By TOM MINEHART
Associated Press Writer
CHARLOTTE (AP) — A Baptist professor leaving today with 21 religious peace activists for the Soviet Union says he’s not afraid of being harassed by the Soviets despite warnings from the U.S. government.

"Compared with a major American city, I think most of our people will feel safer there than here," said Dr. Edwin Bagley, a professor of religion and philosophy at Wingate College.

Bagley, who has been to the Soviet Union twice, said the group plans to visit Moscow and Leningrad.

The U.S. State Department has warned that American tourists in Leningrad have been detained by Soviet police after "innocent contact with Soviet citizens," said press officer Richard Weeks. He said they had also been subjected to "arbitrary and embarrassing searches" at the Leningrad airport.

Bagley said the people in his group — most of whom are Baptists — want to talk to private citizens in Russia. It happened all the time on his trips there in 1965 and last winter, he said.

"It's not very difficult to have an informal dialogue," he said. "People spot us on the streets, see different clothing, and they're eager to strike up a conversation."

Such contacts may be as important as diplomatic talks in bringing about world peace, said Bagley.

"My main thinking is that if we do anything at all to open some avenues for accurate news about what we are like for them and what they are like for us, if we make some friends and keep them from being painted here as so different, it's bound to help in the long run," he said. "They're people with much the same concerns as people in this country. They've got jobs, family and friends that take up most of their time. To the extent they're political, it's a very minor part of their lives."

But Soviet citizens are much more conscious than Americans of World War II, which cost some 20 million Soviet lives, he said.

"There's constant talk of fear of war," he said. "They don't have much of a concept that American citizens are afraid of war — they just hear what our politicians say."

Most of the people in the group, ages 12 to the 50s, belong to Charlotte peace organizations, such as the Bilateral Freeze Committee. They'll be meeting with officially sanctioned peace groups in the Soviet Union, said Bagley.

They also plan to attend a Baptist church in Moscow. Bagley said there are about 4 million Baptists in the Soviet Union, the largest group next to the United States' 13 million.

Bagley said he had been criticized "now and then" by more conservative Baptists who favor a tougher stance against the Soviets.

"That's not a Baptist point of view, just a general conservative point of view," he said. On the previous trips, Bagley and others took along pens, knives and other gadgets to leave for people.

"I think it was the wrong thing to do," he said.
Baptist Minister Is Criticized
For His Trips To Soviet Union

CHARLOTTE (AP) — A Baptist minister who is taking 21 religious peace activists to the Soviet Union says he's sometimes criticized by conservative Baptists who favor a tougher stance against the Soviets.

But the minister, Dr. Earl Bagley, a professor of religion and philosophy at Wingate College, says he doesn't agree...

"That's not a Baptist point of view, just a general conservative point of view," he said.

There are other warnings Bagley has chosen to ignore.

The U.S. State Department has also warned that American tourists in Leningrad have been detained by Soviet police after "innocent contact with Soviet citizens," said press officer Richard Weeks. He said they had also been subjected to "arbitrary... and embarrassing searches" at the Leningrad airport.

"Compared with a major American city, I think most of our people will feel safer there than here," Bagley said. He has already made two trips to the Soviet Union, and he says this group plans to visit Moscow and Leningrad.

Bagley said the people in his group—most of whom are Baptists—want to talk to private citizens in Russia. Such talks happened all the time on his trips there in 1965 and last winter, he said.

"It's not very difficult to have an informal dialogue," he said. "People spot us on the streets, see our different clothing, and they're eager to strike up a conversation."

The contacts may be as important as diplomatic talks in bringing about world peace, said Bagley.

"My main thinking is that if we do anything at all to open some avenues for accurate news about what we are like for them and what they are like for us, if we make some friends and keep them from being painted here as so different, it's bound to help in the long run," he said.

"They're people with much the same concerns as people in this country. They've got jobs, family and friends that take up most of their time. To the extent they're political, it's a very minor part of their lives."

Soviet citizens are much more conscious than Americans of World War II, which cost some 20 million Soviet lives, he said.

"There's constant talk of fear of war," he said. "They don't have much of a concept that American citizens are afraid of war—they just hear what our politicians say."

Most of the people in the group, ages 12 to the 50s, belong to Charlotte peace organizations, such as the Bilateral Freeze Committee. They'll be meeting with officially sanctioned peace groups in the Soviet Union, said Bagley.

They also plan to attend a Baptist church in Moscow, Bagley said there are about 4 million Baptists in the Soviet Union, the largest group next to the United States' 13 million.

Bagley, who teaches a course in Marxism along with courses in ethics and theology at Wingate, said he himself is not a Marxist.