

That vast empire of Russia

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints views on Russia in the 1990's

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Tiivistelmä – Referat <p>Pro gradussa tarkastellaan Myöhempien aikojen pyhien Jeesuksen kristuksen kirkon (MAP), joka tunnetaan yleisesti myös mormonikirkkona, julkisten materiaalien antamaa kuvaa Venäjästä 1990-luvulla ja miten se muuttui tutkimusjakson aikana. Tutkimusmetodina on historiallinen kuvatutkimus, jonka tavoitteena on luoda yhtenäinen käsitys siitä, millaisen kuvan tietyn henkilön tai ryhmän tuottama materiaali antaa valitusta asiasta. Tutkimusaineistona on käytetty MAP-kirkon verkkojulkaisuja Church News, Liahona, LDS Database, New Era ja Ensign sekä lähetysjohtaja Gary L. Browningin muistelmateosta Russia and Restored Gospel.</p> <p>Tutkimusmateriaaleista nousevat havainnot MAP-kirkon antamasta Venäjä-kuvasta on jaettu kahteen pääluokkaan: havaintoihin venäläisestä yhteiskunnasta ja toisaalta venäläisestä arkielämästä. Näiden otsikoiden alla käsitellään kolmatta kysymystä, Venäjä-kuvan muutoksia. Pääluokat on jaettu esiin nousevien teemojen mukaan alalukuihin. Venäläisen yhteiskunnan osalta teemoja ovat Venäjän maantiede ja kulttuuri, vapaus, köyhyys sekä MAP-kirkon lähetystyöntekijöiden kokemat uhat. Arkielämän teemoja ovat köyhyys, perhe ja moraaliset ongelmat.</p> <p>Tutkimusmateriaalin perusteella voi tehdä kaksi päähavaintoa: MAP-kirkon antama kuva Venäjästä perustuu vahvasti sen omaan lähetystoimintaan ja yksilöiden kokemuksiin. Esiin nousee paikkoja ja tapahtumia, jotka ovat kirkon kannalta merkittäviä. Tilastoja ja muita faktatietoja ei juuri käytetä esitettyjen mielikuvien tukena.</p>			
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1. Introduction

1.1 Research questions

In 1843, two men from a religious group called Latter Day Saints (LDS) were leaving USA to Russia to present their faith to Russians. Their leader Joseph Smith jr. told in his farewell speech these men that the vast empire of Russia will play an important role in building the Kingdom of God in the last days. His prophecy left the specific role of Russia unclear except for saying his words would be impossible to understand at the time and become obvious later. He did not bring up Russia later in his speeches or writings. However, the prophecy made Russia special for his followers.¹

The group that Joseph Smith, jr. founded is better known as the Mormons. The name comes from the angel Moron who is said to bring Smith the message he started spreading. Smith wrote the Book of Mormon and several other holy scriptures to the church he had founded in 1830. After his death in 1844, his followers split into several groups. The best-known and widest spread of them is the Church of Latter Day Saints of Jesus Christ (LDS Church). Mission has been important to the church from the very beginning. The centre of the church is located in Utah, USA. Mission is done all over the world. According to the church's own statistics, there were 13.5 million LDS members globally in 2008.²

In spite of the mystical importance of Russia, it was only in the threshold of the collapse of Soviet Union in the end of 1980's when the LDS church could safely start systematic mission in the country. In my master thesis, I have studied the public LDS view of Russia. My research questions have been:

- 1) How is the Russian society presented in public LDS material in the 1990's?
- 2) How is everyday life in Russian mission presented in this material?

¹ Browning 1997 a, p. 5

² BBC Religion 2009.

3) How do these images of Russia change during 1990's?

I want to point out that my intention is to present the LDS views about Russia. In other words, this thesis is about what the LDS Church wanted to say about Russia. Thus, I am not even trying to give an objective image of what has happened there. Groups that are important to LDS Mission but are not of interest in my study are the Russian converts, Russians in general, Russian officials and politicians and so on. Their perspectives are left to be studied in other studies. Together with these other still unmade researches my research can be used to construct a holistic and more objective image that covers views from all relevant parties.

The LDS Church was officially registered as a religious organization in Russia 13th September 1990. Before that, some groundwork for it was done by LDS members. Many of them were Finnish. The next year the Church had 700 members and four branches in Russia. In 1999 the LDS Church had 11,092 Russian members and 103 branches around the country.³ The number could be seen low since it was only about 0.008 per cent of the total population.

Several congregations and churches started mission in Russia after the Soviet Union collapsed. They got plenty of media attention and curiosity but none of them attracted big percentages of the Russian people to the stage of becoming their members. After 1990's their growth stopped and some membership rates even turned negative. All together, only 0.2 per cent of the Russian population belonged to them. LDS's popularity was roughly in the same category with the Scientology that had about 15,000 – 20,000 active members in 2009. It was more than, for example, The Unification Church that only had a little more than 1,000 members. The most popular of the new congregations was Jehova's Witnesses that had been founded in USA in the middle 19th century and registered in Russia in the beginning of the 1990's like the LDS Church. It gained more than 100,000 members.⁴

On the other hand, the growth was remarkable for LDS compared to some other countries. For example in a major Asian country India the church grew from 800 members in 1990 to only 2,865 members in 2000. Just like Russia, India had been culturally far from the West and had strong religious tradition of

³ International LDS Database: Russia.

⁴ Lunkin & Sterin 2009, p. 245 – 252.

its own.⁵ After the 1990's the growth rates in Russia started to decline and even turned slightly negative in some years, especially in the late 2000's. One possible explanation to this could be that LDS with its very American image attracted Russians who had been isolated from the West during the long Soviet period. LDS comments about the developments imply that the growth stopped because American things, like the LDS, were not anymore new and exciting. It also appeared that some of the members had joined the Church because of curiosity instead of their commitment to the faith. After a short burst of enthusiasm, they gave up their membership. Some of the first LDS members in Russia were people who had emigrated to USA or Western Europe in the Soviet times and came back after the Cold War was over. By the end of 1990's, all of them had most likely made their move and migration stopped influencing the numbers of LDS members. Most of the LDS material that I have gone through for this study does not show any disappointment to the number of members gained in Russia.⁶ However, researcher Matt Martinich wrote a brief comparative text about LDS and Jehovah's Witnesses success in the country on LDS research site Cumorah. He found two main reasons for the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses had managed to spread significantly more than LDS in Russia. First of all, they had more members to engage to mission work to start with in the early 1990's. The second reason for the rather quick growth of Jehovah's Witnesses was that they did not demand as long process before baptize as did the LDS Church.⁷

My reasons for choosing the LDS view on Russia for topic of my thesis are many. First of all, I wanted my thesis to deal with something outside of Finland. I have specifically interested in Russian history for my entire master studies. I wanted to continue learning and going deeper to the theme. I knew through my personal connections to LDS that the church finds documentation important and therefore have material for research. Going through the databases I used to search for material confirmed this idea. When I started searching for information about the topic I soon found out that LDS history in Russia was not much studied academically before. No one had put all the material systematically together and analysed it. I would not be doing something someone else has

⁵ Stewart & Martinich s.a. a.

⁶ Stahle 1999.

⁷ Martinich 2013

already done by choosing this topic. I would be able to bring something new to a field of academic study that has not been analysed all that much before.

LDS church is a very American by its background and reputation. It was founded in the territory of USA by an American man. America and Americans has a key role in its texts and teachings. Just before the period I am observing in my thesis, Soviet Union and USA were the greatest enemies of each others. In the beginning of the 1990's, the relations of the countries were still undefined in many ways. There were high hopes but also great fears in the air. One reason for choosing this period of time was that I found the formerly hostile relations of the nations interesting. It could be assumed that the setting would create tensions between LDS and Russians.⁸ The idea of using the non-digital LDS archives attracted me but unfortunately I did not have a possibility to travel a long way to Salt Lake City, Utah, where the archives are located.

I have divided my work in six chapters. In chapter 2, called Religion in Russia before 1990's, I briefly go through at the position of religion in Russia before 1990's. I focus on observing the possibilities that other congregations than the dominating Russian Orthodox church has had for mission and other operation. Chapter 3, Mormon mission in Russia, is an introduction of the LDS Church and mission in general. It is supposed to give the reader an idea of the basic history, structures, hierarchies, teachings and practises of the church. This information will help understanding some motives of the image that the church gives about Russia.

The next two chapters seek answers to my research questions. Chapter 4, The LDS views of Russian society examines how everyday life in Russia appears in the LDS material. In chapter 5, The LDS views on every day living in Russia, the approach is more political. It shows how the LDS writers present the Russian society. In some cases, the line between the division of everyday life and society is not clear because many political decisions have major effects on everyday life. Therefore, the division is not absolute. My third research question is considered in both chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 6 consists of my conclusions.

⁸ See chapter 3.

1.2 Method, materials and former research

My method is historical image research. It is introduced in a book called *Looking at the other* edited by Kari Alenius, Olavi K. Fält and Seija Jalagin. Historical image research has been found useful for studying cultural confrontation. In the introduction of the method, Alenius made clear that image is something deeper and more lasting than opinions. The focus lied in the actor who is making the image and less to the subject of the image. Alenius writes that the image is a heritage that its creator will pass to the readers.⁹

Historical image research can be used to study images that are presented by individuals. For example, Seija Jalagin has researched Western women's images of Japanese women in the 19th century by studying letters and other written sources they produced. Her conclusion was that the length and personal relations with Japanese women had a major impact on the image. Women who had contacts with Japanese women and who stayed in Japan for a longer time had a more varied image of them. A similar conclusion was made by Kari Alenius who studied images that Estonians gave about their neighbouring nationalities and the other way around.¹⁰ Jalagin also noticed that some Western women wrote about their Japanese women to express opinions about their own societies.¹¹

In addition to images presented by individuals, images studied in historical image research can also be formed by groups of different sizes. They can be anything go families to entire nations or continents. The bigger the group is the more views it has. It may be very difficult to evaluate which images represent the image of the whole group or the majority of it. Sometimes individual members' views differ greatly from the common image – if any common image can be identified at all. Therefore, it is important to understand the history, position, nature and structure of the group. Hierarchies can affect the relevance of the sources. The researcher has to recognize that it can be easier to find materials created by people who belong to the higher levels of hierarchy than the so called ordinary members. They can be assumed to play a more important role inside the

⁹ Fält 2002, p. 8 – 10.

¹⁰ Alenius 2002, p. 71.

¹¹ Jalagin 2002, p. 30 – 31.

group and can therefore create common images.¹² I take a closer look at the characteristic features such as hierarchies. of the LDS Church in chapter three.

Images can be more or less intentional. It is not exceptional to use public media and propaganda to turn selected ideas to common images. My thesis deals with 1990's that followed the time of the Cold War which meant a hostile or at least non-friendly relations between Soviet Union and USA. In both countries, the politicians and media tended to create enemy images of each other. The purpose of enemy images is to get support for certain political ideas and movements. As the LDS Church is founded and based in USA, it is important to comprehend the relations between USA and Russia. It can be assumed that general attitudes towards Russia and Russians have affected Mormon mission workers and the church's materials. Especially David S. Foglesong's study *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"* and William Inboden's *Religion and American Foreign policy* have been very useful for me. Sinikka Wunsch has noticed enemy images are not constructed in a chronological manner. Elements from distant past can dominate the image as more recent happenings and facts play a minor role.¹³

The sources of my study are public materials of the LDS Church and its members. The main sources are the Church's own online resources: International LDS Database¹⁴, Church News¹⁵, Liahona¹⁶, New Era¹⁷ and Ensign¹⁸. Searching with the word Russia and the given time frame gave me 113 articles from these services. The articles did not divide equally to all years of the decade. Numbers of articles per year lie between two articles from 1990 to 16 articles from 1992.

International LDS Database provides statistics and description of LDS work in different countries and regions. Church News is, as the name says, a source of news about the LDS church edited by members of the church. Liahona, New Era and Ensign have a more spiritual nature. They contain testimonies and

¹² Raiskio 2002, p. 54.

¹³ Foglesong 2007, 174; Looking at the Other 2002, 87.

¹⁴ International LDS Database.

¹⁵ Church News.

¹⁶ Liahona.

¹⁷ New Era.

¹⁸ Ensign

messages from LDS leaders but also some inspiring news – often taken from the Church News. They seem to be targeted to church members more than the two other sites. All of these websites are run from the centre of the Church, Utah, USA.

Liahona, New Era and Ensign contain testimonies about the church and their spiritual experiences, mostly conversion, from LDS members. Some of them are written by Russian people who describe their home country as a part of their testimony. All published texts are chosen by editors who are LDS members and can be assumed to follow church's policies. That is why I consider them as LDS interpretations of Russia. It is possible that materials have been removed, added or edited. This kind of instability belongs to the nature of internet resources.

The Russian LDS Church has its own sites. One of them, the official Russian LDS church site, contains information about the church and its teachings. Most of its contents seem to be straight translations from the global English Lds.org content but also information about the Church in Russia and other Russian speaking areas.¹⁹ The other site is a source of church news in Russian. It was not useful for my research since it only contains news from 2003 on.

