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Why did Tatiana Goricheva Return to and Believe in God: An Example of Religious Conversion Among Soviet Intelligentsia in the 60s and 70s

Айстракѝ: Циљ овог рада је да кроз интердисциплинарну анализу примарних извора — мемоара и интервјуа, изложи разлоге и почетни пут религиозног преобраћења Татјане Горичеве, модерног руског религиозног мислилаца, богослова и мисионара. Кроз очи ауторке жели се приказати улога жене лаика као мисионара у једном одређеном историјском, социјалном и културном миљеу.

Интересовање за егзистенцијализам довело је Горичеву у интелектуални сукоб са дијалектичким материјализмом и марксизмом. Због тога је током 1970их, трагајући за алтернативним рјешењима, Горичева као и други совјетски/руски дисиденти прошла дуг пут до сусрета са Православљем у којем је открила међусобни личносни однос и вриједност људског постојања. У жељи да своје доживљено искуство свједочи другима, Горичева је основала мањи хришћанско-философски семинар. Сам семинар представља Православно виђење мисионарског рада, који се базира на личном и слободном преобраћењу, непрестаном преумљењу и духовном узрастању онога који свједочи и онога коме се свједочи православни образ живота.

Introduction

Tatiana Goricheva, one of today's well known Russian female Orthodox theologians, religious philosophers, and religious writers is the author of more than fifteen works, with many of them were published in several languages.¹ Throughout her life, Goricheva lived under the weight of the Iron Curtain driven by the Soviet interpretation of Marxism and dialectical materialism, atheism and collectivism. After her departure from the Soviet Union in 1980, she next faced the challenges of Western society, alternatively based on individualism, secularism, and capitalism. Yet regardless of the context, after her conversion in the Orthodox Church, Goricheva faithfully continued to model her views on Orthodox theological grounds and on her personal religious experience in the Russian Orthodox Church. Today she lives, works and witnesses her faith between both contexts, between East (Sankt-Petersburg, Russia) and West (Paris, France).

In 1980 when the Soviet intelligence policy known as Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (KGB) discovered her underground religious and feminist activism, Goricheva could choose one of two options: to go to prison or to emigrate. Being obe-

¹ In addition to one of the primary source for this paper, her memoirs named *Talking About God is Dangerous*, 1987 Tatiana Goricheva wrote or edited the following books: *Взыскание Погибших*, 1982, *Nous, convertis d'Union Soviétique*, Paris: Nouvelle cite, 1983, *Сила Христианского Безумия*, 1984, *Дочери Иова*, 1986, *Сила в Бессилии*, 1987, *Дневник Путешествий*, 1989, *Cry of the Spirit, Witnesses to Faith in the Soviet Union*, Nework: Crossrad, 1989 (trnsl. From Russian original *Надежда*, written in 1979), *Нечаянна Радость*, 1990, *Человек Непрестанно Ищет Счастья*, 1990, *Православие и Постмодернизм*, 1991, *Христианство и Современный Мир*, 1996, *Об Обновленчестве, Экуменизме и Политграмотности Верующих*, 1997, *Христианство и Экология*, 1997, *Письма о Любви*, 1998.

dient to the wishes of her spiritual father, she left the Soviet Union and continued with what she began in Leningrad — the witness her faith through her life, words, deeds and especially writings.²

Goricheva's personal story breaks several of the stereotypes and prejudices concerning the role of women in the Eastern Christian Church and in Eastern-European societies. First, Goricheva was a part of the philosophical circle and a representative of the new Russian (Soviet) intelligentsia, but she became as a young female an open-minded thinker who was looking for different perspectives, views and options rather than the Soviet ideological positions provided which failed to satisfy her. Second, the fact that she came to the Church from this context shows precisely that stereotypically old uneducated and irrelevant „ladies” were not the only religious witnesses of the Orthodox Christian faith and Russian piety. Third, Goricheva, as a young convert into the Church and a woman arose to become one of the important and influential theologians and missionaries in the Eastern Christian Church. One of the criticisms directed towards the Eastern Christian Church and the Orthodox Christian tradition is the marginalization of the role of women within the Church. However, Goricheva by her personal example gives an entirely different perspective concerning this issue. Fourth, Goricheva also portrays the dynamic role of lay members in the missionary work of the Eastern Christian Church. As one of leaders of an underground religious movement in Leningrad with particular interests in the Christian Orthodox tradition, and latter, as an Orthodox theologian and writer in West, Goricheva introduced Orthodoxy to a countless number of people.

Thus, Goricheva herself exhibits an extraordinary biography with wide and rich life experience and knowledge, who was able to think differently, act bravely, and defend her positions incessantly regardless of the unfavorable socio-political, cultural, and historical contexts that surrounded her.

The goal of this paper is not to present her theological positions, teachings, philosophical views or her missionary methodology, but to provide an answer to what persuaded this relevant female Orthodox Christian scholar to become a believer. Dissatisfaction with the meaning of life as presented through the Soviet interpretation of dialectic materialism and Marxism-Leninism was the starting point for Goricheva's journey toward the Eastern Christianity and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Socio-Political Context in the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s

Before the observation and analysis of Goricheva's reasons for conversion into the Orthodox Church it is necessary to present some relevant aspects of the social and political life of the Soviet Union during the time of Goricheva's journey into the Orthodox Church. These aspects are directly related to the governmental policy toward religion and particularly toward the Russian Orthodox Church as the biggest religious institution in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet government, in propagating atheism from its beginning in 1917, used a variety of methodology in order to decrease and control any religious movement and action that could be seen as opposed to the ideas of communism and Soviet ideology. Ironically, this governmental policy of the Soviet Union officially embraced all kinds of religious beliefs and traditions. The Russian Orthodox Church, as the biggest religious institution in the Soviet Union, was especially attacked until the beginning of War World Two. Between 1917 and 1941, large numbers of churches, monasteries, and theo-

² Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 87–88.

logical schools were closed and destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of believers and clergy were imprisoned and executed³.

Both during and after the war these oppressions decreased to some extent, however, they came into full force again as of 1953. The new political course introduced by Nikita Khrushchev, propagating some liberal reforms and anti-Stalinist policy, did not change its position towards religion. Moreover, the Soviet Communist Party, in order to increase the implementation of communist ideology, introduced strong anti-religious propaganda and from 1959 to 1963 forced the physical destruction of churches, monasteries and the closing of theological schools that had reopened after the war.⁴ Since 1953, there were several statements issued by the Soviet Government, which essentially called for the destruction of any religious viewpoint. For example, at the Twentieth Congress of Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, the delegates voted in favor of a strong anti-religious policy, since, according to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, religion could not survive in proletarian modernity.⁵ One of the new acts of oppression carried against the Russian Orthodox Church by the Soviet government was the introduction and forced implementation of the new ecclesiastical constitution of the Russian Orthodox Church issued on July 18, 1961. According to this document, parish priests lost any administrative and financial control of their parishes, deferring the power to parish board members who received full control over any activity in a parish. Mostly, those members of a parish board were no longer chosen by a parish priest, but were elected by local authorities. The following year, in 1962, the Soviet government proposed a law that would directly control the servicing of all religious rituals (including baptisms, marriages, burial services, etc.).⁶ Then, in the 1970s, state-endorsed antireligious activity was by some measure in decline, but it did not make any special difference to the difficulties that the Russian Orthodox Church had been facing. The Council for Religious Affairs, introduced in 1945 and reformed in 1961, already controlled religious activity at many levels, closely followed any actions taken by the clergy, and even spied on both official and underground religious institutions.

As was mentioned above, according to the Soviet constitutional laws, the Soviet Union was proclaimed a society with a strong atheistic disposition and to some level, allowed the „toleration” of traditional religious institutions, such as the Russian Orthodox Church. Yet any Church missionary activity outside of the liturgical (Eucharistic) celebration was seen as illegal, anti-governmental, and thus was forbidden and punishable. However, there were people who in becoming active Orthodox Christians used any possible way to witness their religious beliefs, to spread new views and perspectives on life,

³ For the additional information concerning this particular historical period of the Church and its relationship with the state (1917–1941), see: John Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State 1917–1950* (Boston: 1953), William Fletcher, *The Russian Church Underground 1917–1970* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1971), Dimitry Pospelovsky, *A History of Soviet Atheism in Theory and Practice, and the Believer*, 3 vols. (London, UK: Macmillan, NY: St. Martins 1987–1988), Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Orthodox Church under the Soviet Regime 1917–1982* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), Richard Marshall H. Jr, *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union 1917–1967* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1971), Vladislav Cipin, *Русская Православная Церковь 1925–1938*, (Moscow, Russia: 1999).

