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LIST OF CONTENTS

AUTHORITIES IGNORE ASSAULTS ON BELIEVERS.....	p. 1
INCREASE IN CHRISTIAN PRISONERS IN THE USSR.....	p. 2
PRIEST BARRED FROM CELEBRATING MASS.....	p. 3
APPEAL BY CATHOLIC COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENCE OF BELIEVERS' RIGHTS...p.	3
CHARGES AGAINST ARRESTED BELIEVERS STILL UNKNOWN.....	p. 4
SENTENCES OF BULGARIAN PENTECOSTALS REDUCED.....	p. 5
FOR YOUR INFORMATION.....	p. 5

AUTHORITIES IGNORE ASSAULTS ON BELIEVERS

Keston College reports that a family of Pentecostal believers in the Ukrainian city of Zhdanov is facing a very real threat of physical injury or even death with the tacit consent of local authorities. So far, particular targets of violence have been the 8 and 15-year-old sons of the family. The Balak family recently applied for emigration on religious grounds, and renounced their Soviet citizenship.

They were summoned to both the district Party executive and city executive committee (raikom and gorispolkom) where officials tried to pressure them into withdrawing their renunciation of citizenship. When the Balaks remained steadfast in their decision, they were warned that if "outraged Soviet citizens" were to resort to "physical methods" to demonstrate their indignation with the Balaks, the local authorities would not consider themselves under any obligation to render the Pentecostals any assistance whatsoever.

On 26 January the Balaks' youngest son, 8-year-old Vitali was playing outside when he was approached by two men who proceeded to assault the child. Vitali's 15-year-old brother Igor, who was nearby, ran to his assistance, and the boys managed to break away and run home. The two men pursued them, shouting threats and then battering on the door for some time before going away.

Mr and Mrs Balak reported this incident to the local militia, only to be told by the captain on duty (who refused to give his name) that they had nobody to blame but themselves, and that as they had renounced Soviet citizenship they could not expect