

Ivanovich Dolgorukov (d. 1867) insisted that the Bab be moved away from Maku (Kazemzadeh; BBR 72). From 1848 onwards, Dolgorukov referred frequently to the Bab and the Babis in the dispatches that he sent to the Russian Foreign Office. In 1849, Dolgorukov sent several reports of the Shaykh Tabarsi episode (q.v., BBR 92-5; "Excerpts"), and in 1850 he asked the Russian Consul in Tabriz to make inquiries about the doctrines of the Bab (BBR 9), as well as reporting the episodes at Zanzan (q.v., BBR 114-27; "Excerpts") and Nayriz (q.v., BBR 108).

When the attempt on the life of Nasiru'd-Din Shah occurred in 1852, Bahá'u'lláh was arrested as he left the Russian legation, where his brother-in-law, Mirza Majid Ahi, was a secretary. Dolgorukov exerted himself greatly to obtain Bahá'u'lláh's release, a fact that is referred to in Bahá'u'lláh's tablet to the Czar of Russia. On his release, Dolgorukov is reported to have offered to arrange for Bahá'u'lláh's exile to be in Russian territory; but Bahá'u'lláh declined, preferring to go to Baghdad. One further episode in Iran involving the Russian government occurred when the Bahá'ís of Isfahan were being severely persecuted in 1903 and took sanctuary in the Russian consulate, with the encouragement of the Russian consul Baronovski. However, the Russian consul then lost his nerve and the Bahá'ís were forced to leave the consulate, many being beaten badly by the mob outside as they did so. There must be many more reports about episodes in Babi and Bahá'í history in the Russian Foreign Office Archives but these have not as yet been researched.

Czar Alexander II was the recipient of one of Bahá'u'lláh's tablets (see "Kings and Leaders, Tablets to"). A number of Russian scholars were particularly active in investigating the Babi and Bahá'í religions. N.V. Khanykov, Bernard Dorn, and F.A. Bakulin collected material in Iran, while Alexander Tumanski (q.v.) studied the Bahá'í Faith among the Bahá'ís of Ashkhabad, and Baron Victor Rosen (q.v.) was responsible for publishing several of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh. Tumanski was responsible for the publication of a translation of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* (q.v.) into Russian.

2. Bahá'ís in Russia. From about 1884, Iranian

Bahá'ís began to migrate to the Russian territories immediately north of Iran, to Ashkhabad and Baku in particular. Here they found a freedom of worship and a freedom to build the institutions of their Faith which was denied to them in Iran (see "Central Asia" and "Azerbaijan"). A small Bahá'í community sprang up in Russia itself as well. One of the first Bahá'ís was Izabella Grinevskaia (q.v.), although it is difficult to be certain when she first considered herself a Bahá'í. She met `Abdu'l-Bahá in 1910 in Egypt and published plays and essays about the new religion. She was a resident of St. Petersburg. There were also a number of Iranian Bahá'í students and merchants in Moscow. Count Leo Tolstoy, the renowned author, was very interested in the Bahá'í Faith and met and corresponded with Bahá'ís.

However due to the strict control on religion in Russia, the Bahá'ís were not able to teach the Bahá'í Faith openly there.

For the first few years after the Bolshevik revolution, the Bahá'ís, although attacked in the government press (BW 2:35), benefited from the easing of some restrictions and were able to convert a few Russians to the Bahá'í Faith. Local spiritual assemblies were formed in Moscow and Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and a few other small communities arose in such places as Oriyol (?Auriol, Iryul, Uryul, ??XXX) near Moscow, where Hasan Bayk of Burda` in Russian Azerbaijan taught the Bahá'í Faith and succeeded in converting eight families.

Eventually, however, the pressures against the Bahá'ís and all religions intensified. In 1926, a Bahá'í visiting Moscow to give a public lecture was arrested and a printing press used for the publication of Bahá'í materials was confiscated. By 1928, there were extensive moves against all the Bahá'í communities in the Soviet Union. The Bahá'í communities

made many representations to the government against these persecutions but to no avail. Publications appeared attacking the Bahá'í Faith: I. Darov, *Bekhaizm: Novaia Religia Vostoka* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1930); and A. Arsharuni, *Bekhaizm* (Moscow: Bezbozhnik, 1930); while the Small Soviet Encyclopaedia published in 1933 denounced the Bahá'í Faith for camouflaging itself as "socialism" and stated that it was one of the "fashionable

religious philosophical systems which the bourgeoisie uses in its fight against the ideas of Socialism and Communism" (Kolarz 472). In 1938, numerous Bahá'ís were arrested and some of the Bahá'ís from Ashkhabad and other areas of Central Asia and the Caucasus were exiled to Siberia and elsewhere. All communal Bahá'í activity in the Soviet Union ceased from this date, although many of those remaining at home or in exile continued to hold firm in their faith. Another wave of persecutions and imprisonments occurred in 1948.

Throughout these years, the few remaining Bahá'ís in Russia were isolated from the rest of the Bahá'í world. Mr. Bakhadin Orudzhev (d. 1989) of Baku lived in Moscow from 1973 and isolated Bahá'ís were reported

in Penza and in a town near Leningrad but there is little information about such individuals. Although there were occasional Bahá'í visitors to Russia such as Lorol Schopflocher and Muzaffar Namdar, they did not attempt to contact the Bahá'ís there.