⁴ For more data concerning the closing of the theological schools in the 1950s see: M. V. Shkarovsky, *Русская Православная Церковь при Сталине и Хрущеве* (Moscow, Russia: 1999), 374.

⁵ Olga Tcherounaia, „The Hidden Sphere of Religious Searches in the Soviet Union: Independent Religious Communities in Leningrad From the 1960s to 1970s.” *Sociology of Religion* 64, no. 3 (2003): 377–387. A. V. Beliaeva, *Государство, Общество, Церковь XX Век*, (Iaroslav', Russia: Iaroslavskii Goudarstvennii Universitet imeni P. G. Demidova, 1999), 66–96, D. V. Konstantinov, *Гонимая Церковь, Руская Православная Церковь в СССР*, (New York: All-Slavic Publishing House, 1967), 234–318, D. V. Konstantinov, *Религиозное Движение Сопротивления в СССР*, (London, ON, Canada: Sbonr, 1967), 14–36.

⁶ A. V. Beliaeva, *Государство, Общество, Церковь XX Век*, (Iaroslav', Russia: Iaroslavskii Goudarstvennii Universitet imeni P. G. Demidova, 1999), 66–96.

and the human being, and reinforce the mutual relationships among people based on these religious beliefs. The new Orthodox converts spoke within small circles of Soviet citizens, regardless of the consequences that they had to pay for these activities. One of them was Tatiana Goricheva.

Why Tatiana Goricheva

Not many women from this period of Soviet history left written works concerning their own understanding and comprehension of faith, religious experience, and challenges that they were facing, as Soviet society labeled them all negative elements of the Soviet social program. Tatiana Goricheva is a rare example.

As was mentioned in the introduction, Tatiana Goricheva was a person who through her own words and deeds broke many stereotypes and prejudices about the place and role of women in society and concerning the Orthodox Church. At the same time she, through her own memoirs, shared her personal observations, comments, and ideas concerning various challenges and temptations that she as a young educated Soviet girl was facing on her journey that led her into the Orthodox Church. Goricheva, as an Orthodox theologian and missionary uses her own example of conversion to present the importance of freedom and right to choose and practically implement one's own way of life.

Tatiana Goricheva belonged to the second generation of Soviet citizens who were born, educated and had lived in the Soviet Union. She was born in 1947 in Leningrad into a purely Communist and atheistic family. The pressures she found in her family are exemplified by a passage in her memoirs where she describes the moment of her arrest when KGB agents came to the Goricheva's apartment:

„When my parents understood what was going on they rushed up to me. Why had I not told them? ‘Go, if he is asking you nicely; otherwise you will shame us in front of all the neighbors. They already take you for a nun...’ That was my mother getting worked up. When I went out of the house every day for the poor dear hid my icons so that the neighbors should not see them. She sighs and can not sleep when I pray in the bathroom in the evening, which is where I hide away from my parents.... My mother, who was ashamed of me, whispered to him: ‘She speaks three languages; she has read philosophy and has been singled out as having great promise. And she has not joined the party, and she has done something else. Just imagine, she is working as a lift attendant’... Here my parents’ hysteria reached its climax. ‘Do not give us a bad reputation with the neighbors,’ my mother wept.”⁷

Regardless of the specifically communist and atheistic viewpoints expressed by her parents, and in general, by the Soviet ideological presence and influence held in the second largest city in the former Soviet Union, Goricheva became a believer in her twenties.⁸ At that time she was a student of philosophy at the University of Leningrad.⁹ At the university she was interested in existentialism. The Soviet perspective on this philosophical theme was based on dialectical materialism and Marxism. However, with Khrushchev's reforms the new and young generation of the Soviet philosophers began to analyze Marx-

⁷ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 1–9.

⁸ Goricheva writes that she converted to Orthodox Christianity when she was twenty-six years old. See her interviews for the Orthodox online magazine *Фома* (Thome). Фома, „Фрейд или Хомо Литургикас,” <http://www.foma.ru/article/index.php?news=4103> (accessed December 7, 2010) and the other interview „Дорога Домой,” http://www.waytohome.ru/gorych_t.htm (accessed December 7, 2010)

⁹ Initially she started to study the German language at the Polytechnic Institute in Leningrad, but she switched to the school of philosophy at the State University of Leningrad. Tatiana Goricheva, „Two Interviews,” *Sourozhi*, 9 (August, 1982): 25.

ism from more academic and scientific position where scientific knowledge took the primary place in order to change the social reality. Nevertheless, this new philosophical generation could not publish any works that could be seen as problematic for the Soviet political ideology. Thus, much of this work was shared among small circles of scholars and philosophers or was published and distributed illegally. Also, the philosophical life in the Soviet Union has been developing independently and mostly in isolation from modern western philosophy.¹⁰ Being a part of this circle as well, Goricheva was not satisfied with the answers proposed by Soviet philosophical views concerning life and its meaning. Looking for different philosophical perspectives regarding this subject she became interested in the works of Nietzsche¹¹ and Sartre¹². About her negative attitude to reality and life in the Soviet society Goricheva writes:

¹⁰ V. A. Lektorski, „Предисловие,” in *Философия не кончается, Из Истории Отеческой Философии XX Век, 1960–1980-е Годы*, ed. V. A. Lektorski (Moscow, Russia: Rosspen, 1998), 3–10. See also V. N. Sadovskii, „Философия в Москве в 50-е и 60-е Годы,” in *Философия не кончается, Из Истории Отеческой Философии XX Век, 1960–1980-е Годы*, ed. V. A. Lektorski (Moscow, Russia: Rosspen, 1998), 13–42, Herbert Read, *Existentialism, Marxism and Anarchism: Chains of Freedom* (London, UK: Freedom Press, 1949), James Thrower, *Marxism-Leninism as the Civil Religion of Soviet Society, God's Commissar* (Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales, UK: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd, 1992), *Russian Philosophy, Pre-Revolutionary Philosophy and Theology, Philosophers in Exile, Marxists and Communists*, ed. James M. Edie, James P. Scanlan, Mary-Barbara Zeldin, George L. Kline (Knoxville, TENN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976), Ervin Laszlo, *Philosophy in the Soviet Union, A Survey of the Mid-Sixties* (Dordrecht-Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1967).

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche became so popular in Russia between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the World War One that Russia at that time was one of the few places where Nietzsche had been positively accepted. After the Soviet Revolution, Nietzsche's idea of the Übermensch (Superman) had been accepted by the Soviet ideology in order to defend Soviet teaching about the role of a leader who is a hero and serves the masses. Also, the Soviet ideology accepted his futuristic notions in order to explain how future generations will be more superior, and how they will respect and glorify previous generations who constantly fought for the future of these latter generations. However, in the 1920s the Soviet government changed its attitude toward this philosopher and especially after the World War Two this German philosopher was almost totally ignored. Also, since 1923–24 his books were not published anymore in Russia. Goricheva in writing about her impression of Nietzsche notes: „It is well known how many supporters of Nietzsche emerged from my generation, and indeed how many of them the nature of life in the Soviet Union still produces... I read Nietzsche when I was nineteen, and he seemed to me on first acquaintance to be very good — like Sartre, Camus, Heidegger, that 'existential' and rebellious philosophy which was so close to us. These writers were partly allowed during the years of liberation under Khrushchev, and translations were circulated in the underground literature. In cafes and buses the intelligentsia discussed the question of a meaningless, contrary existence.” *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 13. Thus, Goricheva could receive his works from private collections or close friends interested in philosophy. See Ia, V. Sineokaia and N. V. Motroshilova, *Ф. Ницше и Философия в России*, (Sankt-Petersburg, Russia: Russkii Hristianskii Gumanitarnii Institut, 1999). Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, in writing about the negative Soviet attitude toward Nietzsche and his influence in the Soviet Union says: „Because Nietzsche was persona non grata for much of the Soviet era, his influence was exerted indirectly. Soviet readers received Nietzsche second-hand through the writings of Gorky, Lunacharsky, Mayakovsky, the Proletkult theorist Pavel Kerzhentsev, the theater and film critic Adrian Piotrovsky, the classical scholar Tadeusz Zielinski, and Bogdanov... In many cases, it is virtually impossible to tell whether or not a particular Soviet writer or political activist read Nietzsche and/or one or more of the authors listed above, or simply picked up ideas which were 'in the air.'” Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, „Introduction” in *Nietzsche and the Soviet Culture*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7–8.