One of my sources is Gary Browning's memoir *Russia and the restored gospel*. It is an account of his years as a LDS mission president in Finland Helsinki Mission East and then Russia Moscow Mission from early 1990 to middle 1993. Some twenty years earlier he served as an LDS missionary in Finland and visited Russia. This book offers a detailed view to the very first years of LDS mission in Russia. After the mission, he returned to Utah to study Russian literature, culture and language and became a professor of it at BYU. Browning quotes a great deal of letters he has received from Russian LDS members. That makes the book richer in descriptions of Russian life and society. It must be remembered, however, that Browning is responsible for selecting the quotations. They are likely to represent and support his views. As a high profile LDS authority, Browning could be expected to formulate his written heritage to his readers in a way that puts LDS in good light.²⁰

Since LDS is a religious organization, the majority of my research materials were written from a religious point of view. Statements and evaluations

¹⁹ Lds.ru

²⁰ Browning 1997 a.

about Russia, its people and society are mostly implications in between stories about conversion and descriptions about church activities. Religious freedom and conditions for practising religion are unquestionably the major themes in my materials. Yet they included statements about several other things like family, education, democracy and poverty. Even if individual implications to these issues were brief, together they were enough to get a general idea. This kind of a situation is common in historical image research. Often the views that were the main interest for the researcher is not the most obvious theme of the material.

There was not much academic study available about LDS or Mormonism in general in Russia. Many reasons for this can be thought of. First of all, the Church had not worked in Russia for a long time. Amount of LDS members is very moderate in percentage. Perhaps that was why it did not attract researcher that are interested in influential phenomena in the societies. In general, there are not all that many researchers who are interested in Mormonism. The centre of academic research of Mormonism is Brigham Young University (BYU) in Utah. From there, Russia may have seemed somewhat remote and difficult to access, at least partly because of the Slavic language and culture.

Some research have been done, though. Professor Matt Heiss from BYU has written books and articles about LDS mission in Eastern Europe, also in Russia. Kahlile Mehr's book *Mormon mission enter Eastern Europe* is account of LDS mission in the east side of the Iron curtain before the Soviet Union collapsed.²¹ Finnish researcher Kim Östman has done academic research about Mormonism in Finland. His doctoral thesis, called *The Introduction of Mormonism to Finnish Society 1840–1900*, has given me some important information about LDS and it's mission. Finnish LDS Church had a key role in entering Russia.²²

There was plenty of academic research about the general history of Russia and religion's position there. However, most of it seems to be dealing with the traditional major congregations like the Russian Orthodox Church. It is more difficult to find research about the new foreign groups. There has not been much time for research since the period of my research is only twenty years away. Another reason could be that much of the relevant information lies in closed archives of the Russian state and LDS.

²¹ Mehr 2002.

²² Östman 2010.

The LDS Church is famous for its systematic registers. Digitalizing materials is currently in process but still far from complete. It would have been very useful for me to visit the LDS central archive in Salt Lake City, Utah. Unfortunately, I did not have a possibility to do that. Though, modern technology helped me to establish connections to BYU. They sent me some materials by e-mail.

Even if the historical images that groups share are common for the whole group it would be wrong to assume that all group members would automatically share them. Individual members should not be seen as a brainwashed mass who have no will or skill to question official materials of the group. They all have their own backgrounds, experiences and personal features.²³ It is difficult to know say how well my research material, the official online LDS Church materials, represent different views of the church members. It is also difficult to say how many different views of Russia there are in inside the LDS community. Criteria for texts published in the forums or their writers that I use for my research are not visible anywhere. I recognize this limitation in my research. A more detailed study of individual LDS views on Russia is surely an issue worth further studies.

The main object of my research is the LDS community that has produced its own image of Russia. To understand the image better it is enlightening to study materials that might have had an impact on LDS ideas. Several individuals have participated the production of my source material so it is obviously impossible to track everything. Some major trends and materials can be pointed, though. As mentioned above, Mormonism is a deeply American congregation. Therefore, it is likely that the American media has influenced the minds of LDS members. It has been useful for me to get to know the American anti-Soviet propaganda through articles and literature. I have also gone through a great number of articles about Soviet Union and Russia on Deseret News website. Deseret News is a media company owned by the LDS Church. In addition to the website, the company publishes the newspaper Deseret News. During 2014 the LDS Church News was brought under Deseret News website.²⁴

²³ Koivunen & Tikka 2014, 139.

²⁴ Deseret News: About us.

1.3 Ethical considerations

Since my aim is to research how LDS representatives represent Russia in their public material, it is clear that my material favours the LDS Church and Mormonism. It would be false to think that it would show me the objective truth about what actually happened – if such an objective truth exists at all. It is likely that the writers have left out things that are not in favour of LDS Church's interest. During the writing process, I have been aware of the risk that reading LDS perspectives affect my own thinking.

I am not an LDS Church member. The best way to describe my relationship with it could be to call me an outsider who has had a possibility to observe the LDS closely. Many of my friends belong to the church. I used to spend a lot of time in the LDS community in the early 2000's. Since then, my connection to it has become more random. I know personally some of the Finnish LDS members who are mentioned in my source material. Yet, I have never belonged to the community or shared its religious beliefs.

It is possible that my experiences, memories and personal relations affect the research even if my intention is to follow the rules of science strictly. The effects can be both negative and positive. On the negative side, my analysis could become less critical to the church. It is possible that I have forgotten to explain the LDS terms and practises because their meanings are obvious for me. On the other hand, my personal bond to the church can help me understand Mormonism and the church better and be motivated about my research. Without my experiences with the LDS members I doubt I would ever have chosen an LDS related subject for my master thesis.

My personal values, attitudes and beliefs have an impact on everything I do. This applies also to this research. It is likely impossible for me to make a complete account of how it has affected my research. However, it would be different if it was made by someone else.

My research period, the 1990's, is historically very close. We know what happened before it but not much about what will happen after it. Therefore, it is impossible to analyse in the same way older times are analysed. It is still too early to say which things will be considered the most important turning points and key features of the decade in the historical perspective generally and for Russia and LDS community.

2. Religion in Russia before 1990's

Russia became an officially Christian country in 998 when emperor Vladimir of the Kievan Russia decided to adopt the Orthodox faith and expect the same from the people he ruled. Centuries of active and passive resistance followed but gradually Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) became a part of Russian society and people's identity. Its relationship with the state varied according to political circumstances and preferences of emperors. In general, it can be said that ROC was an important partner for the Russian government until the October Revolution in 1917.²⁵

Even if ROC had a very dominant position in Russia, it would be a major simplification to claim it was the only religion in the empire. Being ethnically and geographically enormous, Russia beheld a great number of traditions. This is true even despite the fact that the size of the empire altered. For a thousand years, half of Europe's Muslims have lived in Russia. They live in Eastern and Southern Russia. Since the 1700's there have been a varying number of Jews. Catholic and Protestant communities have been formed in the Western parts of Russia. In the Mongolian minority of Russia there are Buddhists. In the late 20th century, ancient forms of Russian paganism increased their popularity. Position of these "other" religions in Russia has always been a subject to major changes. Mostly, they have been limited and even oppressed. Jews lacked civil rights until 1917. Russian state made a great effort to keep the Catholic church away from the country. Legal boundaries were established to stop other denominations than ROC from growing.²⁶

In 1917, the Bolshevik party took over Russia in the October revolution. It became the first and biggest state of Soviet Union, USSR by its official name. Gradually the federation got bigger. By the end of World War II it had reached its final great size. In 1991, the federation was altogether 22,402,200 km². It covered areas from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Sea.

The Bolshevik party blamed religion, especially ROC, for many problems in the country. Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin had Marxist ideas about religion: he believed it was a necessity for people who suffered from bad

²⁵ Luukkanen 2009, 70 – 78; Martin 2009, p. 6; Alexander 2009, p. 117; Marker 2009, p. 159.

²⁶ Aitamurto 2010, p. 266; Harviainen 2010, p. 194 – 195; Ketola 2010, p. 92; Laitila 2010, p. 217, 242 – 243; Östman, p. 17.

social and political conditions. He assumed socialism would solve these problems and erase religion. In the ideal world, religion would not be needed. In practice, Lenin wanted to erase religion quite slowly without provoking believers too much. Some of his officials and active party members were for more aggressive approach.²⁷

Officially, Soviet Russia, as the whole USSR was an atheist country from the beginning to the end. After stating this it is, however, necessary to remind that the Soviet history was not at all coherent when it comes to state church relations. Tendency to create separation between these two institutions existed even before the October Revolution.²⁸

Secularization of the state meant many changes. Those included transferring the maintenance of civil register from ROC to state, reforming the school education programs and nationalizing ROC's property without compensation. Also more symbolical steps towards secular state were taken, partly to show authority to ROC. For example, traditional Julian calendar was replaced by the Gregorian and divorce that ROC considered as a sin was made easier.²⁹

At the beginning of Stalin's era, space of religion was diminished. Churches were closed. In the religion law of 1929, religious propaganda and group activities were restricted. In the Great Purges of the late 1930's clergy was one of the numerous groups facing deportations, imprisonments and executions. ROC's popularity declined also by the rapid urbanization which resulted from Stalin's efforts to industrialize USSR. Stalin was not that much worried about religion as a ideologically wrong thing. As a big and highly respected organization it was first of all a political enemy that could create conspiracy towards the government.³⁰

During the Second World War Stalin changed his course about ROC. The same qualities that had made it so dangerous were now adopted to benefit the government. This brought ROC close to state control. As it was made harmless, it could be sent to the West to testify that USSR was not at all as intolerant about religion as thought. In 1970's, when the atmosphere in Russia

²⁷ Luukkanen 2009, p. 252 – 253; Husband, p. 335; McKown 1975, p. 95.

²⁸ Zelnik 2009, p. 278.

²⁹ Orlovsky, p. 306; Husband 2009, p. 335; Luukkanen 2009, p. 246.

³⁰ Luukkanen 2009, p. 317, 334; Siegelbaum 2009, p. 364 – 370.

loosened, ROC was criticized by dissidents for its connections to the state. Stalin wanted to keep USSR isolated from too much Western style freedom. That meant also keeping foreign denominations away. Stalin's suspiciousness towards minorities, especially Jews, increased in his last years: he blamed them for trying to poison him. These accusations harmed Jew's position that was not easy in the beginning.³¹

In the late 1950's, the Communist party decided to get rid of Stalinism's burden and speed up the process of socialization. This meant hardening times for ROC and other religions which were again seen as enemies of the society. Khrushchev launched an anti-religious campaign that was devastating for all religious organization but especially to ROC that lost 59 of its 69 monasteries and 13,500 of its 22,000 parish churches. Anti-religious actions were proceeded at some extent until the early 1980's.³² The intensive phase of these politics ended, however, by the 1970's and made room for religious and other dissident movements. One of the most well-known of them from the Western perspective was the Jewish movement that brought up the Soviet oppression of Jews. A great number of Jews moved from USSR to USA because of the hostility they faced. More and more Russians were now looking for spirituality, both from ROC and other denominations. They made an exception from their European neighbours. In other Eastern European countries interest to religion in post-Soviet times correlated with the number of people who had had a religious raising. In countries where religious raising was common, also interest to spirituality was high. In Russia, only 19 per cent said in 1990 they had been raised religiously but the interest to spirituality was very high. Some of the Russians felt ROC was their obvious spiritual home but others were suspicious about its history and looked for something different.³³

Soviet era created its own cults with religious characters. New holidays and ways to celebrate them were invented to replace the Christian ones. Socialistic world would come as a reward for good deeds and patience just like heaven in religion. Especially Stalin tended to create a harsh separation between good and evil as was done in ROC's teachings. Soviet leaders were praised using

³¹ Murtorinne 2010, p. 17 – 20; Harviainen 2010, p. 191 – 194; Fuller 2009, p. 391, 404; Freeze 2009, p. 407; Luukkanen 2009, p. 351, 380, 400, 407

³² Murtorinne 2009, p. 35 – 36; Luukkanen 2009, p. 381; Freeze 2009, p. 429; Lewin 2008, p. 241

³³ Murtorinne 2010, p. 37; Kääriäinen 2010, p. 65; Freeze 2009 a, p. 448; Luukkanen 2009, p. 407; Fogelson 2007, p. 149.

biblical attributes. This started already at Lenin's times as party intellectuals started to create communistic doctrines. The regional party leader of Leningrad did not hesitate to describe Lenin as a prophet, saint and apostle. He found it awkward and ordered to stop it. After his death he could not anymore prevent his supporters from developing the cult of his personality, and that was indeed what they did. Stalin on his side did not mind about the cult created around him, quite the opposite. He encouraged it and participated in strengthening the cult of Lenin.³⁴

In 1988 Russia celebrated the thousandth anniversary of Christianity's presence. Mikhail Gorbachev had taken the leadership of USSR and started his politics to create a more open society. Religious tolerance was one of the features of these politics. Religious oppression was stopped and entrance of foreign – including American – denominations was made possible. Gorbachev wanted to establish good relations to ROC. He expected the church to help secular government and administration to fight moral problems like prostitution, alcohol and drug abuse. He believed atheists and believers had similar issues to solve, for instance the world peace. Some of the Soviet officials and politicians suggested promoting so called progressive religiosity. An additional reason for the positive attitude towards Christianity, even the Protestant denominations, was the rise of Islam that was happening especially in Central Asia. The doors were now opening even for LDS.³⁵

3. Mormon mission in Russia

As mentioned in the introduction, Mormonism was founded by Joseph Smith jr. He believed that angel Moron had told him the ultimate truth about Christianity that the human kind had lost. This happened in 1820. His mission was to share the restored gospel to the world. He started the work immediately by telling about his experiences to as many people as he could. In 1827, another vision made him publish Moroni's words in written form.