Shoghi Effendi made the opening of all of the Soviet Republics in Asia a goal of the Ten Year Crusade (q.v.). But no Knights of Bahá'u'lláh (q.v.) were named for these areas as it was found that there were already Bahá'ís living there. The German Bahá'ís were given the responsibility of trying to strengthen the Bahá'í community in Russia in 1963. During the 1960s and 1970s, a small number of Bahá'ís visited the Soviet Union as tourists but no attempt was made to teach the Bahá'í Faith.

3. Resurrection of the Russian Bahá'í community.

From 1979 onward, a small number of Bahá'í pioneers managed to settle in

Russia. Paul Semenoff and his cousin Kathryn Soloveoff, two Canadian Bahá'ís of Doukhobor origin, arrived in Ivanovo to study Russian on 21 August 1979. Soloveoff had to return after four months because of her mother's illness but Semenoff stayed until 1981. At about the end of 1981, Mr. Muhammad Nur at-Tayyib from the Sudan came to Leningrad, where he remained until 1988. He was joined in 1986 by Friedo and Shole Zölzer and Karen Reitz from Germany, who all remained for short periods of time. Mr. Leif Hjerpe of Sweden lived in Moscow in 1980-81. In 1982, Richard and Corinne Hainsworth from the United Kingdom settled in Moscow, where they remain to the present, and where they were joined by Andrew and Vivien Bromfield from Ireland who remained from 1987 to 1993. Mr. Zaffarullah Nassim, a Bahá'í from Sri Lanka, opened the city of Krasnodar to the Bahá'í Faith in 1987, and was joined by Mr. Fondem from Ghana in 1989.

The first Russian to become a Bahá'í in this new phase of growth was Miss Katya Zalenskaya in Leningrad in 1982. Anja Skreptsova became a Bahá'í in Moscow in 1984; Dr. Natalya Konstantinova Belisheva in Leningrad in September 1987; and Mrs. Irina Skladnova of Novgorod in 1987. In July 1989, Bahá'ís took part in a Peace Camp at Murmansk resulting in five new Bahá'ís. Among others who became Bahá'ís in that early period were Stanislav Koncebovski, who was the first to translate Bahá'í books into Russian in recent times, and Maria Skreptsova, who was later elected to the National Spiritual Assembly. By the end of 1989, there were some twenty-three Bahá'ís in Moscow, six in Leningrad, twenty-one in Murmansk, two in Krasnodar, and one in Petrozavodsk. In March 1990, Abbas and Rezvanieh Katirai became the last Knights of Bahá'u'lláh (q.v.) to be named when they pioneered to Sakhalin Island.

From December 1989 onwards, most of the growth of the Bahá'í Faith in Russia was the result of organized groups of Bahá'ís from Europe, North America, Japan, and elsewhere coming to Russia for periods of a few weeks. The first such group came from Hawaii in December 1989 and resulted in five new Bahá'ís in Kazan. Since 1987, Lynda Goodwin had been leading tours organized by the Center for US/USSR Initiatives. These groups would often have a few Bahá'ís in them. On 1 January 1990, a public meeting on the Bahá'í Faith was organized in St. Petersburg in the course of one such tour. Between February and April 1990, the South American Bahá'í musical group "El Viento Canta" toured Russia, leading to Bahá'í converts in Ulan-Ude and Severobaikalsk in Siberia. Many more organized groups came throughout 1990-92, some staying in one place and others traveling to various centers. In 1990, the Soviet American Cooperation Society was set up in the United States (by Lynda Goodwin and Bill Mahoney) and NetEast was set up in Canada to facilitate the flow of Bahá'í visitors from North America. There were also groups drawn from all of the European countries and organized by the German Bahá'ís. Of particular note have been native Bahá'ís from North America and Greenland who have gone to the native populations of eastern Siberia.

In April 1990, the Hand of the Cause Mr. Furutan (q.v.) traveled to Russia and was present at the election of the Local Spiritual

Assembly of Moscow at Ridvan 1990. Further local assemblies were formed later that same year in Ulan-Ude (August), Kazan (September), Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk (September), Leningrad (October) and Murmansk (October). On 8-9 December 1990, the first conference of the Bahá'ís of the Soviet Union was held in Moscow with representatives of thirty-five Bahá'í communities present, twenty-three of these being in Russia itself. There were now over three hundred Bahá'ís in Russia. By September 1991, there were some eight hundred Bahá'ís in twenty-three local assembly areas and some thirty-eight other localities.

In April 1991, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Soviet Union was formed at a convention held in Moscow. But by Ridvan 1992, following the rapid political changes taking place in the country, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Soviet Union was replaced by four new assemblies. One of these was the Regional Spiritual Assembly of Russia, Georgia, and Armenia. By Ridvan 1993, there were some 3,000 Bahá'ís in Russia with 40 local spiritual assemblies.

There has usually been good relationships with the government authorities in recent times. The Regional Spiritual Assembly received, on 12 April 1993, a registration certificate recognizing it as the central institution of the Bahá'í Faith in Russia. Also of importance has been the development of an increasingly strong relationship with the Parliament of the Saka Republic (Yakutia) in Yakutsk, which was begun by Jens Lyberth of Greenland and continued through the visit of Hand of the Cause Ruhyyih Khanum and her address to the Parliament in 1993.

See also: "Grinevskaia, Izabella"; "Rosen, Baron Victor"; "Tumanski, Alexander"; "Kings and Leaders, Letters to"

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