¹² Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) was a French philosopher, writer, political activist, and literary critic. He was interested in existentialism and Marxism. Politically and ideologically he supported the Left, but he was a critic of the idea that USSR represented 'socialism; on a world scale or the idea of idolization of a charismatic leader. His ideas were popular among young political and philosophical scholars in the 1960s. Ian H. Birchall writing about this says: „Yet for a new political generation coming to maturity in the 1960s Sartre was a vital influence; his stress on individual responsibility, and his outspoken denunciation of imperialism and oppression, unmodified by the tactical considerations that trammled the French Communist Party, made him an inspiration for those who wanted to reinvent a revolutionary socialist politics.” Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre again Stalinism* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), 2–3. Goricheva does not give any notice where she read Sartre, but we can presume that his works were circulation among these students outside of university classrooms, just as Nietzsche's works had been. For more about Sartre's view of existentialism apropos Marxism see Jean-Paul Sartre *Between Existentialism and Marxism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974). (Sartre's existentialist magnum opus is *Being an Nothingness*, which was a play on Heidegger's *Being and Time*.)

„I lived like a hunted, evil little beast, without ever standing up and raising my head... In school essays I wrote the sort of thing that was expected, that I loved my country and Lenin and my mother — but all that was a glib lie. From childhood I hated everything around me: I hated the people with their with their petty cares and anxieties... I hated my parents, who were the same as everyone else and just happened to be my parents. I thought about how I had been brought into the world without wanting to be there and in a completely absurd way. I even hated nature with its eternal round and tedious rhythm: summer, autumn, winter... The only thing that I loved was complete solitude.”¹³

Goricheva was not the only memoirist to express such sentiments. Zoia Afanas'evna Maslenikova¹⁴, in writing about her conversion to religion, says that the question concerning the meaning of life was a primary issue for her since her late teenage years. As a student at the Pedagogical Institute for Foreign Languages at Moscow she tried to find the answer regarding this complex issue within Soviet ideology, but its atheistic viewpoint and dialectic materialism could not satisfy her existential desire. She wrote her poems in 1963 when Maslenikova was still looking for other philosophical, ideological, and religious alternatives, and through this search she gradually recognized the miracle of the creation of the world and the providence of higher being.¹⁵

Both authors were literate and well educated women with strong analytic mindsets and viewpoints that prevented them from accepting reality without any rational observation and practical verification. Living in a strictly controlled society with a single, partial ideological system, Goricheva, Maslenikova, and anyone else who tried to think differently were denounced as negative elements in Soviet society.

Some of young Soviet intelligentsia that represented the Soviet generations born before or in the first years after the war and educated at Soviet universities with full immersion in Marxism and Leninism experienced the crisis and hypocrisy of the governmental system, but, because of strict controls and a centralized, pyramidal party system they were not able to negotiate with the government and present their viewpoints, critiques, and solutions addressing the needs of the people belonging to the second Soviet generation.

Not having direct access to the governmental institutions in order to present their viewpoints toward social challenges, problems and issues, the young, active, and educated population with heterogeneous ideas started to create various ideologically oppositional, underground groups in the 1960s. These groups were seen as illegal movements, their members were proclaimed as dissidents, and the Soviet government forcibly suppressed their activities to their best ability.

¹³ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 11.

¹⁴ Zoia Afanas'evna Maslenikova (1923–2008) came from an educated Soviet family; her father was a military doctor. During the World War Two she was in the Red Army, after the war, she studied at the Pedagogical Institute for foreign languages in Moscow. Beside her work at the Soviet Ministry for International Trade Maslenikova was an editor at the TACC (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union). Also, she was a sculptor and made sculptures of famous Russian/Soviet artists, whom Maslenikova knew personally, such as Boris Pasternak, Ana Ahmatova, and Nikolai Aseev, a Russian futurist poet. After her meeting with Fr. Alexander Men (1935–1990 a famous Russian priest, religious writer, and missionary who served among young Soviet population) Maslenikova illegally helped Fr. Alexander in his parochial and missionary duties as well as in editing his books and helping him in publishing them abroad. Maslenikova as a writer and a poet left her diary and memoirs where she described her meetings with Boris Pasternak (the writer of famous novel *Doctor Zhivago*) and Fr. Alexander Men. See *Борис Пастернак*, (Moscow, Russia: Zakharov, 2001), *Александр Мень, Жизнь*, (Moscow, Russia, Zakharov, 2001), and *Дух дышит где хочет, Из Духовных Дневников*, (Moscow, Russia: Priscel's, 1998).

¹⁵ Maslenikova Zoia. *Дух дышит где хочет, Из Духовных Дневников*, (Moscow, Russia: Priscel's, 1998), 22–23. However, Maslenikova's meeting with Fr. Alexander Men in whom she saw the incarnation of love for others increased her willingness to find out more about Christianity and the Orthodox Christian teaching. See Maslenikova Zoia. *Дух дышит где хочет, Из Духовных Дневников*, (Moscow, Russia: Priscel's, 1998), 27–30.

Participants in these various dissident movements shared one common and mutual goal — the opposition and protest against the Soviet ideological construction of all spheres of social and personal life. The dissident groups, however, had different programs, goals, and methods of going about their own activities. They organized underground seminars, held regular lectures, distributed illegal publications known as *tamizdat*, or publications illegally exported from the Soviet Union, published in the West, and again, illegally imported and spread throughout the Soviet Union. The other type of publication named *samizdat* meant publications, which were illegally published, copied, and disseminated by the authors themselves.

While some of these dissident movements demanded the right to travel, the freedom of speech, and suffrage on political issues, others were more focused on economic issues, religious matters, but all of them based their programs on the importance of human rights. One of the main questions which arises is could we clearly distinguish religious movements from those who were politically colored.

According to this position, religious freedom, as the main goal of religious resistance, was seen not only in light of its clear religious elements, but this issue had political substance as well, even though the participants in these kinds of movements did not directly emphasize or endorse any political statement.

The first religious movements started in the 1960s¹⁶ and as Tchepurnaya writes, there were two ways of their development.¹⁷ The first way emphasized the liturgical participation and religious education that was based on predominantly liturgical theology and understanding. The necessary literature of those times was based on prerevolutionary Russian theological works that could be found in the libraries or private collections. Some works of the Russian émigré theologians were also used, such as Fr. George Florovsky. The other way was mostly based on the works of Russian religious philosophers with special emphasis on slavophiles, such as Soloviev and Fr. Paul Florensky. In any case, both ways in some sense were anti-Soviet, because they propagated themes and solutions based on prohibited ideologies, according to the Soviet law.

Goricheva converted to Orthodoxy in 1972 when she was 26 years old.¹⁸ According to her interview, it was after her conversion into Christian Orthodoxy where she found the initial answers concerning the meaning of life and human beings. Nevertheless, she wanted to increase her religious knowledge and to practice the Orthodox faith in order to prove her initial satisfaction with the new life perspective. However, the position of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s did not allow clergy and theologians to organize any activities concerning the religious education, Bible studies, or similar missionary work. Thus, Goricheva, as with other people who came from the circle of the young Russian/Soviet intelligentsia, began to organize their own small gatherings where they could discuss various religious, social, cultural, economic, and historical themes providing the Orthodox Christian understanding and position toward these themes. Hence, during the 1960s and 1970s several underground seminars based on strong

¹⁶ Olga Tchepurnaya, „The Hidden Sphere of Religious Searches in the Soviet Union: Independent Religious Communities in Leningrad From the 1960s to 1970s.” *Sociology of Religion* 64, no. 3 (2003), 381.

¹⁷ Olga Tchepurnaya, „The Hidden Sphere of Religious Searches in the Soviet Union: Independent Religious Communities in Leningrad From the 1960s to 1970s.” *Sociology of Religion* 64, no. 3 (2003), 381.

