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## Exploring Cold War Religious Persecution Using the Rank-Order Approach

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## **Exploring Cold War Religious Persecution using the Rank-Order Approach**

### **Introduction**

“If you want to win over the hearts and minds of the people and still try to eliminate any influence from the Church, the last thing you want to do is force the pastor to step down. Forcing a pastor to resign will only cause hatred for the government and resistance within the Church”, described by Jaxson, a 17-year old world history student who was part of a class discussion on how an authoritarian government might control and weaken the influence of the Protestant Church. Jaxson and many of his peers responded in dismay as they discussed the various methods used to silence religion in a communist country. Historical periods such as the Cold War era and topics such as personal freedoms are often instructionally reduced to minimal lectures, unremarkable readings, and passive worksheets, resulting in little to no student interaction or in-depth analysis with limited higher-level learning (Rapopart, 2006; White, 1994). Collectively, students appreciate lessons that go beyond direct instruction and rote memorization; however, year after year, students find the comprehension of the Cold War era alongside associated political and social movements both vague and confusing. Such phenomena are especially noticeable when teaching the concept of totalitarian governments and its treatment of both citizens and religious organizations in Eastern Europe.

### **Aim and Purpose for a Cold War Rank-Order Activity**

For this activity, the rank-order activity was designed to investigate the East German practice of suppressing the influence of the Protestant Church. Students, incorporating the five phases of thinking and decision making, analyzed and evaluated a rank-order learning activity that required students to decide which governmental action would best decrease the religious influence on East German society. Such an activity encourages students to confront three fundamental questions: 1) What information and efforts by the government are warranted to limit the power of a religious organization; 2) When does a government have the right to spy and manipulate its citizens to maintain national security; 3) When do individual liberties and freedoms outweigh a government's power for national security and control?

### **Authoritarian Control, East Germany and the Protestant Church**

Churches and religious communities in East Germany were considered a thorn in the side of the communist party. Since East German churches had a certain amount of independence, they, in return, could provide meaning and hope for the citizens. Although the Protestant Church appeared as a threat to governmental control, the communist government grudgingly developed a liberal approach towards both the Protestant and Lutheran faiths because 1) Both communists and Christians suffered in concentration camps at the hands of Hitler; 2) East Germany was the only Eastern Bloc nation that had a significant Protestant Christian population which allowed for more flexibility compared to the Catholic Church, and 3) The East German government sought to improve relations with and acceptance from West Germany. Fair and proper treatment of the Protestant and Lutheran churches would aid in this acceptance (Baum, 1996).

Despite the perceived steps of flexibility for the Church, East German Christians continued to suffer at the hands of the communist government. Beginning in the 1950s and onward, the communist government implemented a slow, methodical propaganda campaign against Christianity, which was an attempt to procedurally decentralize the Church. As Fulbrook (2005) suggested, the East German state pursued a systematic policy to weaken the social and cultural influence of Protestantism. The State Security Police (Stasi), under the direction of the government, enacted various subtle changes to reduce the affects of Christian beliefs on society and in homes. Protestants and Catholics played an integral part in tradition, dissent, and solidarity against the communist government. The Christian home was identified by The State Secret Security as a critical locus of secrecy, culture, and subversion, fostering anti-socialist attitudes, and popular beliefs (Betts, 2012). As a result, the communist government enacted three goals to diminish and usurp the Church's influence. As part of the government's effort to undermine Christianity as a living and spiritual force in society, the Stasi was used to infiltrate the Church leadership in order to sow seeds of distrust, to communicate false information, and to reduce the reaching impact of Christian beliefs on East German society (Fulbrook, 2005).

Of more critical measures, the Stasi, acting on behalf of the communist government, used coercion by requiring atheist teachings to be included as part of all public school curriculum, which focused solely on the accomplishments of man disconnected from any divine or spiritual doctrine. Government officials instituted the Jugendweihe, a youth ceremony of 14-year-old boys and girls. The Jugendweihe was, according to Betts (2012), a "a full-blown propagandistic affirmation of socialist victory, communal life, and state belonging. Atheism was to be the cornerstone of humanistic education. In the Socialist Party's literature, the point was repeatedly made that religion began science ended, and thus further research and knowledge would dispel the consoling need for mysticism" (p.59). Religious parents were regularly persuaded to allow the dedication rites for their children. It was understood that non-participation in the Jugendweihe ceremony would effectively penalize the family and/or the child in the form of job demotion and/or blocked university education.

