longer or they also think everything is going just fine there. I think that now Mr. Zawistowski will read our report on the condition of believers in the Soviet Union, that this is our personal investigation and evidence that we've collected in the last two months.

**Mr. Zawistowski.** In the course of the last 5 months the American-Russian Institute for Adaptation has been collecting information about the persecution of members of Protestant confessions for religious reasons. In order that the information be objective, all incidents have been confirmed on site, interviews being conducted with friends and relatives. Representatives of the Institute spent time in the former republics of the Soviet Union for more than two months conducting investigation on site. For further observation of the position of Pentecostals, Baptists, and Adventists an agency was opened in Moscow. There are correspondents for the collection of information in the Cossack region—Rostov-on-Don, in Moldova—in Kishinev, in the Ukraine—Vinnitsa, in Uzbekistan—Tashkent. We are planning on opening agencies also in Kiev in the near future. This work has been organized in the last two months. Why were we forced to do this?

In the course of 15 years I have been busy collecting information about the status of freedom of religion, for which I sat out two terms of confinement in prison. (These are Mr. Perchatkin's words.) I came to talk with thousands of people in order to uncover a few dozen incidents of the persecution of Christians for religious motives.

In two months of 1993, November and December, I came to hear some things as I had not heard in 15 years. I will introduce some statistics.

For the time period from 1974-1984, 330 people were convicted. Of them, there were 174 Baptists, 96 Pentecostals, 41 Catholics, 14 Adventists and 5 Lutherans. This averages 33 people a year.

The biggest percent of convictions falls in the period from 1980 to 1984. The Orthodox are not included in these figures because it's hard to separate them from political prisoners, they often overlap.

Why do I speak of the period after 1984? Because after 1984 the repression fell off sharply, and towards the end of 1989 was basically stopped. At that time the USSR was the Empire of Evil, and in the defense of persecuted Christians, very much was done by the West. A mass of organizations was created and they operated very actively. Every incident drew much notice.

In the last year many complaints were heard about the persecution of Christians for religious motives on the part of the Muslims, Cossacks, Nationalists and Orthodox fanatics, as a rule all former Communists. This forced us to conduct an investigation. The investigation convinced us that this work has to be carried out continuously, since although the Empire of Evil has collapsed right now, still the evil has not only remained but has taken on a still more ferocious character.

If earlier the most active of Christians were sent to prison, now they are robbed, tortured, crippled and killed. But in the pages of the Western press there was not a word about this.

The following is a list of martyrs, those killed for their faith. It covers only two years: Svetlyana Nevrova, 20 years old in L'vov, January 1994; Vladimir Lymoryov, 34 years old, Dushanbe, December, 1993; Sergey Lymoryov, 2 years old; Katerina Lymoryova,

4 years old; Inna Lymoryova, 6 years old; Anna Lymoryova, 9 years old; Elita Val'ts; 2 years old; Ol'ga Val'ts, her mother, we don't know her age; Klavdiya Vasilyevna, 60 years old; Vitaliy Ravkin, 50 years old, all Dushanbe, December 1993; Sergey Mikhaylov, 34 years old, Dushanbe, December, 1993, he was an Orthodox deacon; Oleg Shvets, 13 years old, Krasnodarsky Kray; Alexander Khoroshenko, Novokuznetsk, March, 1993, we don't his age; Larissa Detyura, 20 years old, Maykop, January, 1993; Leonid Nechetaylo, 14 years old, Kamensk Uralsky, December, 1992; Alexander Bool, unknown age, Tadzhikistan, November, 1992.

Mr. Perchatkin just corrected me on Larissa Detyura, it was January 1994, this year.

These are those cases which we have been able to document from eyewitness testimony coming from close friends and relatives of the victims. There is no doubt that these particular murders were committed for religious motives. There is no way of knowing how many others suffered the same fate, and yet there is no war going on. This kind of thing did not happen even under the Soviets. We have only been collecting this data for about five months, and notice the age of some of the victims.