¹⁸ See her interview named „Дорога Домой,” http://www.waytohome.ru/gorych_t.htm (accessed December 8, 2010). In the same interview she explains her first experience at an Orthodox Christian service at Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Leningrad (Sankt-Petersburg) built in 1760. This church was one of few churches that had not been closed during „Дорога Домой,” http://www.waytohome.ru/gorych_t.htm (accessed December 7, 2010) of the Soviet government, and even in 1941 it became the residential cathedral of Leningrad's metropolitans. Goricheva chose this church to be her parish church.

religious foundations appeared in Leningrad.¹⁹ In 1973, less than one year after her conversion into the Orthodox Church, Goricheva became, together with the Leningrad poet Sergei Stratonovskii, a leader of the newly established religious and philosophical seminar that was named #37 due to the number of the basement apartment where the members and participants of the movement had regular weekly meetings on Friday nights.²⁰

Goricheva throughout her active work in the religious movement also represents a pioneer among the Soviet women's movement. She was one of the first female Soviet activists and established the women's group known as *Maria* in 1979, but which lasted only one year. The group included Tatiana Mamonova, Iulia Voznesenskaia, Natalia Malakhovskaia, Sofia Sokolova, and Natalia Maltseva. Goricheva established this movement on an Orthodox religious basis, fighting for the rights of women in the Soviet society. The Soviet government oppressed the same rights for both genders, as both genders were facing the same challenges and problems at the hands of Soviet society and its ideology. Goricheva tried to emphasize this dilemma through her work and thoughts published in the movement's journal *Maria*. About this her co-activist and friend Iulia Voznesenskaia writes:

„One must say that all of us women who were engaged in creative work had come across such an attitude (mistrust of women's capabilities on the part of male colleagues). Tatiana Goricheva, a talented philosopher, was praised for her „masculine” mind. I was praised for my „masculine” verse. Need one add that such „compliments” were dubious to us? However, Tatiana Goricheva and I had no desire to make mistrust of women's capabilities a central problem in our activities: these men were our friends and companions, we shared a common aim and suffered the same repression of „independent thought” from the authorities.”²¹

After Goricheva's exile from the Soviet Union, she entered and graduated from the Saint George Catholic Institute in Frankfurt, then West Germany and Saint Sergius Orthodox Institute in Paris²² and together with her professor from the Institute, Elisabeth Behr, represented one of the leading voices among female Orthodox theologians.

¹⁹ Philip Walters in writing about the reasons for creation of religious seminars says: „When a young man frees himself from the Marxist-Leninist yoke he is confronted with a confusing mass of alternative ideologies to follow. Eventually they began to find answers in Christianity, and came to the Church. Perhaps inevitably, the Church they discovered was the Russian Orthodox Church. They then discovered that this Church was allowed to exist by State only on condition that it confine itself to acts of worship in registered buildings, and did not concern itself with applying Christian ideas to the problems of society at larger. These young people had already discovered the social message of Christianity, and founded the Seminar to provide themselves with an active „parish life,” a forum for open discussion by Church laymen of all the consequences of the Christian faith.” Philip Walters, „The Ideas of the Christian Seminar,” *Religion in Communist Lands* 8, no. 2 (Summer, 1980): 92–112.

²⁰ The seminar named #37 was established in Leningrad as religious-philosophical underground seminar in 1973. The name came from the number of an apartment where the seminar gathered. The apartment belonged to Tatiana Goricheva, who was the leader of a this seminar and her husband, the Russian poet and dissident Viktor Krivulin (1944–2001). A major preoccupation of this seminar was the relation between Christianity and culture — art, literature, and poetry. About this Goricheva in her memoirs writes: „What concerned him (Sergei Stratonovskii, the second leader at the seminar) deeply and seriously was a cultural problem. He could not understand how religion had always been the beginning of European culture and its breeding ground, so that the word ‘culture’ is itself derived from the word ‘cult.’ Sergei proposed that we should form a seminar in the philosophy of religion in which the church fathers and contemporary theologians would be studied.” Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 48. Seminar published samizdat magazine called *Журнал #37* (Journal # 37) from 1976 until 1981 and they published twenty-one issues. Besides Goricheva and Krivulin other important persons in the seminar were Evgenii Pazuhin, Viktor Antonov, Lev Rudkevich, Natal'ia Sharimova, and Natalia Malahovskaia. Seminar continued to exist after Goricheva's until 1986. See: Philip Walters, „The Ideas of the Christian Seminar,” *Religion in Communist Lands* 8, no. 2 (Summer, 1980): 92–112. Anthology, „Журнал 37” (Journal #37) http://antology.igrunov.ru/after_75/periodicals/37/ (accessed December 8, 2010)

²¹ Ruth Fisher, „Women and Dissent in the USSR, The Leningrad Feminists,” *Canadian Women Studies*, 10 no. 4. (1989): 63.

²² The Saint Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute was open in 1925 and at time of its opening was the first Orthodox theological institution in Western Europe. Most of the Russian theologians and religious philosophers who left Russia after the Soviet Revolution settled in Paris and thought at this school.

Goricheva and the Communist Reality

Tatiana Goricheva, as many other young people in the period of *stagnation*²³ in Soviet society, faced disillusion with Marxism as it was implemented in the Soviet Union and with all the later attempts to reform the Soviet Marxist-Leninist system. There were different reasons for their dissatisfaction with their reality. Goricheva claimed that her first challenge and problem with Soviet society was tied to the lack of mutual love among people and the lack of deep understanding of human freedom in this idea of love. The second reason was connected to her practical experience of nihilism and finally, as a way to escape her surrounding reality, she tried to find an answer in spiritual spheres.

Writing about the notion of reality when everything was based on constant competition, where people were trained to desire and work to be better than others from very young ages, even in the first years of schooling, yet Goricheva however commented that at first, she was uncritical of this spirit:

„And school only encouraged our external ‘competitive’ qualities. Praise at school is for those who can work better and higher, who ‘distinguish’ themselves in some way. That served further to consolidate my pride and bring it to full bloom. My aim was to be cleverer, more capable, and stronger than the others. But no one had told me that the supreme thing in life is not to overtake and to get the better of others, but to love.”²⁴

All spheres of life were affected by this ideology, starting with schoolwork, sport, art, the economy, military and finally, policy. In a society where the idea of equality was both an ideological and governmental dogma, people were distinguished on various levels with the insatiable desire to be better than others. This disruption between ideological and practical realities caused mistrust among people who believed and trusted in the entire implementation of Marxist and Leninist ideas in Soviet society.

The Soviet government created a situation where people could not trust each other and every act, comment, or even word could justify an investigation, report, and arrest. One of the questions that had been raised by dissidents was how in a society with constant distrust and fear of one’s neighbor, could anyone can speak out about fraternity and unity? If a person was conceived as an anti-governmental, or anti-Soviet and negative element, not only did that person pay the personal consequences, but his/her family members, friends, or coworkers were seen as the enemy’s supporters that should be condemned, as well.²⁵

²³ The period of *stagnation* is related to the period of presidency of Leonid Brezhnev (1964–1982) and began in the middle of 1970s and lasted until the period of the presidency of Michael Gorbachev and his policy of perestroika. This period of stagnation was characterized by the decline of growth in the Soviet economy and suppression of practically any social life in the USSR, as well as the repression of dissidents.

²⁴ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 12. This is an especially interesting point because it is the opposite of how people today remember their Soviet childhood.

²⁵ Anastasia Durova in her diary describes one episode about how the Soviet authorities oppressed dissidents’ families and relatives as well as dissidents themselves. According to this story, Andrei’s father, who was a prominent communist was arrested and judged as a contra-revolutionist and a negative element. However, his son, Andrei, who at that time was a student and an active communist, was seen as potential enemy as well. His friends and classmates eventually left him and nobody would speak to him or support him through this hardship. Andrei himself could not believe that the Communist Party could be so brutal to its faithful members and activists. Andrei’s second disappointment with communist ideology and the Soviet party was when the Soviet government committed military troops to the Hungarian resistance in Budapest in 1956 to bring freedom and peace, and oppressed any potential activity of the Soviet intelligentsia in order to reform the system, starting with Boris Pasternak in 1958. Finishing this description Durova writes that the biggest sin of communism is its desire to destroy the most important and the most valuable thing in a human being — his/her personality. Living under the Soviet government a person cannot think by himself/herself, a person cannot follow

Goricheva wrote comments concerning the double policy of the Soviet government, where ideas of fraternity and unity could not be practically implemented, because they could potentially lead society outside of centralized political control. Thus, people who could start to think differently than the Communist Party felt themselves enclosed within a labyrinth, which led them nowhere, and this position and status enormously affected one's personality and life, in general. About this, Goricheva writes:

„I was born in a land from which the traditional values of culture, religion, and morality had been deliberately and successfully eradicated; I was on a journey from nowhere to nowhere: I had no roots and would go into an empty, meaningless future. During my childhood I had a friend who committed suicide at the age of fifteen because she could not no longer bear everything around her. She died and left a note, 'I am a very bad person' — and yet she was someone with an unusually pure heart, who could not bear other people telling lies and could not tell lies herself. This girl committed suicide because she felt that she was not living as she should and that at some point one had to pierce through the surrounding emptiness and find light. But she could not find the way. My girl friend was too profound, and an extraordinary conscientious person for her age; she understood that she too had a share of responsibility.”²⁶