Smith was described as a strong leader. He made himself and his ideas seen where ever he was. He tended to get involved in politics and seek

³⁴ Luukkanen 2009, p. 294, 307; Fuller 2009, p. 403 – 404.

³⁵ Murtorinne 2009, p. 39; Freeze 2009 b, p. 458; Luukkanen 2009, p. 425.

positions of high profile. He even run for president of USA. He was active in business. This made him both popular and hated. He had to move several times during his life in order to get away from growing pressures against him. Many of the Mormons followed him from New York state to Ohio in 1831 and then from Ohio to Missouri in 1838. Sometimes, conflicts with local citizens led Smith jr. to problems with authorities. He and his business partners were accused for several financial crimes. Another major reason that provoked internal and external tensions was polygamy that was practised in the Mormon community and by John Smith jr. himself. Smith jr. was imprisoned several times and murdered in jail while waiting for a trial in the state of Illinois in 1844.³⁶

When Joseph Smith jr. was still alive, he was the unquestionable head of the church, even despite of the occasional internal disagreements. After Smith's death, the Mormons could not agree about the leader and was divided into several groups. They differ by their doctrines and practises. Some of the members felt that the church should be given to Smith's son Joseph Smith III. They founded a church that now known as Community of Christ. The most widespread and well-known of them was led by one of Smith's close apostle Brigham Young. Majority of the other apostles joined it. It is called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In 1847, Young and other LDS members settled in Salt Lake City where they started to build cities in the territory that later became known as the state of Utah.³⁷

The LDS Church did not have paid clergy. The priesthood was open for all male members but it was divided to two levels: Melchizedek or higher priesthood and Aaronic or lower priesthood. The priesthood had to be received from someone already holding it. Theological training was not needed because the call for the church's positions comes through a spiritual revelation. The leader of the church, First President, was considered as a prophet like Joseph Smith jr.

Smith jr. created the majority of the holy scriptures that the Mormons follow. The most important of them is The Book of Mormon. It was published in 1830. After that, Smith wrote several other books and guides, including The Word of Wisdom. It contains practical guidelines for ideal living like avoiding caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and premarital sex. Later generations have made their contributions to the scriptures.

³⁶ Östman 2010, p. 33 – 44; Koester 2007, 62.

³⁷ Östman 2010, p. 45.

Mormonism's relationship with Christianity was debated right from the start. Sometimes, LDS is seen as a Christian church, sometimes not. It is not all that easy to find clear and objective material about the issue. One of the reasons is that both Christian and Mormon doctrines are somewhat complex. Even Mormons have different views about the issue. The official LDS view it is actually the Christians who have lost their touch to the true and original Christianity which Mormonism represents. The Mormons hold Bible as a holy book. The Book of Mormon is considered to be an additional part to it. Raising Joseph Smith jr and other church leaders in position of prophets like Moses or Aron is alone enough a reason for some Christians to draw a line between Mormonism and Christianity. In Mormonism's early years, as a part of their own group identity building, the Mormons had very hostile views about Christian denominations. Nowadays the LDS Church calls itself Christian. It encourages its members to co-operation with other Christian Churches. Still, the highest level of eternal life is reserved only for those who follow God's commands – which means being a descent Mormon.³⁸

One thing that clearly separates Mormon belief from mainstream Christianity is the concept of God. God is superior in Mormon belief just like in Christianity. However, he is believed to have a physical male body. He is married and able to have children. There are several gods but the father god, Elohim, is above the others. The Holy Trinity is not recognized in Mormonism as it is understood in Christianity in general. Jesus is considered as God's son and Holy Spirit as God's gift to humankind. Together they are Godhead, united in purpose but not in substance.³⁹

As the name of the church implies, the Mormons believe in Jesus as a saviour. They believe Jesus had received a mission from God and gave an example of ideal living for all people. Just like the Christians in general, the Mormons believe that Jesus will return on the last days. His faithful followers will be taken to live in glory with him in the eternity. A remarkable difference to Christianity is that Mormons believe that one can only be saved through his or her own deeds. These deeds called ordinances include baptism, confirmation and temple endowment and marriage sealing. Believing in God and Jesus Christ is

³⁸ Östman 2010, p. 50 – 56; Church Organization.

³⁹ God 2009.

another condition for receiving salvation.⁴⁰ Some of the differences lie in emphasizing doctrines. An example of these is the perhaps most visible difference between an LDS church building and Christian church buildings is the total absence of crucifixes or other crosses. This is because the Mormons choose to highlight the exemplary life of Jesus instead of his violent death.⁴¹

Mission had been an important part of Mormonism right from the beginning. Joseph Smith jr sent missionaries to different parts of the USA and a little after that to Great Britain and rest of Europe. At first, the idea was that all the converted people would move to Utah and become members of the new Zion which meant the Mormon community. Most of the converts did not do that but founded local Mormon communities instead. In times, the idea of Mormon Zion turned more abstract.⁴²

Joseph Smith jr decided to send two church members, Elder Orson Hyde of the Quorum of the Twelve and George J. Adams, to Russia already in 1843. It was their farewell celebrations were he stated his prophecy about the vast empire of Russia. It would have been one of the first non-English-speaking country in the Mormon mission's history. However, Hyde and Adams never left. One of the reasons was Joseph Smith jr's death that caused internal problems in the church that had just lost its founder and leader.⁴³ Even if the LDS Church did not enter Russia in the 19th century, it did start circulating it by going to its neighbouring countries. In 1870's, the mission was started in Finland that was a part of Russia but had an own legislation in several issues. For example, Finland was mostly allowed to remain Lutheran and not adopt the Russian Orthodox belief. Even there it was difficult to do mission work. Establishing systematic mission in Russia did not become possible but the groundwork for it could be started by some of the Finnish LDS members.⁴⁴

Other American denominations were not all that interested in Russia before the last decades of the nineteenth century. By then, transportation had improved enough to make the long journey to Russia possible. Changes in politics played an even greater role. In 1880's, different views about Far East created

⁴⁰ Are Mormons Christians 2009; Jesus Christ; Mormonism 101; Ordinances 2014.

⁴¹ Q & A 1999.

⁴² Östman 2010, p. 58, 173.

⁴³ Avant 1997.

⁴⁴ Östman 2010, p. 181; Browning 1997, p.

tension between USA and Russia and made it more acceptable to publish critical views about Russia in USA. American Protestant churches got concerned about the Tsarist government that strongly favoured the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and oppressed all others. Liberating Russians became a mission of several congregations. They saw a great potential for growth among the Russians who they would guide to the light of true Christianity – in contrast to ROC that they found profoundly corrupted.⁴⁵

Later, LDS started to emphasize sharing the gospel around the world. It was not only them. From the early 20th century, Christianity started to come up in US leaders' speeches about foreign affairs. USA was seen as God's chosen country and therefore legitimate to spread its power all around the world. This inspired especially American Protestants who had their differences but also a strong national identity. At first, they dominated the American mission strongly. When times got more difficult in 1930's, President Franklin D. Roosevelt included Catholics, Jews and Mormons to the God's chosen people in order to increase the number of engaged American mission workers.⁴⁶

The essential purpose of Mormon mission still is to unite the Saints – in other words, the LDS members – for the last days' work. What has changed from the early days is that they do not wish all members to live in the same geographical area anymore. Mission is all strongly recommended for all members. There are different kinds of ways to do mission. Each member is advised to choose the one that fits best for their desires and situation in life. Mission can be done abroad or at home, alone or together with others. Informal mission means sharing gospel spontaneously to surrounding people. Formal mission is organised by the church.⁴⁷

Full-time mission was normally started at the age of 19 for men and 21 for women. Men served two years and women one and a half years. Serving men are called elders and women sisters. Most of the costs of the mission were covered by the missionaries or their families. They were encouraged to save money in advance. All members are advised to help missionaries by inviting them to dinner and donating things they might need. They apply to the mission

⁴⁵ Foglesong 2007, p. 10 – 11.

⁴⁶ Inboden 2008, p.

⁴⁷ Preparing to serve.

themselves but the actual mission area is decided by the church. Detailed criteria for choosing a missionary in a specific area are not available.⁴⁸

Missionaries were trained for a month before entering their actual mission area at the Missionary training centre (MTC). There are fifteen MTCs worldwide. The trainings included studies about Mormonism and the language and culture of the mission area. In 1980's, the training program was modified a couple of times in order to increase the theological content in it. Missionaries were expected to study Holy Scriptures every day also while serving in the mission field. Every week, Monday was reserved for preparing and studies. In general, the life of missionaries was very organized according to guidelines presented in Missionary Handbook. There were rules for keeping in touch with family, clothing, media etc. The handbook also contains basic advises for normal everyday life like house holding. In general, missionaries were expected to live decently, giving a good example for the community around them.⁴⁹

Other organised forms of mission were full-time senior mission service and church service. They were more flexible than the full-time service for young people. All of the missionaries that served in Russia in the 1990's were young full-time missionaries. From the early 2000's, the visa regulation made LDS Church cut down the number of full-time missionaries and increase mission work done by the Russian LDS members.⁵⁰ Before they entered Russia, there were some individual married LDS couples who spent brief periods in mission work in Russia before and during the Soviet times.⁵¹

Charity was another form of LDS Church's work. Food and clothing were sent to Russia and other Soviet countries especially for people in need like orphans and at times of natural disasters like earthquakes. Charity was realized by LDS Relief Society that are run by female LDS members. Relief Society was organised like LDS Church in general to regional, country and local levels.⁵²

LDS church was lead from Salt Lake City, Utah, by the First Presidency which consists of the President and his two advisors. Below that in the hierarchy comes The Quorum of Twelve Apostles which is a committee of

⁴⁸ Missionary handbook, p. 43 - 46; Preparing to serve.

⁴⁹ Gowan 2001a, p. 58 – 60; Gowan 2001b, p. 54; Missionary handbook p. 4, 37, 45.

⁵⁰ Martinich 2013; Missionary.

⁵¹ Mehr 2002; Mehr 1981.

⁵² Relief Society; Food shipments 1991; Todd 1991.

‘special witnesses of Jesus Christ, called to teach and testify of Him throughout the world.’⁵³ In the global level, the church is organized in areas like Europe or Asia North. The American and Canadian areas are directed by the Presidency of the Seventy while the others have Area Presidents nominated by the First Presidency. The areas are divided to branches which are divided to wards and congregations.⁵⁴

Also LDS mission was organized hierarchically to mission areas. The size of the areas varied greatly. Each mission area was lead by a mission president. The decision about starting mission in Russia was made in 1989 by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Finland Helsinki Mission East was established in 1990. Gary Browning was called to its president. Despite of the mission area’s name, it was meant for Russian mission. At first, Browning and his family even lived in Finland and only visited Russia. Perhaps that was why the mission work was started in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) and Vyborg which are close to Finland. The same applies to Estonia’s capital Tallinn, that was also used to get closer to Russia.⁵⁵

According to Browning, the position of the LDS in USSR was difficult. Organized mission was not possible because the society was hostile to religion. Preparations were done, though. The Book of Mormon was translated to Russian by LDS member André Anastasion who was born in Ukraine and found the LDS Church in London where he had settled as a young man. He finished his work a little before his death in 1980. In Finland, local LDS members studied Russian, created contacts with individual Russian people and followed news about the country.⁵⁶ In the late 1980’s, two LDS authorities negotiated with the leaders of the Committee of Religious affairs of USSR in order to promote religious freedom and open the country for LDS mission.⁵⁷

To avoid too many risks and bureaucracy, the first Mission area for Russian mission was founded in 1990 in Finland and called Helsinki Mission East. It was organized in four cities: Vyborg, St. Petersburg and Moscow in Russia and Tallinn in Estonia. In 1992, an independent St. Petersburg Mission

⁵³ Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

⁵⁴ Church Organization s.a.

⁵⁵ Browning 1997 a, p. 51 -54.

⁵⁶ Browning 1997a, p. 13 -25.

⁵⁷ Registration of Leningrad Branch.

was opened in Russia. In the same year it was divided to Missions of St. Petersburg and Moscow. By 1999, there were eight missions in Russia: Moscow, Moscow South, Novosibirsk, Rostov, St. Petersburg, Samara, Vladivostok and Yekaterinburg.⁵⁸ Churches and other buildings for meetings were established in Russian cities as soon as having property was allowed to denominations like LDS.⁵⁹ Temple, the holiest of all LDS locations and venue of the most sacred religious acts, was not built in Russia. Reason for this is not explained in my research materials. This meant, among other things, that Russian LDS members had to visit temples in other countries for teachings and acts of endowment, ordinances for the deceased and family sealing. In the 1990's, the closest temples were located in Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Later, temples were built in Russia's neighbouring countries. Helsinki Finland temple was dedicated in 2006 and Kiyv Ukraine temple in 2010. These two temples were opened partly to serve the Russian members.⁶⁰

4. The LDS views of Russian society

4.1 Russia, its cities and literature

Before the Iron Curtain fell down the LDS members visited Russia only briefly. Mission was difficult or impossible because of the political situation. Even if Russia was strategically important to LDS Church from the beginning the country was mostly absent from their sites that mainly dealt with present LDS activities. Very few articles written before 1990 could be found in the public material in the databases I used. However, the older times and the very first Mormons in Russia are mentioned in several articles from the 1990's, even if it was rather unclear who they eventually were. Most of these mentions are about the Soviet times.

