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## Jehovah's Witnesses under Communist Regimes\*

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### Introduction

Jehovah's Witnesses were severely persecuted under all communist regimes, not only in Eastern Europe and the USSR but also in countries such as China and Cuba. They did not gain religious freedom in any Eastern European country until the fall of the communist systems. In the USSR more than 9000 Witnesses were deported to Siberia within one year in the 1950s. During the 40 years of its existence, more than 6000 Witnesses were imprisoned in the GDR. In addition, many Witnesses experienced a two-fold persecution. We know the names of some 300 Witnesses who were imprisoned under the Nazis as well as under the communists in Germany.<sup>1</sup> So far historical research has not identified any other group which had so many victims under both regimes.

The Jehovah's Witnesses<sup>2</sup> started as a Christian Bible study group in the USA in the late 1870s. Early in the twentieth century they established their main office in Brooklyn, New York, where they still have their organisational centre. Their faith is based on the belief that the whole Bible – the Old and New Testaments – is God's inspired and authoritative Word. The Bible has taught them that the heavenly Kingdom of God (Jehovah) shall one day rule the Earth. Every human being willing to obey God's laws has the opportunity to live forever in a paradise Earth, without death, sickness, old age or pain, as described in the book of Revelation. In 1931 these Bible students adopted the name 'Jehovah's Witnesses'.

Since Jehovah's Witnesses submit totally to God's rule, they are neutral in all political matters. Although they obey the laws of the country they live in, as long as they do not see a conflict with God's law, they refrain from political activities such as voting. This neutral stand, combined with the Biblical order not to murder, leads them to conscientious objection to military service, and for this reason many were sentenced to death in the Second World War. Witnesses believe that everybody should have the opportunity to hear the gospel, or the 'good news of God's Kingdom'. This is one reason why they engage in intensive evangelising work. They firmly believe that no human government is in a position to forbid this Christian preaching work commanded by God. In countries where their religious work is banned, Witnesses carry on their activities underground.

\*This paper was first presented at the conference 'Religion and the Cold War', 12 April 2000, organised by the Institute of Contemporary British History at the University of London.

### **Developments during the Nazi Period**

Jehovah's Witnesses were among those who suffered most severely under National Socialism. When Hitler came to power in 1933 one of the first laws introduced was against communists,<sup>3</sup> which turned into a weapon against anyone who offered resistance. For Jehovah's Witnesses, this resistance had already begun with their refusal to say 'Heil Hitler'. For them this greeting constituted religious worship, which only God deserves. Other forms of resistance, as mentioned earlier, were their abstaining from elections and their refusal to perform military service. Amazingly, at that time Jehovah's Witnesses were accused of being communists, working in collaboration with the Jews to gain world power. During the twelve years of their rule the Nazis cruelly persecuted the Witnesses. Though they numbered only about 25,000 in Germany in 1933 some 10,000 of them were in prisons and concentration camps, and some 2000 were murdered. Historians believe that no other religious or political group (apart from the Jews) suffered the same intensity of persecution under the Nazis.<sup>4</sup>

Hitler went on to occupy or enter into alliances with other European countries and as soon as the Gestapo or local authorities began to carry out persecution Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested, for example in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Ukraine and Hungary, and sent to prison or concentration camp. It is known that in the women's concentration camp in Ravensbrück alone there were at least 50 Polish, 15 Ukrainian, 10 Czech, 10 Hungarian, 25 Dutch and 500 German Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Situation in 1945**

After the Second World War the liberated Witnesses from various concentration camps were at the forefront of reorganising evangelising work in their home countries. When the communist persecution began large numbers of Witnesses once again went to prison or labour camp. This is ironical when we consider that many communists in power or public office, particularly in Poland and the GDR, had also spent many years in Nazi concentration camps;<sup>6</sup> now they found themselves persecuting their former prison-mates.