Goricheva, who was especially focused on the idea of human being, his/her role in society and mutual relationships among people, mentioned this particular tragic story as an example of terminal destruction of the idea of person under the Soviet governmental and ideological oppression. Thus, according to Goricheva, suicide was one of few possible ways to escape this difficult reality. The alternative option was to find personal satisfaction through involvement in other ideologies and philosophical doctrines. It could be simply one's way of living or a person dissatisfied with reality that could join other groups of people with similar interests. At the same time, those people had to live in communist society and pretend to behave themselves as loyal Soviet citizens in order to avoid arrests, deportation, clinical confinement, trials, and jail. Sometimes, this twofold style of life could bring about various mental, spiritual, and physical problems leading to death. Goricheva, writing about her personal experience says:

„At that time I was already looking for a 'total,' consistent way of life. I felt that I was a philosopher and stopped telling lies to myself and others. The bitter, fearful, sorry truth was more important to me than anything else. Nevertheless, my existence was still divided and contradictory. I still delighted in contrast and the absurd, in the imponderables of life. I was also enamored of aestheticism. For example I much enjoyed being a 'brilliant' student and the pride of the philosophical faculty...However, in the evening and at night I kept company with outsiders and people from the lowest levels of society — thieves, psychological cases and drug addicts... We got drunk in cellars and attics. Sometimes we broke into a house, just for the fun of drinking a cup of coffee and then vanishing again.”²⁷

Facing all of these challenges and temptations passing through various ways of opposition toward the official Soviet ideology and communist society, some of these seek-

his/her conscious, but he/she must hide the truth not only from others, but also even from himself/herself. See Anastasia Durova and Svin'ina Evgenia. *Россия — Очищение Огнем и Письма Внушке*, (Moscow, Russia: Izdatel'stvo Rudomino, 1999), 63.

²⁶ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 10.

²⁷ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 14–15. In this quotation there is a mention about people from the lowest levels of society — thieves, psychological cases and drug addicts, but she did not give any additional information concerning where and how she found them. In reading other personal comments and interviews given by Goricheva one does not find any additional information concerning this issue.

ers were looking to spiritual and religious spheres for an answer to their personal struggles and problems. The time until their full conversion into the Church could vary. All of the seekers however had one thing in common, they were looking to a higher being as the answer and cause of this world.

Goricheva tried to exercise yoga with enthusiasm in Eastern philosophies in order to free herself from her reality. She wrote that the yogic practice helped her in being more focused toward herself and allowed her to escape from reality. However, her personal satisfaction was not fulfilled as she still was looking for internal peace and stillness.²⁸

Maslenikova, at the time when she still was not clearly an Orthodox believer, but was a woman looking for the meaning of this life and expressed dissatisfaction of the communist ideology, started to write poems that included dialogues with the Supreme Being who is the creator and ruler of this world. Thus, in the poem written in 1963 named *Our Father*, Maslenikova calls on God and gives thanks to Him for having wisely created the world and individual freedom, will and reason.²⁹

These two examples, even if they present two different situations, represent two related themes: their desire to escape the communist ideology dominated by a Soviet understanding of the meaning of life and the gradual turning toward Eastern Christianity that involved a period of practicing non-Christian religious traditions, techniques, or philosophies. Two of them were looking for some Supreme Being who authored existence, but they did not know who this Supreme Being was and how they could discover Him. They were looking for Him to meet Him, to encounter Him, to learn more about Him, and until that moment of personal encounter with Him they could not find peace or satisfaction. They passed through all the various channels that could be offered in Soviet society. The Church itself, for these two women, served as the final destination on their paths toward conversion into strong and active believers and witnesses to their faith.

²⁸ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 16–17. Eastern philosophies and religions have a long history in Russia, then Soviet Union. When the Russian Empire extended its territory toward the Siberian region situated directly east of Lake Baikal, named Transbaikalia, the Buddhist tradition was introduced into Russia. After the Soviet Revolution, newly introduced religious oppression affected the Buddhist communities, especially during Stalin's rule. From 15,000 lamas who were initially exiled, barely 200 returned. After the World War two, the governmental policy toward Buddhism had changed to some degree, because the Soviet government wanted to use the Buddhist community in its international policy with the Asian countries, and thus, the Soviet government allowed the Buddhist community in the Soviet Union to establish the Central Spiritual Directorate of Buddhists, which constantly endorsed Soviet policies. See Geraldine Fagon, „Buddhism in Postsoviet Russia: Revival or Degeneration?” *Religion, State & Society* 29 no 1 (2001): 9–22. This situation helped the Buddhist communities to survive the oppression. The center of the Buddhist community in the Soviet Union was in Ivolginsk, 25 miles south of Ulan-Ude in Buryatia. In the 1960s there were about 300 lamas in the entire country, but according to the Soviet policy normal religious practice undertaken by the lamas were treated as illegal, which implied that village communities could not exercise their right and become registered. See Michael Bourdeaux, „Survival of the Buddhists,” *Religious Minorities in the Soviet Union (1960–70)* Minority Rights Group, Report no. 1. ed. Michael Bourdeaux, (London, UK: Benjamin Franklin House, 1970), 30–32. This explanation leads toward the conclusion that Goricheva and other people interested in Eastern philosophy and religious practice or yoga probably were not able to obtain Buddhist literature by legal means, but somebody who was visiting the Buddhist monastery in Ivolginsk could possibly disseminate some Buddhist literature or show some spiritual exercises that he/she had learnt there. Bourdeaux in his report quoted some sources informing about pilgrimages and young visitors interested in the Buddhist tradition: „What is certain, however, is that ‘pilgrims constantly come to the datsan (monastery) at Ivolginsk, arriving on horseback, in cars and by airplane’...and even admits that ‘active religious propaganda in post-war years has succeeded in attracting a considerable number of young people into the religious communities.’” See Michael Bourdeaux, „Survival of the Buddhists,” *Religious Minorities in the Soviet Union (1960–70)* Minority Rights Group, Report no. 1. ed. Michael Bourdeaux, London, UK: Benjamin Franklin House, 1970), 31.

²⁹ Maslenikova Zoia. *Дух дышит где хочет, Из Духовных Дневников*, (Moscow, Russia: Priscel's, 1998), 23–25.

Goricheva Becomes an Orthodox Christian Believer

Throughout the history of the Church one of the biggest challenges was (and continues to be) how to interrelate the Christian faith to a particular culture where Christianity is introduced. Yet, the Church in carrying out this task is obligated to preserve her dogmatic teachings, her content, and imply its teachings in a culture using cultural „codes” in order to present Christian doctrines to people in that culture in acceptable cultural and social forms, thoughts, and codes.³⁰

Goricheva herself did not have knowledge of the Russian Orthodox faith and the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, and she did not see that Christianity could serve as a bridge connecting the Christian faith with old myths that could not be reinforced again. Thus, she did not try to study and explore the teachings of Eastern Christianity.³¹

However, in situations where Christianity was seen as negative and destructive ideology and in an environment with strong anti-Christian propaganda as was the case the former Soviet Union, most of the interest for the Christian faith came from the side of common people. There are millions of different stories and narratives documenting the way and conditions of conversion to Orthodox Christianity and the Russian Orthodox Church during the Soviet rule.

On the other hand, Goricheva still was involved in yoga and Eastern philosophies through which she discovered Orthodox Christianity and personally found it as the terminal answer toward her strongest challenges. According to her writing, she found a Christian prayer, the *Our Father*, in a yoga book proposed as an exercise for yoga practitioners. She started out by using it as a mantra, and she repeated it around six times. When the moment of conversion happened, as Goricheva bluntly notes, she turned inside out. In the history of Christianity there are similar examples of unexpected and sudden conversions with strong external impacts.³²

Goricheva describes one very interesting moment that can be seen as a comment based on her later religious experience and theological knowledge. This critique is based on Goricheva's deep theological understanding of the idea of love presented in Eastern Christianity. Undoubtedly, she experienced these ideas of love throughout her life, but the question remains whether or not this was related to this first moment of conversion. From this perspective a theological question could rise: Can a person suddenly understand the whole idea of Christian love and personhood, or does the comprehension of these realities take time and involve gradual religious growth, practice, and experience of these ideas in a believer's life?

Goricheva writes that her sudden conversion changed her total viewpoint as well as her whole life. As was mentioned earlier, she suffered with a lack of love toward others, harbored immense bitterness, and led a nihilistic way of life in order to somehow resist the governmental ideology and understanding of life. However, with conversion her heart became open toward others, creation, all things, and she found in Christianity the possibility for implementing real equality among people.³³

³⁰ See Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

³¹ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 14–15.

³² Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 17–18. Goricheva in her works does not mention the book's title or anything about a way how she found the yoga prayer book.

