Colonel A. Pimenov on
COMRADE SAMSONOV GOES TO WAR

(The following article appeared in the Soviet Ministry of Defense publication Krasnaya Zvezda on January 7 under the title, "Communists in Combat Formation: Captain Samsonov's Dream." The translation has been provided by the U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service.)

The battalion commander summoned Senior Lieutenant Sergei Samsonov, commander of an armored platoon.

"You will take two tanks to escort the convoy," and the battalion commander named the points on the route and specified what the mission was.

"Is everything clear?"

"Absolutely!"

The motorized convoys carrying food and other national economic freight for the Afghan working people are favorite targets for the dushmans'[a Pushtu word meaning "enemy"] attacks. They operate like spiders: They lay a network of mines on the road while they themselves lie in ambush. That is why our troops assign tanks or infantry combat vehicles to guard the convoys. Senior Lieutenant Samsonov had had to perform similar missions escorting convoys on dozens of occasions; it was already a familiar job. He decided to place one tank closer to the head of the convoy while he himself rode in the other, bringing up the rear, where it was more dangerous. (The dushmans usually try to cut off the last vehicle.)

...Following the bends in the road, the convoy entered the mountains. Here in the foothills the landscape is not as depressingly monotonous as it is in the mountains—the horizon is wider and there are bushes along the road. But Senior Lieutenant Samsonov was not admiring the landscape. He was surveying and assessing the terrain by different yardsticks: Where was the ambush most-likely to be? The road turned sharply to the right and the convoy was hidden round the bend. "It might very well be here," Samsonov thought, and over the tank intercom he issued the order to the crew: "Step up your observation!" At that moment the tank shook sharply as though one of its tracks had struck an enormous rock. An explosion was heard at the same time as the jolt, and there were no doubts left: a mine.

"We've hit a vacuum mine," Samsonov commented to himself. He had frequently seen these British-produced articles. Familiar with the dushmans' habit of setting up ambushes next to laid mines, Samsonov issued the necessary orders to the crew. And just in time: The bandits opened fire on the tank. A fire started to blaze from a direct hit to the barrel carrying additional fuel. Samsonov ordered everyone to abandon the tank.

They jumped out and lay down on the roadside.

"Is everyone alive?" Samsonov shouted.

"Yes!" came the cheerful voices.

Samsonov could already see that everyone was alive, but it was important to him to hear those voices and to understand the condition of his subordinates from their intonation. He noted with satisfaction that the soldiers were experiencing neither panic nor fear. From the sounds of the shots they estimated the bandits' numbers—there seemed to be ten or twelve of them, no more. "Tolerable" was how he assessed the situation. But he realized that reinforcements were needed. He decided to send two men to the next post guarding the sector of the road....

The soldiers disappeared into the bushes, followed by Samsonov and driver Private S. Zinchenko. They took turns running. Each ran fifteen or twenty meters, dropped to the ground, and moved to one side. After another dash the dushmans fired from a grenade thrower on the place where Sergei Zinchenko had dropped. The blast raised a cloud of dust and Samsonov rushed to the spot.

"Are you alive?" he asked hoarsely, dropping down next to his comrade. Zinchenko groaned. He was wounded in the legs. Samsonov rapidly applied bandages and tourni-
quells. He realized the soldier was totally unable to move. He hoisted him onto his back, slung his machine gun over his chest, and, selecting the thickest bushes, moved forward.

"Comrade Senior Lieutenant," Zinchenko breathed in his ear, "leave me in the bushes and come back later, get out of here...."

"Stop that!" Samsonov silenced him. "Take a closer look round." And he joked: "You can see better from up there."

The June sun was blazing mercilessly. Sweat stung his eyes; his mouth was parched.

"Never mind, Sergei, just be patient," he reassured Zinchenko, although the latter was silent, merely emitting rasping breaths from his parched throat.

Rising again with his load, Samsonov suddenly saw a dushman directly in front of him, about fifteen meters away. The latter rose up from behind a bush and began to aim his rifle at Samsonov. For a minute they stood looking at each other. Samsonov immediately thought not of himself but of the wounded soldier on his left shoulder. He realized that it was futile to try to avoid the bullet in this situation, but nonetheless he moved sharply to the left, dropping to the ground with Sergei Zinchenko. And it seemed as though he first felt the powerful blow to his right shoulder and only then saw the yellow-white tongue of flame from the muzzle of the dushman's rifle.

He decided to get up, putting his weight on his right hand, and collapsed onto the ground with a groan. His lifeless arm buckled behind his back. He wiggled his fingers—they were working normally, but his arm did not obey him—he had to drag it from behind his back using his other hand.