The following people have been severely beaten for their faith in Jesus Christ: Vladimir Bukreyev, Stavropolsky Kray, end of 1993; Omurbek Batyrkanov, Tokmak, Kyrgyzstan, November, 1993, we talked to his family by telephone; Nina Kalinkina, Gudermes, Chechnya, September, 1993 she's crippled for life, she will never work again; Lyubov Afanasyeva, Chechnya, July, 1993; Vitaly Vorobyov, Grozny, Chechnya, May, 1993; Ulugbek Satybaldiyev Osh, Kyrgyzstan, April, 1993; Abdulatip Yusupzhanov, Osh, Kyrgyzstan, April, 1993, he again will never work again, he's been crippled for life; Ravshan, Osh, Kyrgyzstan, April 1993; Anastasia Astretskaya Tashkent, a 13 year old girl, severe concussion, April, 1993; Pyotr Ponomaryov, Gudermes, Chechnya, February, 1993; Alexey Franchuk, Vinnitsa, the Ukraine, September, 1992; Pyotr Afanasyev, Grozny, Chechnya, September, 1992; Vasily Gavrilov, Grozny, Chechnya, August, 1992; Tatyana Shelestyukova, Kyrgyzstan, June, 1992; Yuri Bulgakov, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, the exact date we don't have, he was also crippled for life; three members of the Mayorov family, Kyrgyzstan, 1992.

Again, this is only in a period of two years.

Again, these are only cases of people who happened to have friends and relatives in America who could contact us about them. All information was verified by interviews with eyewitnesses or witnesses to their conditions after the beatings.

Other physical mistreatment also occurs. In the city of Maykop, in the Adygey Republic, a seven year old girl named Anna Zhirinkova was kidnapped in October of 1993. She has yet to be found.

In Kyrgyzstan, there was evidence that two women, Tanya Krey and Nadya Ulyanova, were deprived of medical attention while they were giving birth. The result was stillborn babies. In both of those cases, the fact that they needed immediate medical attention was known. They were left in a room in a hospital to die.

Not all abuse of believers is violent, personal harm. Many people witness to the destruction of property; homes, crops in particular. Many robberies occur. Pentecostals and Adventists are easy targets, because they're not allowed to defend themselves according to their pacifist religious beliefs. In those republics of the former Soviet Union where civil or even external wars are going on, pacifism becomes a major issue. In the Soviet

Union in peacetime a conscientious objector would be sentenced to jail for his beliefs, this happened all the time. In war conditions in the Caucasus, he can be shot.

Pentecostals, Adventists and Baptists all feel called upon to share their beliefs. In 1991 this was done openly almost everywhere. By the end of 1993, things looked very different. In many parts of the former Soviet Union, all forms of Evangelization are banned. This is nowhere official, but permits are simply not given, or the permit is given but the Cossacks or the Mullahs physically oppose Evangelization. In many places in Central Asia and the North Caucasus, the Protestant population has been denied the ability to buy land to build a church on. They have been denied the ability to rent in public places or to meet in public on the street. In effect, they have been driven back underground, meeting in private houses for worship. In Tbilisi the Baptist prayer house was simply burned down.

Geographically, the persecution of Christians presents some very big differences. In Central Asia, the local Muslims used to have great tolerance for the Russian Christians. In fact, many Russian Protestants came here during Soviet rule to get away from stricter control of the Russian Federation. In recent years, however, things have changed. The main issue was the conversion of Muslim young people to Christianity. Under traditional Muslim law, the penalty for conversion is death. In no republic of Central Asia is this official or legal, but some fanatics have tried to enforce it anyway. Persecution of Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tadzhik Christians soon spilled over into the persecution of ethnic Russians. In fact, there is a pattern of mistreatment of Russian Christians occurring right after the conversion of some locals.

The North Caucasus is also a place of active persecution of believers. In Chechnya, the perpetrators are mainly ethnic Chechens getting even for their deportation to Central Asia under Stalin. As Muslims, they have a particular hatred of Christians. Other Muslim populations also victimize the Protestant communities here, but persecution also comes from the Cossack movement.

The so-called Cossacks of today are only partly the descendants of the Tsarist Cossacks. Often they were former Communists who jumped on the Cossack bandwagon as a way of staying in power. Part of the Cossack ideology is that Cossacks defend Orthodoxy against all infidels. In recent months they have singled out Protestants as the infidel, working together with the Muslims. It must be said that only a handful of Orthodox priests are involved in this. The so-called Cossacks are, in large part, ignorant of the Orthodox faith and lifestyle. I can add that that's also true of the so-called Muslims who will try and kill an infidel but won't go to the mosque.