In the late nineteenth century a Finnish LDS couple Johan and Alma Lindlof lived in Russia and did some minor mission work in St. Petersburg. For a brief periods of time, they were accompanied by other LDS members from

⁵⁸ Mission Index 2011; Growth of Church 1993; Missions created in Russia 1992; The year in review 1992;

⁵⁹ Stewart & Martinich s.a. b.

⁶⁰Temples 2014; Helsinki Temple 2014; Kiyv Temple 2014; What Happens in Temples

Finland, Sweden and USA who helped with mission.⁶¹ In addition to the Lindlofs there were rumours about a more mysterious group of Mormons. When the LDS entered the country in the 1990's, they found stories about groups of people were called Mormons. They were said to have lived in Siberia. The LDS organization had never heard about these people and could not find anyone who admitted being a member in such communities. Typically it was said to be childhood neighbour or a grandparent. It has remained unclear who belonged to these groups and what the word Mormon actually meant to them.⁶² However, Richard M. Romney considers Siberian Mormons as pioneers and inspiration just like the more well-known Lindlofs for the Russian LDS members of the 1990.⁶³

“...Katya can't help thinking about the trials faced by Church members of an earlier era. “They were driven from their homes. They faced storms, starvation, and a journey of more than a thousand miles,” she says.” ...“We have different tasks before us,” Katya continues... “Sometimes it's as simple as telling people about the Word of Wisdom”⁶⁴

Here, Russian LDS members Katya compared her own pioneering to the challenges that pioneers of the earlier era had. Telling people about the Word of Wisdom was the only concrete challenge she brought up as an example but the word “tasks” implied there were more than one. She did not mention what made talking about the Word of Wisdom as difficult as surviving in hard material and weather conditions.⁶⁵

How vast was the vast empire of Russia for the LDS? Location was not always specified in the articles. Some writers only refer to Soviet Union and later to Russia. That is somewhat vague since the area is wide in geographical, political and social terms. The most named location is Moscow. It is mentioned all together 207 times in my research materials. The next one is St. Petersburg (or Leningrad) with 153 mentions. Vyborg is brought up 33 times. Other mentioned cities include Nizhny Novgorod (6), Samara (16) Saratov (18), Vladivostok (19), Ekaterinburg or Yekaterinburg (15), Partizansk (3), Rostov (17), Krasnoyarsk (16) and Novosibirsk (11). Siberia as a region was mentioned 57 times. The

⁶¹ Mehr 1981.

⁶² Eliason & Browning 2001, 29.

⁶³ Von Rosen 1997.

⁶⁴ Romney 1998 a.

⁶⁵ Romney 1998 a.

numbers show that most of the writings about Russia were the about Western Russia and big cities. Placed on a map the majority of the most often mentioned cities seemed to form a route that starts from Vyborg and then follows the river Volga all the way to the Black Sea. Northern and Eastern parts of the country were absent from the research materials except for three mentions about Partizansk that is a city close to Sea of Japan. There were LDS activities in all of the named places but St. Petersburg and Moscow were also mentioned in other connections.

Russian capitals Moscow and St. Petersburg were named trough the whole decade. Neither of them were very closely described, only mentioned as venues of events, meetings, mission or happenings. The number of mentions indicates that they were central to LDS activities and for the Russian society. Top politicians and officials were met in these two cities. For many LDS members, they were the first or only place to visit in Russia.⁶⁶

In a picture drawn by David Messina, an eleven year old American LDS member who admired missionaries, Moscow was symbolized with an apparently Orthodox church with its flame-like domes and strong colours.⁶⁷

I was no different from thousands of others my age. All of us were searching for something. Our country lived in feverish anticipation of the changes to come. And here in Moscow these feelings were particularly strong.⁶⁸

The quote is from LDS member Sergei Martynov who was talking about his memories from 1990. In Martynov's view, people who lived in Moscow were the most anxious of all Russians to see what would happen in the future that was still so unclear. He thought the city was a centre of the coming change.⁶⁹

Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow attracted LDS visitors because it was seen as a central – and at the Soviet times, the only - cultural venue in the city.

In the evening many of us had hoped to attend Moscow's renowned Bolshoi Theatre, but no tickets were available. Our disappointment was acute. Our tour director suggested, instead, a short sacrament service in one of the hotel rooms.

⁶⁶ Lloyd 1997; Neubert 1994; Growth of the Church 1993; Y. troupe tours Russia 1993; Todd 1991; Sowell 1976.

⁶⁷ Messina 1997.

⁶⁸ Browning 1997 b.

⁶⁹ Browning 1997 b.

He had paper cups and bread; two or three others had pocket-size songbooks; another could direct music.⁷⁰

This Madison Sowell's memory from her first visit to Russia and Moscow indicated high expectations towards Bolshoi Theatre. The company had heard good things about it before and could ask for getting there. Their guide did not have any other attraction to offer when it turned out impossible to visit Bolshoi Theatre. They were left with their hotel room. Perhaps because of the impression of Bolshoi Theatre as a central and only cultural venue in Moscow and Russia it was later used for LDS Choir's concerts. Other specific venues like Bolshoi Theatre were not brought up when there started to be more LDS concerts and other activities in Russia.⁷¹

In St. Petersburg, none specific cultural place was named but its cultural richness was recognized perhaps even more than Moscow's as elder Romney wrote: "The center of St. Petersburg, crisscrossed by canals, is full of palaces, monuments, statues, churches, gardens, and museums."⁷² Romney remembered St. Petersburg also for its miraculous white nights and even made them a title for his New Era article about the city.

St. Petersburg, Russia, is a city so far north that it spends much of the year in darkness. Winters are long and cold. Even the rivers freeze. The sun seems distant. It rises late and shines for only a few hours. Then, almost miraculously, warm weather returns. As if to make up for its own absence, sunshine lingers nearly 24 hours a day. Long after midnight, it's still bright enough to see. It is the season of the white nights.⁷³

Here, Romney made a clear distinction between St. Petersburg and the rest of the country as the most used word for Russian weather conditions was cold. Romney was amazed by the sunshine that did not stop even for the night. One reason for this must be that the Russian winters are cold compared to Utah. He was used to sun going down every night and rising again in the morning. In spiritual terms, cold weather was a contrast to warm atmosphere in LDS

⁷⁰ Sowell 1976.

⁷¹ Van Orden 1997; Avant 1995; Russian dignitaries hosted 1991; Todd 1991; Sowell 1976

⁷² Romney 1999.

⁷³ Romney 1999.

functions.⁷⁴ “The water was very cold, but we paid no attention to it”, said LDS member Marina recalling her baptism in the Gulf of Finland. Cold weather was not important when one wanted to practice spirituality.⁷⁵

It was on a day like today [150 years ago] that 13 brave Mormons froze to death. . . . Young mothers with babies in their arms had to bury their husbands in the snow because they could not dig the ground. Your hands are cold, and your toes are cold, but it helps us remember the trials of many people. We will remember you for your great faith. This is a symbol of the things that will happen in Russia.⁷⁶

According to this quote from President B. John Galbraith weather conditions had been hard in the past, too. Pioneers who had survived coldness were inspiring examples for contemporary mission workers.⁷⁷

Mentions about Siberia can be divided in two groups: it was brought up in historical reviews about the very first Mormons in Russia and again when the LDS Russia Novosibirsk branch was established in 1993 and full-time mission began in 1995. LDS Public Affairs Editor of Eastern Asia Michael S. von Rosen emphasized the geographical size of Siberia:

Siberia's vastness is best illustrated by the 1982 discovery by Russian geologists of a family that had lived in hiding since the tsarist times in a remote region of the Siberia taiga (Siberian forest). The family knew nothing of the fall of the tsar (in 1917) and the rise of the Soviet rule. Covering 4.8 million square miles, Siberia extends from the Ural mountains to the west all the way to the Pacific Ocean, an area of nine different time zones.⁷⁸

In addition to Mormon history, the enormous Siberia was seen to carry other kind of unique traditions: its aboriginals. An LDS article was concerned about their position in the society.

Circumstances in Utah and Siberia are remarkably similar, with dominant societies (Anglo and Russian) seeking to help aboriginal cultures (Native American and native Siberian) find their role in a contemporary world.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Romney 1999; Cannon 1995; Lloyd 1995; Johnson 1994; Larson-Hall 1993; Food shipments ease Soviet hunger 1991; Sowell 1976

⁷⁵ Browning 1997 b.

⁷⁶ Von Rosen 1997.

⁷⁷ Von Rosen 1997.

⁷⁸ Von Rosen 1997.

⁷⁹ Lloyd 1997.

An American LDS couple quoted here, the Longs, saw great similarities between the Navajos in USA and native Siberians in Russia. According to the Longs both of these groups needed activation in order to find their place in the world.

Dominant societies in both countries were thought to be interested in promoting the rights and conditions of these native groups. An example for this was bi-lingual education that Longs were introducing to Russian officials.⁸⁰

4.2 Freedom

Freedom of religion was one of the major themes in my materials. LDS writers made notes about it already on their very visits to Russia before the actual mission work could start. Elder Høglund, a Finnish LDS member from the early 1900's, found "more religious freedom in Russia than is generally supposed." It remains unclear what is meant here by generally supposed. The idea could have come from media or Høglund's personal social sphere. By making this statement, Høglund showed he had had false assumptions about Russia. He had expected the society would be more closed in religious terms. His own notions about the situation pleased him.⁸¹

When the LDS Church saw new possibilities to enter Russia, the need to evaluate religious freedom in the country emerged again. Now they were not facing a country with one dominant church but a country with no religion at all. The views were not visibly reflected to the general suppositions like Høglund had done some decades earlier. However, it is reasonable to assume that LDS members had been affected by the American media. Characteristic to the Soviet times and communism seemed to be atheism which was brought up in several texts. It was not always defined at all but when definitions were given atheism is described as a state policy hostile to religion and a personal conviction. Elder Oaks from the Quorum of Twelve described in 1991:" the stated policy of the government was not just irreligious but anti-religious." In other words, he emphasized the active nature of the politics against religion.⁸² Without an

⁸⁰ Von Rosen 1997; Lloyd 1997; Church growth steady 1993

⁸¹ Browning 1997 a, p. 11.

⁸² Avant 1991.

exception atheism was brought up as a negative thing. The impression given about atheism was unchanged through the whole period of my research.

When Diana had been in school, she had taken a comparative religion class; the goal of the class was to convince the students that belief in a supernatural being was ridiculous.⁸³

Newly converted Russian LDS members, like Diana in this quote, shared their memories about going to school and living in the society where religion was either actively opposed or ignored. They had been ridiculed and bullied for their religion. Religious literature was difficult to receive and obtain.⁸⁴

As was common at the time, his parents never openly discussed religion with their children, and occasionally derided the beliefs of Sergei's grandparents.⁸⁵

In the text quoted above, Browning wrote about Russian Sergei who joined LDS. Sergei was described as a typical former Soviet citizen as he had heard about religion only occasionally from his grandparents. His parents did not talk about religion with him. Reasons for this silence were not analysed.⁸⁶ Several other Russians also remembered hearing positive comments about religion from grandparents like Sergei, or from their parents.⁸⁷

“When I had occasion to visit an Orthodox Church and would see the many elderly women there, the thought would occur to me that these women would soon die and then the church would be closed,” he says. “That would be the end of religion.”⁸⁸

Some believed religion was a phenomenon that would fade away with elderly people who still practised it. Quote above is from the same Browning’s interview with Sergei as the quote above. Religion did not seem attracting to him because it was not a part of future but practically a part of the past.⁸⁹

⁸³ Larson-Hall 1993.

⁸⁴ Browning 1997 b; Larson-Hall 1995; Russian members strive to help build the Church 1993; Avant 1991; Sowell 1976.

⁸⁵ Browning 1997 b.

⁸⁶ Browning 1997 b.

⁸⁷ Romney 1999; Romney 1998; Browning 1997 b.

⁸⁸ Browning 1997 b.

⁸⁹ Browning 1997 b.

