

Soviet Union: Standing Firm

(This is an incident report in the magazine of the Russian Student Christian Movement *VESTNIK*, No. 78, 1965) The story was told by a British tourist who had recently visited the USSR.

Upbeat

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The young girl's father was a communist and her mother was indifferent in matters of faith. She had never received any religious education but was secretly baptized in her infancy by her grandmother. The grandmother never had much influence on the girl, but after her death, when the girl was a college student, she found a New Testament. She read it once, became absorbed, read it again and again. She began attending church, keeping it a secret from everyone.

One day, talking to her mother on the phone, she used the words "God bless you!" Her fellow students heard her and her troubles began. At first they were amazed: "How can a member of the KOMSOMOL use such expressions?" "Do you mean to say you are a believer?" When she answered in the affirmative, the students made fun of her. They the KOMSOMOL Honor Board was called and they pressed her to give up her religious convictions. The girl refused.

Now the faculty and the college dean took up the affair. Because of her excellent grades, the dean suggested everything could be smoothed over if she would agree to give an anti-religious lecture, otherwise her scholarship would be taken away. When even this failed she had to appear before a special commission and after many hours of interrogation she was finally expelled.

Some of her fellow students gradually changed their attitude and gave her moral support. A few communists among them even became indignant at such a breach of religious freedom, guaranteed by the soviet constitution.