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Editor's Note on the Ukraine Crisis

Coming to terms with the impact of the Ukraine crisis upon churches and ministry outreach in both Ukraine and Russia was the focus of an expanded theme issue of the East-West Church and Ministry Report 22 (Summer 2014), available in English, Ukrainian, and Russian via the EWC&M Report website (www.eastwestreport.org). In addition, the following issue (22 [Fall 2014]) carried nine, often countervailing, responses addressing either the crisis itself or the EWC&M Report Ukraine theme

issue (pp. 4-5 and 16). The present issue continues coverage of the crisis with an additional seven contributions focused on Ukraine. Readers will readily note that authors' interpretations of events vary dramatically. The editor and contributing authors can probably agree safely on at least this much: A tragedy continues to unfold in terms of loss of life, human suffering, and regrettable disruption in church life and Christian witness.

Russian Christians and the Conflict in Ukraine

Ekaterina Smyslova

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13: 35).

Russian and Ukrainian Christians at Odds

One of my Russian friends, a leader of an international ministry, recently shared with me her confusion. One of our good common friends, a Ukrainian woman of deep faith and a world-class trainer of trainers, has strong anti-Russian views. In contrast, my Russian friend believes that Russian policy toward Ukraine is blameless, and crazy people who do not understand this cannot be welcomed as team members. It is a pity that now it will be impossible for us to have valuable training sessions in Russia led by a Ukrainian trainer.

Sadly, the Christian NGO, "Russia without Orphans," no longer cooperates with its counterpart, "Ukraine without Orphans," because Russian and Ukrainian leaders of these two charities disagree about the situation in Ukraine (<http://mirvam.org/2014/09/05/al'yans-rossiya-bez-sirot-zamorozil-so>). Are our political disputes worth the cost of a home for thousands of orphans? Disagreements over Putin's policies in Ukraine are taking place in all international ministries in Eurasia, and longstanding relationships and partnerships are being broken. What is going on, brothers and sisters? What are our priorities? How can we place our political views higher than issues of faith and mercy? If God is love, how can we consider that we know God if we are unable to love our neighbors unconditionally?

St. Seraphim of Sarov advises us, "Acquire a peaceful spirit, and around you thousands will be saved." Isn't it the goal of any church or mission to lead people to salvation? How then can we expect that our ministry will be successful if we do not have peace in our soul, and if we lack love even toward our

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A Refugee from Eastern Ukraine Speaks Out

An Alive Faith Media interview conducted by Alena Balashova and Sergey Kireev

Russia is the very center of the Ukrainian crisis. But not because Russian tanks and guns are physically present on Ukrainian territory as some provocateurs try to say, but because now in this difficult time Russia has accepted more than one million [sic] Ukrainian refugees who had to leave their homeland because of the civil war there. In order to understand the roots of the conflict, to hear firsthand testimony about refugees' uneasy life, and to find out how faith in God helps in overcoming the hardships of war, we interviewed Elena Kurinnaya, a former parishioner of the Good News Church in Slaviansk who is now attending an evangelical church in Yaroslavl.

AF Media: Why did you have to leave your homeland and move to Russia?

Elena: In November 2013 in Ukraine there was a revolution that most people from southeast Ukraine did not support. When in spring 2014 things calmed down a little bit the new authorities said that people in the Donbas [the Donetsk Basin] would have to pay for the restoration of Kyiv. Naturally, everybody was disturbed and asked: On what grounds? We were not there on the Maidan [Square], and we did not destroy anything there. Why should we pay from our salaries for it? We refused to pay.

Generally, during the 20 years before the Donbas separation [of 2014] we were oppressed; we were forced to accept Ukrainian as the only official language, even though Donbas citizens do not know it since we are all Russian. It was one of the reasons why our men, including my son, rebelled and started to defend our Donbas.

Then we had a referendum that was not accepted by the new Ukrainian authorities, and then the

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Disagreements over Putin's policies in Ukraine are taking place in all international ministries in Eurasia. How can we place our political views higher than issues of faith and mercy?

The possibility of disagreement with the policy of President Putin toward Ukraine does not even occur to most people.

Russian Christians and the Conflict in Ukraine *(continued from page 1)*

Christian co-workers?

The Russian Media on Ukraine

I know that believers in both countries now live under the heavy influence of secular mass media. Russian state-controlled mass media advance the idea that a fascist junta seized power in Ukraine. This junta, bribed with Western money, callously butchers peaceful people. Every day all Russian TV channels show bloody pictures illustrating the malfeasance of the junta. It motivates Russians to go to Eastern Ukraine as volunteers to rescue local people dying there because of the fascists. In such a context anyone lifting a voice against Russian interference in Ukraine provokes social condemnation.

Few in Russia believe that Ukrainians, driven to extreme measures by corruption and grim poverty, participated in Maidan protests and demanded political change of their own free will. It is also hard for Russians to believe that Ukrainians want to distance themselves from Russia in favor of the bureaucratic-oligarchic capitalism of the West.

Succumbing to Mass Media

I remember when I was making my first steps in Christian life I was greatly surprised by clergy advising believers not to watch, listen to, or read secular mass media. I now know that such a discipline would help us keep the Gospel in our hearts and would protect us from brainwashing by secular propaganda. As I observe our mass media fostering hatred I remember the "March of the Calves" by Bertolt Brecht:

Following the drum

The calves trot

The skin for the drum

They deliver themselves.

The butcher calls. The eyes tightly closed

The calf marches on with calmly assured step.

The calves, whose blood has already been shed in the slaughterhouse

In spirit they march along in their ranks.

Are we as Russian believers calves answering the butcher's call, or are we lambs entrusting ourselves to the Good Shepherd of Heaven and following Him?

Shall we blindly accept the opinion of secular authorities and act according to their expectations as unfortunate Christians did in Nazi Germany? Or shall we act as ambassadors of love and peace sent by our heavenly Father into this world of sorrows?

In the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, Russian believers were seeking guidance from church leaders who responded simply: "Just pray for the authorities and for peace." As a result, secular authorities have shaped the political views of Russian believers on the situation in Ukraine. In the face of the anti-Ukrainian public mood of hatred, we need to be reminded that the Gospel warns us: "You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings" (I Corinthians 7:23).

"Symphonia" in Theory and in Practice

Historically, Russians have been accustomed to church and state having different areas of

responsibility. Prior to 1917 relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state were based on the principle of "symphonia," the mutually supportive arrangement between secular and religious powers developed by 6th century Byzantine Emperor Justinian. According to this understanding of the distribution of authority, both church and state are established by God. The priesthood is in charge of "heavenly matters," but state authorities are in charge of "worldly matters." The state supports the church and integrates Christian values into secular legislation while the church acts as the voice of conscience to the state and its rulers.