Below us was a country whose government served as a people's religion and whose onetime churches often functioned as public museums.⁹⁰

This is how Madison Sowell remembered Russia from her first trip. Churches were turned into secular buildings. Secular government had been put in the place of religion. In another text about socialist countries in general, an interviewee from Czechoslovakia described atheism as the religion of the socialist states. Czechoslovakia was, of course, different from Russia with its own national character but the statement was made in an article which dealt with socialist countries as a group, having state atheism as one shared feature. Brought up like this, it can be understood to apply also to Russia.⁹¹

Atheism was said to have wide negative long sight affects on the society and Russian people. They are mostly mentioned as arguments or obstacles for bringing Mormonism and religion in general to Russia. Atheism was connected to mistrust and disrespect between citizens, emotional issues and family problems. Russian LDS member Vladislav Mesheryakov even stated: "People have lost their basis of love, which was a belief in God."⁹² Some kind of internal emptiness and search for something deeper troubled even convictional atheists.⁹³

His work has religious overtones as both he and his wife, Natalia, a university professor, said their faith in God helped them endure the years of the communist regime.⁹⁴

Quote above indicates that for Igor Sakharov, a Russian genealogist, and his wife religion was something to hold onto during the difficult years of communism. The writer has chosen to use the word endure, perhaps to emphasize how hard it was to live during the Soviet times.⁹⁵ The quote reminded that everybody were not atheists even during the Soviet times. In several texts it was reminded that Russian's religious roots were deep and therefore impossible to terminate for good. Some people were baptised to ROC and some heard about religion from their parents or grandparents. Information about other congregation was received

⁹⁰ Sowell 1976.

⁹¹ Todd 1991; Sowell 1976.

⁹² LDS heritage inspires Russian journalists 1992.

⁹³ Browning 1997 b; Browning 1997 a, p. 70, 219, 280; Hart 1993; Larson-Hall 1993; LDS heritage inspires Russian TV journalists 1992; Todd 1991; Avant 1991

⁹⁴ Hart 1993.

⁹⁵ Hart 1993.

by those who visited other countries and or met foreigners for example because of their jobs.⁹⁶

Not only religion was banned in the Soviet Union. Several other restrictions were mentioned as well. In the beginning of their visit to USSR, LDS members from USA were not allowed to take pictures at the airport. Using foreign currency was not possible for Soviet citizens until in 1990. Having wealthy was a reason for imprisoning a Finnish LDS pioneer family in the early Soviet period. Chances for expressing opinions and criticizing the government was very limited. These restrictions were mentioned as a part of the Soviet system. LDS writers did not report any limitations of freedom after USSR collapsed.⁹⁷

In 1990 and '91, the LDS writers sensed a massive change happening and, even more, coming in Russia. Gorbachev was praised for his intentions to make Soviet Union more open and democratic. Deseret News stated its support for him when Lithuania wanted to become independent. In his analysis for BYU Studies, professor S. Bialer also criticized him for too much technological optimism. He emphasized the importance of co-operation between Russia and USA in order to avoid risks of isolation.⁹⁸

Even if the atmosphere was waiting and nobody knew what was going to happen, Russia's opening increased LDS interest in it. Expectations for increasing religious freedom were high. In 1991 elder Oaks from the Council of Twelve who was a part of a delegation that went to negotiate about Church registration in Russia announced that newly adopted law had removed earlier limitations for religious work.

Heretofore, we've always felt the limitation of the growth of the church in Russia was imposed by them as a government. That limitation has now been removed. Now the limitation is placed upon the Church. We can move as fast as we choose to move, or as slowly as we choose. This recognition has just changed the focus of who holds the limiting factor.⁹⁹

As can be seen in the quote above, elder Nelson from the Quorum of Twelve had high hopes for the LDS future in Russia. Obstacles of the old legislation were now gone and the new law opened the path for limitless growth. According to Gary Browning, the LDS authorities' efforts had affected greatly to the new law.

⁹⁶ Sowell 1976; Browning 1997 b;

⁹⁷ Sowell 1976; Mehr 1981; Soviet Union relaxes currency laws 1990

⁹⁸ Growth of Church 1993; Bialer 1990, p. 10, 16; Bush exerts subtle pressure on Soviet Union.

⁹⁹ Avant 1991a.

Church representatives kept establishing and maintaining connections with Russian high level politicians and officials. Their attitudes towards religious freedom were described positive. For example, prime minister of Russia went to LDS choir in Bolshoi Theatre in May 1991. In the end of June, the church was recognised by the Russian republic.¹⁰⁰

Similar positive attitudes towards LDS and Americans were observed from media's and Russian people's side. Michael Otterson from the Church Public Affairs Department said:

I expected to find the media still so stifled and bureaucratic that they would be difficult to work with, but the thing that surprised me was the incredible length Russian TV would go to in order to be cooperative.¹⁰¹

Otterson had expected that co-operation with Russian media more difficult than it actually turned out to be. He was surprised to find Russian television staff was willing to make great efforts to work with LDS.¹⁰²

The change in attitudes did not become practice right away. The first Russian missionary Anton Skripko had difficulties to get an exit visa to leave to his mission to USA because officials did not know which status they should give him. In the same article he told that also ordinary Russians were confused because there were suddenly so many religious organizations in Russia.¹⁰³

LDS materials concentrated in LDS and said very little about the other denominations in Russia. ROC's domination was recognised, criticized and understood. Its ruling position was visible to anyone walking in Russian streets because of the Orthodox church buildings with their gliding domes. To many, ROC had been the only link to religion during the Soviet times. Some had been baptised and thus joined its members as children. For some, it was the first place to look for spirituality when it was commonly accepted again. In LDS texts, ROC did not meet expectations of these searching souls. Browning quoted a Russian LDS member who had written his story to him:

“We began to attend Orthodox services, light candles, and pray before icons to the Savior, but we always had the feeling that God did not hear us, that we were hardly noticeable among all the gold, icons, and beauty of the cathedral,” Viacheslav writes. “We would go home disappointed, where we would sit down at

¹⁰⁰ Browning 1997 a, p. 88; Russian dignitaries hosted 1991; Todd 1991; Avant 1991a; Avant 1991b.

¹⁰¹ Choir's media impact 1991.

¹⁰² Choir's media impact 1991.

¹⁰³ Choir's media impact 1991; Hart 1991.

the table and drink a glass of vodka and start to feel warmer. ... That's how it was for 15 years. We would sin and repent, then sin again."¹⁰⁴

The writer described his experiences from practising Orthodox faith. He had joined ROC with his family because they had all been missing spirituality. Their expectations were not met in glorious church buildings and ceremonies of ROC. The effects of the services did not leave any permanent effect in their everyday lives. Repentance made it possible to repeat sins over and over again without really making any changes in life.¹⁰⁵ To many others, ROC was not only a religious organization but an important part of Russian society in economical, historical, political and educational terms. The word church implied in Russia to ROC. It was so strongly connected to Russian identity that leaving it felt like betraying the country.

ROC had had its difficulties in the Soviet times and that was well acknowledged in the LDS Church. Elder Oaks from the Council of Twelve expressed his compassion for the ROC clergy who had been through times of anti-religious state policies. These policies were not defined in detail.

I think it's appropriate, when we rejoice in the opportunity to take the message of the restored gospel into Russia, to remember that we are building on the foundation that these good people have kept intact.¹⁰⁶

In this quote, Oaks reminded people who worked in LDS mission about ROC's important role in building the base for religious work in Russia. He wished the missionaries would show respect for this work. It remains unclear how well this wish was respected by the missionaries.¹⁰⁷

In 1997 the Russian government was planning to establish a new law on religious organizations. LDS followed the law making process carefully with serious concern. It would have banned mission of foreign churches and therefore LDS saw it as a sign of threatening religious oppression. Senator Bennet, an LDS member from Utah, felt he was negotiating for all Western religions when he went to meet Russian politicians in order to stop the law. Yet every example he used to describe problems of the intended law were about Mormons. He was convinced that the LDS Church's work in Russia would not be harmed by the new law. He did not say anything about the other religious

¹⁰⁴ Browning 1997 b.

¹⁰⁵ Browning 1997 b.

¹⁰⁶ Avant 1991.

¹⁰⁷ Browning 1997 b; Browning 1993; Avant 1991; Sowell 1976

organizations except for ROC. He understood the Russian will to conserve and protect ROC that was such a relevant part of the country and its people.

The law passed but in a less restrictive form than feared. It allowed churches that had been in the country for 15 years or more to do mission. Obtaining and reserving property was strictly regulated. The most problematic part of the law for the LDS was that it shortened the validity of missionary visas to 90 days. This was the most visible feature of the law in LDS materials, possibly because it required remarkable actions for LDS mission. It meant that the missionaries had to leave and return Russia from six to eight times during their mission that lasted from one and a half to two years. Despite of this, elder Jeffrey R. Holland from the Quorum of Twelve praised president Yeltsin for vetoing the original draft law. He was assured that the law would not be a major obstacle for the LDS Church growth in the future.¹⁰⁸

Literature was one of the things that were under strict control during the Soviet times. The collapse of USSR liberated it. Forbidden books could now be printed and sold. Variety of genres and styles increased, as well as competition in book markets. Because of the growing interest to spirituality, religious literature was one of the winners of this competition.¹⁰⁹ The first LDS mission president in Russia, Gary Browning had a doctor's degree in Russian literature. Despite of that Russian writers or novels are rarely mentioned in the texts – except one. To Browning, as to many other LDS members, Russia was the country of the novelist Leo Tolstoy who lived in the late 1800's and early 1900's. There are several mentions about him in the materials. It was not just because he known worldwide and written an impressing collection of works. The Mormons had a special relationship with him. He was said to have known Mormonism and read The Book of Mormon. Tolstoy had made a prediction in favour for Mormonism: "If Mormonism is able to endure, unmodified, until it reaches the third and fourth generation, it is destined to become the greatest power the world has ever known.

In 1998, Museum of Church History in Utah organised an exhibition to celebrate “the humanitarian, cultural, religious and personal interactions between Russia and Utah”. The museum appreciated especially one item: an icon that had once belonged to Leo Tolstoy. The appreciation seemed to be mutual

¹⁰⁸ Avant 1997; Russia adopts new visa regulations 1998; Year in review 1998.

¹⁰⁹ Ekonen & Turoma 2011, p. 633 – 635.

since Tolstoy's grand-nephew told that the icon he loaned "was the most precious relic of our family".

Tolstoy's interest in Mormonism was discussed in the Mormon sphere long before Browning. He was said to have defended Mormons when they were under oppression in USA. Tolstoy was interested in several religions. In his diaries and letters can be found some brief mentions about Mormonism, as well. According to Associate Professor of Russian in San Diego State College Leland A. Fetzer, Tolstoy only spend a little time studying Mormonism. Its role in his life was smaller than some Mormon writers had assumed. Fetzer's article, however, was not published until 2010 so LDS writers could not have known about during my research period.¹¹⁰

The most visible change in LDS materials during the decade was that the Russian society became more open for LDS Church. Meetings had become possible to hold and advertise.¹¹¹ Missionaries and other LDS members were allowed to visit schools and kindergartens, share the Book of Mormon and do mission openly on the streets.¹¹² More LDS materials were translated to Russian.¹¹³ LDS Church got some media attention in Russia.¹¹⁴ All of this would have been either very difficult or impossible in the early 1990's or before that. Attacks on the missionaries were seen as individual cases since anti-Mormon movement had not spread and strengthened yet.¹¹⁵

We are carrying on some missionary work in Russia, Latvia and Estonia. We have seven missions in Russia and we are building congregations. They are not large. We are officially registered with the Russian government; they are fully aware of what we are doing and we are making some headway.¹¹⁶

Here, LDS President Hinckley expressed the Church's positive and hopeful spirit towards its possibilities in Russia. LDS had not gained as many new Russian

¹¹⁰ Fetzer 2010; Weaver 1998; Brown 1997 b; Hart 1991

¹¹¹ Fidel 1992

¹¹² Living by the scripture 1999; Gardner 1998; Lythgoe 1994: Russian members strive to help build Church 1993, Todd 1991.

¹¹³ Y. troupe tours Russia 1993; Rushing to Russia 1992

¹¹⁴ Von Rosen 1997; LDS heritage inspires Russian TV journalists 1992; Todd 1991; Choir's media impact 1991; Hart 1991

¹¹⁵ Flintoff 2012; Nemtsova 2012

¹¹⁶ Hinckley comments 1999.

members as they perhaps had wished but it had established itself in the country and could expect it had a future there.¹¹⁷

4.3 Poverty

Poverty and lack of food and goods were severe right before and after the collapse of USSR. Russia suffered from a serious economic crisis through the whole decade.¹¹⁸

"The Russian economy is suffering some major problems," explained Elder Woffinden. "Because there is no money flow, many, many people have not been paid for six months or longer. . . . Most people just continue to go to work and hope they will be paid. They know that if they do not continue to go to work they will never be paid."¹¹⁹

Missionary elder Woffinden described Russian situation very difficult in 1999. Citizens had not get their salaries in months because of the general lack of money. The only option was to continue working because quitting job would only lead to greater poverty because that would prevent getting the salary later.¹²⁰ In another text from 1995, poverty of pensioners was described with a concrete sum: their "monthly incomes averaging about U.S. \$45." It is, however, difficult to estimate how severe poverty this meant because nothing is said about the living costs.¹²¹

The Russian poverty was mostly brought up in articles about LDS charity that was sent to different parts of the country through the whole 1990's and even some time before that. LDS aid consisted mainly of foods and clothes. In some cases, also blankets and other textiles were included. The items were shipped from Europe, USA or Russia. At first, the aid was given to people by LDS members from Europe and USA but already in early 1990's, as Relief Societies began to exist in Russian branches, they took the responsibility of sharing.¹²² Sometimes the aid was distributed by LDS alone, sometimes in cooperation with other organizations like Catholic Relief Service or The Red Cross.

