AMERICA WAKE UP, Broadcast No. 69

INTERVIEW WITH DR. GEORGE HESS

ANNOUNCER: AMERICA WAKE UP, in cooperation with the Daughters of the American Revolution, state of Illinois, presents Phyllis Schlafly:

MRS. SCHLAFLY: It is a pleasure today to introduce to the listeners of AMERICA WAKE UP Dr. George Hess, a practicing physician of Bunker Hill, Illinois and nationally known as past president of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons. Dr. Hess, you recently made a trip, did you not, to the famous Baptist Church in Moscow?

DR. HESS: Yes. Just a little over 18 months ago I had the opportunity of attending a regular Sunday morning service in the most discussed and publicized Moscow Baptist Church.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: Many famous people have visited that church and they have come back and told us that this church proves that Communism is changing and that religion is allowed within the Soviet Union. What is your reaction?

DR. HESS: Well, of course, that is true. Many famous people have visited that church and I think perhaps that there is something to be gained by having some of us who are not so famous make the same trip because, you see, I was allowed as an unimportant individual to sit up in the balcony on the first row and just observe the procedures of that service for three hours. And it is true, as I have read and heard from other visitors before me, that the church was completely packed for that Sunday morning service. Figures of 2500 - 2600 packed into an auditorium designed to seat about 500, I think, are quite accurate. And I must admit, if I can elaborate on this point, I must admit that I really learned something by my presence there on that Sunday morning since some of my ideas were changed somewhat. Before I went I had the idea that perhaps some of these people who

were gathered here in this auditorium, this church service every Sunday morning, were by-and-large induced to come there through some special favor, perhaps a little extra food rationing, for the purpose of filling the building and thus creating a favorable impression on the part of foreign visitors who might attend. But as I sat there in the first row of the balcony and observed these people as they crowded into the pews and into the aisles, I was quite sure that they were not there as part of a propaganda-Hollywood type production. If they had been, they would have been much better dressed, for example. These folks that were crowded in there were not as well dressed as the average people I saw down in Red Square, or in Orpheum Amusement Park. If these people were there as part of a Hollywood-type propaganda production impressing visitors, I am certain I would have seen many more of them with bibles and hymn books. I am sure that I would not have seen so many of them with their eye-glasses tied on with cord around behind their scarfs to hold them in place.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: Were these people younger people or older people?

DR. HESS: Of course, you get different opinions on that subject from different visitors. As I took the opportunity to scan the crowd below and across the balcony opposite me, I observed no more than 25 or 30 whom I would consider under the age of 20 and perhaps not more than 5-10% under the age of 40.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: If the church was so crowded, how many Baptist churches were there like this in Moscow?

DR. HESS: It is an interesting thing. You know they state frankly and freely that we have 13 churches in the city of Moscow with over 6 million people. That seems like rather a small number, but when you

look into it and question them, they will admit (by "they" I mean the official government guides) those 13 churches include all places where services are held including even the foreign embassies. And, of course, there is only 1 Baptist church. One is the "one and only". I would like to point this out to you, and perhaps you are already aware of it, many of our so-called "liberal" ministers will visit over there and come back and say "we saw their church packed and obviously it is an indication of the softening attitude on the part of the Communist government." Wellnow, of course, it is traditional that the Baptist churches particularly divide and multiply over and over. As soon as you have a little congregation, the first thing you know a little handful will move off in another area and they will start a-nother church. Well, why is it that since this one church is packed every Sunday to capacity why do they not divide and start another little church in another part of the city and make it more convenient for the people. Of course the answer is quite obvious, it is simply that the government will not allow it.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: Do you think that the Communists are able to use the pulpit for their Communist propaganda?

DR. HESS: They certainly were able to use the pulpit effectively the day I was there because at that Sunday morning service a visiting African was introduced in the pulpit as being the head of the Liber-ian Baptist, Dr. John Talbett. Incidentally, he is also the Vice President of Liberia. He spoke for about 5 or 6 minutes extolling the virtues "of the leaders of your great country" and complimenting and thanking them for their cooperation in making his visit possible. While that was going on 3 teams of movie cameramen and men with flood-lights were operating throughout the building, one of them right on the platform with this visiting clergyman from Liberia, where it was recorded on film and I have since been told that these

very films are used in Africa for the purpose of attempting to convince those people by saying "See, we can show you that it is possible for people to have the benefits of Communism and at the same time continue with your churches.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: Dr. Hess, what was the condition of the church building and how would you compare it, for example, with Lenin's tomb?

DR. HESS: Well, I have pictures to show that the exterior of this building is in a very poor state of repair, the paint is peeling off, the steps are worn and chipped, and it is in a very poor condition. Whereas, it is obvious that they do have the money for the buildings they consider important. For instance, the beautiful hotel in which I stayed, the Palace of Congress is one of the most modern buildings in the world and is 3 years old down inside the Kremlin wall. And, of course, Lenin's tomb of beautiful polished red granite is a spectacle to behold because of its elegance. You see the point is they are not spending money on the Moscow Baptist church, which, of course, is government property; they are not spending money maintaining it because they simply do not expect to be needing it much longer.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: Do you mean that the Baptist church is government owned instead of being owned by the congregation?