"Symphonia," however, did not mean church and state were equal in authority. Muscovite Metropolitan Philipp attempted to rebuke Tsar Ivan the Terrible, and Patriarch Nikon attempted to challenge Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich, but both churchmen came to very sad ends for their trouble. Later, Peter the Great refused to appoint a successor to Patriarch Adrian and in effect abolished the patriarchate and converted the Orthodox Church into a department of state with the tsar at its head. State control of the Orthodox Church became so complete that opposing the state came to be seen as a sin, and independent thought of any sort came to be regarded as both a challenge to the church (heresy) and a challenge to the state (treason). Russian Orthodox believers were—and many still are—certain that the only proper public and political activity is patriotism and support for positions taken by the state. For Protestants in Russia facing persecution and discrimination, a demonstration of loyalty to state authorities is a matter of survival.

Taking into consideration all of the above, it is easy to understand why the absolute majority of Russian people do not even consider the need for any questioning of national mass media. The possibility of disagreement with the policy of President Putin toward Ukraine does not even occur to most people. A majority of the Russian population is ready to sacrifice whatever is necessary for the implementation of his ideas and to actively oppose any dissent.

The Russian Orthodox "Social Concept" Doctrine: A Blueprint for a Prophetic Church Challenge to the State?

Might this popular passivity and uncritical acceptance of the political status quo ever change? I believe there is reason to hope so. In the 21st century the Russian Orthodox Church has entered into a new stage in its development. It now motivates laity to take an active role in missions and in social and political life. "The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church" declares: "In participating in government and political processes, Orthodox laity are called to base their work on the norms of the gospel's morality, the unity of justice and mercy (Psalm 85:10), the concern for the spiritual and material welfare of people, the love of the fatherland, and the desire to transform the surrounding world according to the word of Christ" ("The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church," V. 3; <https://mospat.ru/en/>

documents/social-concepts/v/).

Furthermore, Orthodox social doctrine holds that the church even has the right to participate in political processes: “If the authorities force Orthodox believers to apostatize from Christ and His Church and to commit sinful and spiritually harmful actions, the Church should refuse to obey the state. The Christian, following the will of his conscience, can refuse to fulfill the commands of the state forcing him into grave sin. If the Church and her holy authorities find it impossible to obey state laws and orders, after a due consideration of the problem, they may take the following action: enter into direct dialogue with authorities on the problem, call upon the people to use democratic mechanisms to change legislation or review the authority’s decision, apply to international bodies and to world public opinion, and appeal to her faithful

for peaceful civil disobedience” (“Social Concept,” p. III.5; <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/iii/>).

Therefore, every Christian not only has the right but must take a proactive role in social and political issues. In Russia today the principle of the civic responsibility of Christians is supported by Orthodox as well as Protestant churches. However, in choosing our response to any given social or political issue, we should take care that our actions are in conformity with the Gospel. Above all, we must ask ourselves, “Are our judgments and actions grounded in love?”♦

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

Ekaterina Smyslova is an attorney in Moscow, Russia.

A Refugee from Eastern Ukraine Speaks Out *(continued from page 1)*

siege started. Hostilities broke out in April near Kramatorsk, and in May bombs started falling, not only in Kramatorsk, but also where I lived. Men started organizing the evacuation of their families from the war zone. We had arrangements to have all families of volunteers moved to Crimea.

By that time the Ukrainian Army took Mount Karachun with a population of about 300. Soldiers in this army did not know where they happened to be, and they did not know they would have to shoot civilians. These honest guys refused to follow this wrongful order and were executed, and then their bodies were cut open and their organs were taken. It was creepy. There was a terrible stench and corpses were everywhere. The Ukrainian Army also often wounded civilians. Body parts, arms and legs, were all over the city. Everybody understood that if the Ukrainian Army entered our cities, the families of volunteers and those who did not agree with the Kyiv regime would be in big trouble.

AF Media: When did you leave Donbas?

Elena: We left Slavyansk for Crimea on May 22. It was very dangerous, so when we rode on the bus we were covered by mattresses. One bus with refugees that was in front of us was completely destroyed with all the people who were inside. [Russian] emergency ministry planes took us from Crimea to Yaroslavl where since June 26 I live now with my pregnant daughter. We have filed our documents and applied for a temporary residence permit.

AF Media: How were you welcomed in Russia?

Elena: People accepted us as refugees and were very kind and hospitable. They helped with everything they could and even more. To be honest, I did not expect it. In two hours after we arrived trucks with

food, clothing, and shoes arrived. This help was very much needed because we could not take much luggage with us. We received help in Russia not only from sympathizing citizens but also from different organizations that provided us with humanitarian aid and financial help, rented an apartment for us, and helped us with documents and other necessities.

AF Media: How do you feel about the new Ukrainian authorities?

Elena: What kind of authority is it if it shoots its own citizens? This is not an authority. This is a bunch of pretenders. Ukrainian authorities now are oligarchs who sold themselves to America and do away with their own people. Even Nazis did not do it. Thanks to Putin, of course, he supports Ukrainian people a lot. Russia accepted and helped many refugees.

AF Media: What is the spiritual situation in Donbas churches?

Elena: Churches reacted in very different ways to the Maidan Revolution. It was shocking to see how believers of some churches in Donbas went to the squares, coloring themselves with blue and yellow paint and yelling “Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!” It was strange to me. Lately I was attending the Good News Church of Pastor Sergey Demidovich. This church fully supported Ukrainian authorities. I was shocked. I believe that the church should not be involved in politics.

Before I left [Slavyansk] I was in a home Bible study, and I prayed and asked God to reason with the American government and Obama. My prayer was very abruptly cut off. The Bible study leader not only angrily forbade my prayer but also said that he rejected my prayer. After that, I said that I would never again

Ukrainian authorities now are oligarchs who sold themselves to America and do away with their own people. Even Nazis did not do it. Thanks to Putin, of course, he supports Ukrainian people a lot.

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Correction

I regret that my summer 2014 *East-West Church and Ministry Report* article gave the erroneous impression that Alexander Dvorkin is a member of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR). He is not. The reference was to the head of the Duma Committee on Public and Religious Organizations: Yaroslav Y. Nilov, LDPR Duma member and Deputy Administrator of the LDPR Duma faction.

Lauren Homer, *Law and Liberty Trust, Washington, DC*

A Refugee from Eastern Ukraine Speaks Out *(continued from page 3)*

come to this church.

AF Media: During war people experience terrible things—suffering, grief, violence, devastation. Tell us how your faith in God helped you to overcome the hardships of war.

Elena: Without God I could not have survived. Half a year before the violence all started, I had a prayer in my heart: “God, make me strong!” I did not know back then why I had this petition in my heart. Today, with my son missing in action for three months, I understand why God urged me to pray for strength. I do not know

anything about the fate of my son. Only because of God do I have the strength to believe and to live.

Editor’s Note: The present article is published with permission from “Pobeg iz Slavyanska v Yaroslavl’ ili bezhenka po-blagodati,” Zhivaya Vera Media [Alive Faith Media], AF Media; <http://afmedia.ru/zhizn-cerkvi/pobeg-iz-slavyanska-v-yaroslavl-ili-bezhenka-po-blagodati>; 5 September 2014. Extensive readers’ responses attack and defend the accuracy of this interview. Translated by Ekaterina Vatulya.