³³ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 17–18.

In her memoirs and interviews given after her departure from Russia³⁴ Goricheva does not give any details related to her conversion, baptism, and the initial period of her life as an Eastern Orthodox Christian. She explained that she became a believer very slowly, because when she discovered the Christian God she did not have any previous theological, religious knowledge or experience. Goricheva's religious journey was made by small steps first visiting the liturgical services at the Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Sankt Petersburg, then Leningrad. About her initial experiences and impressions concerning the Orthodox liturgy, Goricheva writes:

„I was utterly overcome by the Liturgy, by the beauty of the Orthodox celebration. The more I discovered Liturgy, the less I wanted to leave church after the service had ended; it seemed to me that I that I was leaving Paradise to rejoin Hell. I was caught up by all this, not because of the aesthetic beauty, but because it penetrated deeply into me — to the level of my very being, so to speak, and not to some superficial level.”³⁵

The socio-political situation in the Soviet Union at the time of Goricheva's spiritual journey prohibited any missionary activity besides the serving of the Liturgy and other Church services. Thus, the young and well-educated new-believers such as Goricheva in order to obtain more religious knowledge and advice visited monasteries and spent time with experienced older monks called spiritual fathers or *startsi*. In her interview Goricheva mentioned that she was visiting the Monastery of the Caves, near Pskov in Northwest Russia, close to the Estonian border. There she met three very influential Russian spiritual fathers at that time, Father John, Father Adrian, and the hegumen³⁶ Gabriel. The influence and importance of these spiritual fathers on the new believers is seen in the fact that one had to wait for more than six months to have a meeting with one of them. Also, Goricheva wrote that she was able to visit and spent some time in other monasteries as well. The other monasteries that Goricheva visited are the Monastery of Saint Sergius in Zagorst, the Skete of the Transfiguration near Riga, and the Pochaev Monastery in the Western Ukraine.³⁷ Also, in her memoirs, Goricheva gives a detailed explanation of her first confession, which occurred at one of the monasteries, she did not give the name of the monastery, but from the introduction, one can presume that Goricheva's confession happened at the Pskov Cave Monastery of the Holy Dormition.³⁸

Apart from the pilgrimages to the monastery, Goricheva, not long after her baptism (less than one year), willing to learn more about the Orthodox faith and its perspective of

³⁴ See Tatiana Goricheva, „Two Interviews,” *Sourozh*, 9 (August, 1982): 25–34. Tatiana Goricheva, „Spiritual Rebirth in Russia: A Personal Account,” *Sourozh*, 21 (August, 1985): 8–11.

³⁵ Tatiana Goricheva, „Two Interviews,” *Sourozh*, 9 (August, 1982): 28–29.

³⁶ Hegumen is the title for the head of a monastery, or monastic community in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

³⁷ Tatiana Goricheva, „Two Interviews,” *Sourozh*, 9 (August, 1982): 25–34.

³⁸ After the Soviet Revolution in 1917, the number of open churches and monasteries in Russia enormously decreased. There were several waves of forced closing and destruction of monasteries and Churches. After the Khrushchev's pressure on the Church (1958–1964) the number of active churches was only 7,523 along with only 16 monasteries. See Vladislav Cipin, „Русская Православная Церковь в Новейший Период 1917–1999,” in *Православная Энциклопедия*, (Moscow, Russia: 2000): 154–155. Among these 16 monasteries one was the Holy Dormition Pskov-Cave Monastery dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God, Goricheva in her memoirs, explain her impression of the monastery mentioned that it was dedicated to the Mother of God, writing: The service will soon be beginning. In the left-hand aisle of the church a large and varied crowd of pilgrims has gathered. They include many women wearing simple, poor clothes, with scarves tied round their heads reaching right down to their eyebrows. Some of them come from a long way away: from the Ukraine, from Kazakhstan, from the remoteness of Siberia. These women have been preparing for months and years for their journey to the monastery, to the source of the Mother of God. See. Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 19.

life, opened in 1973 a religious-philosophical seminar as a place where people could learn more about the Orthodox Christian Church and her doctrines.³⁹

In Goricheva's memoirs the main focus is not given to the historical description of her conversion, but she particularly paid attention to the ideological, sociological, and philosophical reasons for her entrance into Eastern Christianity where she gradually found for herself satisfactory answers. Goricheva, as it was mentioned earlier, was interested in existentialism looking for the true meaning of a human being and his/her absolute value, the role of a human being in society, and the mutual/personal relationships among people. In the Orthodox Church and her theology, Goricheva, as she writes, found these truths in their authentic meaning.⁴⁰

Eastern Christianity, from its side, bases its teaching on the human being, personhood, and about equality among people on the theology of the Holy Trinity and the idea of *koinonia* (communion of love among people). Instead of the formless social hodgepodge characteristic of the situation among people in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Christianity offered an alternative in the cultivation of a new communion, not merely interpersonal, but a deep communion of love or *koinonia* — based on the unity and interconnection of fellow human beings as concrete personalities, among themselves, with creation, and with God.⁴¹

Goricheva, as it was mentioned earlier, at the time of her baptism and conversion into the Orthodox Church did not possess any knowledge about Eastern Christian theology, but, after her meeting with the Christian tradition, even through the single *Our Father* prayer and initial Church visits, experienced a different reality and set of views on the human being, personhood and on mutual/personal relationships. These aspects of life in the Church were based on the Eastern Christian theological tradition. According to Goricheva, this new view of reality was revealed to her as such:

„Finally my heart was also open. I began to love people. I could understand their suffering and also their lofty destiny. That they are in the image of God. Immediately after my conversion

³⁹ Writing about the reasons for the establishment of such kind of seminars Goricheva says: „We created a clandestine seminar because it was difficult to stay Christian in the conditions under which we lived, with neither books, nor priests, nor teachers. To start with we looked for a spiritual father...” Tatiana Goricheva, „Spiritual Rebirth in Russia: A Personal Account,” *Sourozh*, 21 (August, 1985): 9.

⁴⁰ Tatiana Goricheva, „Two Interviews,” *Sourozh*, 9 (August, 1982): 28.

⁴¹ For more about this see in Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Toward A Global Community: Resources and Responsibilities*, in *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns*, ed. Anastasios Yannoulatos (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2003), 21–22. *Koinonia* among the Three Persons of God in the Orthodox teaching of the Triune God is ontologically expressed and the place where humankind finds the source and image of *koinonia* in this world is expressed here as equality among persons. However, humankind is not a monolithic entity; there are enormous varieties and diversity among people, but true human nature is rooted in unity because each human being is created according to God's image and likeness. Hence, the true relational model between people is inherited in humankind's nature and it is based on the relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. According to this model, human nature aspires to be in union with the whole universe and its Creator. God created all human beings according to his image and likeness regardless of their race, color, language, or education, and all of them possess intellect, free will, and love. Thus, these elements, which represent the Divine image in the human being builds an invisible unity among them. Thus, in the Church, each faithful member constitutes a living cell and is a living part, which realizes his/her own unique self and develops his/her inner powers in harmony with the whole in love. Having imprinted the model of the communion of love in itself, the Church works toward the final unity of all people. Until that time, the Church, through the acts of Holy Spirit, calls all people to gather in this communion of love. At the same time, there are many obstacles, problems, and crises that impede the unity of the people on the way to the eschatological reality. Nevertheless, the ultimate aim — the eschatological communion of love among people, creation and God — will not be lost if people continually work on their repentance. Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Toward A Global Community: Resources and Responsibilities*, in *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns*, ed. Anastasios Yannoulatos (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2003), 30–31, „Toward A *Koinonia Agapes*,” in *Towards World Community*, ed. by S. Samartha J., (Geneva: WWC Publications, 1975): 50.

everyone simply seemed to me to be a miraculous inhabitant of heaven, and I could not wait to do good and to serve human beings and God.”⁴²

The crucial moment for Goricheva’s conversion was through the *Our Father* prayer, and it happened unexpectedly, because she, in her struggle with Soviet reality and its ideological perspective, excluded Christianity from serving as the source for satisfactory answers. She emphasized that God through his grace called her to become a Christian and that through one prayer she received a revelation that changed her entire life. About this moment, Goricheva writes:

I personally did not seek the Christian God; neither did my friends. It was God who called us and who found us. The Holy Spirit took the only remaining path to find us, for in this world all human channels were closed. God worked alone through the agency of prayer. Our religious rebirth took place above all through prayer, through the path of mystical understanding.⁴³

The first steps following the process of conversion and active religious life for both women was connected to confession and spiritual leadership based on the role of a spiritual father, where they experienced real, personal community between people based on unconditional love and trust. Goricheva gives a long and descriptive observation of her encounter with Father Hermogen to whom she confessed her first time.