The government established a punitive system against the Church, intended to reduce the Church's powers and presence by limiting church-sponsored activities such as outdoor festivals, organized sports, and religious camps. Actively evangelical pastors received particular resentment from the government and were often singled out in Stasi reports as politically dangerous and threatened with arrest. By using candy and gifts from the West, pastors were accused of encouraging youth to resist the Jugendweihe ceremony while discouraging active participation in state activities. Conspired stories of violence and abuse by pastors towards non-believers and socialist youth were common defamation practices by Stasi agents and frequently touted in the socialist press. (Betts, 2012; Baum, 1996; Fulbrook, 2005; and Diefendorf, 1982).

The State Security Police particularly valued young informers who were often utilized to penetrate circles of disruptive social groupings such as punks, Goths, and church members; groups that were challenging to survive with traditional tactics. Many teenage informants were babysitters who reported on church members' discussions. According to Betts (2012), some Christian informants spied on fellow Christians "in exchange for various favors such as improved housing, rare consumer goods, and financial bonuses along with guaranteed university acceptance from the state" (p.47).

## The Five Phases of Thinking and Decision-Making

J. Doyle Casteel and Robert Stahl contend students encounter five phases of decision-making as they investigate situations and information for which a decision is required. As described by Casteel and Stahl (1997), decision-making episodes concerning content-specific material are designed to foster student use of conceptual, relational, decisional, affective, and reflective thinking. Students explore moral dilemmas associated with historical content and incorporate the five phases of thinking to formulate either individual or group decisions (p.19). Clarification of values and moral beliefs, which occur through student decision episodes, is often unique to how each student or group identifies, comprehends, decides, and uses values and values reasoning when considering a historical text (Casteel, 1978).

The conceptual phase in the decision-making process focuses on student comprehension of the task at hand. Explanatory answers to questions of who? where? when? what? how much? and how many apply. Conceptual thinking focuses on the comprehension, description, and clarification of information provided to the student. Such information may include, but is not limited to, a situation, phenomena, or problem associated with the content. As students attempt to generate meanings and interpretations of information, the goal at the conceptual phase is for students to ascertain the premise or focus of the situation, the set of data, or the problem. According to Stahl (1979), students who engage with conceptual thinking answer such questions as what does this mean? What is your interpretation of the situation? What specific data is known? What are some of the relevant attributes, characteristics, or features discussed? At what place or location did a situation(s) occur? Such questions aide in the early steps toward deciding on the objects, situations, and problems considered.

The relational phase stresses the formation, relevancy, and connection to content materials used in the classroom. The relationship between content material is combined through a lesson or activity. Two examples of questions associated with the relation phase include: In this activity, the President attempts to enact the New Deal discussed this last week. How are the President's efforts in this activity connected with the content material previously covered? The relational phase places emphasis on the application and analysis of information from the learning activity and course material, which in turn, encourages synthesis between the two elements, resulting in the integration of previously learned material with new learnings, connections, and possibilities (Casteel and Stahl, 1997).

Students must consider plausible decisions or actions based on personal preferences. Such an activity involves a student's personal preferences, rankings, likes, dislikes, values, emotions, feelings expressed during a given situation. The following questions are suggestive of those likely to evoke valuation thinking: Of the options of actions provided, which do you dislike the most? Of the alternatives offered, which one would you rank as your top two choices? and How would you rate these policies?

The decisional phase involves a student using categories of information that should calculate as a student considers all options before making decisions. Categories include given, likely, and possible choices, actions, or policies and probable short and long-term advantages and

disadvantages of each option or plan. During this phase of thinking, a student might guide their consideration with questions as: If placed in this dilemma, what course of action would you take? If the first alternative is selected, what results should be expected? (Stahl, 1995).

The final reflective phase occurs when the other stages are presumed complete. In the reflective aspect, a student must include a public statement of a final decision, and the rationales used for having arrived at the situation. The following questions are characteristic for the reflective phase: How consistent were you in your use of the same criteria for making decisions? How did you spend your time determining the appropriate conclusion? How did you use the ideas presented in the activity?