He heard the muffled roar of engines, but he could not make out whether the sound was coming from the convoy receding into the mountains or from the other direction. Zinchenko helped Samsonov to make a bandage and placed his arm under his belt to stop it dangling, and they began to think about how to advance further.

Zinchenko again suggested that the platoon commander leave on his own, but the latter would not hear of it. Samsonov tried to carry the soldier, holding on to him with one hand, but it proved beyond his power. Then he lowered him into an irrigation canal and began to push him through the water. It was easier that way. Soon Private Kholmizayayev brought two infantry combat vehicles from the post. The wounded were sent to the medical station.

And hospital life began for Senior Lieutenant Sergei Samsonov—with medicines and injections.... There were several hospitals. The broken bone obstinately refused to knit. But time, the youth of his vigorous organ, and the doctors' efforts did their work. The long-awaited day came when he first felt the powerful blow to his right shoulder and only then saw the yellow-white tongue of flame from the muzzle of the dushman's rifle.

It was not evident at first glance: Samsonov appeared ill at ease and somewhat wary. This did not last long, however. A delegation of Afghans from the province center had come to the town. They reported that a hamlet had been attacked by bandits, who had killed several youth organization activists and had taken the leader away alive—that meant they would torture and humiliate him. Could they have some help?

The two infantry combat vehicles and the tank advanced toward the hamlet. They were hurrying while it was still light. They did not find the bandits in the hamlet, but the latter had had the time to do their dirty work. They had tied the young man, alive, to a tree trunk. They had flayed the skin from his belly and back, removing it as far as his neck, tying it in a knot....

"We were all shaken by that cannibalistic ferocity," Sergei Samsonov ended his story. "And that was just one incident out of many." He fell silent and asked quietly, thoughtfully, as though he were talking to himself: "Who will help them if we don't?"

And recently the editorial office received a letter from S. Samsonov, now a captain. A terse, restrained letter, but behind those spare lines you could still understand that it was hard for the man. The letter came from a military hospital near Moscow. The officer reported that after he had been wounded, complications had arisen and they had amputated his hand.

"In the first days it was very hard. The nurse obviously noticed and did everything to try to distract me from my unpleasant thoughts. Once she brought me a newspaper clipping and said: 'Look, read this. That man had a far harder time but he held out.' The article described a young political worker, the officer A. Kiselev, who lost both arms saving the life of a soldier. I had read about Kiselev before and had once described him to the soldiers at political classes, but when I was in a similar situation myself, I somehow forgot about the incident. I reread the article and thought: It really was many times harder for him, why should I lose heart?"

Sergei cheered up and took heart: Perhaps he, like Kiselev, would be allowed to continue serving in the army? Having thought long and hard about it, he decided to write to the editorial office. He closed the letter with a request: "Could you help me to arrange a meeting with Captain A. Kiselev?"

I telephoned Captain Aleksandr Kiselev at the V.I. Lenin Military-Political Academy immediately on reading Captain Samsonov's letter. I couldn't get through to Kiselev, so I phoned him at his apartment that evening.

"I have every sympathy with him," was Aleksandr's reaction, "and certainly I am prepared to meet with him."

"...So we went to the hospital. Before going into Sergei Samsonov's ward, we met with Valery Afanasevich Topilev, the doctor treating him, and inquired about Samsonov's condition."

Valery Afanasevich smiled and said:

"He's fine and in good spirits now. Come along and see for yourselves."

It was not evident at first glance: Samsonov appeared ill at ease and somewhat wary. This did not last long, however. Aleksandr Kiselev is an engaging sort of person, affable with a winning smile, and the tension of those first few moments instantly evaporated. Sergei Samsonov began to smile too, as if to confirm the doctor's assurances.

Thin, wiry, and of average height, he gave the impression of a man of stamina and dexterity. He and Kiselev got along immediately and started an animated conversation. When I looked at the two captains, I occurred to me how close they were in spirit, in terms of their views and life stance, despite the outward differences. Neither of them had set out to perform a feat; the circumstances had required them to act with determination, courage, and bravery, and, without
thinking, they had acted in accordance with the duty of the Soviet soldier—patriot and internationalist....

For displaying bravery in the execution of his international duty Captain Samsonov had received two Orders of the Red Star. It was with a question about the orders that the conversation began. Not just about what they were given for, in what circumstances the officer displayed bravery, but more, perhaps, about the source of that bravery.... The conversation went on for a good while. It was gratifying to see Sergei cheerful and ebullient. But from time to time anxiety would appear in his face, like the shadow of a passing cloud. Is there something worrying you?