Immediately after 1945 the situation for Jehovah's Witnesses in Eastern Europe varied from country to country. In the eastern part of Germany they were reregistered in September 1945 and allowed to function by the Soviet Military Administration.<sup>7</sup> They gained similar recognition in Czechoslovakia where in December 1945 their activities were permitted by the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>8</sup> In Romania they were even recognised as a legal body.<sup>9</sup> However, even in this early period Witnesses had problems. In East Germany, for example, Witnesses who engaged in preaching were often arrested by the police and the Soviet authorities, who were suspicious about this kind of activity.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Start of Communist Persecution**

In some Eastern European communist countries the situation for Jehovah's Witnesses was difficult from the beginning. In Yugoslavia there was no peaceful post-war period at all. Persecution by the Croatian nationalist *ustaše* moved more or less seamlessly into communist persecution under Tito. There were arrests of Witnesses in 1946, though in most cases they were held for only a few days.<sup>11</sup> We might regard this as a typical postwar problem rather than the result of deliberate communist

policy; but it is significant that the authorities denied Jehovah's Witnesses recognition as a religious denomination, for which they had applied to the secretary of state and the prime minister.<sup>12</sup> Then in September 1946 all the so-called leaders, that is all members of the country committee of Jehovah's Witnesses in Yugoslavia, including Rudolph Kalle, the chairman, were arrested. On 3 February 1947 a show trial of 18 Jehovah's Witnesses was held in the Supreme Court in Croatia.<sup>13</sup> They were accused as follows: (1) of working to overthrow the popular government by force and to establish their fascistic rule; (2) of holding views which weakened the country's fighting forces; (3) of maintaining relations with the Bern and Brooklyn offices of Jehovah's Witnesses, which the prosecution claimed to be fascist centres working for a third world war, and of protecting Second World War criminals; (4) of treason; (5) of printing 700 copies of the magazine *The Watchtower* despite being prohibited to do so; (6) of claiming that freedom in Yugoslavia existed only on paper and not in reality. The Witnesses' 'head', Rudolph Kalle, and two fellow-believers were sentenced to death, and 12 other Witnesses were sentenced to up to 15 years in prison. During the court hearing one of the accused said that at the time of the German occupation his mother had been put in gaol and two of his sisters and his brother sent to Dachau concentration camp, and now he was addressed as a 'fascist'.<sup>14</sup> Although the three death sentences in this case were later commuted to long-term imprisonment,<sup>15</sup> from that time Jehovah's Witnesses were regarded as illegal in Yugoslavia.<sup>16</sup> The show trial was accompanied by a smear campaign in the press using photographs of the accused. Despite these unfavourable conditions, the number of Jehovah's Witnesses in Yugoslavia increased from 120 in 1947 to about 500 in 1949.<sup>17</sup>

In 1948 Albania followed with an official ban on Jehovah's Witnesses. Although there were only 35 in the country, these few Witnesses were persecuted with merciless brutality.<sup>18</sup> Severe persecution next started in Czechoslovakia in 1948, with press articles claiming that Jehovah's Witnesses were opponents of the state and of the communist system.<sup>19</sup> On 29 November 1948 the Czechoslovak secret police closed the branch administration office of the Witnesses and conducted house searches throughout the country. Three days later all ten members of the leading committee were arrested.<sup>20</sup> In 1949 Bulgaria followed with a ban on the Witnesses and with measures against their activity even though there were only about 20 Witnesses in the country.<sup>21</sup> In Romania, after a short period of freedom in 1948 while the Witnesses, numbering some 5000, reorganised their religious work, persecution started in August 1949 with a raid on the central office and the arrest of members of the country committee.<sup>22</sup> In July 1950 the military court in Bucharest sentenced 11 Witnesses to labour in a camp near the Danube: three to 10 years, six to 5 years, and two females to 2 years.<sup>23</sup>

### **Persecution in the Soviet Union**

It is not clear to what extent the persecution of the Witnesses in these various countries was coordinated from Moscow: so far the documents researched seem to indicate that there was no direct order from the USSR to the other communist states. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Soviet government knew about the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Before the Second World War there were only about 100 Witnesses in Russia itself. Larger numbers of Witnesses came into the USSR (Ukraine and Belorussia) with the annexation of the eastern parts of Poland in 1939. About 500 Witnesses had

been living in these areas.<sup>24</sup> More came in when Latvia, Lithuania and later Moldavia were annexed. Another group of Witnesses entered the USSR after the end of the Third Reich: these were Russian prisoners who had been converted while in Nazi concentration camps, including a number of young Russian and Ukrainian women from the Ravensbrück camp. Some reports from that time indicate that the increase of Jehovah's Witnesses in the USSR was quite rapid.<sup>25</sup> In 1946, 5218 people attended the annual celebration of Jesus' death in the Ukraine, 1915 in Bessarabia and 251 in Russia itself.<sup>26</sup> In the same year hundreds of Jehovah's Witnesses began to be transferred to other places as a result of the Soviet policy of forced resettlement.<sup>27</sup> They also suffered reprisals because they would not participate in elections.