### **Content-Centered Learning**

Encapsulating the five phases of decision-making is the concept of content-centered learning. The premise of content-centered knowledge supports the development of attaining values clarification and moral development. Specifically, values clarification refers to desired patterns of student verbal statements, the occurrence of which can be used as a basis for inferring that students are engaged in comprehending, conceptualizing, and clarifying values and are involved actively in the process of valuing (Stahl, 1979). To foster both values clarification and moral development, content-centered learning is condensed to one of the following five types of dilemmas: 1) a neutral issue or context which people may react to or consider in terms of some values of moral belief (e.g., the building of a local prison); 2) a value or moral issue which could be viewed in its extreme forms (e.g., a person being either lawful or unlawful, or honest or dishonest); 3) a value or moral issue in conflict with another value or moral in a problem-solving situation (e.g., fighting for civil rights, or spending money on weapons development while holding peace talks); 4) a value or moral issue which causes conflict because it allows for two or more possible choices (e.g., a person who believes in the freedom of speech having to decide how to act when there is a peaceful march of the American Nazi Party); and 5) a situation where two or more values or moral dilemmas are applicable and may even conflict (e.g., divorcing a spouse to marry another individual).

Content-centered activities often originate from either a situation or event found in the content in conjunction with one of the five types of dilemmas (Stahl, Corbett, Gasche, 1978). Once decided, the teacher may select from five distinct decision-making formats students can learn to use with values-based dilemmas or moral dilemmas found in, or associated with, content material. Robert Stahl developed five unique strategies to enable students to aide in solving conflict, problem-solving, and decision-making. In the end, the rank-order, forced-choice, negotiation, invention, and exploration strategies impart higher-order thinking that fosters learning. There is no hierarchy to these strategies, but rather, each represents novel approaches for making decisions given the context, conditions, and specific needs of the situation (Stahl & Stahl, 1995).

### **Designing the Rank-Order Activity**

Based on the five phases of decision-making, the concept and premise of content-centered learning, and the influence of East Germany's control on religion, the authors elected to incorporate the rank-order decision-making strategy. The rank-order approach encourages

students to systematically examine and clarify available options to impose restrictions on the Protestant Church in relation to personal, social, intellectual, or situational priorities. Casteel and Stahl (1997) indicate the rank-order decision strategy “required students to consider an entire spectrum of values, beliefs, or feelings simultaneously and to make use of the value and belief priorities they hold” (p.35).

It is plausible that students may have never experienced competition between their beliefs and held values. Students may discover discrepancies, inconsistencies, and inadequacies in their values and beliefs when confronting a situation in which they are forced to act consistently with their personal values system. The rank-order approach situates students in this type of value dilemma using six elements to frame the learning activity.

The first element is the selection of expected outcomes and objectives that students should learn as a result of the activity. Such effects may be in the form of content, information processing, or the affective domain. The establishment of expected outcomes and objectives allows the teacher to focus, monitor, and assess student involvement in alignment with the lesson expectations. The second element is presented in a story or situation where a student or group determines value and priorities in the form of a set of ranked options. As described by Casteel and Stahl (1997), the purposes of this component are to “a) help students develop a perspective of a person in a particular set of circumstances that several present alternatives to be considered; b) to provide students with access to particular information which they are to study and learn related to expected instructional outcomes; c) to develop a context for the decision making strategy to be used; and d) to provide to students opportunities to consider the possible ramifications of the priorities they assign to different options” (p.36).

The third element consists of five to twelve alternatives to be ranked. The ranking provides the student or group a set of policies, a set of consequences, a set of interpretations, or a set of criteria to consider. Options should be similar in attractiveness and unattractiveness. The alternatives included must also reasonably fit within the contextual background established in the first and second elements. The fourth component is a set of instructions that introduces the student or group to the rank order process. Guidelines provide students with information on how to proceed to rank order the items. For example, Mark the choice you like best with a ‘1,’ mark your second choice with a ‘2,’ mark your third choice with a ‘3,’ until you have ranked all items.

The fifth element takes the form of a decision sheet that provides a student or group with a place to write the results of their thinking and decision-making. The sixth and final element consists of a series of follow-up questions. According to Casteel and Stahl (1997), these questions are useful to “a) encourage students to consciously consider the information they have processed about the details contained within the story or situation; b) facilitate student examination of the actual decision-making strategy used in coping with situations where rank ordering was the task; c) help students comprehend and interpret the situation and choices ranked; d) enable students to clarify connections to the situation, alternatives and focus of the material studied, and e) assist students in examining choices made and the grounds upon how they determined their rankings” (p.36).