¹¹⁷ Hinckley comments 1999; Stahle 1999.

¹¹⁸ Freeze 2009 b, p. 475 – 479.

¹¹⁹ Weaver 1999.

¹²⁰ Weaver 1999.

¹²¹ Cannon 1995.

¹²² Weaver 1998; Cannon 1995;

¹²³ According to my research material, LDS relief was given through the whole decade. The same applied to the image given about the Russian poverty: it did not change during the decade.

All of the packages were freely given, Pres. Browning said, and each contained a sheet of information explaining Church welfare principles. Recipients were invited to donate an amount equal to the cost of the box's contents to the local branch's fast offering fund to help others in need, if they had the means and desire to do so. The law of the fast and principles of fast offerings and food storage were explained, along with directions for mixing dried milk and making cereal.¹²⁴

In this quote from President Browning a lot is said about the typical LDS food relief. The recipients or the content of the aid were not specified in detail. Aid was given for free but receivers were encouraged to learn more about the Church and make donations for it.¹²⁵

Where the content of food relief was specified in detail it contained things that were easy to preserve and share: flour, beans, rice, powdered milk, canned meat and applesauce etc. Any other criteria for the content of aid parcels were not specified.¹²⁶ Apparently the analysis behind the selections was not thoroughly considered since in 1999 BYU implemented a project where students planned nutritionally balanced food relief menus for different countries, including Russia. Local food cultures and natural resources were now taken into account in order to meet the real needs of the people. It remained unclear whether the developed menus were actually adopted into practice.¹²⁷

Need for relief was explained in several articles. The need rose from the generally difficult economic and political conditions, natural disasters and the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of 1986.¹²⁸

"During my entire life, no one ever gave me anything, though I have shared what I could with others. And now God has seen me in my loneliness and helped me. Thanks to dear God, and to you, good people. I offer your church 15 rubles from my small pension. May the Lord preserve you."¹²⁹

¹²³ Weaver 1998; Humanitarian relief in Europe 1992; Stout 1992;

¹²⁴ Food shipment 1991.

¹²⁵ Food Shipment 1991.

¹²⁶ Cannon 1995; Humanitarian relief in Europe 1992; Stout 1992; LDS food shipment 1991; Food Shipment 1991

¹²⁷ Acquiring practical knowledge 1999.

¹²⁸ Missionaries help in cleanup 1998; News of the Church 1996; Cannon 1995; From around the world 1992.

¹²⁹ Food Shipment 1991.

"I thank you from my heart for your attention and concern for me in my old age and loneliness. Warm thanks for your package, which was very important to me because I am weak and cannot go to the stores. . . ."

"There was a time when the Russians fed many people; now the time has come when Russians are fed by other people. Thank you."¹³⁰

"The people are very thankful for the help received," said a relief worker who helped coordinate the distribution. "Our hearts are full of gratitude toward God and you for this great help that we received from you."¹³¹

Grateful quotes like these one from church members and the recipients of the help emphasized that the need was real. In the first one, a donation for the Church emphasized thankfulness. The sum was not big in general terms but it was remarkable for the poor pensioner. In the second one, the need for aid was great because going to stores was impossible because of ones weak condition. The third receiver thought that former Russian efforts of giving aid justified receiving help at this point of history. The last quote was an example of many similar where LDS members praised God and the Church for generosity.¹³²

Some of the relief was shared for all without any criteria. In majority of the articles, like in the above quoted, the recipients were named more specifically. The criteria for selecting certain groups of recipients were not visible in any article but in the LDS Relief Society's international website it is stated that the relief is given for those who need it the most. Apparently these were defined separately in each case since the list of recipients is fairly varied. The help was aimed for orphans, women and children, women with more than one children, soldiers, LDS members, prisoners, seniors, Chechen refugees etc. The most needy people were not always defined by LDS alone. There is a mention about considering the issue together with the Catholic Relief Service. In one text clothes and shoes were "distributed to Church members as well as to those of other faiths."¹³³ This could mean that the Church excluded the atheists from receiving help or that the writer assumed everyone somehow religious.¹³⁴

Also non-material help was given. It meant teaching English and other skills, medical assistance, cleaning the city after a natural disaster and

¹³⁰ Cannon 1995.

¹³¹ Victims of hardships 1996.

¹³² Victims of hardships 1996; Cannon 1995; Stout 1993; Humanitarian relief in Europe 1992.

¹³³ Stout 1993.

¹³⁴ Cannon 1995; Stout 1993; Stout 1992; Food sent to Russia 1992; Church donates 1992; Food shipment 1991.

administrative advising. Especially the lack and need for English skills was underlined. The main argument for this need was mission. From the beginning, materials were translated to Russian and the missionaries were trained to communicate in Russian but having the Russians speak English made the work easier for the LDS visitors and missionaries who were just starting their work. This emphasis was reduced during the decade. The material does not tell whether this is because there were more Russian-speaking LDS members or because more Russian LDS members had learned English.¹³⁵

A story of a little Russian girl with severe burn injuries gave a view to the Russian health care system: “She received basic medical treatment from doctors. Still, her injuries were extremely painful and unsightly.”¹³⁶ In other words, basic services were available but it was not enough to treat people with special long-term needs. It remained unclear whether more care could have been bought privately with money that little Marsha’s family did not have. The other possible explanation would have been a total absence of these services in Russia. If this was the case, it was not said whether the reason for this was lack of medical knowledge, money or political will. Need for medical assistance was brought up in one other article, as well, but the reasons were not defined in it either.¹³⁷ In two texts, American LDS members were told to have used medical services in Russia. It was not said whether the treatment was given by Russian medical staff or an outsider. In the case of Gary Browning who had an eye surgery done in Russia it could be assumed that the care giver was Russian since he felt that the operation had made him closer to Russia. He was happy with the results.¹³⁸ In the other text medical care was mentioned only briefly as a part of making sure that kidnapped missionaries were doing well.¹³⁹

The most important need in Russia was not material, educational, medical or social. It was spiritual. All other forms of relief work were only a way to remove boundaries that were stopping meeting this need. Hungry, unemployed people would not be open for the spiritual truth. Gary Browning said in 1991:

¹³⁵ Weaver 1999; Missionaries help in cleanup 1998; Browning 1997 b; Stout 1993; Sowell 1976.

¹³⁶ Stahle 1998.

¹³⁷ Stahle 1998; News of the Church 1996; Stout 1993.

¹³⁸ Growth of church 1993.

¹³⁹ Dockstader 1998.

"It is a very difficult time for Russians because of the economic turmoil, and that is distracting a certain amount of their interests from spiritual matters. They are worried about finding food and clothing and whether they have jobs, and that complicates our work."¹⁴⁰

In the quote, Browning explained that people who lacked necessities were not responsive for religion. That was why their prior material needs had to be fulfilled before moving to the spiritual teachings. Yet, poverty did not prevent all talk about religion. LDS teachings were shared with relief parcels. That meant talking to recipients about faith and distributing Book of Mormon when it was possible.

¹⁴¹

During the 1990's, Russian inequality increased even more than elsewhere in the world. In addition to the people who got poorer than ever there were now people who had more wealth than ever. This new elite was quite small but it existed and had power. In my research material this phenomenon is not brought up at all.¹⁴²

4.4 Threats to LDS missionaries

"The social problems here are so grievous - alcoholism, narcotics and crime", said the president of Russia St. Petersburg Mission, and continued: "Most of the people, nevertheless, are kind and wholesome."¹⁴³ Similar statements are given in number of articles. Differences between the society and people were clearly distinguished. LDS writers pointed several problems in the society but in every turn they reminded that majority of people were pleasant and responsive.¹⁴⁴ This positive attitude towards Russian people remained even when LDS mission in Russia faced serious problems in 1998. That March two missionaries were kidnapped in Saratov. In October, two missionaries were stabbed in Ufa in Yekaterinburg Mission Area. The other one died and the other was injured.¹⁴⁵

The kidnapping lasted four days. After that the both missionaries were released unharmed. LDS got help from the local police. Two suspects were

¹⁴⁰ Avant 1991.

¹⁴¹ Avant & Brown 1991; Food Shipment 1991.

¹⁴² Freeze 2009 b, p. 479.

¹⁴³ Stout 1993.

¹⁴⁴ Stout 1993; Larson-Hall 1993; Russian members strive to help bulding Church 1993; Y. Troupe tours 1993.

¹⁴⁵ Year in review 1998

arrested and one searched for further investigations. LDS sources did not mention that one of the suspects was a former LDS member. "He decided to abduct the missionaries and demand a large ransom for their release", *The Moscow Times* reported.¹⁴⁶ Why this was not brought up by any LDS can only be guessed. It is not likely that the identity and background of the stabber was unknown in the LDS community in Russia that was quite small. Perhaps LDS writers did not want to analyse the stabber's motives for leaving the membership and turning against the church.

LDS planned to carry on the mission despite of what happened. Bishop Propst in Utah was somewhat concerned how the kidnapping would affect on a young man who was going to be sent for mission to Russia. Apparently his image of Russia was not harmed since his answer to Propst's query was: "I'm more excited to go now than I was before."¹⁴⁷

The kidnapper did not get any ransom. It was important for the LDS Church. In another connection it was written: "That's probably how Christ would do it—without force and without bribes"¹⁴⁸. In his memoir of his mission president times, Gary Browning told about LDS members who found ways to associate with the Russian officials without bribes. The best way to do it was to use social skills, invoke their human side. For example, Finnish Nellie Jäkkö gained the trust of the officials by playing table tennis with a toll official when crossing the Finnish-Russian border.¹⁴⁹

The stabbings made the LDS community all over the world mourn but it was strongly emphasized that this was an unfortunate individual case. The stabber's previous criminal record was mentioned. Elder Holland said in an interview:

We see this as a tragic, but nevertheless random, very isolated incident," ("...the neighbourhood they were working was a safe, approved area. The elders were calling upon members. They were doing everything that a missionary ought to be doing." Parents of the dead Elder Jose Manuel McIntosh did not want to blame Russians in general for their son's unfortunate destiny. "Our son Jose had a great love for the country and people of Russia. He has always had it. . . . The people of Russia were in his heart."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Saradzhyan 1998.

¹⁴⁷ Fidel 1998.

¹⁴⁸ Larson-Hall 1993.

¹⁴⁹ Saradzhyan 1998; Browning 1997 a, p. 26; Dockstader 1998; Larson-Hall 1993.

¹⁵⁰ Weaver 1998.

Both the LDS leaders and parents of Elder McIntosh, the stabbed missionary, refused to blame the Russian society. They remembered him talking about Russians in the warmest manner. He was said to have behaved ordinarily without provoking anyone by his behaviour. This statement was made perhaps to prove that Elder McIntosh himself did not cause his death.¹⁵¹

5. The LDS views on every day living in Russia

5.1 Poverty

The everyday life in Russia was described from LDS perspective, as was the case with the Russian society in the last chapter. In addition of sharing their own experiences they made comments about the lives of the people they met. Most of the themes were same as in the previous chapter, only the approaches were somewhat different. Plenty of comments were made about the ways that Russian lifestyle differed from the LDS habits and ideals. Russian people and groups of people were met and described. Descriptions varied from a brief mentions of titles to entire life stories. Some of the people were mentioned by name while some were only implied with titles like child, grandmother or member. Most of the times, the texts concentrated on people's relationship with LDS.¹⁵²

Poverty, unemployment and lack of goods made life difficult for many in Russia. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these problems occurred in Russia through the whole decade. Economical problems even got worse since building the nation after USSR collapsed was rather chaotic.¹⁵³ People – especially women – spent remarkable time of their days in queues in search for food. Its price got too high for many which made purchasing other things like clothes and

¹⁵¹ Weaver 1998.

¹⁵² Gardner 1998; Von Rosen 1997; Weaver 1997; Browning 1997; Lyon 1997; Browning 1997 b; Avant 1997; Sisterhood growing in Russia 1996; Luschin 1995; Avant 1995; Cannon 1995; Johnson 1994; Neubert 1994; Stout 1993; Larson-Hall 1993; Hart 1993: Russian members strive to help build Church 1993; Food sent to Russia 1992; Fidel 1992; Lloyd 1992; Stout 1992; LDS heritage inspires Russian TV journalists 1992; Hart 1991; Choir's media impact 1991; History of Church Todd 1991; Food shipments 1991; Avant 1991

¹⁵³ Freeze 2009, p. 475.

coal impossible. Poverty was seen as lack of material. Any percentages about how common poverty were given.¹⁵⁴

Russian people like to cook and have food supplies in their homes. But now, with the shortages, it is not allowed by the state [to store food]. We have shortages of flour, cheese, milk products and meat. We have ration coupons for meat, butter, flour, cereal, noodles, eggs and sugar. We cannot get more than is allowed on the coupon.¹⁵⁵

As this quote implied, even if they could find food it was not always enough. The Russian LDS member interviewed here told about restrictions that prevented people from cooking at home as the Russian manner was. Ration coupons limited consumption of several goods.¹⁵⁶ Despite of the lack of food the Russians were very hospitable. In several articles there are mentions of Russians who invited LDS members in their homes or dachas. Sometimes hospitality even went a little too far. Mikail Sorokine, an LDS member from St. Petersburg assumed people were offended by missionaries who would not stay for a meal after the teaching session. “If missionaries aren't well received at an apartment it is often because the people living there don't feel their food is good enough.” Sometimes, politeness required the missionaries eat more than was good for them.¹⁵⁷

Another problem that poverty created for practising Mormonism was related to temple visits. As mentioned in chapter 3, there were no LDS temples in Russia. To visit a temple in other countries meant a trip abroad. Members had to pay their own visits. For the poorest, this was a great financial sacrifice. The problem was recognized in one of the articles in my research materials. Cases where poverty would have totally stopped members from going to temples or even hesitate doing it were not shared. Apparently the sacrifice was not too great even for poor members or if it was, it was not worth mentioning.¹⁵⁸

“Most of the seminary and institute classes in St. Petersburg are held in the teachers' apartments, usually no bigger than two small rooms”¹⁵⁹, LDS Church News reporter Sarah Jane Weaver wrote about the early LDS meetings in St. Petersburg. Small was the most used word to describe apartments in Russia.