Nowhere in our material has there been an official link between the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church and persecution of Protestants, with one exception, and that exception is Georgia. Patriarch Elias II has openly called for the creation of a Georgian state in which only one religion is tolerated, Orthodoxy. He has even called for action against the Armenian Gregorian Church in Georgia, which under the Soviets was recognized as Orthodox. Results of this attitude, including the burning of a Baptist church in Tbilisi, the confiscation of Armenian Gregorian churches in the south of Georgia. Much of this activity was associated with the Zviadist ultranationalist movement, which is no longer in power, but the policies of the Patriarch are maintained.

In the Ukraine and in much of European Russia, the situation is much easier for Russian Protestants, but there are still problems. These "problems" can include even isolated beatings and murder, but are generally confined to administrative harassment fol-

lowing exactly the pattern of the Soviet era. This is especially true in those places, particularly along the Black Sea Coast, where the former Communist officials are still in place, with only a change of title.

This is the situation in much of the Ukraine and Moldavia, as well as Rostov and Krasnodar in Russia itself, and in small towns everywhere in the CIS. Still, things are better than in Central Asia. There, Christians welcome the rule of the former Communists by day, because at night there is no rule other than that of the bandits. The situation is critical in that the central authorities have no control at all over some areas, and only limited control in others. This is also true of the autonomous republics along the Caucasus chain, particularly Chechnya.

Our ability to collect information in the former Soviet Union and to make this information known is severely limited by two factors. First of all, we are a non-profit organization existing on the financial support of recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Many churches do take up collections for us and many people voluntarily send us offerings knowing the difficult situation of their relatives back home. But it is not enough to support the kind of work needed. We are able to maintain an agency in Moscow and a home office in Portland, Oregon, the city with the largest concentration of Russians in America, yet there is so much more that needs to be done. In fact, the necessity of diverting funds and attention to this work means that we must defer much of our other work, particularly in the adaptation of Russian immigrants to American life.

Our second major problem is a lack of direct access to the American media. The murder of a family in a remote village in a new republic most Americans have never heard of attracts little media attention, especially if there is no videotape. However, the nine Baptists and the one Orthodox deacon murdered last December 31st in Dushanbe died in the same city from which the American ambassador had to flee on a Soviet aircraft not so awfully long ago. Several of those beaten for their faith, and at least one murder victim, already had travel documents to immigrate to the United States. That was a girl who had documents in hand to come here and never made it.

The situation of Russians and other Protestants throughout the former Soviet Union is further complicated by the fact that just when things are getting worse, worse even than under the Soviets, just when a safe haven is most necessary, that haven is being taken away. Mass immigration of Russian speaking Protestants has been underway for six years now. At first, the criteria of persecution for religious beliefs was broad enough to include all those who needed to leave within a reasonable amount of time. Circumstances and changes in the law have turned this immigration for religious motives into a new category of immigration for family reunification.

In the last two years, it has become practically impossible for people to come to America from the former Soviet Union without having close relatives already here. This category, those having a parent, child or sibling in America, in itself represents a waiting list two years long at best, and that only if all other criteria are met. The believing Christians who do not happen to have close relatives here have no hope at all of immigration. The waiting list for those with relatives never runs out, and the turn of those without relatives simply never comes.

At present quotas and priorities, the INS has enough applicants at this time to make an 80 year long waiting list; that's if no new applicants were to be accepted from today. We have several cases of people who were on those waiting lists when they were murdered or raped or beaten for their faith. In particular, converts from Islam absolutely

must leave Central Asia and the Caucasus. They are in constant physical danger. Yet they are the least likely to have close relatives in America, and so have no hope of immigrating here. They are not Russians, so they have no possibility of immigrating to Russia either.

In fact, even ethnic Russians find it hard to immigrate to Russia. Russia simply cannot receive them because of lack of money. Also, as Protestants, they are often discriminated against in the granting of citizenship and material aid if they do get to Russia, as was the case with many refugees from Sukhumi in Georgia.