### **Procedure and Preparation for the Teacher**

### *For the Teacher*

Teaching about Cold War events, specifically regarding the power and suppression of religion in socialist countries, may be difficult. This rank-order activity affords the teacher the ability to use the rank-order approach to illustrate plausible options utilized by the State Security Police of East Germany (Stasi). Stasi agents gathered information on church members and clergy in the effort to limit the power and influence of the Church in an atheist country. This lesson is to expand and broaden students' cooperative skills and increase their level of decision-making by using characteristics found in the five phases of decision-making and the rank-order approach.

#### *Step One: Introduction*

*Set the rank-order activity in the context of what is studied and establishing a purpose.* To set the stage for the lesson, students either work individually or in small groups of three to four. Inform students the year is 1987, and they are members of the much-feared East German Secret Police. Your job is to protect the socialist and atheist state from both external and internal influences, which are deemed subversive and a threat to the government. The mission for students is to rank order the options provided in the effort to limit both the influence of religion as well as the Church's impact on East German society.

#### *Step Two: Rank-Order Activity Distributed*

*Students examine the rank-order activity individually or in small groups with critical questions of power and authority posed, active participation with students explaining and analyzing possible choices of action.* Provide individual students with a personal decision sheet (appendix A) or a group decision sheet (appendix B). Each student or group evaluates a list of field-tested approaches utilized by the East German Secret Police. Each option deals with a potentially unique outcome and is diverse, much like most Stasi operations. Indicate to the class they have a time limit (determined by the teacher) to analyze, evaluate, select, and rank potential strategies.

#### *Step Three: Comprehension Development*

*The student synthesizes and evaluates the information with a discussion between students and teachers.* Allow students to assess each choice and then have students/groups rank-order the importance of each choice based on its potential for success. It is necessary to understand that there are no set criteria for the value of each choice. Students determine the relevance and practicality of their selections as evaluated alongside the perceived value by East German authorities. Students should be able to defend their rankings.

#### *Step Four: Reinforcement / Extension*

*Students transfer the learning of the topic in general with questions for review and reflection.* Instruct each student/group to identify and explain the top five options while defending their rationale for each choice. Also, students/groups will answer while taking part in a class

discussion or students/groups will provide a written rationale for review and reflection. The teacher may ask students the following questions: 1) Do government organizations like the East German government and the State Secret Police have the power and right to spy on religious organizations? 2) When should a government ever have the right to gather information on religious organizations and members? 3) Is it appropriate for a government to purposively deter its citizens from attending religious-based activities or worship? 4) Which is greater importance: infiltrating church to spy on its members, or blackmailing or spreading false rumors to create divide? and 5) What criteria did you or your group use in evaluating the importance, value, and effectiveness of each option?

### *For the Student*

The date: Monday, 9 September 1987. The location: Communist Eastern Europe. Situation: As a member of your country's secret police, your job is to protect, at all cost, the communist government. The communist government is officially atheist. They have no religious affiliation, nor do they openly support organized religion. Churches and religious communities in your country are considered a 'thorn' in the government's attempts at strict control of society and its citizens. Since the end of the second world war, churches have maintained a certain degree of independence in an otherwise strictly controlled state. Many churches throughout Eastern Europe influence local citizens to actively criticize government policy, and often provide a safe harbor for environmental, peace, and human rights groups. Fearing a political backlash from its European neighbors, the communist government will not close the different churches throughout the country. Instead, controlled measures seek to 'limit' the religious threat. Your ongoing investigation into church activity uncovers several perceived threats directly related to the Church's influence. The government views the Church as a threat because: 1) the church represents strength and retreat in a harsh daily living environment; 2) the Church provides hope and salvation through the belief in a higher power and afterlife and not allegiance to the communist government; 3) the Church can connect to the masses through outside activities not related to Church-related operations; 4) the Church provides a counterbalance to the government's strict control of society. The government's policy is to stop or to decrease the Church's influence through direct or indirect means. As you read the government report, several options are designed to limit the Church's overall authority.