Persistent difficulties moved Nathan H. Knorr, the president of Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the corporate body for Jehovah's Witnesses in the USA, to formulate a petition in favour of his fellow-believers in the USSR. It was planned that a number of delegations of Russian Witnesses would hand over the petition to the state authorities; but the MGB was informed of the plan in advance and arrested all the proposed participants.<sup>28</sup> Shortly afterwards many Witnesses were exiled to Siberia.<sup>29</sup>

On 1 June 1949 the Witnesses succeeded in filing a petition for legal recognition with the Ministry of Interior Affairs of the USSR in Moscow.<sup>30</sup> This petition evidently reached Nikolai Shvernik, secretary of the USSR Supreme Soviet Executive Committee in Moscow, but it brought no change in the Witnesses' circumstances.<sup>31</sup> The Supreme Soviet thus by now obviously knew about the existence of this religious group.

Restrictive measures continued. Reports tell of heavy persecution in Lithuania and Latvia in September 1950.<sup>32</sup> In its decree No. 667-339cc of 3 March 1951 the Council of Ministers of the USSR ordered the deportation of the 'active participants of the antisoviet sect of the Jehovahists and their family members to Irkutsk and Tomsk'. This decree was carried out through order No. 00193 of the Ministry of State Security dated 5 March 1951. The authorities later reported that 9389 Jehovah's Witnesses had been deported up to 1 July 1952. The documents indicate that from Moldavia alone at least 2600 witnesses, about 723 families, were deported in 1951. Almost all of them were sent by train to Tomsk.<sup>33</sup> There is evidence of more deportation and resettlement of Jehovah's Witnesses later in the 1950s. Witnesses from Western Ukraine, Belorussia, Bessarabia, Moldavia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were exiled beyond the Ural mountains, to Kazakhstan, the Far East, Sakhalin Island and the Kamchatka peninsula.

At the time the deportations began in the USSR, persecution was already well under way in all the other communist countries, so at the moment it is not possible to say that the persecution started in the USSR or that it emanated from there to other countries.<sup>34</sup> Further research is needed to clarify the sequence of developments.

### **Persecution in Poland**

In 1950 there were about 18,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in Poland. In April and June of that year the secret police (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa* (UB)) raided the headquarters of the Jehovah's Witnesses and made many arrests.<sup>35</sup> It was not until the following year, however, that a big show trial was staged in Warsaw, from 16 to 22 March 1951, at which the Witnesses were accused of spying for the United States and attempting to overthrow the People's Republic of Poland.<sup>36</sup> The court handed down some sentences of life imprisonment and others of up to 15 years. Meanwhile articles appeared in the press blackening the Witnesses and calling them a 'gang of spies'.<sup>37</sup>

## **Persecution in the GDR**

Perhaps the Polish authorities were waiting to see the outcome of the persecution in the GDR, where Jehovah's Witnesses were one of the earliest groups to be persecuted – earlier and more severely than in the other Eastern European countries. By 1985 at least 6000 Jehovah's Witnesses had spent time in prison, and at least 60 had died there. Observation of Jehovah's Witnesses began in the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ). In 1946 agents from local offices of the SED party visited churches and other places of worship, including those of Jehovah's Witnesses, and reported on the sermons and how they were received.<sup>38</sup> After a centralised internal administration was set up in the GDR in 1947 these reports found their way to East Berlin. Officials noted the high proportion of reports dealing with Jehovah's Witnesses and their preaching work, reflecting the Witnesses' zealous commitment to preaching in public. Many people respected the Witnesses as victims of Nazism and initially this even helped them in their relations with the Soviet administration. They were the only religious group which had offered united resistance to Hitler, refusing him the honour which they believed was due only to God. The reports now showed clearly that the Witnesses were persistent in preaching about the Bible and God's judgment, but also that in the new socialist system they would show the same Christian neutrality as they had done before and during the Nazi regime and that they would not vote in elections.

In 1948 the ruling SED party decided to put the Jehovah's Witnesses under central surveillance and collected reports about their activities.<sup>39</sup> In the autumn of 1949 Walter Ulbricht initiated a decision by the SED Politburo to take active measures against the Witnesses,<sup>40</sup> and when these did not produce the hoped-for results, the Witnesses were banned altogether in August 1950.<sup>41</sup> The day before the ban came into force, the administrative centre of the Witnesses in Magdeburg was occupied and some 400 leading Witnesses were arrested throughout the country. The reports of their detention and the pressure put on them make difficult reading. The secret police (*Staatssicherheit*, or *Stasi*) especially wanted to hear confessions about supposed spying for the USA, and names of fellow believers, in order to arrest them too.