In Voronezh and in Moscow itself there are large refugee colonies of people of various ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs. Sometimes these are people fleeing from each other, as the Armenians and Azerbaidjanis from Baku. They live together in their refuges with little problems, but the hostility of the local population to these refugees is explosive.

These are Mr. Perchatkin's words again: I myself was in the hostels where some of these refugees live in Moscow. I watched as the militia checked the papers of an Armenian friend five times in the course of a single trip to the store to buy food. And he is a Pentecostal, a pacifist. He cannot go back to Armenia because he cannot serve in the army. This is a situation typical for many refugees.

The breakdown of law and order is particularly terrifying to those who have no other defense. The breakdown of the economy makes people more competitive and more hostile towards minorities, whether ethnic or religious. I was surprised in Krasnodar Territory to hear that many Protestants had voted for Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party. People explained that any order was better than the complete lawlessness they are now experiencing. Also, who can vote for the former Communists?

The position of Pentecostals is made more difficult by the fact that since 1928 this denomination has been completely outside the law in the Soviet Union. This meant, among other things, that Pentecostals were denied all access to even minimal education. It was considered the responsibility of the elementary school teacher to either convert the Pentecostal child to atheism or else completely discourage any desire for learning. The result is that there are very few Pentecostals who are functionally literate. They have great difficulty expressing themselves on paper or before the authorities, even the adjudicators of the American Embassy. Since they were intended for the lowest jobs only, they are unneeded in the new Russia, and also have trouble adapting to the new workplace in America.

It is hard for new immigrants to even conceive that they have the same abilities as other people, the same opportunities for education and training and for a decent job. In our work, it also means that eyewitness testimony is often incoherent when written. We therefore use interviews in Russian, often obtaining all the details we can and comparing different reports. These reports are then translated into English by our staff translator, that's me, and presented to the general public.

For the American adjudicator in Moscow this means that the Pentecostal applicant before them cannot make his case clearly and coherently, and often does not even respond to prompting. The results is often "parole," that is immigration only with the help of a sponsor. If a sponsor cannot be found, the person remains where he or she was.

Under new American rulings, many relatives of potential immigrants do not have enough money in the bank to sponsor their families. Finding sponsors for parolees is one of the most frustrating parts of our work, and having to give parole status to prospective refugees is one of the most frustrating parts of the work of the staff of the American

Embassy in Moscow, where all requests for immigration from the CIS are handled; that's on the authority of that staff.

One of the functions of our agency in Moscow is to help people whom we know to be truly believing Christians to pass this interview process and to help the adjudicators with difficult cases as necessary. We have contact with many Russian Protestant pastors and have an active knowledge of the Protestant subculture as it developed in the Ukraine and Russia. We are constantly willing to share this expertise with the Embassy.

Our findings from the work of the past five months leads us to only one conclusion. We urgently need to open a special quota for refugees for religious motives, irrespective of family ties in the West, for all those who urgently need to leave their current homeland in the CIS. This is particularly true of converts from Islam, of Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tadzhik and other nationalities, of Armenians from the Russian Federation and Georgia, of Protestants from the Cossack areas—there are Cossacks active in the Urals and in Siberia as well as in Rostov-on-Don, Stavropol.

The sole criteria for this must be the fear of physical persecution. It must also include those Russian Protestants who are in danger because of spill-over violence for having converted the local Muslim population.

It is also imperative that the United States grant direct aid to the resettlement of Russians into Russia itself. Russia is not now in any condition to take care of the vast number of ethnic Russians who need to return home or to the home of their parents and grandparents for fear of their physical safety. And it is not physically possible for America to take in all of these people. It will simply be much cheaper for America to help people move to Russia than to establish these same people over here. But for this it is absolutely necessary to establish American control over how American funds are spent. Otherwise, additional funds may go the way of much humanitarian aid to the CIS. If the United States does not act now in these two ways, we are very much afraid of what will happen.

