



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Last Monday night my Dutch companion and I parked our car on a dimly lit street in the capitol city of an East European city behind the Iron Curtain. Glancing in all directions we walked swiftly down the street and turned into a dark alley. "We wait here to see if we are being followed," my guide said.

After what seemed like an eternity we walked with quick strides through the narrow, twisting streets, over cobblestone paths and past huge, gray buildings that loomed above us in the dark. "We have to do it this way," my guide said. "The secret police are everywhere."

Up a flight of dark, narrow stairs we finally came to a heavy door. We knocked twice. Then again. A tiny peep hole opened and we were quickly ushered inside by a beautiful young woman whose husband is in a Communist prison—for preaching the Gospel.

"Have you brought Bibles?" was the first question. Usually when they come they are smuggling Bibles in from the West.

"Not this time," my companion answered. "My friend is writing a story for an American magazine on Christians behind the Iron Curtain. We cannot afford to get caught."

Later than night I attended an underground prayer meeting in a basement room. Meetings of six or more have been forbidden since the last purge by the Russians a year ago. The Christians have been meeting secretly, at one place one week and then across the city the next week. Since all phones are tapped the only way to publicize the meetings is by word of mouth.

We sat in a small circle with the windows closed and the shades drawn. Our heads were bent inward and we sang and praised the Lord in whispers. Three weeks before they had allowed a newcomer in the group, an old woman who seemed to be a great student of the Bible. The next day they discovered she was a secret police agent.

After midnight we disbanded, each making our way silently through the dark streets on foot. My Dutch companion and I rendezvoused with a brilliant young Englishman who has committed his life to serving Christ behind the Iron Curtain. We drove to a mountain overlooking the Communist city and talked in the car. We kept the windows rolled up and were constantly on the alert for those who might overhear. They were discussing the best methods to smuggle Bibles into the country.

Later we joined hands in the car and prayed—in three languages. "O Lord, even as your Son sat outside Jerusalem and wept over the city, so we weep for the people of . . ."

"We must go. They are here." The Englishman pointed to a car that had quietly parked down the road from us.

"Lord, confuse their minds," he prayed audibly as he spun gravel and we roared off down the road. The car attempted to follow but moments later we had lost them.

"No one knows where I live so I will get out here and walk the rest of the way," the young Englishman said as we shook hands. Moments later he had been swallowed up in the darkness.

After a week of interviewing men and women whose tales of courage put us to utter shame, I came home wondering just how fat, free church members of America would react if forced to worship this way. Most churches suffer when it rains. What if the rain were blood?