He was evasive: "No, nothing."

Our meeting took place on New Year's Eve, and as we were about to leave I asked Samsonov what he hoped the New Year would bring, what his dreams were.

"To remain in the Army and get back to work as soon as possible—that's my dream."

I wished him every happiness and told him I hoped his dream would come true.

EXCURSUS 2

Bruce Nichols on CHURCH & STATE ABROAD: SQUARING OFF?

Questions of the relationship between the U.S. Government and U.S. church groups working abroad have long circulated in the back halls of Congress, the State Department, and various religiously based agencies. One such question, that of the freedom of church groups to oppose U.S. policy abroad, may be particularly affected by developments in Washington over recent months. Does the protection of "free exercise of the freedom of religion"—never an absolute right even at home—extend to active opposition to U.S. policy overseas?

Despite the growing number of Americans serving overseas with religiously based agencies, issues involving political tension between church and state abroad have rarely been aired in public. However, in a rare outburst of frustration, Secretary of State George Shultz used last spring's congressional hearings on Central America to express his dismay over church-based political activism in support of refugees and others affected by regional turmoil. Legislative trends in government-assisted, religiously based humanitarian work were set in the post-World War II era. The Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act, passed in 1951, explicitly linked U.S. economic assistance abroad with national security. Ever since, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders have expressed concern for maintaining the independence of their overseas missions from government priorities, particularly in those instances when the government is funding some or all of their relief and development activity.

This issue was addressed in late November by President Reagan's Commission on Security and Economic Assistance (also known as the Carlucci Commission). The commission recommended even closer ties between government-funded humanitarian and developmental assistance and national security concerns. This would be accomplished by merging the government's separate economic and security aid agencies into one governmental unit—the Mutual Development and Security Administration—which would distribute all U.S. foreign aid. The commission argued that this merger was necessary to avoid congressional confusion over divergent economic and security goals in the president's foreign aid requests.

Some U.S. foreign aid is currently channeled through separately incorporated relief and development arms of religious bodies. While most religious groups active abroad operate with private funding, the line at the State Department's cash and commodities window is growing. Registration with the government, a requirement for such aid, confers a certain legitimacy on private agencies; and with increased funding, the agencies inevitably expand the scope of their operations. Whether they can continue to utilize government assistance and, at the same time, raise effective voices of political dissent under an increased linkage between humanitarian assistance and national security remains to be seen.

The financial independence vs. government funding dilemma goes to the heart of the nature of voluntarism and presents questions that have been stumping analysts since the rise of the modern state welfare system: Does private assistance compete with government assistance? If the two systems are blended, can the "private" aspect survive?

These issues are not new. In 1952 a British committee under the leadership of Lord Nathan published a famous analysis of the problem, noting that there were essentially two lines of response. The first, pragmatic approach would be simply to look at the job to be done and award private agencies particular tasks alongside government. The work of such agencies would complement government efforts—essentially the approach recommended by the Carlucci Commission.

The second approach identified by the Nathan Commission viewed the role of voluntary societies as a political alternative to government-sponsored action. Said the Nathan Report: "The essence of voluntary action is that it is not directed or controlled by the State...It is the meeting by private enterprise of a public need."

U.S. religiously based agencies that see their role abroad in this light occasionally produce results that government officials consider harmful to the interests of the United States. U.S. embassies are generally happiest with agencies that seek a complementary role in extending American foreign policy concerns, particularly if the government is footing all or part of the bill.

The question remains: How far will the U.S. Government go in tolerating dissent from established foreign policy goals among U.S. citizens working for religious agencies abroad?

To answer this, two other recent currents of decision-making bear examination. Both are directed at the nonprofit, tax-exempt status of religious and other private organizations as defined in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. As the economist Joseph Schumpeter frequently emphasized, tax law is one of the best vantage points for understanding how a society works. In the field of church/state studies, application of provisions of the tax code has long been taken as a bellwether of who is doing what to whom.

In May, the Supreme Court withdrew the tax-exempt status of Bob Jones University, maintaining that the University's rules forbidding interracial dating and marriage were "contrary to accepted public policy." In so doing, the Court bypassed the question of the First Amendment right of free exercise of religion. Drawing on English common law definitions of charity (the same definitions used in the Nathan Report to outline the "complementarity" of private agencies and government), the Court focused on Bob Jones University's failure to comply with well-defined public policy concerning racial discrimination.

In a separate concurring opinion that found a ready audience among religious organizations, Justice Powell raised