The Stasi reports became the basis for the charges in the trials of Witnesses which began in the Supreme Court in October 1950 with a big show trial in East Berlin.<sup>42</sup> The sentence passed at the first of these show trials included the absurd assertion that speaking publicly about God's judgment and heavenly war (Revelation 19–20) constituted 'warmongering', despite the well-known fact that the Witnesses refused to do military service. At this first trial two Witnesses were sentenced to life imprisonment and the rest to up to 15 years. There followed a flood of similar trials of Witnesses throughout the GDR.<sup>43</sup> No local court dared to deliver a verdict different from the one prepared beforehand by the Stasi. Thousands of Witnesses were sentenced for 'spying for the US imperialists' and 'attempting to boycott the state' (*Boykotthetze* – speaking negatively about the socialist state) and were sent to inhumane prisons such as Waldheim or Bautzen.<sup>44</sup> The trials were accompanied by an extensive hate campaign in the press calling Jehovah's Witnesses 'agents paid in dollars', 'moles in religious camouflage' and other things.<sup>45</sup>

The August 1950 ban on the Jehovah's Witnesses did not stop them continuing their preaching work, so the Stasi had to rethink its methods. An order issued in January 1951 by Erich Mielke, permanent secretary in charge of the Stasi, identified the deployment of spies as the principal technique to be used: 'discovering the leaders and the most dangerous agents of the sect is possible only by working hard to

find unofficial collaborators who have good prospects in the sect and who will secretly keep us informed'.<sup>46</sup> Stasi employees thus began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and even took part in their preaching activity. Over the years, however, the Stasi learned that arresting and imprisoning leading Witnesses did not stop the Witnesses' activity. In the early 1960s, therefore, the Stasi tried a new method of subversion called *Zersetzung* ('decomposition' or 'disintegration'). The aim of the technique was to make Witnesses feel psychologically unsure, as a Stasi report makes clear:

'Disintegration' measures must be applied in such a way that members of the Jehovah's Witnesses always believe that every action they undertake for the sect is watched by the security organs. It is thus most important that they should believe that leading figures in the sect in particular are supplying information to the State Security. Members must be led to assume that their so-called publishing work, their home visits and all their illegal activities for the Jehovah's Witnesses involve great danger and may lead to imprisonment.<sup>47</sup>

In the GDR, then, the Stasi used various different techniques to suppress the Jehovah's Witnesses and the struggle continued until 1989.

### **Persecution in Hungary**

Hungary was the last European communist country to start persecuting Jehovah's Witnesses. During the first half of 1945 many Hungarian Witnesses returned home from gaol and concentration camps, where 160 of them had been since 1942.<sup>48</sup> By the end of 1945 about 600 Witnesses were working under relatively peaceful conditions in Hungary, most of them in Budapest.<sup>49</sup> The situation changed in 1948, however, when the communist MDP began to consolidate its power. During the Second World War the press had labelled Jehovah's Witnesses 'communists', but in 1949 several articles were published calling them 'agents of American imperialism' financed by the United States. In 1950, at a time when 2307 Witnesses were living in Hungary, the police arrested 302 of them.<sup>50</sup> A police report of 3 September 1950 documents the arrest of János Lakó. It says that he went from door to door in the 15th district of Budapest carrying out Biblical 'agitation' by proclaiming that God's Kingdom would come for everybody who believed. Misery would end, and everybody who believed would be happy, because only God could bring happiness.<sup>51</sup> On 11 November the State Security Police (ÁVH) submitted an extensive report about the Jehovah's Witnesses. In contrast to the police reports, it accuses them of agitating against elections by saying that they do not vote. It criticises their refusal to do military service: in reality they are fighting against the state and serving the interests of American imperialism. It accuses them of writing reports about their religious activities and sending them to America. It says that they had recently commenced a big agitation campaign and attracted a huge number of new believers. Even members of the party had returned their party cards and had become members. For all these reasons the ÁVH suggested restricting the activity of the Witnesses by arresting their leading members.<sup>52</sup> On 13 November 1950 the ÁVH searched the central office of the Witnesses and arrested the director János Konrád, the translator András Bartha and others. Their trial took place on 2 February 1951. The charge was 'joint leadership of an organisation aimed at the subversion of state and society, and treason'. The accused were sentenced to between 5 and 10 years in prison.<sup>53</sup> The sentences had

evidently been prearranged: during an interrogation before the trial one of the Witnesses was told by his interrogator:

We shall lock you up for ten years, and when those ten years are up, our People's Republic will be stronger than it is now, and the people will be ideologically trained and immune to your trying to influence them with the Bible. Then we shall be able to release you.<sup>54</sup>

The Witnesses then restructured their leadership, but in April 1953 six members of the new committee were arrested and sentenced,<sup>55</sup> and that same spring almost every Witness with any responsibility was arrested. The total imprisoned in 1953 was over 500.<sup>56</sup> All members of another new restructured committee were again arrested and imprisoned in 1955.<sup>57</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In the Third Reich Jehovah's Witnesses were called communists; a few years later, under communism, they were being called fascists and supporters of American imperialism. The real reasons for their persecution under both systems were their absolute Christian neutrality and their refusal to compromise their freedom to worship and to preach in public.

In the various communist countries the development of persecution followed a similar pattern. It started with press campaigns and interference in religious services. Then a sudden flood of arrests took place, followed by show trials. Simultaneously, in most countries, the Witnesses were banned, and in some were declared illegal. The main accusations in the show trials were always that under the 'mask of religion' the Witnesses were trying to overthrow the state and install a new fascist system, and that they were acting as spies for imperialistic America. All these were charges which had been levelled against a range of victims in communist states since Stalin's show trials of the late 1930s, but in the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses the charges are particularly ironical since the Witnesses were known to have been persecuted by the Nazis.

The main reason why they were persecuted by the communists and Nazis alike was that they took a stance of neutrality. None of the communist states allowed genuine antimilitarism or political abstinence. Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted by the communists not because they were enemies or opponents of the communist system: they were persecuted because they simply wanted to remain neutral. The Witnesses did not want to take part in compulsory state-sponsored quasi-religious rituals. Unfortunately, this was not an option. In order, however, to explain why this peaceful minority had to be eradicated, the communist authorities had to frame charges of political subversion and cast the Witnesses in the role of political opponents.

In conclusion it should be kept in mind that the question of religious freedom for Jehovah's Witnesses still seems to be a current topic today.<sup>58</sup> Recent developments in countries such as France, Russia and Georgia give rise to the question whether the historical twofold persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses will eventually become threefold.



## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> Hans-Hermann Dirksen, 'Jehovah's Witnesses in the German Democratic Republic', in Hans Hesse (ed.), *Persecution and Resistance of Jehovah's Witnesses During the Nazi Regime 1933–1945* (Chicago, 2001), pp. 210–28.
- <sup>2</sup> See Eileen Barker, 'New religious movements: their incidence and significance', in Bryan Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (eds), *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response* (London, 1999), and Greg Stafford, *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended: an Answer to Scholars and Critics* (2nd edit.) (Anaheim, CA, 2000). For detailed consideration of the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses see *Knowledge that Leads to Everlasting Life* (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., New York, 1995).
- <sup>3</sup> *Notverordnung zum Schutz von Volk und Staat*, ('Reichstagsbrandverordnung'), 28 February 1933, *Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1933 I, p. 83.
- <sup>4</sup> Detlef Garbe, *Zwischen Widerstand und Martyrium: Die Zeugen Jehovas im 'Dritten Reich'* (Munich, 1993), pp. 479ff.
- <sup>5</sup> Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses 1946* (Brooklyn, New York), p. 137 (hereafter *Yearbook ...*).
- <sup>6</sup> Compare Walter Bartel and Stefan Heymann (eds), *Konzentrationslager Buchenwald, Bd 1: Bericht des Internationalen Lagerkomitees* (Weimar, 1949), pp. 136f.: 'Was die Bibelforscher betrifft, so hatten sie in einer Protestresolution mit etwa 20000 Telegrammen 1934 bei Hitler gegen das Verbot ihrer Tätigkeit Einspruch erhoben, worauf ihre Funktionäre im Herbst 1934 in Magdeburg festgesetzt wurden. Von dieser Zeit bis zur Hauptaktion 1936 fanden laufend Verhaftungen statt. Schon mit den ersten Zugängen kamen in Buchenwald auch die ersten Bibelforscher an. Bis zum Herbst 1938 erhöhte sich ihre Zahl auf 450. Sie hatten hier harte Jahre zu verbringen, und die 1937 gegründete Strafkompagnie setzte sich hauptsächlich aus "Blaupunkten" zusammen, wie sie genannt wurden, weil sie große blaue Punkte als Markierung auf ihren Kleidern trugen. Ihre Hauptarbeit war Steintragen und auch sonst hatten sie die schwersten Arbeiten zu verrichten.'
- <sup>7</sup> Magdeburg Local Court, *Register* no. 819, extract from 24 September 1945. Permission of the education authority of Magdeburg city council, 13 October 1945.
- <sup>8</sup> *Yearbook ...*, 1947, p. 114; *Yearbook ...*, 1972, p. 137.
- <sup>9</sup> *Dedication of New Branch Facilities Bucharest, Rumania* (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Selters/Ts., 1998), p. 3 (hereafter *Dedication ...*).
- <sup>10</sup> Dirksen, *op. cit.*, ref. 1, p. 213.
- <sup>11</sup> *Yearbook ...*, 1947, p. 251.
- <sup>12</sup> Statement of Ministarstvo Unutrašnjih Poslova, Beograd, F.N.R.J., no. 2010, from 6 March 1946.
- <sup>13</sup> Sentence issued by Okružni Sud za Grad Zagreb (Kr. 375/47) from 5 February 1947.
- <sup>14</sup> *Yearbook ...*, 1948, p. 219.
- <sup>15</sup> *New York Times*, 22 February 1947: 'The Supreme Court of Croatia has recently commuted the death sentences of three Jehovah's Witnesses. As the result of an appeal, the three received sentences of twenty years imprisonment at hard labor.' The appeal was accompanied by many letters of protest from the USA and Europe and petitions to the embassy.
- <sup>16</sup> 'Pred okružnim sudom u Zagrebu otpočelo je suđenje rukovodiocima profašističke organizacije "Svjedoci Jehove"', *Narodni List*, 3 February 1947.
- <sup>17</sup> *Yearbook ...*, 1948, p. 219 and *Yearbook ...*, 1950, p. 253.
- <sup>18</sup> *Yearbook ...*, 1949, p. 161.
- <sup>19</sup> *Yearbook ...*, 1949, p. 132.
- <sup>20</sup> *Yearbook ...*, 1972, p. 139.
- <sup>21</sup> *The Watchtower* (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Brooklyn, New York), 15 August 1950, p. 255; *Yearbook ...*, 1949, p. 102.
- <sup>22</sup> *Dedication ...*, p. 4.