### **Student Options**

*Option A: Infiltrate Church Seminaries.* Stasi agents recruit fellow seminary students as informants to gather information on individuals seeking to become a pastor. Information collected includes political beliefs towards the government, church activities, and underground movements.

*Option B: Removal of Religion in schools.* As part of the official atheist policy by the government, all school curriculum will follow strict science guidelines and doctrine followed by humanistic theories. All reference to religion is mysticism. The desired outcome is that humans control their destiny, not religion.

*Option C: Government-led anti-church activities.* Pressure youth to participate in government-organized activities after school and on weekends. Such activities include political meetings, work internships, and sports events. Students who refuse are isolated and ridiculed.



*Option D: Promote Social Differences.* Encourage youth to pursue different preferences in music, politics, and entertainment from older generations. Promoting a humanistic (atheist centered) form of self-gratification is counter to traditional faith-based families. The desired outcome is a cultural divide between youth and older generations.

*Option E: False information.* Spread false news and rumors on beloved pastors and clergy. Stories include but not limited to fabricated stories about church members, fake accounts of power struggles within the Church, or affairs among married Church members. The desired outcome is to create distrust among members and clergy.

*Option F: Recruitment of Pastors/Clergy:* Stasi agents recruit pastors and clergy to become informants. Informants spy on one another, providing critical information on Church activities, relations, scheduled events, and members. Information used provides counternarratives for Church activities and vital information to spread rumors and disinformation.

*Option G: False information and blackmail:* Using elements of options A and C, Stasi agents create damaging rumors among the Church about leadership in the effort to expose and extort. Actions may include extramarital affairs, use of illegal drugs, or theft of Church funds. The desired result is the removal of specific Church leadership and replaced by informants.

*Option H: Government loyalty and acceptance:* Students are required to take an atheistic oath to the government and pledge to live their lives as members of a communist society. Such an allegiance includes active participation in political organizations, after school activities, and job training. Failure to take the oath often results in denial of higher education, specialty schools, or desired jobs.

## **Conclusion**

Using content-focused learning activities that require students to evaluate scenarios by considering how their values system conflicts or coincides with a competing values system increases higher-order thinking and critical classroom discourse. From this curricular activity, students/groups were provided a learning activity that included specific content about East German methods of decentralizing the social and cultural influences of the Protestant Church on East German society. By using the rank-order strategy, students/groups analyzed authentic scenarios used by the East German government, determined, using their personal ethos/pathos, the appropriation of the scenarios by rank order, and constructed a rationale, verbal or written, justifying the order of the rankings. Considering the products of the activity, students were engaged in the five phases of thinking and decision-making. As one student stated, “this activity really made me think. As I looked at each of the choices and had to determine the best method to shut down an important institution to me. In my mind, each choice had an adverse effect.”

With content standards that continue to narrow what and how much is taught in classrooms complicated by limited time, teachers increasingly find it difficult to engage students in higher-order thinking and discourse with content-rich lessons. As Arends and Kilcher (2010) suggest, classrooms must continue to scaffold for higher-order processing without compromising the depth

and breadth of the curriculum. Additionally, content should be offered in a way that allows students to deconstruct information using both their affective and cognitive understandings while constructing new learnings by also using both. From this curricular study, students used logic and empathy while evaluating how the East German government confronted, as what they viewed, the competing influences of Protestantism on East German society. The study revealed that when students encounter content that challenges their system of values, they begin the process of making sense of the new information through a values-centered lens, which may be led with logic or emotion. Regardless of whether students chose emotion or logic as they evaluated and rank-ordered the scenarios, scaffolded thinking and, for groups, collaborative decision-making were strongly evidenced. With the continuous need for increased critical thinking accompanied by critical and collaborative classroom discourse, using the content-centered approach with the rank-order strategy, pedagogically, proved to effectively engage students in both, critical thinking and critical discourse.

