

True Parents in Ukraine: A Personal Account from November 1995

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True Father speaks to members in Kiev, November 14, 1995



Members waiting outside the hotel where True Parents stayed

The following comes from the entry in my diary on November 16, 1995. At the time I was the church leader of the St. Petersburg region of Russia.

I had just returned from Kyiv, Ukraine where True Parents visited and True Father was meant to speak on Nov. 14. However, the speech was cancelled and True Parents could not even have a hall in which to meet the 800-900 members who came from around the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and Baltics to see them. In the end, True Parents were able to meet with just 40 or so native members and 20 missionaries in their hotel living room.

Of course, the members were very disappointed at not being able to see True Parents even from a distance. When the speech was cancelled, there was hope that True Parents could at least come out on their balcony so members could see them, but even this became impossible, as many militia and even OMON security forces were around and could have used their appearance as an excuse to arrest everyone or even True Parents themselves. So, in this sense it was very disappointing.

True Parents themselves, however, were very upbeat despite the situation. When they were finally able to have a gathering in their room, Father was very energetic and inspiring. I arrived late as I had taken some St. Petersburg members out for dinner when we were told there would be no meeting and that those who didn't have a room at the hotel would not be allowed to go in.

The meeting had started somewhere around 9-10 pm. I arrived back around 11:30 to meet Jacques Marion for the purpose of going together to the flat we were staying at. I was late, as I was supposed to be there at 11. When I didn't see Jacques, I walked right into the hotel (no security) and took the elevator up to the 10th floor where I discovered the meeting in progress. According to True Parents' security, it was supposed to finish soon. I slipped into the back of the room through True Parents' small dining room.

Of course, the meeting didn't end soon but would go on another four hours, not finishing until 4am. Unfortunately, only four St. Petersburg members were there, but they were right in the front. Father made good use of one of the brother's heads and I got some good pictures from my vantage point in the back.

For most of the meeting, Father was very light, even cracking jokes, just wanting to love and uplift the members. It was Father's first chance to meet and speak to CIS members directly and he wanted to make the most of the situation. Father just really controlled the atmosphere, bringing God's spirit, and even though it was late, even the middle of the night and no one had slept much, nobody was tired.

Father was so animated, beyond time and space. He was jumping up and down from his chair. At one point he knocked over a glass of water sitting on the table in front of him and stepped on the wet carpet. So, he took his socks off, of which one our members got one as a treasure. Father was just so free and casual.

As always, Father spoke about many things, the main topic being why God created Adam and Eve. Around 2 or 3 am, Dr. Seuk started trying to get Father to stop so he could rest before leaving, but to no avail. At one point, Father suddenly left the room to use the toilet. Dr. Seuk got up and told people that Father should rest, but then Father bounded back into the room full of energy. So, there was no way to get Father to stop. Dr. Seuk said something to Father, but Father responded in English, "No sleeping tonight. This is war."

Although I was not there, I heard that at the beginning of the meeting Father talked about leadership and asked if, under these circumstances (not being able to speak), you were the leader, what would you do? Could you just think, "Well, nothing can be done," and just go to bed? Rather, he said that a leader must take responsibility and set some indemnity condition. So, although Father was using this chance to meet with members as much as possible, he was also paying indemnity for the event's failure by not sleeping and speaking all night.

Finally, at 4 am Father stopped in order to give himself and his party (True Mother, Rev. Kwak, and Peter Kim) time to prepare to leave. For the next two hours, we waited, trying to stay awake, until True Parents came out around 6 am. Rev. Kwak came out around 5:30. He told us we should not be discouraged about what had happened but have confidence that, if Satan attacks in this way, only blessing will come. Satan must somehow pay the price. Rev. Kwak also spoke about how the spirit world is very active now and that we should be prepared for such phenomena in the CIS.

At 6am True Parents came out and we saw them off. Some leaders went with them to the airport, but I went to a nearby flat to rest as I was to meet St. Petersburg members at 11am to do something together before departing Kyiv. I met them at the metro and shared with them about the meeting. Then, we went to visit a monastery followed by a stop for ice cream before I had to quickly leave to catch the 5:10pm train for Moscow.

The morning of the 14th I had the opportunity to have breakfast together with True Parents along with Rev. Kwak, Peter Kim, Dr. Seuk, Jack Corley, and Tom Phillips. Several other leaders came in later and sat on the floor. The dining room was very, very small, so only eight of us could sit around the table. I sat at the opposite end, directly across from Father.

At the beginning, everyone was quiet, and I felt a little uncomfortable. Although I had been at small gatherings before, even one meal at East Garden, I had never been at this small of a setting with True Parents - and to be sitting directly across from Father! Dr. Seuk broke the ice by giving some kind of report in Korean and then introduced me to Father. This was the first time I had ever been introduced by name to Father. Dr. Seuk asked me to give a report, but Mother said to let me finish my breakfast first (a real mother's heart!). About 20 minutes later I gave my report about the members in St. Petersburg and their activities in witnessing and about our social service project "Elder Brother/Elder Sister" in which members paid visits to orphanages. I spoke about our forming a Parents Association and how active some parents have become, even becoming members themselves. I also spoke about the IEF work, our presentations on AIDS, and one missionary's work in the Komi Republic. Somehow, I was able to be more composed and coherent than I had expected in such a circumstance. Then, Jack Corley gave a report about public relations, Mr. Mogushi about MFT, and Mr. Oba about Japanese sisters working in the CIS.

After each report Father gave some guidance. He emphasized several times the importance of working with the Orthodox Church. We must be able to use their foundation. Otherwise, we will not be successful. We must not make them our enemies but offer to serve them, regarding them as our elder brothers. The Russian Orthodox Church's problem is that it doesn't have an ideology with which to inspire young people and spiritually lead Russia. We have such an ideology. If we can work side-by-side with the Orthodox Church, then we can really change the country.

Also, Father said we must emphasize the importance of God's existence to people, not just speaking about ethics and morality as IEF does. People need to have a living relationship with God. God's truth is unchanging, whereas human ideas are always changing.

Father said that with economic development will also come other problems, like drugs and immorality. The CIS should not repeat the West's mistakes. Therefore, we must work with the Orthodox Church to develop a strong, effective religious system which can deal with these problems.

The breakfast lasted over two hours. Then, Rev. Kwak left to meet with the head of the Ukrainian Presidential Council. Although True Parents were welcomed by the federal government, it seems that the city government were the ones that had opposed True Parents' visit. It was people in the city government who stopped Father from speaking and pressured the hotel to not even allow Father to use its hall to meet with members. So, 800-900 members ended up standing outside the hotel for about three hours while we negotiated with the militia, finally to no avail. Rev. Kwak came out and conveyed True Parents' greetings. At the end, Dr. Seuk also spoke for about 15 minutes, even risking arrest himself.