One of the Over 4,700 Fatalities in Eastern Ukraine

Igor Zazymkin

Editor’s note: Dr. Gennadi Sergienko, senior pastor of the Second Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church, Moscow, interviewed Igor Zazymkin for this article.

I was born 29 November 1964 in Donetsk, Ukraine. I later moved to Lugansk and worked there as head of the law department of Lugansk cable TV. I also had a private law practice, as well. My wife, Larissa Zazymkina, was born 22 July 1965. We were married in Lugansk 11 October 1987. Larissa had a wholesale business selling stationery. We have two children.

Our first daughter was born in 1989 and now works in Israel. Our second daughter was born in 1992 and worked as a secretary in one of the district courts in Lugansk. We have relatives in Ukraine: My mother and older brother live in Donetsk; my sister lives in Dagestan; and my wife’s parents live in Lugansk. We don’t have any relatives in Russia.

I became a believer in 1998. There was a tent

ministry in our region, and during one of the meetings, 28 August 1998, I accepted Christ. Later I became involved in the tent ministry myself. I worked organizing Christian movie showings. Then I worked in youth ministry, and later I became a preacher, and I continue to preach up to the present.

My wife was killed when she was standing on the balcony of our apartment in Lugansk. A bomb exploded near us, and my wife’s arms were torn off, and her chest was pierced. After that we almost immediately moved to Moscow. We don’t have any relatives in Moscow. I haven’t found a job here yet. There are difficulties with citizenship. Right now I’m preparing documents to receive a work permit. By God’s mercy there will be a job for me. ♦

My wife was killed when she was standing on the balcony of our apartment in Lugansk.

One should put aside one’s loyalties. For most of us this is very difficult, or even impossible, because of our inability to be fully independent of our national, cultural, and spiritual allegiances.

In Response to the Ukraine Crisis Theme Issue

Gennadi Sergienko

I perceive the Ukrainian situation to be one of the tragic events of current history. The whole ordeal is a part of a global power struggle for spheres of influence. The “puppet master” though is not always clearly seen behind the curtain. But the idea to play a “nationalistic card” and make out of Russians the villains makes me sick. It seems to be the only way that Ukraine under the pretext of independence can slip from Russia’s influence. Unfortunately, religion seems to be an effective tool in sparking the flames

of war. In a second, all our religious rhetoric becomes just that—rhetoric. I pray that the hatred and animosity sparked between two countries will be overcome in the nearest future, although when blood is shed it takes decades to heal the wounds. I sometimes think that I am witnessing scenes from the theater of the absurd. ♦

Dr. Gennadi Sergienko is Senior Pastor, Second Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church, Moscow, Russia.

In Response to the Ukraine Crisis Theme Issue

A pastor in southern Russia

It is difficult to add anything to the in-depth study of this issue done by the *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 22 (Summer 2014). But I can express my personal opinion. First, this current Ukrainian crisis is a very complex issue. In order to have a sensible understanding of it, one should first of all thoughtfully consider all circumstances that impact the situation. Second, and it is very important, one should put aside one’s loyalties and preconceptions in order to be objective. For most of us this is very difficult, or even impossible, because

of our inability to be fully independent of our national, cultural, and spiritual allegiances.

The biggest difficulty in discovering the truth is biased mass media which present only those views pleasing to the authorities. Media in Russia are in some kind of fairytale. It means we may not have the basic facts of the conflict for 50 or so years, when all archives will be opened. In the Ukrainian crisis it is a great challenge to sort out the politics, the economics, and the ideological factors that fuel the conflict. For sure, the state distracts the public’s attention and

manipulates people's consciousness by searching for an external enemy in the face of domestic economic problems. This dynamic was pretty well caricatured in the 1997 movie, "Wag the Dog." The United States, Russia, and the European Union all have their own economic difficulties and interests. It is not popular to talk about economic considerations as the basis for action, so the picture in biased media is presented primarily as a political and ideological struggle.

Putting aside our cherished allegiances in order to form an independent, objective conclusion is no easy task. We are all the product of our culture and our time. Russian evangelicals, for example, historically have had no tradition of public political protest, and this may help explain their current loyalty and support for Putin. At the same time, Russian evangelicals believe less in Byzantine "symphonia" of church and state and reject the idea of evangelical participation in politics.

It is a pity that all of us are assaulted by biased media and, lacking impartial historical studies, we just exchange accusations. We Russians are accused of "Putinism," but our Ukrainian colleagues draw their own mistaken conclusions. I personally do not fully support the actions of our Russian government. For example, I admit that Crimea was annexed, our soldiers invaded foreign territory, and our media do not tell the truth. At the same time, aggressive moves of other governments are also easily detected,

for example, U.S.-engineered changes in Ukraine's government for reasons of profit as well as politics and the strongly nationalistic accent of the current regime in Kyiv.

We Russian evangelicals find it very offensive when our Ukrainian brothers rebuke us demanding that we should oppose our Russian authorities and make our own "Maidan." From our side, we take strong exception to Ukrainian evangelical support for Ukrainian ultra-nationalist and radical groups.

New Testament ethics should require us to search for the truth (the ninth commandment), to be modest in decision-making, to refuse to generalize, to work for peace, and to show respect for others. I think that the only way forward in the current Ukrainian conflict is for believers to rise above politics, to maintain spiritual unity, to pray, and to trust in God's providence. The way towards healing will be difficult, but we can take steps toward that end:

1) We must consciously resist simplifications and black-and-white thinking; 2) We must strongly encourage constructive dialogue on both sides; 3) We must offer constructive criticisms of both sides in love and in light of Scripture; 4) We must clearly understand that we live in the midst of an information war, and that we should accept only proven facts—or at least understand that our views may be distorted because we simply do not have all the facts; 5) Finally, we must deliberately cultivate a spirit of dialogue and respect towards people with differing opinions. ♦

We must clearly understand that we live in the midst of an information war, and that we should accept only proven facts—or at least understand that our views may be distorted because we simply do not have all the facts.

Religious Freedom, Mission, and the Transformation of Society in Post-Soviet Churches

Grigori Komendant

The Coming of Freedom

The period of religious freedom in post-Soviet countries was inconsistent in that many opportunities were far from successfully implemented. Freedom came as an unexpected gift, and we were not able to fully manage it. Ukraine still enjoys a unique level of religious freedom. It is another matter that this is not perceived by everyone as a treasure that must be protected. Additionally, we do not always understand how to make use of the opportunities presented by freedom.

Missionary activity has become the primary activity engaged in by the church in conditions of freedom. In 1988, profound changes took place. Before then, everything was predictable and formulaic. I remember when the possibility of a visit by Billy Graham was discussed in the Council for Religious Affairs. At that time one of the generals said: "Hair will grow in the palms of my hands before this Billy Graham comes to the USSR." And then in 1988, at the invitation of the Russian Orthodox Church, Billy Graham traveled here for the millennial anniversary of the Baptism of Russia. As Gorbachev grew stronger and *perestroika* gained momentum, unprecedented opportunities opened up.