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## Appendix A

### Personal Decision Sheet

**Directions:** For this activity, you are to assume the following is true.

**Date:** Monday, 9 September 1987

**Location:** Communist Eastern Germany

**Situation:** As a member of your country's secret police, your job is to protect, at all cost, the communist government. The communist government is officially atheist. They have no religious affiliation, nor do they openly support organized religion. Churches and religious communities in your country are considered a 'thorn' in the government's attempts at strict control of society and its citizens. Since the end of world war two, churches have maintained a certain degree of independence in an otherwise strictly controlled state. Many churches throughout Eastern Europe influence local citizens to actively criticize government policy, and often provide a safe harbor for environmental, peace, and human rights groups. Fearing a political backlash from its European neighbors, the communist government will not close the different churches throughout the country. Instead,

controlled measures seek to 'limit' the religious threat. Your ongoing investigation into church activity uncovered several perceived threats directly related to the Church's influence. The government views the Church as a threat because: 1) the church represents strength and retreat in a harsh daily living environment; 2) the Church provides hope and salvation through the belief in a higher power and afterlife and not allegiance to the communist government; 3) the Church can connect to the masses through outside activities not related to Church-related operations; 4) the Church provides a counterbalance to the government's strict control of society. The government's policy is to stop or at least decrease the Church's influence through direct or indirect means. **As you read the government report, several proposals are designed to limit the Church's overall authority.**

**Proposal A: Infiltrate Church Seminaries.** Stasi agents recruit fellow seminary students as informants to gather information on individuals seeking to become a pastor. Information collected includes political beliefs towards the government, church activities, and underground movements.

**Proposal B: Removal of Religion in schools.** As part of the official atheist policy by the government, all school curriculum will follow strict science guidelines and doctrine followed by humanistic theories. All reference to religion is mysticism. The desired outcome is that humans control their destiny, not religion.

**Proposal C: Government-led anti-church activities.** Pressure youth to participate in government-organized activities after school and on weekends. Such activities include political meetings, work internships, and sports events. Students who refuse are isolated and ridiculed.

**Proposal D: Promote Social Differences.** Encourage youth to pursue different preferences in music, politics, and entertainment from older generations. Promoting a humanistic (atheist centered) form of self-gratification is counter to traditional faith-based families. The desired outcome is a cultural divide between youth and older generations.

**Proposal E: False information.** Spread false news and rumors on beloved pastors and clergy. Stories include but not limited to fabricated stories about church members, fake accounts of power struggles within the Church, or affairs among married Church members. The desired outcome is to create distrust among members and clergy.

**Proposal F: Recruitment of Pastors/Clergy.** Stasi agents recruit pastors and clergy to become informants. Informants spy on one another, providing critical information on Church activities, relations, scheduled events, and members. Information used provides counternarratives for Church activities and vital information to spread rumors and disinformation.

**Proposal G: False information and blackmail.** Using elements of options A and C, Stasi agents create damaging rumors among the Church about leadership in the effort to expose and extort. Actions may include extramarital affairs, use of illegal drugs, or theft of Church funds. The desired result is the removal of specific Church leadership and replaced by informants.

**Proposal H: Government loyalty and acceptance.** Students are required to take an atheistic oath to the government and pledge to live their lives as members of a communist society. Such an allegiance includes active participation in political organizations, after school activities, and job training. Failure to take the oath often results in denial of higher education, specialty schools, or desired jobs.

**Directions:** Rank order the following proposals from the one you most prefer to the one you least prefer. Place a '1' in front of the most preferable proposal, a '2' in front of the next most preferable, and so on until you have placed a '8' by the least desirable proposal.

In keeping with my beliefs, I rank the proposals as follows:

\_\_\_\_ Proposal A: Infiltrate Church Seminaries

\_\_\_\_ Proposal B: Removal of Religion in schools

\_\_\_\_ Proposal C: Government-led anti-church activities

\_\_\_\_ Proposal D: Promote Social Differences



## Appendix B

### Group Decision Sheet

**Directions:** For this activity, you are to assume the following is true.

**Date:** Monday, 9 September 1987

**Location:** Communist Eastern Germany

**Situation:** As members of your country's secret police, your job is to protect, at all cost, the communist government. The communist government is officially atheist. They have no religious affiliation, nor do they openly support organized religion. Churches and religious communities in your country are considered a 'thorn' in the government's attempts at strict control of society and its citizens. Since the end of world war two, churches have maintained a certain degree of independence in an otherwise strictly controlled state. Many churches throughout Eastern Europe influence local citizens to actively criticize government policy, and often provide a safe harbor for environmental, peace, and human rights groups. Fearing a political backlash from its European neighbors, the communist government will not close the different churches throughout the country. Instead, controlled measures seek to 'limit' the

religious threat. Your group's ongoing investigation into church activity uncovered several perceived threats directly related to the Church's influence. The government views the Church as a threat because: 1) the church represents strength and retreat in a harsh daily living environment; 2) the Church provides hope and salvation through the belief in a higher power and afterlife and not allegiance to the communist government; 3) the Church can connect to the masses through outside activities not related to Church-related operations; 4) the Church provides a counterbalance to the government's strict control of society. The government's policy is to stop or at least decrease the Church's influence through direct or indirect means. **As your group reads the government report, several proposals are designed to limit the Church's overall authority.**