DR. HESS: All of the properties which are used for church purposes are loaned, so to speak, by the government and nothing can be done to those buildings without the permission of the government.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: We are told by some people that the Soviet constitution guarantees the right of the freedom of religion. Would you explain this to us?

DR. HESS: I am very glad that you brought that point up because it is a very important one. It is true that the Soviet government in

its constitution guarantees the right (now this is important) to have religion, but it guarantees the right to practice atheism. In other words, they grant and realize it isn't possible to take religion and worship out of the heart of an individual but by law they can prevent him from showing any signs of practicing that religion. So the significant thing is that the constitution guarantees the right to have religion but it also guarantees the right to practice atheism.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: Can a minister of the gospel go into the homes of the people or do his preaching anywhere outside of this one church?

DR. HESS: All of the preaching, the use of the scripture, the consulting with his people must be done within the walls of the church building.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: Are there any church operated schools, hospitals, welfare agencies, or other church activities?

DR. HESS: All such activity is completely forbidden, absolutely forbidden, because as they say (and of course it would be amusing if it weren't so tragic) we have no need for charitable works such as your churches carry on in this country. So therefore you are forbidden to carry on such things as welfare work, hospitals, clinics, nursery schools, etc.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: I suppose the Communists make it very difficult to teach the children anything about religion?

DR. HESS: As a matter of fact, it is forbidden by law to teach these children the idea of worshipping God because, as they say, you are holding back the progress of our program of rebuilding the world by teaching such outmoded myths as that. So such fables can not be perpetuated because it holds back the progress of what we are expected to do for mankind.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: I have seen a picture of the congregation in the Baptist church in Moscow where some of these old people have tears in their eyes. Do you think that is because they are so moved by the service?

DR. HESS: No, I am quite sure that is not the case, because as I observed them many of these elderly people were blotting their tears before the service even began, and as I have discussed this matter with those who have fled from behind the Iron Curtain who were very active in their churches, they have explained to me simply that as these old folks sit there and think of the days that have gone and will probably never come back in their lifetime when they can take their children and grandchildren in to worship with them, they have plenty reason to have heavy hearts and blot their tears.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: If a group of people in Russia want to organize or start a church, what is the procedure? Do they have to sign a document, or how do they go about it?

DR. HESS: The first procedure is for a group of 20 of good reputation and of some material means to get together and agree to act as a committee of caretakers who will be responsible for any property that is assigned to them for their church use, and then begins the long difficult struggle through official channels to get approval. And getting such approval has become practically an impossibility unless those on that committee of 20 have indicated a willingness to cooperate with the government and allow that church to be used for propaganda purposes.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: Is it made difficult for these 20 people to continue holding their jobs or to get promotions when they so identify themselves with the church?

DR. HESS: These 20 people, or as many of them that are really honest and sincere in wanting to develop and promote a church in the real sense of the word and not acting as Communist representatives, those people must be prepared to make a very real sacrifice,in so far as just a bare minimal comfort is concerned.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: You mentioned the freedom to practice and teach atheism. I believe you visited,also,the Kasaan Museum of Religion and Superstition and would you tell us how this fits into the atheistic picture of Russia?

DR. HESS: The Kasaan Cathedral is right in the downtown heart of Leningrad, the second largest city in Russia. It is one of the great cathedrals from the architectural standpoint of the Russian Orthodox Church. A number of years ago it was converted into a Museum with a multitude of exhibits, paintings, posters, sculpture -- everything imaginable for the purpose of teaching the people, particularly the young people -- that religion is the one factor that has held back the progress of this great land and that we will really not accomplish our goals until all religions and religious ideas are stamped out completely. And in that building I saw pictures, caricatures and sketches and all sorts of visual aids and materials which made it clear that anyone who has any concept of worshipping God is just simply a menace to our progress.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: These are exhibits to hold all religions up to ridicule,are they?

DR. HESS: Yes, it isn't just directed toward the Russian Orthodox Church but it is departmentalized. I saw departments for the Roman Catholics, the Moslems, the Hindus, the Protestants, and actually, if I should describe in detail the exhibits I saw there, they're just

simply so vile that your listeners would not believe that it could be true.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: To sum up, would you say that atheism is an integral part of Communism?

DR. HESS: Without atheism as the very heart and soul of the movement, there would be no Communist conspiracy attempting to engulf our world of today because it is from its very inception a movement to eliminate the concept of God.

MRS. SCHLAFLY: Thank you very much, Dr. George Hess, for being with us today on AMERICA WAKE UP.

ANNOUNCER: One of the chief objectives of the national Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, is patriotic education. DAR work with the education of our youth dates back to 1903. The DAR gives regular financial support to many schools and colleges in America, aid which over the years has amounted to millions of dollars. To qualify for DAR aid, a school or college must be specifically intended for underprivileged boys and girls who otherwise would not have the opportunity for an education, or for the Americanization of foreign-born students of foreign parentage. Most of the DAR schools are in remote rural sections or pilot counties where transportation is difficult. Graduates of DAR-supported schools frequently become leaders in their communities and experts in many specialized fields, as well as good American citizens. Although much progress has been made in providing public schools in depressed areas, there are still today children who would never know the joy and enlightenment that education can bring unless they have the opportunity to attend a school supported by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

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