No one knew in what direction things would develop. I remember one meeting with Gorbachev at the beginning of 1991. He asked, "Will the USSR continue to exist, or won't it?" He then talked about his

family, how his father was an atheist and his mother was of Molokan descent; how in his house an icon with a Ukrainian *rushnyk* (an embroidered, ritual cloth) hung on the wall between the classics of Marxism. Unexpectedly for everybody, I said, "So it was, Christ was crucified between thieves." The silence lasted for two minutes; no one knew what to say. After this meeting, one of Gorbachev's aides approached me to make my acquaintance and said, "Grigori Ivanovich, I already know you from Ukraine. It was my job to watch your activities." Afterwards, this man helped me organize the Billy Graham Crusade. Such were the heady changes that came to us. Back in February 1991, Gorbachev asked if the Soviet Union would or would not exist, and in August it was all decided – there was the hard-liner Communist coup that failed. We could see on television the trembling of the drunken organizers of the abortive *putsch*.

The National Question

The disintegration of the USSR put before the leadership of Evangelical Christians-Baptists the question of the need to divide the all-union structure into national associations. Prior to this, our church was, in a sense, Soviet, that is, it encompassed all the republics. The end of the USSR exacerbated the national question. But to this day our churches have not yet fully acquired a national character, and this

We must defend Ukraine, but Russia will not willingly let go of her. And this is the political posture of Putin.

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Transformation of Society in Post-Soviet Churches *(continued from page 5)*

Ukrainian evangelical churches are the most powerful, not only in comparison with Russia, but also with Europe. Hundreds of our missionaries are in Russia, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Greece.

limits their role in the formation of national statehood, civil society, and culture. After the collapse of the USSR, we implemented a difficult decision – we set up independent national alliances of churches and a Eurasian federation of unions. Many were not ready for this, but the time was ripe. The older generation did not accept these changes. They were even less able to comprehend the concept of the mission. Why? We have the church, and this is enough. Everyone was accustomed to the church living its inner life.

At this time, international missions were beginning their work, such as Slavic Gospel Association (SGA), and then Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries [now Mission Eurasia]. Churches that began cooperation with the missions began to develop rapidly. Partnerships produced good results. I remember the ministry of Peter Deyneka, Jr.: He collaborated with everyone. I won't forget how he stepped out from behind the pulpit in really muddy shoes, having just returned from a mission trip that was, apparently, somewhere in the woods. People were very open, the so-called spiritual vacuum tormented them, people flocked to repentance, and they reached for the Bible.

Unfortunately, today, 20 years later it is as if we have come full circle. A kind of nostalgia is emerging for the USSR, and a return to ideas and methods with a Soviet flavor. Collectively, we could not see the matter through. Each of us became lost in our own affairs and dispersed our strength on petty matters. Society was not changed because no unifying goal existed.

Russia and Ukraine

In the light of prophecies of the Bible, Russia will play a negative role in global politics, and the other post-Soviet countries will be led by it. I cannot foresee that Russia will let go of Ukraine. Russia will remain a world power, and Ukraine will remain transitional and problematic. We must defend Ukraine, but Russia will not willingly let go of her. And this is the political posture of Putin.

And what, given this situation of enforced dependence on Russia, can Ukrainian Christians do? We should be strong and active; we should do everything in our power. One of the problems of our Russian brothers is weak mobilization, the weakness of the church. We know how much ministry effort was invested in Russia. And the results are negligible. Ukrainian evangelical churches are the most powerful, not only in comparison with Russia, but also with Europe. Hundreds of our missionaries are in Russia, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Greece. Ukraine is a donor country. Even in Soviet times, many state leaders and church leader were from Ukraine. Ukraine has a strong base in its western regions where the church retained its spirit.

“It is Not Possible for Us to Stay in a Cave”

In other words, the influence of Ukrainian Christianity can be manifested through a strong church and its active mission, including within

Russia. Indeed, the impact of our missionaries is changing Russian Christianity by its good example, and is spurring it to activity. And yet, why, given such great potential, has so little change been implemented in the surrounding post-Soviet society? I believe a role has been played by negative influence from the West. The West overestimated us and overrated us. Yes, we endured a lot in Soviet times, toughed it out, survived. But in recent times we have seen little progress, and few outstanding leaders have emerged. We need a reassessment of ourselves, self-criticism. We have falsely idealized ourselves. We need to soberly assess things. When performance is overrated somewhere, then later it backfires.

I will say this: We should not be afraid to harness youthful vigor. Over the past years we have let a lot slip away. I remember how we formed the Creative Council in our Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church, and how young people brought their ideas there, their energy. Now barriers have gone up and little understanding exists between the young and the old. We have thus far been unable to realize the potential of our churches, our missionary movements, and our young leaders to realize a great social transformation.

I recently met with all the former presidents of Ukraine. The first of them, President Kravchuk, said, “What do we do?” I replied, “We must all, without exception, repent.” The earth trembles under our feet. All our castles, riches, and we ourselves are negligible. The church's task is to remind us about what is most important: the eternal and the spiritual. We should remind politicians that all empires have fallen; all emperors have perished. Sooner or later, everything ends. It is worth remembering the eternal. The church's task is to reveal the role of eternal truths and spiritual values for all of society, including politicians, businessmen, and bureaucrats. And we are doing this, but more often in our church circles, while we need to be speaking more on a public and even global scale. Today, the church cannot again close in on itself, as we did 50 years ago when we would congregate, pray, and disperse. It is not possible for us to stay in a cave.

How can we help our people? How can we exert influence over the authorities? I am very interested in hearing the thoughts of Yuri Sipko, under whom the Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Russia actually ceased to support a relationship with the authorities. We cannot change the situation dramatically, but we can continually exert influence. Even our mere presence changes the situation.

Neutrality: Not an Option

Some evangelical leaders speak of neutrality as the only true social position. Neutrality is permissible for personal emotions, but not for principles. We cannot be neutral because we cannot say that black is white. It is very important to be true to oneself. In the early 1990s I suffered from aggravated asthma. I often flew from Moscow to Crimea to regain my

Today, the church cannot again close in on itself, as we did 50 years ago when we would congregate, pray, and disperse.

health. In those years many opportunities came my way to engage in politics and business, and it would have been possible to discredit myself and the Gospel. However, God with the help of illness put me aside and spared me mistakes. Last year, my illness again gained strength. Only now am I coming back to life, it would seem for some new purpose. Thus, God saves us so that we do not cause harm through our activities.

It seems to me that evangelical churches have put all their activities into evangelistic missions, but do little for the transformation of society, culture, politics, and socio-economic relations. We have a catastrophic deficit of leaders. In this respect, the Eastern-Rite Catholics have overtaken us. They have managed to establish high-quality training of personnel. The difference is immediately evident. I am sorry that even our successful Christian politicians have become somewhat confused. They have engaged themselves in major politics, but do not know what to do, how to manage these opportunities. Materialism has captured the church and instead of seizing the opportunity for Christian influence, Christians have turned into competitors in

business and politics.