¹⁵⁴ Cannon 1995.

¹⁵⁵ Stout 1992.

¹⁵⁶ Stout 1992.

¹⁵⁷ Cannon 1995; Stout 1993; Stout 1992

¹⁵⁸ Avant 1995.

¹⁵⁹ Weaver 1999.

Some people lived in shared apartments where the private space was even more limited. Another thing that made living conditions difficult was the cold weather. Heating and warm clothing were too expensive for many.¹⁶⁰

Not all Russians suffered from misery. The middle class and very rich elite were forming as inequalities between the citizens increased.¹⁶¹ However, wealthy people not called wealthy like poor people were said to be poor. Even LDS writers who had spent time in Russia or followed seemed to avoid reporting wealthy people as could have been expected from Jalagin's and Alenius' notions about historical images. As told in chapter 1.2, they stated that historical images got more varied as the image creator gained more experience of the culture they observed.¹⁶² Hints about their economical situation had to be searched in texts about their lives. For example, 16 years old Anna Terebnika wrote in 1990 that her favourite hobbies included slalom and travelling. It is likely that a poor person would not have been able to exercise these hobbies. The same could be assumed of the young Sasha Strachova who studied intensively in a dancing academy to become a professional dancer unless she had a scholarship. Why wealthy was not brought up as directly as poverty could only be guessed. Perhaps poverty was underlined to show that LDS was interested of the less fortunate people. Another reason could be that talking about wealthy was considered bragging or otherwise inappropriate.¹⁶³

5.2 Family

Many observations were made about family life that was very central in LDS teachings. Several problems were seen in Russian families. Perhaps the broadest article about Russian family living was written by LDS member Lori Neubert who moved to Russia because of her husband's work wrote her impressions of life in the country, concentrating on children. In particular she remembered one scene from the beginning of their stay in Russia:

A young boy with a sweet grin appeared behind us, and in his tattered brown coat and gray knit hat, he timidly cooed and grinned at our baby while he waited for his grandmother to buy that rare treat of hamburger and maybe some fries.

¹⁶⁰ Weaver 1999; Gardner 1998; Russian members strive to help build Church 1993

¹⁶¹ Freeze 2009 b, p. 479.

¹⁶² Alenius 2002, p. 71; Jalagin 2002, p. 30 – 31.

¹⁶³ Gardner 1998; Terebnika 1990.

Grandmother returned, grabbed his hand, and he was gone, but the image was left in my mind. It was one of those moments where I almost felt immediate love for someone, and I have wondered what does this boy go home to. Is it a home full of sadness and despair? Is there a mother and a father? Do they love each other or do they hurt each other?¹⁶⁴

These thoughts were followed by speculations about the unknown boy's future possibilities in spiritual life and LDS mission. Neubert did not explain more closely what her conclusions were based on. According to the text she did not talk to the boy or his grandmother. It seemed that she thought fast-food restaurant and the food it served were rare luxuries for the Russian boy. She did not tell what made her think this. Her primary assumptions about the boy's family were negative. She wondered to herself whether his home was full of sadness and despair and whether he had parents. She worried about the family's internal relations, asking if they loved or hurt each other. Neubert also visited an orphanage home where she saw abandoned babies. One of the staff members of the home told her there were too many babies per nanny. The visit made her very sad since it made her think of her own child. The whole text has a strong personal emotional load in it. This was typical for my materials since most of them were primarily meant to raise reader's spiritual feelings.¹⁶⁵

Like in Neubert's text, young Russian children remained silent in public LDS materials. They were not quoted in any article. Where children were mentioned, they are introduced as sons or daughters, schoolchildren, choir members, attenders of Sunday school, receivers of aid or orphans. Their role was to be taken care of or taught.¹⁶⁶ LDS Church wanted to guide the children to spiritually and morally right. For example in 1997, children of LDS members in Moscow got lessons about the positive feelings that were gained by making the right choices in life.¹⁶⁷

Impressions given about the Russian family life were in generally quite negative or tragic. Some families were torn apart during the Soviet times or been broken by deaths and diseases. "They are full of love for each other and for their family. That's what we lost in our country over more than 70 years of

¹⁶⁴ Neubert 1994.

¹⁶⁵ Neubert 1994.

¹⁶⁶ Dads, children enjoy 1999; Avant 1997; Dockstader 1997; Lloyd 1997; Neubert 1994

¹⁶⁷ Dockstader 1997.

history“, Russian TV journalist said.¹⁶⁸ During the Soviet era, family connections were not encouraged, quite the opposite. LDS News staff writer John Hart wrote in an article about genealogy:

Historical amnesia began after the 1917 revolution. For example, during the Stalin era, "it became dangerous to have a good memory, especially the memory of one's own family line. It became dangerous to remember one's parents and grandparents if they were not only of nobility, but also if they had been well-to-do peasants, entrepreneurs, clergymen, army officers, functionaries of the older regime, or just educated people.¹⁶⁹

In the article, concept of historical amnesia was used to describe the attitude towards history in the Soviet times. This meant that remembering had been undesired, even dangerous. A family history with relatives that belonged to groups that the Soviet government considered its enemies might lead to problems. It was better to forget the previous generations. Genealogy was a hobby that could make life harder. Therefore, it was not much practised.¹⁷⁰

Divorces continued to happen after Soviet times. They were presented without exception as human tragedies. The divorced persons introduced in the texts were women. Perspective of divorced men was not given. Another common feature for the descriptions were writers' strong interpretations about the affects of the divorce. Other factors about the women's life were not enlightened much. Women were not directly quoted. A women's conference speaker told about a woman in her branch: "She is only 29 and she is badly ill with tuberculosis. Her husband divorced her. The illness and divorce broke her down completely."¹⁷¹ Apparently the decision about divorce was not mutual in this case. The woman lacked the authority to make choices about her own life. Divorce appeared at the same time or as a result of tuberculosis. These two things together made the woman's life miserable.¹⁷² Divorce's effects on children were brought up in an article about a girl who wanted to join the Church: "But her mother, recently divorced and feeling burdened with life, dismissed her news and her excitement."¹⁷³ Here, divorce is seen as a partial cause of mother's emotional

¹⁶⁸ Sisterhood growing in Russia 1996; Johnson 1994; Larson-Hall 1993; Hart 1993; LDS heritage inspires Russian TV journalists 1992.

¹⁶⁹ Hart 1993.

¹⁷⁰ Hart 1993.

¹⁷¹ Sisterhood growing in Russia 1996.

¹⁷² Sisterhood growing in Russia 1996

¹⁷³ Gardner 1998.

absence in her daughter's life. Other factors were not named but it was implied that some other reasons for the mother's behaviour existed.¹⁷⁴

Conflicts inside families were also caused by differences between generations. Children lived in a different Russia than their parents who had been born and raised during the Soviet time. The children, as well as grandparents, were said to be more concerning and therefore open to Jesus. For instance one article is about a boy who is bullied at school but does not want to use violence to solve the situation. This amazed his father "who generally had followed a different, far harsher ethic all his life." In this case, also the father changed his way of thinking. In many families, parents would not talk about religion at home so that felt at first uncomfortable for many of their children as well.¹⁷⁵

Family was central in the LDS teaching. In several articles, LDS membership had greatly improved dynamics of Russian families even when it had not been that bad in the first place. A concrete way to do this was a campaign that challenged fathers to bring up their ways of spending more time with their children. One of the fathers was Russian Alexander Eonin who took his children fishing. This was told about relations of a Russian convert Pavel Anischenko: "He has always loved his family, but the Church has taught him to be more patient and forgiving with family members."¹⁷⁶ It is not said whether the rest of Pavel's family joined the Church. Sometimes it was the whole family that joined, sometimes only one person. Also in the cases where the other family members stayed outside the church they felt their relations to their family improved.¹⁷⁷

Genealogy was again possible after the collapse of USSR and LDS promoted it strongly. It was important for LDS Church because they had a tradition of asking God to unite families in Heaven. This could only be done if the family members were known. Genealogy did not attract Russian people very much: only about one hundred people attended to the first genealogy conference LDS in 1993. Despite of the importance of genealogy for the LDS Church, there were no further articles about it in the materials, not even in the Russian LDS

¹⁷⁴ Gardner 1998;.

¹⁷⁵ Browning 1997; Lloyd 1995; Avant 1995; Browning 1993

¹⁷⁶ Dads, children enjoy 1999.

¹⁷⁷ Dads, children enjoy 1999; Johnson 1994; Russian members strive to help build Church 1993; Avant 1991.

website. That is why it is not possible to tell if it became more popular in the following years.¹⁷⁸

5.3 Moral issues

LDS observers saw several moral issues in the Russian lifestyle and moral. Alcohol, drugs, caffeine, prostitution and abortion were mentioned in my research materials. The communist rule and its atheism was blamed for this. It was said to have taken the moral basis of life from the people.¹⁷⁹ These articles remained silent about the fact that also Russian commentators and decision makers, for example the last USSR leader Mikhail Gorbachev, had raised similar concerns in their speeches and writings and asked for ROC's co-operation to fight the issues. In LDS materials, ROC's efforts to fight these problems were not mentioned at all.¹⁸⁰

The most commonly mentioned moral problem was alcohol. Alcoholism was named as one of the biggest problems of the Russian society. Many people found it hard to stay away from it. It violated against the Mormon guidelines like Word of Wisdom. It was also said to cause social and family problems. Russian newly converted Tanya Solovyova described the problem for the youth's part: "many young people in Russia spend time together at restaurants or bars, and often, because of alcohol, start fights."¹⁸¹ The Word of Wisdom restricted also tobacco, drugs and caffeine. The latter was an ingredient of tea which was a traditional and much consumed drink in Russia. According to LDS, these things cause addiction that is bad for one's health and mind.¹⁸²

When people drink tea or coffee or alcohol, or when they smoke or use drugs, they think that if they stop they won't have freedom anymore. But if you stop you don't lose freedom; you gain freedom because you're not dependent on those things anymore.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Johnson 1994;

¹⁷⁹ Lloyd 1997; Lloyd 1995

¹⁸⁰ Freeze 2009 b, p. 453; Luukkanen 2009, p. 425.

¹⁸¹ Living by the scriptures 1999; Browning 1997 a, p. 80; Larson-Hall 1993

¹⁸² LDS topics: Word of Wisdom 2014

¹⁸³ Romney 1998.

According to a 16 year old LDS member Katya Medvedeva from the Nevsky Branch, Russian people felt that the Word of Wisdom meant giving up their personal freedom to make choices. Her view was the opposite: addiction free life would be freedom in the true meaning of the word.¹⁸⁴

Some, for example, find it difficult not to drink tea. The only convenient alternative is tap water, which is not clean and must always be boiled. Milk, soda pop, and juice cost too much for the average Russian. Those who substitute herbal teas must gather the herbs or berries themselves. This presents real problems in winter.¹⁸⁵

This quote tells that leaving caffeine in order to follow the Word of Wisdom could make life tricky. Tea was a convenient drink because the tap water could be dirty and needed to be boiled. Cold drinks were significantly more expensive and therefore out of reach for many Russians. Caffeine free teas were not available in stores. Making them took time and effort. It was problematic especially during the cold winter because herbs and fruits did not grow.¹⁸⁶

An American missionary who had done baptismal interviews remembered in particular two women who had been through an abortion. “Both times I could see scars that could never be healed.” It was told that other of these sisters been very young at the time of the abortion. She had carried bad conscience about the abortion ever since it was done. Further analysis about the women’s situation before or after the abortion was not presented, perhaps because abortion was disapproved by the LDS Church and could be a reason to lose its membership. These women were baptised and taken to church members but the missionary felt sad for these women since he could not promise them God’s forgiveness.¹⁸⁷

After a few months of single-minded devotion to dancing, Sasha had drifted dangerously far from her mother, her schoolwork, and the Church. .. [T]he mother of an LDS friend said, “Sasha, stop! Do you think you can remain clean in that environment? Those people don’t keep the Word of Wisdom or the law of chastity. Do you think the Holy Ghost can remain with you?”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Larson-Hall 1993.

¹⁸⁵ Larson-Hall 1993.

¹⁸⁶ Larson-Hall 1993.

¹⁸⁷ Browning 1997 a, p. 310; LDS topics: Abortion.

