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1. The village of Yerki in the Ukraine had a Russian Orthodox church at one time, but it had been converted into a club for kolkhoz workers by the Communists. The older people retained their religious beliefs and even kept icons hidden about the house. Most of the youth, however, due to the absence of churches and the anti-religious propaganda of the Soviet Government, possessed few religious beliefs outside of the teachings given them by their parents and relatives. When the Germans occupied our region in 1941, the people of the village immediately set about to convert the club into a church again. The church was quite large, accommodating about 500 people. A Russian Orthodox priest, Father Nikolay, who allegedly had been affiliated with the Kiev University, became the priest for the church. When our region was liberated in the spring of 1943, the Soviets permitted the church to remain open but sentenced Father Nikolay to a 15-year prison term, presumably for collaborating with the Germans.
2. From the time of our liberation until I was inducted into the Soviet Army in January 1949 the church stayed open and, judging from the letters I received from home, is still open. As I mentioned, church attendance was primarily by older people, although some youths did attend occasionally. Every Sunday the church was filled to capacity, and a respectable representation was also in evidence on Saturdays. On religious holidays, particularly on Easter and Christmas, the church was completely filled and throngs of people surrounded the church. On these occasions most of the youth from the surrounding area would also attend. Although Party members did not attend church services, their families often did so regularly.

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3. Although the youth did not normally attend church except for holidays, most of them were married in church. I believe that this was attributable to the insistence of their parents, who would not recognize any marriage which did not take place in church. There was one instance when a Party member's mother insisted on his being married in church, and he finally agreed. If he received any disciplinary action from the Party it was not evident to anyone, because he remained an active member of the Party.
4. There is no evidence of Party interference in church affairs. I have never heard of any eulogies of the Party or of Stalin being given by priests. The people of my village think, however, that the priests are either Party members or directly under the control of the Party. I heard some of the kolkhoz workers who were Party members speak of the priests as belonging to the Party, but I have no definite information on this point. I have heard that there is a seminary in Odessa which graduates Russian Orthodox priests after they complete a five-year course. This school allegedly existed before the war on a small scale but now has expanded greatly. I know of one engineer, a Party member, who had completed this seminary in Odessa before the war; when he returned from the army he became a priest at a nearby town. This helped convince the people that many priests were Party members.
5. When I left for the army, my grandmother gave me an icon to carry. This was taken from me and I was surprised at the large number of youths who also had icons taken from them. Those of us who had carried icons into the army were derisively berated by the Zampolit and other officers. The Zampolit would even jeeringly make references to some soldiers as "believers" in an attempt to shame and embarrass them. On several occasions, however, I heard a Zampolit mention that the Church had helped the country considerably during the war. The implication was that the many contributions given the Church by the people went directly to the State. In fact, many people on my kolkhoz had expressed similar opinions about money contributed to the Church. There were also many who thought that the Party reopened the churches both to boost the morale of the people and to provide an easy source of income. There are also those who think that the churches have been permitted to stay open as a sop to conceal the low standard of living and as an aid in calling the people in event of another war.

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