I appeal to our American brothers and to the international Christian community and ask for your prayers and support for Ukrainian churches and missionaries. I also ask for God's mercy for the people of Ukraine in these days of civil strife. ♦

Edited excerpts published with permission from an address presented at a U.S. Congress Briefing on Religious Freedom Issues in the Former Soviet Union/Eurasia, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, 5 February 2014.

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A Generation of Free Russians Is Forming in the Church

Yuri Sipko

A Yearning for Salvation and Peace

The Lord has appointed me to live in Russia and has given me love for our people, our land. The great plan of salvation in His heart includes all the nations of the earth, uniting in Him disparate and warring tribes, calling for peace among men and women, nations, and tribes, for whose sake He sacrificed His only beloved Son. I thank God for His boundless love and patience toward Russians. I also thank Christians around the world who, in accordance with the will of the Almighty, pray for the rebirth of the peoples of Russia and patiently wait for us to open up to freedom, to a civil society, and to a dignified role in the world community and the family of Christians.

Russia is in the initial stages of building a modern, democratic state and civil society. We as evangelical Christians have almost no influence over the state, but as part of society we are responsible for the strengthening of civic life and the proactive position of the church. The problem of democratization is not resolved by a presidential decree, although many people in Russia think so. Democratization begins with the reformation of each person, with the emergence of a unifying ideology, and peaceful and reciprocal relationships among people. This centuries-old dream of humankind is expressed in the words of the prophet: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4). Unfortunately, the rhetoric and mood in Russian society speaks about a state of war, not peace, and xenophobia, not dialogue and unity. And so our Christian task is the affirmation of divine peace in the hearts of people.

The Legacy of Autocracy and Atheism

A few words about our history: It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, in 1861, that serfdom was abolished, and Russian society still lacks any concept of law and individual liberty. The specter of Communism wandering through Europe found lengthy refuge in Russia. Autocracy was swept away, and in exchange, the dictatorship of the proletariat was erected.

For over 70 years an atheistic regime, antithetical to its people, demolished the country's civic institutions. Only the church was not destroyed. However, the Soviet state did manage to badly weaken and limit its place in society. Here are the primary characteristics of the Soviet regime: private property is a crime; civil liberties are criminal; religion is criminal. The authorities alone are sacrosanct and beyond judgment. The priest Alexander Men described the ascent to the throne of the tyranny of Stalin:

Steadily and deliberately, he erected the building of absolute dictatorship. With cold calculations he swept from his path everyone and everything that might have exhibited even a hint of a threat to his autocracy. No longer was it possible to separate from his personality and will either science, or art, or literature. Or even religion. But to preserve it even in a "tamed" form was risky. God must be the one in the Kremlin, and faith in Him is to become the dominant ideology of the state. The leader is the only oracle and bearer of truth. He is not constrained even by the Marxism he espouses, for the Leader himself fully embodies its doctrines.... With the "cult

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A Generation of Free Russians Is Forming in the Church *(continued from page 7)*

of personality” state authority arrived at complete self-deification; it established itself as the only absolute value.

This description by a murdered priest accurately reflects not only the process of deification of the self-styled autocrat, but also points to the characteristics of the proletarian state that have been passed on to the new Russia: the cult of the leader, hatred of freedom, collectivism, intolerance of dissent, and enslavement of the church.

In contrast, the socio-political program of the first Russian Baptists was to demand a “free church in a free state.” To this day, this still remains our desired ideal, our dream. To this day, the church is still fighting for its freedom. Our Christian views on freedom, dignity, and human rights are ahead of social development. The publicist Igor Yakovenko argues that in Russia, our civic consciousness has not developed a culture of responsibility among its citizens. On the contrary, what reigns is a culture of subjugation. “A culture of subjugation can be defined as a culture of submission, when one can make requests of the authorities, or even make demands, but the participation of the subjects in politics is taboo.” As Yuri Afanasiev writes, “For thousands of years, the vast majority of Russians have existed in a state of barely surviving. Such a state turns them into helpless creatures, submissive to fate, ready to die standing, without a fight, like the trees in the forest die.”

A Culture of Subjugation

These images conceal deep problems in the development of society. A lie is not considered a vice. Drunkenness is not considered a vice. Divorce and adultery are not considered vices. Tax evasion is not considered a vice. Furthermore, the art of deception is taken for valor. Thus, divorced men refuse to pay alimony. A moral violation, and on top of that a violation of the rules of criminal procedure, the laws of the country, and the Constitution, is seen as a matter of course.

It would appear that in the absence of civic engagement, growing religious activity should be regarded as a positive process, as a means of healing the ailments of atheism. However, currently, this is not at all the case. Society is dominated by intolerance of dissent. The conviction remains of the superiority of the collective over the private and personal. Rights and freedoms, including freedom of conscience, have not yet been grasped and assimilated by society. Hence, the suspicious attitude toward minorities, strict control over NGOs, and the subjugation of the media by the authorities. Here are the elements of the culture of subjugation fully manifested. Information is replaced with propaganda. Access to the national media for Protestant religious groups has been completely off limits for some time.

A high degree of intolerance of dissent is observed even in the evangelical movement among

different traditions. Such friction weakens the Protestant movement, marginalizing it, and costing it any sympathy from society. Protestants need to exert great efforts to find common ground before the public in order to present a common defense of religious liberty against the encroachments of the state.

Evangelical Charitable and Educational Work

State patronage is enjoyed by only one denomination, the Russian Orthodox Church. All the rest are in the category of foreign spies or destructive sects. Given such a situation, evangelical churches regard their main mission to be one of charity and educational activities, as these spheres are far removed from politics and for now remain relatively free. Evangelical Christian-Baptist churches and all Protestant communities are actively committed to charitable service in hospitals, orphanages, and in homes for the elderly. For many years, successful spiritual care has been rendered in areas where penitentiaries are located. Churches have established a network of rehabilitation centers providing material and spiritual assistance to those released from prison. A huge number of people suffer from alcohol and drug addiction. This is a disaster for families, the deaths of thousands of young people, and a problem of national importance. Government authorities are in no way able to manage this problem.

The second important aspect of the ministry of evangelical churches is education. Religious educational institutions have been created and have reached a certain maturity. The number of churches has multiplied in which highly educated pastors conduct their ministry. In many regions of Russia, such pastors are involved in public councils under the governor, providing an indirect impact on the atmosphere of relations among religious groups, and between the government and the church. Books are being published, and what is encouraging, books by local authors. In this difficult and important area of the spiritual health of society Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries [now Mission Eurasia] and Slavic Gospel Association (SGA) play an important role. This is labor with splendid prospects. Russia’s territory is a vast land, which is home to about 180 nationalities and linguistic and ethnic groups. No matter how bitter and hard the past, no matter how difficult the moment, evangelical churches look to the future, and selflessly invest themselves in the cause of God.