¹⁸⁸ Romney 1999.

Bad company threatened the purity of Russian converts or people who were thinking about joining LDS. It was not enough to avoid bars to keep away from that bad company. Young LDS member Sasha Strachova who is presented in the quote above decided to give up her promising dancing career to keep her purity. Intensive training took her away from her family and schoolwork, both very central LDS virtues. She was encouraged to make this decision by a mother of an LDS friend. It was not said whether the mother herself was a Church member but her concern about the Word of Wisdom and keeping LDS ideals could indicate she was.¹⁸⁹ Strachova case was at some level in contradiction with an earlier text where American LDS members who visited Russia. The case was presented more closely in chapter 4.1. The group was very disappointed to find out that the well-known Bolshoi Theatre was sold out. The disappointment could be seen as a sign of appreciation for Russian performing arts. Yet, the performers' lifestyle was considered too impure for an LDS member. Russian theatre was thus presented both as interesting and a nest of vice. Apparently there were different kinds of feelings about the issue inside the LDS community or its attitude had changed.¹⁹⁰

We are working to help sisters understand that Sunday is a day of reverence. It is a day to worship together. It is a holy day. For many, it is the only day they do not work and the only day for family outings, shopping or recreation.¹⁹¹

Keeping the Sabbath became an issue for LDS missionaries like Sister Maximova who was quoted above. Russians were not used to reserve one day a week for practising religion as was recommended by the Church. Even if Sunday was a day off from work, it was reserved for shopping, recreation etc. instead of spiritual activities. Sister Maximova found the habit hard to break.¹⁹²

Their sterling example stood and stands in stark contrast to the pornography, violence and vulgarity entering Russia from the West through tawdry films and TV.¹⁹³

This quote shows that all threats against purity did not come from Russia. They could also come from the West which included USA. That was why the LDS had

¹⁸⁹ Romney 1999.

¹⁹⁰ Sowell 1976; Romney 1999.

¹⁹¹ Stout 1992.

¹⁹² Stout 1992; Sabbath Day 2014.

¹⁹³ Russian members strive to help build Church 1993.

consider carefully which influences they would bring to Russia. In the project described in the quote, BYU professor Trevor McKee brought a group of his students from Utah to prove Russians that America was more than just bad influence presented in TV and media. By their own example, they would draw a clear line between the desired and undesired features of American lifestyle. Apparently, that meant promoting the LDS ideals.¹⁹⁴

Concerns about moral issues occurred in LDS materials mainly during the first side of the decade. When they were brought up in the texts written in late 1990's, moral problems were mentioned as memories from earlier years, mostly Soviet era. Reason for this could be the fact that news about Russia concentrated on local LDS members – now that there were more of them to write about. Mormonism had helped them overcome their bad habits.¹⁹⁵ However, Russian LDS member Katya Medvedeva reminded that alcoholism, caffeine and smoking were still general problems in the country even in 1998.¹⁹⁶

6. Conclusions

In this study, my research questions were:

- 1) How is the Russian society presented in public LDS material in the 1990's?
- 2) How is everyday life in Russian mission presented in this material?
- 3) How do these images of Russia change during 1990's?

Answers for these questions were searched in public LDS online materials and LDS mission president Gary Browning's memoir *Russia and the Restored Gospel*.

Questions 1 and 2 were connected to each other. Their limits were not always clear and in some cases it can be debated whether the notion should have been situated under the category of Russian society or everyday life. However, the separation made organizing the materials more logical. Question 3 was dealt thematically among the two other questions by continuously observing the changes that occurred in the material.

¹⁹⁴ Russian members strive to help build Church 1993.

¹⁹⁵ Gardner 1998; Antimenkov 1997; Browning 1997 b; Von Rosen 1995.

¹⁹⁶ Romney 1998.

My method was historical image research. It was presented in chapter 1.2. To put it briefly, the method aims to create a coherent understanding of the image that chosen materials give about their subject. For my study, this means that the focus is on LDS writers' choices and not in actual happenings in Russia.

Russia interested the LDS Church because its founder Joseph Smith jr. had mentioned "that vast empire of Russia" and its remarkable role in his prophecy about the last days. He had not explained his words any closer and it remained vague to his followers but it was enough to make Russia mysteriously attractive to LDS Church that was a strongly mission oriented.

Geographical and functional vastness of that vast empire depended on how the LDS Church spread and where it worked. Russia was approached from its Western neighbours, Finland and Estonia where they could work more freely. St. Petersburg and Vyborg, both located reasonably close to Russia's Western border, were the first Russian cities to appear in LDS materials in the very early 1990's. Moscow as the other capital was as well brought up early and quite often. LDS had a special relationship with Siberia since there were rumours about Siberian Mormons who had lived in the late 19th century. Even by the end of the decade, LDS view did not cover the whole country. The Eastern and Eastern-Northern parts were almost totally left out. Russian weather was brought up in several texts. The image that a majority of the texts gave was that Russia was cold. The coldness was not a neutral statement about temperature but also a metaphor to emphasize the warm atmosphere in meetings of Russians.

Public LDS reports about Russia were based on what reporters saw and heard more than on statistics and researches. This was the case even when it came to notions about the entire society. Support for LDS views was not searched in facts. Any certain reasons for this could not have been found.

Central issues to the LDS view on the Russian society were freedom, poverty and threats to LDS missionaries. The first two named issues were handled in the materials for the whole decade but the third one became accurate in 1998 when LDS missionaries faced violence.

Limitations of citizen's freedom were brought up as a feature of the Soviet era. LDS writers were especially interested in the freedom of religion. Atheistic Soviet policies were constantly brought up as a reminder of religious oppression and problems that it caused. Some of the problems were told to have

affected the society still in the 1990's after USSR collapsed. The freedom of religion seemed to improve in the early 1990's when new laws about religious minorities were adopted and the traditionally dominating position of ROC was . It became possible for the so called new churches for instance to do mission work openly and obtain property. In 1997, the legislation changed again, this time to the other direction. Restrictions to other denominations than ROC were adopted. Most attention in the LDS materials was given to the fact that new law required foreign missionaries to renew their visas every three months. For LDS missionaries, this meant they had to leave and return Russia several times during their service. LDS leaders were, however, optimistic and believed mission could go on despite of the new rules. They emphasized that the Russian decision makers and officials had been very co-operative to LDS.

Poverty was present in the LDS materials for the whole research period. It meant lack of food, goods, medical services, education and administrative knowledge. Poverty was in particularly mentioned when writing about LDS charity. Several Russian people were described as poor while no one was given the attribute rich or its synonyms. The other side of the increasing inequality in Russia, the few people with more property than ever, was ignored. One reason for these could be that poverty legitimated the LDS charity work. Grateful quotes from relief receivers strengthened the idea that LDS was needed in Russia. Poverty was a major theme in both of the main categories of my study. It was a phenomenon in the society and it affected every day life in Russia. Homes were said to be small. All this created an impression of hard living conditions. In LDS view, the greatest lack of Russians and Russia was, however, spiritual. All relief work was aimed to meet the spiritual needs.

The main reasons for the poverty was said to be the general economical depression that started in the late 1980's and continued to get more severe through the entire 1990's. The collapse of USSR had caused a chaos in the society. It was not as easily sorted out as was expected in Russia. Unemployment rates were high. Even having a job did not assure income for people since several employers lacked money to pay for their workers. On the other hand, even people who had money could not buy necessities because there were shortages of materials and therefore limitations. Despite of all the poverty, Russian people were said to be very hospitable. They wanted to serve food for their guests. People who felt they did not have enough to offer refused from home teaching

sessions that LDS missionaries wanted to give them. Because of the poverty, travelling to an LDS temple for the most sacred acts was a great financial sacrifice for some of the converted Russians.

Impressions given about the Russian health care system were contradictory. On the other hand, there were stories of severely injured people who needed LDS medical charity to get the right help. On the other hand, American LDS mission workers were said to have received all the medical care they had needed.

In the beginning of the decade, Russian people's poor skills in English language was brought up in the materials. In the end of the decade, it was not mentioned anymore. Either it was not anymore an issue to LDS writers or the situation had changed.

Russia was said to be safe for the LDS Church even in 1998 when four missionaries faced severe violence in two Russian cities. In Saratov, two missionaries were kidnapped and in Ufa, one missionaries was killed and one injured in a stabbing. These incidents were presented as unfortunate individual happenings that would not turn the LDS attitude towards Russia and Russians negative. Even the devastated family of the killed missionary affirmed they did not have any bad feelings for the country or its citizens. Young LDS members still wanted to do their mission in Russia.

The identities of the stabber and the kidnapping were not revealed. In other than LDS sources it was brought up that the stabber was a former LDS member. Why this information was not brought up remained unclear. When the kidnappings of missionaries were over, it was made clear that nothing was paid to the kidnapper. Similar strong statements against corruption were made in other articles, as well. Even if bribes were sometimes requested by Russian authorities and criminals, paying them was against LDS religion.

In addition to poverty, most visible themes about every day life in Russia were family and moral issues. Both of them were central in LDS teachings.

Soviet period and atheism were said to caused great harm for the Russian families. LDS writers were concerned about divorces that continued to happen even after the Soviet era. Family members were separated by the authorities or turned against each other. Acknowledging family history had been made dangerous: no one wanted to find out they had relatives that the USSR classified as state enemies because that could have made them state enemies as

well. When Soviet Union collapsed, LDS hoped for rise of genealogy but the research materials did not give any reason to assume that this kind of development took place in Russia.

Most of the descriptions about family life came from Russian LDS members who talked about their own memories and current situations. Role of family was not as central for Russians as it was in LDS teachings. LDS commentators were concerned about this. Joining LDS was said to have improved dynamics of families, even if only part of the family joined. In particularly families' attitudes towards religion were told about. Some said they never talked about religion with their parents or their parents were even hostile to religion. On the other hand, some had heard about religion from their parents or grandparents and practised their faith with them.

One text was strongly based on assumption instead of people's own experiences or other facts. Lori Neubert, an American LDS member, wrote her impressions from a fast food restaurant focusing on a little boy who was walked away from the venue by his assumed grandmother. Her text could be thought to be an example of general American ideas about Russian family life. Neubert imagined mainly negative things about the boy's family and life. Her text included a feature that was typical for my entire research material: the children were not quoted. They were considered very important but their own words were not given space.

Moral issues - alcohol, caffeine, divorces, drugs, prostitution and abortions - made many LDS commentators worried in particularly in the early 1990's. These problems were said to have been caused by atheism. LDS living guidelines restricted all the things above. The most important of these guidelines was the Word of Wisdom that advised to avoid all addictions because they would keep thoughts away from spiritual matters. It was not very easy to get Russians adopt moral guidelines of the LDS Church. One missionary compared the difficulty of talking about the Word of Wisdom to the rough weather and material conditions that the very first Mormon pioneers had faced in Siberia in the late 19th century. Also the LDS ordinance of keeping Sunday as a Sabbath was said to be difficult for Russians who were not used to reserve one day a week for spirituality.

Most attention was given to alcohol, a problem that was also recognized by Soviet and Russian leaders like Mikhail Gorbachev. It was not

brought up that also ROC worked on reducing alcoholism and drug addictions in Russia. Many writers reported that alcohol was used much and it caused serious problems. For example, it was written that young people spent time drinking in bars and got into fights. Giving up alcohol was difficult for Russians who were used to it. The same applied to other addictive substances. It was not just because people were used to them but because they were convenient. Caffeinated tea, for instance, was affordable and safe compared to other options like were dirty tap water and expensive sodas.

Both abortion and divorce were described as human tragedies. Couple of individual cases about these issues were told in my research materials. In all cases, the people who were told about were women without quoting them directly. Reasons for these very personal choices or stories behind them were not told, only the consequence: a life long trauma, depression and inability to show interest to people around them. What came to LDS moral codes, abortion was more problematic than divorce because it could be a reason to lose Church membership.

An individual case of a young Russian woman Sasha Strachova illustrated how strongly LDS membership impacted member's life. Strachova was said to be a devoted and promising student at a dancing academy. As she joined LDS other members started questioning the morality of dancer's lifestyle. Eventually, she gave up dancing to concentrate on living by LDS teachings.

LDS commentators were not only concerned about the moral issues inside Russia but also influences that were brought there by the Western television and movies: pornography, violence and vulgarity. Example of favourable kind of American lifestyle was set by LDS members who lived or visited Russia.

To make a brief general conclusive statement about the LDS view on Russia, it could be said to be very LDS centred. Things that were brought up were always in connection with LDS activities. Views were based on individual experiences and notions, not in factors like statistics. These main lines of LDS reporting did not change during the 1990's.

My research left many interesting questions about LDS mission in Russia open. By studying common Russian materials like newspapers, it could be possible to study how Russian society and people saw LDS. Systematic comparisons between LDS and other denominations in Russia would be necessary

to comprehend the roots of all LDS solutions in mission work. Another set of comparisons should be done to LDS mission in other countries to see if the Church's views about Russia differed from its views on other countries.

Abbreviations

BYU	Brigham Young University
HA	Historiallinen Aikakauskirja
LDS	Latter-Day Saints
MTC	Missionary Training Center
ROC	Russian Orthodox Church
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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