It may be that in a few months or years we will be seeing new interest in Russia, with many new videotapes of the type we are seeing from Bosnia. Let us not forget that people were warning five years ago that there was an explosive situation there. It was not considered popular or reasonable to support the immigration of Slavic Muslims at that time, although there were isolated incidents of persecution all over the Balkans. Our staff translator, that's me, was even involved in trying to help just a few people emigrate from Kosovo and Bulgaria, to no avail. Now we have a full scale catastrophe to deal with. God forbid that we be too late in Central Asia as well.

In God's name and in hope, Boris Perchatkin, A.R.I.A. President.

**Mr. Smith.** Mr. Perchatkin and Mr. Zawistowski, thank you for that very sobering and comprehensive testimony. And before we go to questions, obviously we have a very distinguished witness to hear from, Ms. Homer, who will speak to us now, and then we'll go to questions.

**Ms. Homer.** Thank you, Congressman Smith and Mr. Perchatkin and Zawistowski, ladies and gentlemen. I greatly appreciate having the opportunity to be here this morning and have a chance to talk to you about the extremely volatile and very difficult situation effecting Christians throughout the former Soviet republics and in other former Communist countries.

As was indicated, I'm an attorney. I have been practicing for 16 years, and over the last four I have focused my attention on the issue of religious liberties and rule of law

in the former Soviet republics. I have primarily been active in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and more recently in Kazakhstan, but I have met with leaders and with people involved in these issues from other central Asian republics here in the United States.

It would be very difficult for me to add much of value to the excellent presentation of Mr. Perchatkin. I think he has given you facts which need to be made available to our government and to the American public in a very succinct, sobering and fear way.

It is very easy in these tumultuous and violent times to become caught up in labeling of different groups; labeling of Muslims, labeling of Christians and various Christian denominations as good or evil. This is a much greater problem of good or evil and I think it's very important that this Commission, which has as its name the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, be addressing these issues at this point in time because we are dealing with religious liberties issue, but more importantly we are dealing with a major, major world security issue which if is not attended to and is not carefully dealt with by our government and by other responsible governments will likely lead to a conflagration that will make the current situation in Yugoslavia pale by comparison.

During the past four years I have been representing approximately 20 American organizations that are involved in charitable and religious activities in Russia. I've also had the opportunity because of numerous trips to meet with government officials. I was involved in the new law on religion that was proposed this summer in Russia, and had the opportunity to review other laws.

We see two—well, perhaps three overall trends in this region. On the one hand we see, as Mr. Perchatkin so eloquently said, a complete breakdown of law and order, which began with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the elimination of its legal system. We're now in a post-Soviet period in which there are not laws in place that have been enacted and that are enforceable in most of these republics in any area; in the area of tax, in the area of immigration, in the area of borders. And just basic law and order. Criminality is rampant all over these republics.

At the same time there has been an attempt in virtually all of these countries to bring back repression of various religious minorities and bring back increased control of various groups, particularly those from outside, what are perceived as foreign religious organizations. And at the same time there have just been random acts of violence. But the fact that these acts of violence are random does not mean that they are not based on ethnic and religious motives anymore than the lynching of blacks in the United States prior to the passage of the Civil Rights laws was a function of mere lawlessness in these communities.

And in this vacuum we have a number of different possibilities. We have the possibility to assist these governments in developing new and better legal systems and legal enforcement mechanisms from their constitutions on down through every aspect of government.

We also have the opportunity to use political means, treaties and other pressures including economic to bring these communities back into compliance with international norms and agreements, which many of them are signatories to, including the Helsinki Accords.

And finally, we have the opportunity as a nation which has many resources to take steps to aid in the practical problems which face these nations, which include the issue of refugees and resettlement of refugees.

As I have recently spent time in both Kazakhstan in October and in Russia where I was an official monitor in the December 12th, 1994 elections, I see two forces moving toward one another at great velocity and with nothing, apparently, about to stop them from a major collision.