Our contribution to civil society and freedom in Russia is the Gospel and Christian participation. This alone can change the essence of our citizens and lay the spiritual foundations for public life, giving a Christian content to the concept of freedom and human rights.

The fruits are still ahead. But already today, the young people of Russia have the opportunity to see the world not in terms of the meaningless

Society is dominated by intolerance of dissent. The conviction remains of the superiority of the collective over the private and personal.

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chaos of evolution, but a world order in which life has meaning and in which God bestows rights and responsibilities on every citizen on earth. This is still the period of sowing, but the shoots are maturing, and a generation of free people will grow up.

“Therefore, brethren, be patient until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receives the early and the late rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:7-8).
We believe, we labor, and we see the approach of a

great awakening in Russia which will not include repression or any limitations on religious freedom. ♦

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Old Church Slavonic Versus Russian in the Divine Liturgy

Brian P. Bennett

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Orthodox Tradition

The concept of Tradition—with a capital T—is central to Orthodox Christianity. “The Orthodox Christian of today sees himself as heir and guardian to a great inheritance received from the past, and he believes that it is his duty to transmit this inheritance unimpaired to the future” (Ware 1963: 204). Those who support the maintenance of Church Slavonic and those who propose some manner of Russification both appeal to Orthodox Tradition, but they call to mind different personages and periods to bolster their cases.

In general, biblical precedents and prescriptions figure more prominently in the discourse of reformists than that of traditionalists. For one thing, reformists look to the Bible itself for evidence in their favor. Jesus spoke Aramaic, but the Bible was composed in Koine Greek in order to make it more accessible to people living around the Mediterranean. This, say reformists, has always been the way with Christianity (Averintsev 1997 [1994]: 10). Specific New Testament sayings or parables are also brought to bear on the language question. For example, Jesus’ remark that nothing on the outside can defile a person (Mark 7: 14-15) leads some to the conclusion that it is wrong to create a dichotomy that posits Church Slavonic as sacred and Russian as profane (Kostromin 1997: 112). Lapkin (1997: 44) warns that to maintain the Gospel in the unintelligible Slavonic idiom is to keep it under a bushel (Mark 4: 21); it is to give a stone to a child who asks for bread (Matthew 7: 9). He compares contemporary defenders of Slavonic to the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ time. Zaidenberg (1998: 55) asserts that if even one out of 99 lambs (Luke 15: 3-5) does not understand Church Slavonic, then it must be abandoned and replaced by Russian. All of these statements go back to the intelligibility issue. On this issue, reformists repeatedly invoke St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians (14: 5-19), to the effect that clarity is paramount. They also refer to Jesus’ commands to his disciples to spread the Gospel to all nations (Matthew 28: 19). This passage is often

linked with the story of Pentecost (Acts 2), which reformists see as sanctifying all languages. Since every language can be a vehicle for the dissemination of the Good News, this necessarily includes Russian.

Traditionalists generally do not invoke specific biblical precedents to the same degree. Some suggest, however, that while Jesus spoke in Aramaic, he prayed in Hebrew—thus setting a pattern for the use of sacred languages in Christian worship. Others contend that Slavonic is indispensable because it has faithfully preserved the Septuagint version of the Old Testament used throughout Orthodox Christianity.

Beyond the Bible, reformists tend to emphasize two aspects of Orthodox Tradition: the missionary and the reforming. After Cyril and Methodius, they probably refer most frequently to St. Stephen of Perm, a 14th-century missionary who is credited with creating a new alphabet for the Permic (Komi) people (Pletneva 1997: 102). Cyril and Methodius, Stephen of Perm—the reformists gladly situate themselves in this stream of the Tradition. Meanwhile, their opponents create a different lineage for reformists, connecting them with such radical figures as Luther, Calvin, and—closer to home—Tolstoy (Murav’ev 1996: 242-43). Beyond specific saints, reformists above all emphasize the council of 1917-18. The basic idea is that the Church was on its way to Russifying the liturgy if only it had been allowed to fulfill its mandate. Contemporary translations of the service books are therefore a legitimate extension and implementation of the spirit of the council. According to the reformists, the “Responses” of the bishops in 1905 show that a majority wanted something to be done to make the liturgy more intelligible, with a minority even supporting the radical idea of replacing Slavonic with Russian altogether (Borisov 1994: 131). Reformists attempt to authorize their actions by claiming that they are, in effect, the delayed implementation of the 1917-18 council’s wishes.

This puts traditionalists in an awkward position, since they would appear to be the ones who are most keen on upholding the authoritative traditions of

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the Orthodox Church. They make several replies. Some claim that reformists distort the council record, magnifying the number of bishops who truly favored reform. Some go further and cast doubt on the council itself. They note that reforms of the early 20th century were infected by the Western ideologies of humanism and secularism, which are inherently alien to authentic Orthodox Tradition. The council had a democratic—even secular—character, lacking in the Holy Spirit. There was a kind of “Presbyterianist” mutiny on the part of the parish priests against the bishops, who had all spoken in defense of Church Slavonic (Koroblin and Mikhailova 1999: 60-61).

Cyril and Methodius

Reformists claim that Russifying the liturgy is the modern-day equivalent and extension of the mission of Cyril and Methodius. Just as the missionary brothers translated Byzantine Christian texts into Church Slavonic in order to make them intelligible to 9th-century Slavs, translation into Russian is necessary for the current post-Soviet age. Cyril and Methodius thus serve as a charter for the contemporary situation. In the reformist understanding, all who have labored to spread the Gospel in local languages are operating in the true spirit of Cyril and Methodius.

For traditionalists, the key point is not that Cyril and Methodius created a vernacular language, which happened to be Church Slavonic, but that they created, through divine inspiration, Church Slavonic—a special, sacred language. It was designed specifically for the Slavs, and it could not be otherwise. Traditionalists make several additional arguments. One is that Church Slavonic was never a vernacular idiom. According to Klimenko: (2001: 98-99), for instance, it was inspired by and modeled on the Greek literary language of the time. Reformists are said to misinterpret the mission of Cyril and Methodius: They had a choice between the “high” and “low” Greek of the time, and they chose the former. Thus, from the beginning, there was an attempt to make the language special (Asmus 1999: 224). In sum, traditionalists dispute the characterization that Cyril and Methodius created a vernacular language; therefore, they reject the idea that Russian is the modern counterpart of medieval Slavonic.

Soviet Legacy

Regardless of the historical record, in terms of the post-Soviet debate the important point is that those who advocate liturgical reform are branded as “Renovationists” or “Neo-Renovationists.” Traditionalists see no difference between Renovationists of the 1920s and “Neo-Renovationists”—meaning Kochetkov *et al.*—of the 1990s. Their ideas are said to be one and the same (Bufevev 1999: 152). Such associations—or accusations—put progressive religionists in a very

difficult position. They claim to want to energize and enable the Church to meet the challenging conditions after the fall of Communism, yet they also need to distance themselves from the reputation of the Renovationist movement. Kochetkov invokes the dictum, “the Church is always to be reformed/renovated.” He provides a roster of church figures who, he says, represent true renovation, from Cyril and Methodius to Prince Vladimir and beyond.