- <sup>23</sup> The Tribunalul Militar București, Sentința no. 756 (Dos. 1045/950), 27 July 1950 sentenced Albu Pamfil to 10 years of labour. Pamfil had also been arrested under the Nazis.
- <sup>24</sup> Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (MfS), Berlin, HA XX/4 237, p. 10. See also Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (London, 1999), p. 658.
- <sup>25</sup> Gosudarstvenny Archiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), Moscow, Fond 6991, o.3, d. 298, list 204.
- <sup>26</sup> This is the only annual celebration of the Witnesses; its official name is 'Memorial'. N. S. Gordiyenko, *Rossiiskie Svideteli Iyegovy: istoriya i sovremennost'* (St Petersburg, 2000), p. 20ff.
- <sup>27</sup> Sergei Ivanenko, *O lyudyakh, nikogda ne rasstayushchikhsya s Bibliyei* (Moscow, 1999), pp. 135f.
- <sup>28</sup> Walter Kolarz, *Die Religionen in der Sowjetunion* (Freiburg, 1963), p. 337.
- <sup>29</sup> *The Watchtower*, 1 January 1948, p. 5.
- <sup>30</sup> Lembit Toom, 'Half a century under totalitarian tyranny', *Awake!* (Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Brooklyn, New York), 22 February 1999, p. 12.
- <sup>31</sup> *loc. cit.*
- <sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.
- <sup>33</sup> The author wishes to express appreciation for the research assistance of Alexandru Moraru, Chișinău, specialist principal at the Archiva Națională a Republicii Moldova, who put documents concerning the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Moldavia at his disposal. For the decree see Hilda Sabbo, *Voimatu vaikida* (Tallinn, 1996), p. 1246.
- <sup>34</sup> Andrew and Mitrokhin, *op.cit.*, pp. 658ff.
- <sup>35</sup> 'Zakac działalności Zrzeszenia "Świadków Jehowy"', *Życie Warszawy*, 2 July 1950, p. 1.
- <sup>36</sup> Sentence of Wojskowy Sąd Rejonowy w Warszawie, 22 March 22, 1951, and sentence of Najwyższy Sąd Wojskowy, 19 May 1951.
- <sup>37</sup> "'Świadkowie Jehowy" – banda szpiegów amerykańskich. Sensacyjny proces w Warszawie', *Express Wieczorny*, 18 March 1951. See also Wolfram Slupina, 'Jehovahs Zeugen in Polen 1945–1989: die Verfolgungsgeschichte einer religiösen Minderheit', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* (Heidelberg), vol. 15, 2002.
- <sup>38</sup> BStU MfS Allg. P 501/63 (Leipzig), vol. 5, p. 63. On 4 April 1946 the Abteilung Informationsdienst of the city administration of Leipzig inquired at the Abteilung Aussendienst: 'In Leipzig soll eine religiöse Gemeinschaft mit dem Namen "Jehova" Gottesdienste bzw. religiöse Versammlungen abhalten. ... Es ist dabei im allgemeinen zu erörtern, wie die Tätigkeit von religiösen Gemeinschaften vor sich geht.'
- <sup>39</sup> Dirksen, *op. cit.*, p. 213.
- <sup>40</sup> Bundesarchiv Berlin, SAPMO, DY 30 IV 2/2/44, SED-Central Committee, decision of the Politburo, meeting of the Politburo of 13 September 1949.
- <sup>41</sup> Announcement by the minister of the interior, Steinhoff, on 31 August 1950, that Jehovah's Witnesses were 'struck from the list of permitted denominations and thereby banned'.
- <sup>42</sup> Sentence issued by the Oberstes Gericht der DDR, 4 October 1950, Az.: 1 Zst. (I) 3/50, published in *Neue Justiz*, 1950, pp. 452ff.
- <sup>43</sup> Dirksen, *op. cit.*, pp. 217ff.
- <sup>44</sup> For the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in the GDR in general see Hans-Hermann Dirksen, *Keine Gnade den Feinden unserer Republik. Die Verfolgung der Zeugen Jehovahs in der SBZ/DDR 1945–1990* (Berlin, 2001). For Thuringia, see Petra Weber, *Justiz und Diktatur: Justizverwaltung und politische Strafjustiz in Thüringen 1945–1961* (Munich, 2000), pp. 299f. For Saxony, see Gerald Hacke, *Zeugen Jehovahs in der DDR: Verfolgung und Verhalten einer religiösen Minderheit* (Dresden, 2000), p. 47.
- <sup>45</sup> Hacke, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- <sup>46</sup> Quotation from Gerhard Besier and Stephan Wolf (eds), *Pfarrer, Christen und Katholiken:*

*das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der ehemaligen DDR und die Kirchen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1992), pp. 150f.

<sup>47</sup> BStU MfS HA XX/4 1378, p. 143f.

<sup>48</sup> *The Watchtower*, 15 July 1993, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> Recording of reminiscences of Ádám Szinger, Paks, Hungary, 14 September 2000 (in possession of the author).

<sup>50</sup> *Yearbook ...*, 1996, p. 98.

<sup>51</sup> Történeti Hivatal (history archive) (Budapest), V-71056, pp. 36ff., police report IV/XV district No. 5300, 3 September 1950.

<sup>52</sup> Történeti Hivatal, V-71506, pp. 2ff., report of ÁVH, 9 November 1950.

<sup>53</sup> Történeti Hivatal, V-149998/4, pp. 4–19, criminal proceedings against János Konrád and others.

<sup>54</sup> *Yearbook ...*, 1996, p. 99.

<sup>55</sup> Történeti Hivatal, V-111784/4, pp. 37ff., criminal proceedings against Élek Nemes and others.

<sup>56</sup> Reminiscences of Ádám Szinger, Paks, Hungary.

<sup>57</sup> Történeti Hivatal, V-139674/1, p. 79ff., criminal proceedings against Zoltán Hubicsak and others.

<sup>58</sup> Carolyn R. Wah, 'Jehovah's Witnesses and the responsibility of religious freedom: the European experience', *Journal of Church and State*, vol. 43, no. 3, summer 2001, p. 579ff.