In the central Asian republics and the Caucasian republics you have people groups who have experienced extreme repression during the Soviet period. And we would very foolish, indeed, to discount the impact of this on the psyches and the outlook of the people groups in this region. They were, many of them, marched off to Siberia, people were killed all in the name of enforcing an overall atheistic Soviet state. And in the period since January of 1992 since independence has come there is a concomitant and a natural desire to bring back the traditions, the Muslim traditions and the religious traditions that were once possessed by these people. Unfortunately, as Mr. Perchatkin has very cogently pointed out, there is no experience with what it means to be a Muslim, there is no experience with what these traditions are and there is a tendency for the rawest and most hate-filled aspects of these religious beliefs to come in and fill this void. And so there are broadcasts from other nations that are encouraging the murder of—well, Christians and other ethnic groups, non-Muslim ethnic groups. There are large, large numbers of Russians living in these former republics. In fact, in Kazakhstan there was a majority of the population was Russian. As of January 1992 this is changing rapidly as people are fleeing in large numbers.

The non-Muslim ethnic groups are also rapidly losing their positions in government and in various economic and social organizations as “ethnic Muslims” are being put into these positions. There is just a general atmosphere of hostility and enormous fear in these areas, and it is in many cases well-founded as the evidence Mr. Perchatkin has presented here this morning indicates.

These events have not been lost on the people of Russia. And one of the observations that I made during the recent elections as I spoke with members of the Russian public, as well as leaders in various political parties, was that the reason, a primary reason for the success of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy was his recognition and speaking out on the issue of the persecution of the so-called near or broad Russians living in other former Soviet republics. This is not a nationalism issue, it is a real practical issue that there are tens of millions of people in these areas who are fearful, who have relatives or contacts back in Russia proper and who are communicating about what is going on. These topics are on the Moscow evening news on a virtually daily basis, and this is producing enormous concern and unrest and is, perhaps, the most powerful of the appeals of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and his political associates if you will.

He has stated publicly, as I'm sure most of you are aware, his desire to reinstitute the borders of the former Soviet Union, which would mean taking back former Soviet republics in Central Asia as well as in Eastern Europe, including the Baltics. One of his statements, which I understand was broadcast in Russia but was abruptly terminated in Kazakhstan, is that there is no such thing as Kazakhstan, only southern Siberia. And Mr. Zhirinovskiy was a native and grew up in Almaaty, the capital of Kazakhstan. These are fighting words and the fact that they were accepted by such a large percentage of the Russian population numerically and also if we look at it geographically, the vast majority of the territory of Russia voted for either Mr. Zhirinovskiy's party or for the Communist party during the recent election, this is truly frightening because you have a well spring of people in Russia who are thinking very seriously about trying to reestablish the borders of

the Soviet Union and at the same time you have an increasingly strong and vociferous set of opinions in Central Asia in which people want to remain independent, and even more so, repress the minorities in their midst.

If we look at this from a legal point of view, it is very difficult to find provisions that would specifically permit any of the forms of discrimination or persecution that are going on right now. Most of these nations have constitutions which provide for religious freedom and prohibit the persecution of people because of their religious beliefs. Most of them have laws on religion that also prohibit such persecution. And I believe that all of them are or must be under international law, principals, successors and interests to the international agreements of the Soviet Union, including the Helsinki accords and the various U.S. declarations and conventions on human rights and protection of minorities. So we are, again, not dealing with an absence of law, we are dealing with an absence of law enforcement.

And I believe that our country in its—let me also say that most of these states are at least purportedly secular states; they so state in their constitutions and they so state publicly. However, there are tilts and there is a sort of general feeling that in the Central Asian republics Islam or Muslim faith should be the prevailing faith, while in Russia and Ukraine and Belarus that Russian Orthodoxy should be the prevailing faith. Unfortunately, the people in these countries are not all cut of the same cloth. There has been a major intermingling of ethnic groups because of Stalin's settlement programs and for other historic reasons that will make it very difficult for any of these states to become purely populated by one particular religion or nationality without major bloodshed along the lines of what we've seen in Yugoslavia.

I think our country in its desire to retain a secular point of view has gone way too far in emphasizing the economic aspects of reform in the former Soviet republics. I personally was shocked to see our President speaking of more pain as necessary for Russia at this point in time, and more reform rather than dealing with the evident problems of economic chaos and misery that has been produced for the vast majority of people in Russia and outside Russia in the other former Soviet republics because, of course, the impact of the collapse of the Russian economy has been felt throughout the region. And we do ourselves a great disservice if we think that we are going to bring about stability and harmony in the region simply by sending in teams from the World Bank and other economically oriented organizations and insisting upon more U.S. investment if we don't deal with the very real issue of a lack of an adequate legal system, the lack of adequate law enforcement and, most of all, the real heartfelt religious and ethnic problems that exist there. I think this has to become a number one priority for our country. We need to understand it, we need to be involved in it, we need to help these governments.