Traditionalists typically repudiate the need for reform. For them, the Church is not in need of change or improvement. The deposit of faith must be safeguarded and transmitted intact from one generation to the next. They suspect renovation is simply a cover for the importation of Western ideologies (freedom, democracy, humanism, modernism) that are inimical to authentic Orthodox Tradition. Linked to secularism and sectarianism, reform can disrupt and ultimately destroy the faith. They see Renovationism as a lethal schism that, by Divine Providence, did not destroy the Church. The agenda of reformists such as Kochetkov is too close for comfort, and they categorically reject it.

Traditionalists are greatly concerned with the threat of schism. They point not only to Renovationists but to Old Believers, who broke away from the Orthodox Church in response to liturgical reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon in the 17th century. In traditionalist discourse, this sundering of the Church is evidence of what happens when reformists are allowed to tamper with the liturgical service books. In a kind of doomsday scenario, traditionalists warn that the *ispravlenie* (correction) of the service books proposed by the likes of Kochetkov could well produce another cataclysmic schism. This point is crucial. In the post-Soviet period, the Russian Church has had to contend with a variety of divisions, turf wars, and contestations (N. Davis 2003). It has faced the peeling away of church organizations in former Soviet territories, most notably Ukraine, and their calls for autocephaly, as well as the appearance of different “catacomb” churches that claim to have preserved the true flame of Orthodoxy, unlike the collaborationist Moscow Patriarchate. Thus, the possibilities of schism were acutely felt in the 1990s, especially by traditionalists.

Reformists answer that no schism will happen as a result of liturgical reform; in fact, introducing the vernacular could prevent such a development because it will stop members from leaving the Church in favor of Protestant “sects.” They also point to the Orthodox churches of Bulgaria and Serbia, where “parallel liturgies” done in Slavonic and the national languages have not led to schism.

Other Churches

As this last point suggests, the debate about liturgical language inside Russian Orthodoxy often proceeds by reference to what has happened in the history of Protestantism and Catholicism.

Reformers claim that just as the missionary brothers translated Byzantine Christian texts into Church Slavonic in order to make them intelligible to 9th-century Slavs, translation into Russian is necessary for the current post-Soviet age.

For instance, Nazvanov (1999: 192) complains that Kochetkovites act like a sect: they separate themselves; they have a charismatic leader; they espouse a proselytizing brand of Orthodoxy; they wish to return to putatively apostolic practice—in sum, they peddle a kind of “Eastern-Rite Protestantism.” This is a consistent line of attack on the part of traditionalists: The push for the vernacular is something straight from the Protestant Reformation, and it will yield the same bitter fruits on Russian soil—secularization, fragmentation, and more (Koroblin and Mikhailova 1999: 11). But reformists do not wish to accede to this equation. For them, the use of the vernacular is an authentically Orthodox principle.

Not surprisingly, then, reformists do not look for much support from Protestantism. They do, however, occasionally invoke Catholicism. One of the recurring reformist arguments goes as follows. The Orthodox Church used to upbraid the Catholic Church for its use of Latin—a dead language that was unintelligible to the people. Yet, ironically, the Russian Church now maintains its own “Latin”—namely, Church Slavonic (Averintsev 1997 [1994]: 11; Mikhail 1993: 82). They note that the Catholic Church survived the transition to the vernacular. Russia, so the argument goes, has fallen behind the West, where individual national languages are now widely used and are utterly uncontroversial in Christian worship (Bersenev 1996: 13-14; Ustinov 1996: 61). Traditionalists, however, do not feel that Russia should be following the West’s lead. As for the Catholic Church, they contend that the loss of Latin has been disastrous. The great heritage of Latin culture has been lost (Likhachev 1999 [1998]: 277). As a result the Catholic Church has become much more Protestant in character. One is now confronted with the spectacle of the rock-and-roll Mass and other such debased forms of worship.

Reformists note that different Orthodox churches in the West—in America, France, Finland, and elsewhere—make use of their respective national languages. The cases of Serbia and Bulgaria are particularly important, because they are Slavic Orthodox churches that share the Church Slavonic patrimony, and therefore are the closest in history and ethos to the Russian Orthodox Church. Reformists claim that the introduction of Serbian and Bulgarian, in addition to Church Slavonic, has been largely successful. But traditionalists beg to differ, even though this means criticizing those sister churches. For instance, Bufeev (1999: 309) claims that translation into the national languages in those two countries has resulted in confusion and regret.

Language

Reformists argue that the Orthodox Church has always been a missionary Church, that it has always met the needs of its flock by presenting the Gospel in a readily understandable language. The message, not the medium, is paramount. The message does not

change, but the form of expression does. The same Gospel has been translated into different languages, from Aramaic to Greek, from Greek to Church Slavonic, and from Slavonic to a host of others. For traditionalists, the medium is part of the message. Church Slavonic is considered an essential element of the Russian Orthodox Church (Mironova 2009: 3). If you change the language, you change the Church.

Some traditionalists contend that Slavonic is not a conventional or arbitrary sign system. The word is like an icon, mystically partaking of what it depicts. Therefore, it cannot be changed or discarded without doing harm to doctrine. To change the language is to change the spiritual condition of the people (Shargunov 2008; Kaverin 2008). Traditionalists contend that the reformists subscribe to “Protestant” linguistic theory (Kamchatnov 1999). The fact that the two camps advance such radically different ideologies of language makes a resolution hard to imagine.

The liturgical language debate involves a number of factors—history, beauty, tradition, intelligibility, community—that are hard to reconcile. Attempting to do so in the crucible of post-Soviet transition is even harder. It seems as if the bitterness of the 1990s debate has diminished (Kravetskii 2009). Indeed, the official websites of the Moscow Patriarchate betray no hint of tension or turmoil over this issue (Gopenko 2009: 16-17). But the debate has probably only been deferred, not decided.

A number of other factors may influence the next flare-up. One has to do with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR), an émigré group that was formed in reaction to the perceived collaborationist stance of the Moscow Patriarchate with regard to Soviet power. In the United States, the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) pursued a path of integration and engagement with the surrounding culture. ROCOR, on the other hand, took a more isolationist approach. The respective postures were reflected in differing language policies. Nine out of ten OCA parishes eventually switched to English. At the same time, the OCA tends to be open to converts and inter-faith affairs. On the other hand, 85 percent of ROCOR parishes have maintained Church Slavonic. ROCOR tends to be neutral regarding converts, and negative when it comes to ecumenical endeavors (Krindatch 2002: 544). There is a natural affinity between the OCA and Russian reformists, just as there is between ROCOR and traditionalists. In this connection, it is noteworthy that ROCOR signed an accord with the Moscow Patriarchate in 2007, ending some 80 years of estrangement and antipathy (Turunen 2007). It is not clear whether this will bolster traditionalist attitudes within the Moscow Patriarchate.