Confession itself has very deep theological, spiritual, and psychologically significant meaning. For the first time Goricheva felt internal freedom, joy, and peace after their confession. Goricheva connects this with the idea of God’s love toward his creation, including those who are returning God and becoming active believers. During their confessions, their spiritual fathers expressed special attention and offered their support to them in order to show how they, as persons and God’s creation, have values and how there are no sins that cannot be forgiven by God, so that personally they can feel that special kind of joy after confession and the priest’s prayer over them. Giving her explanation of this experience, Goricheva writes:

„The high level of demands in Orthodox faith is connected with its extraordinary flexibility and its gentleness towards human beings. How can this contradiction be resolved? Only through love. This specific, wise love in our pastor, who is endowed with grace to give us freedom.”⁴⁴

Reading the memoirs of Goricheva and Maslenikova, one realizes that both women considered their future spiritual fathers to be examples of the real implementation of the

⁴² Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 18.

⁴³ Tatiana Goricheva, „Spiritual Rebirth in Russia: A Personal Account,” *Sourozh*, 21 (August, 1985): 7–8.

⁴⁴ Describing her relationships with a new spiritual father, the priest-monk Leonid who was a monk at a small cave monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ near Riga, Latvia, established in 1894, (This monastery also was one of 16 monasteries that stayed open during the Soviet rule in Russia. More about this on the web site of the Russian Orthodox Church in Latvia <http://pravoslavie.lv/index.php?newid=1453&id=180>) gives her impressions of Father Leonid as the real example of the practical implementation of the Orthodox Christian teaching of the human being, personhood, and on mutual relationships: „That evening in a conversion with him I first time understood what a priest really is. There before me I had someone who could give himself not just half-heartedly, but with all his personality and all his soul to another person. There I had met a person who was not just interested in the ‘roles’ that I was playing or even just in my ideas about life, but had a quite personal interest in me, in my particular self, which I had always kept hidden because I thought that it would not interest anyone...Father Leonid, by contrast never condemned or even spoke indifferently of anyone. He always spoke of everyone always as though they were his own children, without the sentimentality and blindness which are so typical of physical parents.” Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 30–31. Seeing the importance of personal relationships between a spiritual father and his spiritual children where Goricheva found practical implementation of Orthodox teaching of human being, personhood and mutual, unconditional love, she collected the letters written between elders and their spiritual children in the 20th century and edited the book named *Cry of the Spirit, Witness of Faith in the Soviet Union* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1989).

Orthodox teaching of unconditional love and service to others, as those who saw their spiritual children equal to them. In them they found true friends and portents to whom they could say everything. From their side, their spiritual fathers, Fr. Hermogen, then Leonid for Goricheva, and Fr. Alexander Men for Maslenikova, truly loved them and led them in their religious life enacting the very practical implementation of *koinonia*.⁴⁵ The personal examples of love that their spiritual fathers showed toward these young new converts and formerly rebellious youth, pointed converts in the direction of trusting and following their spiritual fathers who were for the most part poorly educated, marginalized, and oppressed, but nevertheless were able to show them true love.

Can Personal Witnessing of Faith Create Positive Change in Society?

Tatiana Goricheva through conversion found satisfactory meaning in life and regard for human society where the idea of equality could be practically implemented. She saw that Eastern Orthodoxy preserves the stable and unchangeable teaching that can be implemented in various social and historical contexts. Unlike this reality, the Soviet government failed to implement the very ideas on which the whole Soviet system was created. The two biggest hypocritical segments of Soviet ideology that struck some young and educated people as Goricheva, even before their conversion into the Orthodox Church included: a) the destruction of one's personality along with his/her entire creativity and the staining of one's ability with a stigma of unworthiness and b) the Soviet creation of false personal relationships among people.⁴⁶ Goricheva in criticizing the weaknesses of Soviet ideology, describes her fidelity to Christian teachings, saying:

„On the other hand we were glad that the church preaches the truth which is given once and for all by God, that the commandments of God are not subject to the individual changes that time brings with it. We liked the minimalism of the Christian proclamation: it was only worth living for those things for which people could and would die.”⁴⁷

The new reality and experience as a new believer allowed Goricheva to grow in her religious understanding of life and its meaning. This process of growth naturally included her active participation in church services, prayers, the reading of theological literature, and practical implementation of the Orthodox Christian teachings.⁴⁸ This process of reli-

⁴⁵ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 30–31.

⁴⁶ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 26–47.

⁴⁷ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 26.

⁴⁸ It was mentioned earlier about Goricheva's impression with the Orthodox liturgy (see page 30). About the importance of prayer in her life, Goricheva writes: 'The spiritual struggle is stronger than all the other combats of this world. Prayer gives you immense energy, great strength. It is the old monks, the *startsy*, who can heal through prayer...Prayer has become more necessary for us than the air we breathe.' Also as practical implementation of her new view of life was the establishment of the seminar: 'In our seminar we try to help the people around us, to change their lives.' In these seminars they were reading the Bible, then the texts of great Church fathers, such as Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Basil the Great, Origen, Saint Athanasius the Great, and Tertullian. With a concern over modern Russian theologians and philosophers they were also reading Sergei Bulgakov, Paul Florensky, Nicolai Berdiaev, and Vasilii Rozanov. These reading were available to them through private collections or public libraries. Also they visited the psychiatric hospitals where people were treated as nonhumans, especially if they believed in God. She established the first women's organization in the Soviet Union and these women were against the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Goricheva, about her feminist movement, writes: „This group called *Maria* was the only one to take a stand against the war in Afghanistan. It was dangerous: they arrested and beat up women in the street, inflicting all sorts of psychological cruelty on them. But these women were not rebelling; there is no comparison with western feminist movements... Women in Russia have only one weapon: prayer in humility and love.' All of these examples show the practical implementa-

gious or spiritual growth takes time, enormous willingness, and constant good works, but through it, a person is able to experience the unstoppable changes or „transfigurations” in the Orthodox Christian theology known as *theosis* (gr. *θέωσις*).

The process of constant religious growth and spiritual change is possible only through active participation in the Church, the Eucharistic life, and under the spiritual guidance of an experienced and wise priest, or father confessor, who will help his spiritual children on their religious path. Thus, the personal relationships and mutual confidence among spiritual fathers and their children are the basis for successful spiritual growth and fruitful communal life. As Goricheva mentions, the aim of her spiritual father was to create from their formless chaos a perfect icon of God and to help them to become persons.⁴⁹

In order to understand the deeper meaning of Goricheva’s words concerning the role of her spiritual father, the monk-priest Leonid, as well as her future actions and deeds witnessing her Orthodox faith in Soviet society, one has to see how the Eastern Orthodox Church understands the motives and goals of witnessing the Orthodox Christian faith.

Regarding the witnessing of the faith and the helping others who want to follow the religious path, Orthodox Eastern theology can be analyzed from many perspectives such as positions esteeming the love for God and humankind, and obedience to the will of God. However, the first and foremost condition is inner necessity. This necessity, as the motive of mission, has its roots in one of the aims of the Church’s mission — incorporation in Christ. Then, people in the Church should not feel, think, or act differently than Christ, because he/she wants and yearns after the salvation of all people and of all creation. It is obvious that this necessity to preach the Gospel is not only an ethical matter, but also a reality founded on a deep theological understanding of the synergy between God and people as the way for the recapitulation of all things and for full participation in God’s glory.⁵⁰

Through this theological perspective one can understand why both Goricheva and Maslenikova were writing about people who were looking for the answers in the Church, in their returning to God, and thus, they as believers were obligated to present through their ordinary lives a new meaning of reality based on religious foundations that they learned from their own experience, actively participating in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church, having close personal relationship with their spiritual fathers, and organizing seminars where they offered others the opportunity to become familiar with the Eastern Christian tradition and theology.⁵¹

In order to witness the faith, Goricheva, in line with the Orthodox theological perspective, writes about repentance as the starting point of metanoia. In the case of young Russian intelligentsia who were returning to God, the biggest struggle was the idea of pride, brilliance, and superiority.⁵² These realities, politically presented as humanity’s

tion of the Orthodox understanding of spiritual growth in faith. See Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 48. Tatiana Goricheva, „Two Interviews,” *Souroz*, 9 (August, 1982): 25–34.

⁴⁹ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 33–34.

⁵⁰ See Anastasios Yannoulatos, „The Purpose and Motive of Mission,” *The International Review of Mission* 45 (1965): 281–297.