As Boris indicated, there is not enough room in our country to accept 200 million refugees from the former Soviet Union. We're going to have to step in in a meaningful way and help with stability in the region. We can't put short term economic interests ahead of long term stability. And we must remember that the players in this particular drama are not nations which have to wait for shipments from other countries in order to be able to have anti-aircraft missiles and be able to defend themselves. They're nations which are fully armed with nuclear devices, many of which can't be accounted for and are, undoubtedly, in the hands of various factions and even terrorist groups. And the only answer, I think, for the former Soviet Union and for the world and, therefore, for our

I don't think we're making that as big a priority as we should, and I'm not aware of any major initiatives in this area and I think there need to be, and very quickly.

**Mr. Smith.** Does the Russian government have any kind of formal or ad hoc process of dialogue with these respective republics on the issue of religious freedom and/or nationalism in terms of so many ethnic Russians being repressed?

**Ms. Homer.** Well, they certainly have continuing discussions and dialogues on, you know, a whole range of issues. And I think that the nationalism issue has been brought up. I'm not familiar with anything that has been said, for example, in the case of the murder of the deacon of a Russian Orthodox church in Dushanbe, although it was widely reported. Perhaps Mr. Perchatkin is aware.

**Mr. Perchatkin.** I spoke about this with Mr. Barbulis and with many members of the Russian Parliament. These people are of the opinion that Mr. Yeltsin has gotten involved in political warfare and doesn't consider the needs of the Russians in this area. I mean, he's simply concerned right now about holding on to his own seat. The opinion of those people we have talked to is that if the matter doesn't concern Mr. Yeltsin's position, then it doesn't interest him.

I am convinced that one of the reasons Mr. Zhirinovskiy became so popular is because he was one of the first to raise the issue and to talk about it openly. He never said anything about how he was going to solve the problems, but he at least raised them and spoke about them. And I think this will now force the democrats, the Russian democrats, to at least think about doing something. They'll be forced to match the opposition's interest in the area of the Russian-language population of the other republics.

**Ms. Buwalda.** My name is Ann Buwalda, I'm the U.S. Director of Jubilee Campaign. My question would be directed towards the Caucasus and Asian republics. Are the leadership in those countries renamed Communist are they Muslim/Islamic, are they interested in dealing with the situation in their country of religious persecution? And finally, would they be willing to dialogue with the U.S. on that issue, and how would they respond?

**Ms. Homer.** It's impossible to characterize all these different governments at once. I mean, the Caucasus are nominally still under the control of the Russian Federation. The other central Asian republics, Tadzhikistan and Uzbekistan are in a circumstance where there is very little control by the government at all. Most of the former Soviet republics do have former Communists involved in their governments. It doesn't mean that they're not mindful of the problems that exist, and I think that they are looking for solutions.

My impression, and this also goes to Congressman Smith's question to me, is that, you know, you're dealing with governments which four years ago were persecuting anybody who evidenced religious beliefs. And to expect them now to become champions of religious freedom and actively become involved in it is a little naive, just as it's naive to expect them to have sophisticated taxation systems in economies where there were no independent actors and there was no need to collect taxes because everything belonged to the government. These are major psychological, analytical and legal steps forward. And I think that perhaps we have to do something new here and invent a way to have a dialogue and figure out how our government can weigh in what kinds of structures we can create.

I have certainly not had the impression in my meetings with leaders in the areas of regulation of religious organizations or experts in this area from Central Asian repub-

lics that there is a lack of desire to solve these problems. I think there's a great desire to solve them and in a real sense of hurt at being treated as demonic crazed murderers of Christians by some of the press from outside. So I think we do have some very meaningful opportunities, but I don't think any structures now exist.