**Proposal A: Infiltrate Church Seminaries.** Stasi agents recruit fellow seminary students as informants to gather information on individuals seeking to become a pastor. Information collected includes political beliefs towards the government, church activities, and underground movements.

**Proposal B: Removal of Religion in schools.** As part of the official atheist policy by the government, all school curriculum will follow strict science guidelines and doctrine followed by humanistic theories. All reference to religion is mysticism. The desired outcome is that humans control their destiny, not religion.

**Proposal C: Government-led anti-church activities.** Pressure youth to participate in government-organized activities after school and on weekends. Such activities include political meetings, work internships, and sports events. Students who refuse are isolated and ridiculed.

**Proposal D: Promote Social Differences.** Encourage youth to pursue different preferences in music, politics, and entertainment from older generations. Promoting a humanistic (atheist centered) form of self-gratification is counter to traditional faith-based families. The desired outcome is a cultural divide between youth and older generations.

**Proposal E: False information.** Spread false news and rumors on beloved pastors and clergy. Stories include but not limited to fabricated stories about church members, fake accounts of power struggles within the Church, or affairs among married Church members. The desired outcome is to create distrust among members and clergy.

**Proposal F: Recruitment of Pastors/Clergy.** Stasi agents recruit pastors and clergy to become informants. Informants spy on one another, providing critical information on Church activities, relations, scheduled events, and members. Information used provides counternarratives for Church activities and vital information to spread rumors and disinformation.

**Proposal G: False information and blackmail.** Using elements of options A and C, Stasi agents create damaging rumors among the Church about leadership in the effort to expose and extort. Actions may include extramarital affairs, use of illegal drugs, or theft of Church funds. The desired result is the removal of specific Church leadership and replaced by informants.

**Proposal H: Government loyalty and acceptance.** Students are required to take an atheistic oath to the government and pledge to live their lives as members of a communist society. Such an allegiance includes active participation in political organizations, after school activities, and job training. Failure to take the oath often results in denial of higher education, specialty schools, or desired jobs.

**Directions:** Rank order the following proposals from the one your group most prefer to the one you least prefer. Place a '1' in front of the most preferable proposal, a '2' in front of the next most preferable, and so on until you have placed a '8' by the least desirable proposal.

In keeping with our beliefs, we rank the proposals as follows:

\_\_\_\_ Proposal A: Infiltrate Church Seminaries

\_\_\_\_ Proposal B: Removal of Religion in schools

\_\_\_\_ Proposal C: Government-led anti-church activities

\_\_\_\_ Proposal D: Promote Social Differences



\_\_\_ Proposal E: False information

\_\_\_ Proposal F: Recruitment of Pastors/Clergy

\_\_\_ Proposal G: False information and blackmail

\_\_\_ Proposal H: Government loyalty and acceptance

6. We selected proposal \_\_\_ as the best course of action because

7. We selected proposal \_\_\_ as the worst course of action because

8. If asked by the leadership of the secret police to justify my rankings based on effectiveness, we would say

9. If asked by Church leaders or students to justify our rankings on moral or ethical grounds, we would say

10. The consequences we most wanted to avoid as a direct result of our decision are:

## Questions for Review and Reflection

Suggested follow-up questions to focus and guide inquiry, reflection, and learning.

1. In this situation, what is the major problem(s) the group had to resolve?
2. What is the significant difference between your best solution and your worst solution?
3. Assuming the situation was real, how would you feel being the person or group who had to make this decision?
4. In this situation, what information and efforts by the government are warranted to limit the power of religious organizations?
5. When does the government have the right to spy and manipulate its citizens to maintain national security?
6. When does an individual's liberties and freedoms outweigh a government's power for national security and control?