⁵¹ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 35–48, Zoia Maslenikova, *Дух дышит где хочет, Из Духовных Дневников*, (Moscow, Russia: Priscel’s, 1998), 27–31.

⁵² About this issue Goricheva writes: „Conversion and repentance are practically necessary in fighting the mother of all sins, pride. It is well known that the intelligentsia has more of prosperity to these vices than any other people. They are particularly enslaved to the idea of their own brilliance and superiority... Moreover,

greatest potential, were rather to be transformed into positive and productive energy for the good of the whole society, and not for individual prosperity. Thus, for those types of converts, repentance and change became important factors.⁵³ Goricheva even suggests that these young converts are called to transform the world into the service of God.

However, the changing of the world also implies the changing of oneself through active participation in the spiritual life of the Orthodox Church. The changing of personal life emphasizes that a person has his/her own freedom and free will, which the communist ideology in Soviet society ignored and oppressed. At the same time, this idea of free will reveals to a person the reality that he/she has inherited, its potential, value, and importance, all which have to be used and multiplied throughout one's actions and life. Writing about this Goricheva says:

„It is not as if Soviet life were merely governed by an indifferent atheism. It is guided more by an anonymous inhuman 'fate' which is filled with jealousy. When I carried out an investigation among students, no one said that he or she believed in God. But many said that they would believe in fate... This is also understandable: a tough net has been cast over society, a net of anxiety, of lack of trust in one's own power, of a sense of the impossibility of changing one's life. The experience of total captivity, complete slavery, outside and in, this darkness and harassment make people take refuge in the last resort of magic. They want to make God gracious once they have enslaved him. But they turn themselves into slaves.”⁵⁴

The practical examples of the new understanding of life, its meaning, and experience of a new reality are to be found in the process of conversion, and constant religious and spiritual growth begins for both these two women with prayers based on an cosmic understanding and comprehension of the world and its ultimate goal — salvation and participation in the glory of the Triune God. About this Goricheva writes:

„In the Russian monasteries we found a universalism which met the needs of our hearts. There people prayed for the whole world, and in the late evening prayer this intention is sometimes indeed made quite precise: 'And now let us pray, brothers and sisters, for those who cannot pray for themselves, and also for those who have no one to pray for them. Let us pray to the mother of God. 'Under your protection.'”⁵⁵

The next level of the witnessing of faith based on inner necessity is revealed by one's daily life according to the Eastern Christian meaning of life. Goricheva did it through her lectures speaking about her own conversion,⁵⁶ establishing the Christian underground

the intelligentsia is poisoned by the cult of a renaissance-like 'broad' individualism. And it is more difficult for them than for others to go the narrow way of the cross and the truth. And yet all that is taking place. For the first time the Russian intelligentsia is going to Church in large numbers, openly and seriously. The intelligentsia is repenting.” Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 36.

⁵³ In her memoirs Goricheva gives several examples of this type of repentance and changing of life. See Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 36–37.

⁵⁴ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 39. Tatiana Goricheva in this quotation mentioned her students. It is interesting to say that after her graduation from the school of philosophy at the State University of Leningrad in 1973, she started to teach as a teacher of philosophy. However, even after two months the authorities discovered that she did not teach only Marxist-Leninist ideology, but was focused on Western theology. Soon she lost her teaching position and started to work at the Russian Museum in Leningrad, but she at that time already drew to herself the attention of the KGB, which and intervened in her affairs and saw to it soon that she was once again removed from her position. After this, there was no longer any possibility of doing anything other than menial work. As a result she worked for a while managing lift repairs in the city. Tatiana Goricheva, „Two Interviews,” *Sourozh*, 9 (August, 1982): 25.

⁵⁵ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987), 45.

⁵⁶ Tatiana Goricheva, *Talking About God is Dangerous, The Diary of Russian Dissident*, (New York, NY: Cross-

seminar in Leningrad, and led the first Christian women's movement in the Soviet Union forcibly abolished in 1980.⁵⁷ Through her own acts, deeds, and style of life she wanted to change herself, and through this process of personal changing she implemented her understanding of Orthodoxy where she found religious, spiritual, social and ideological satisfaction. One of the first steps on this new journey was to build relationships among people based on love, respect, and equality. In order to fulfill this tasks, Goricheva emphasized the great deal of support and strength required in order to effectively witness the faith, and how this was found in regular participation in the liturgical life of the Church, in pilgrimages to Russian monasteries, and in visitation with experienced monastic persons.

Conclusion

The conversion and activism of Tatiana Goricheva in the Orthodox Church demonstrates several important issues. First, Goricheva represents the group of people who in the Soviet Union began to look for „existentialist” answers outside of the officially promulgated Marxist-Leninist codex of beliefs. This search for different ideological views gradually led Goricheva, as well as many other young and educated dissidents, to the Russian Orthodox Church and Eastern Christian theological tradition where they found acceptable and appropriate answers. Goricheva's memoirs, interviews, and eventually her theological works prove that she clearly based her thoughts and positions concerning the idea of personhood, the role of humankind and of relationships among people on a firmly Orthodox Christian grounding and perspective.

Second, Goricheva through her missionary activism in the Church, as it was allowed under the specific socio-political conditions in the Soviet Union, abolished the widely established stereotype that religion in the Soviet Union survived only because of old, socially irrelevant, and marginalized women who kept the parishes alive and actively were participating in the liturgical life of the Russian Orthodox Church. Molded by Orthodox Christian theological positions and perspectives, Goricheva wanted to share her personal experience and impressions with other people, and through her activism establishing small Christian seminars, Goricheva became one of the important lay missionaries in the last century in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Goricheva as one of the most important female Orthodox theologians in this current age, shows that the role of the women in the Orthodox Church is far from being marginalized and rejected.

Third, Goricheva instead of basing her opposition toward the Marxist-Lenin system based on liberal Christian positions or Western philosophers, as some underground

road, 1987), 43.

⁵⁷ As it was mentioned in the paper the seminar was established in 1973 not long after her conversion into the Orthodox Church in 1972. In 1979 Tatiana Goricheva, Natalia Maashovskaia, and Tatiana Mamonova founded the journal *Women and Russia*. One year later they created the first womens association and a journal called *Maria*. However, in the next year they were discovered by the Soviet authorities and the movement was dismissed. On July 20, 1980 Tatiana Goricheva emigrated to West. Speaking about the differences between their feminist movement and those in the West, Goricheva says: „At the present time all women's movement are labeled feminist. I can do nothing about that. But there are differences between our ideas and those of many contemporary feminists: we are against abortion, while almost all feminists are for it; we are for the Church, while the majority of feminists have left the Church. Yet there are similarities. All of us are against the patriarchal system. In Russia women suffer greatly because of the coarse and heavy-handed behavior of men. Women are responsible for the family, while men are often drunk and helpless. Women have children and bring them up; they don't commit suicide because they are responsible for the children... Most of the time it is anonymous, unknown women who help the Church with their firmness.... All Orthodox priests in the Soviet Union are 'feminist' now. They praise their women parishioners in their sermons and compare them to the women who went to embalm Christ in the tomb. Tatiana Goricheva, „Two Interviews,” *Sourozh*, 9 (August, 1982): 33–34.

movement did, rather stayed obedient to the tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church and ecclesiastical authorities. Through the intimate spiritual relationships forged between monk-priests and their spiritual children Goricheva discovered the practical realization of the Orthodox Christian ideas of person, the role of humankind, and of mutual relationships. These personal relationships were built on true love, respect, equality, and the universal recognition of one's validity and uniqueness. For Tatiana Goricheva these aspects of existentialism carried an ontological meaning and thus, she began to look for them in the Soviet interpretation of Marxism and Leninism, where their practical implementation completely failed. Her search Goricheva continued into Western philosophy and Eastern philosophical and religious systems and eventually concluded with her exploring the Eastern Christian tradition. However, Goricheva strongly believes that her conversion was not simply an act of her own empirical, ideological research and analytical analysis, but of the personal God's revelation to her as *Missio Dei*,⁵⁸ and not only to her, but also to those who were like Goricheva:

The prayers of Russian martyrs have brought about a miracle in Russia: young members of the intelligentsia, people who have never heard about God, are being converted... I personally did not seek the Christian God; neither did my friends. It was God who called us and who found us.⁵⁹

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⁵⁸ *Missio Dei* is the Latin term explaining that the missionary activities proceed directly from God's providence of the entire creation. See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991): 389–390.

⁵⁹ Tatiana Goricheva, „Spiritual Rebirth in Russia: A Personal Account,” *Sourozh*, 21 (August, 1985): 7.

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