**Mr. Zawistowski.** If I might enter a response to that. In Central Asia and in the North Caucasus the Muslim republics have three models they can follow, Turkey, Iran, Syria, basically. And all of them in Central Asia have opted officially for the Turkish model, that is to say a secular state in which all religions are officially recognized. But even Turkey has a hard time doing this because the major opposition are the Muslim brotherhoods, and similar organizations exist in Central Asia which are the prime threat to the stabilization of those governments. Because of that these governments are afraid to enforce the laws. That's one reason we have nonenforcement of legal situations.

The other issue is the problem in Chechnya and in a few other places in the Caucasus where it's hard to talk of a government, and these were people who were resettled to Central Asia and then resettled back to the North Caucasus. They were originally driven out of their homes in trucks, that had American stars on them because they were part of lend/lease. They are simply people who are getting even with the Russian population and the Pentecostals are that part of the Russian population that don't have guns. So we have a total breakdown there, there's nobody to talk to in some ways.

**Mr. Smith.** Let me just ask somewhat of a follow up to that. One of the ways that the persecutions of people, religious and just general human rights persecutions over the years were brought to the forefront and to the media, to governments, was through local monitors who took the Helsinki accords and then said, "We're going to seek an implementation of those accords in our respective countries." One of these groups was Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, I'm sure you're very familiar with how brave and how effective they were over the many years. In these countries, particularly the Central Asian countries, is there an understanding of the Helsinki final act of the Vienna concluding document as it relates to religion and some of the other documents that could serve as a way of internationalizing so that monitors could come forward and say, "Look, this is the problem and we're speaking out for our universally held rights?"

**Ms. Homer.** Well, let me just say there are still representatives and official monitors within Russia and there may be in some of these other republics. I think it's very difficult right now, given the overall breakdown, for them to have anybody to talk to. As Mr. Perchatkin was indicating, it's not as if you can go to the council on religious affairs or you can go to a particular spot in the government and attract attention to this problem. But I think that that would be something that would be excellent for this Commission to consider bringing back to the forefront.

**Mr. Smith.** Maybe from both perspectives, indigenous people who take the risk come forward and almost self-appoint as human rights monitors plus the deployment of human rights monitors, as well. And I'm not sure if that's actually happening or not.

**Mr. Perchatkin.** In Central Asia and particularly in Tadjikistan there are no groups that could have any influence on the government to defend human rights. At least our correspondents who work in Tadjikistan work there illegally. Basically in Central Asia right now our correspondents try to remember rather than write down. In Russia, of course, the situation is different, you can write down anything you want, you can take pictures of whatever you want. That really doesn't interest anybody, and work for human rights is possible, it's not threatened at all.

Really the only hope in Central Asia is to exert outside influence to ensure that human rights aren't just in words, but in words influencing an anarchy, an anarchic situation, but actually will exist in fact. And our basic interest is, of course, that these organizations reactivate themselves to work for the rights of human beings in this area and also governmental agencies, and this is really the only way out of the situation.

I think that in Central Asia basically the main interest in the United States is to receive from it the most money possible.

**Mr. Smith.** Would it be your suggestion that we link human rights progress to funding?

**Mr. Perchatkin.** Yes, I think this is the only way out for today, to link credits and human rights. And I think there has to be some kind of a commission that exists independently of the republics that would determine whether or not the human rights have been respected in the republics. Because what's interesting is that what's happening is the same thing that happened in the former Soviet Union. There are duty officers whose job is to sit there and say whatever is necessary. There are duty pastors and duty correspondents who basically sit there and tell the foreign correspondents whatever they want to hear. And in that relationship very little has changed.

**Mr. Smith.** If I could ask any other questions from the audience, please come to the microphone.

Does the slaughter of the Bosnian Muslims in the war in former Yugoslavia have any impact in terms of settling scores in some of the Central Asian countries where the Muslims have a domination role?

**Mr. Perchatkin.** That's hard for us to say simply because we can't talk to the murderers themselves to find out their motives. We've had a little bit of success in talking to people like Zhirinovskiy, but we haven't been able to contact the actual Muslim terrorists at present, although we've tried.

**Mr. Smith.** Are there any other questions? If not, I thank you so much for your testimony and it's very helpful for our Commission.

[Whereupon, the briefing was adjourned at 11:13 a.m.]