The reconciliation of ROCOR with the Russian Orthodox Church was overseen by Patriarch Aleksii II. His own relationship to the liturgical language debate was contradictory. Early on, he seemed to

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give some latitude to reformists; however, perhaps because he personally loved Church Slavonic or because he feared schism, he ended up supporting the traditionalist side and put an end to Kochetkov's linguistic experiments. Late in his life, however, he also criticized those who clung, like the 17th-century Old Believers, to the letter of the liturgical texts (Bodin 2009: 43). When Kirill was installed as Patriarch in 2009, it was widely reported in the media that some reform of the liturgical language might be in the offing. In an interview with Protestants, Kirill cautioned that there would be no full-scale reform, though he suggested it was possible to replace individual words whose meanings have changed so much that they cause confusion for Russian speakers. He also seemed to envision the possibility that scriptural readings could be done in Russian and the rest of a service in Slavonic. (A number of traditionalists have backed this idea.) But the bigger issue, says Kirill, is that people need to learn the "language" of the faith in the broadest sense of the term. He called for more catechesis (<http://www.baznica.info/indes.php>; accessed 6 July 2010).

Full-scale translation of the liturgical books continues, though their use in the liturgy is prohibited. "In this way," warns one traditionalist, "everything is in place for a certain 'zero hour' when the conservative hierarchy is replaced by a liberal one." Then Neo-Renovationists will be ready with their corpus of translated texts (Kaverin 2008: 25). Traditionalists remain on guard for a reformist takeover of the Russian Church. ♦

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An Interview with a Christ-Follower Who Works with Muslims in Moscow

Anonymous

Editor: How many Muslims are there in the Moscow Region?

Worker among Muslims in Moscow (WMM):

Official figures are much lower, but our research indicates that the Muslim population in Moscow and its region is five to five-and-a-half million. Also, St. Petersburg is home to some two million Muslims.

Editor: What is the breakdown by nationality of Muslims in Moscow?

WMM: There are two basic categories: Citizens of the Russian Federation who come from the 80-plus republics and autonomous regions within Russia and nationals of other former Soviet republics. In the first category, the largest Muslim minority in Moscow is the Tatars, numbering one to one-and-a-half million. Next, are those from the autonomous republics in the North Caucasus, which includes migrants from 45 different ethnic groups. Perhaps half a million of Russia’s nine million North Caucasus Muslims live and work in Moscow. The second broad category of Muslims in Moscow, those who are not citizens of the Russian Federation, come mostly from other independent republics of the former Soviet Union, including Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan: around one million each. We do not meet many Muslims in Moscow from less populace Turkmenistan or comparatively prosperous Kazakhstan. Moscow is also home to small numbers of Muslims from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Jordan. For example, approximately 80 Jordanian medical students study at Peoples Friendship University.

Editor: Why have so many Muslims moved to Moscow, and what is their status?

WMM: Job opportunities draw most to Moscow, especially work in construction, but also the menial labor that Muscovites would rather not do. Many Muslims work in retail selling goods and produce

such as watermelons brought in from the south, driving taxis, cleaning streets, etc. Some come to Moscow to study, but most come to make money to send back home.

Editor: What is the legal status of Muslims in Moscow?

WMM: Muslims who are born in Russia or obtain Russian citizenship are, of course, in Moscow legally. In contrast, an unknown but sizable number from the “Near Abroad” (Central Asia and Azerbaijan) do not have registration papers (*propiski*) for residence in Moscow. Many Muslims lose their legal status after their initial registration expires. Sometimes officials simply confiscate registration papers.

Editor: What is life like for Muslims in Moscow?

WMM: Muslims can be a very transient population in the capital. Many Central Asians in Moscow are men working in the building trades with families back home. Pay is not great but better than at home—if jobs can be had at all. The cold climate is difficult for many from farther south. Working and housing conditions are poor. Many work long hours each day, seven days a week; and many live in basements of buildings or in apartments that may house 10 to 40 workers each, sleeping in shifts. Life is harsh. Russians tend to ignore them, take advantage of them, or discriminate against them. Many opportunities are present to show them the love of Christ.

Editor: Are Muslims in Moscow strongly attached to their faith?

WMM: Some are, and some are not. Migrants from the North Caucasus most often are devout Muslims. Tatars and many Central Asians in Moscow tend to be adamant that they are Muslim, but quite nominal in their practice of Islam. For many their faith is a matter of cultural identity, which makes it difficult for them to consider becoming followers of Jesus.

Official figures are much lower, but our research indicates that the Muslim population in Moscow and its region is five to five-and-a-half million.

(continued on page 14)

A Chechen-language Bible was printed in 2012 after 40 years of work!

Muslims in Moscow *(continued from page 13)*

Moscow has only four legally registered mosques. Moscow's largest mosque near Prospekt Mira Metro Station has been under construction for more than five years. Explanations vary as to why the original structure was demolished in 2011, but now it is being enlarged to be a much grander structure. Moscow is also home to an unknown number of unregistered mosques functioning in out-of-the-way locations, such as in warehouse districts. Authorities know about many of these worship centers and close them down periodically. With such a large Muslim population and so few registered mosques, crowds around existing mosques on holy days, especially Ramadan and Kurban Bayram, can be huge: 50,000 to 100,000. These mass throngs freak out Russian Muscovites who typically hold prejudices against Muslims anyway. As an example, slurs directed at Central Asians are common on Russian TV. Tajiks tend to get the brunt of these.

Editor: Turning to your ministry, how long and where have you ministered among Muslims in the name of Jesus?

WMM: I have lived and worked among Muslim populations for 20 years in Africa, Central Asia, and Russia.

Editor: How do you witness to Muslims in Moscow?

WMM: Just being friendly to overworked, lonely, and stressed-out migrant workers is a good beginning. People from Muslim cultures are typically very relational and easy to talk to, and it is not difficult to engage in discussions about spiritual matters. I often strike up conversations with Central Asians and other Muslims on their work breaks. On very cold days, I go out and share a thermos of hot tea and Scripture portions with them. My wife and I try to show hospitality by inviting Muslims into our apartment for meals. Just treating my wife and children with love and respect in the home can be a powerful witness because our guests watch very carefully how we live. We try to show them what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus. I have learned not to wait to share Jesus with them in a loving, relational way, trusting that His sheep will hear His voice. I ask them if they have questions; I engage Muslims in real, caring conversations; I do not argue; I speak the Truth in love; I open my life to them; and I pursue hospitality.

Editor: What resources do you have to assist in your outreach to Muslims?

WMM: We have the Campus Crusade "Jesus" film in eight languages on a single disc. I think even more effective is a film called "Mary Magdalene." It basically is the story of Jesus told from Mary Magdalene's point of view, combining excerpts from the "Jesus" film with added footage shot for this production. We have the "Eastern" Translation of the Russian Bible (www.slovocars.org), which is designed with Muslim cultural and aesthetic preferences in mind. We also have excerpts of this translation of the Bible published in a more compact volume of about 100 pages. A Chechen-language Bible was printed in 2012, and a Chechen audio New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs have been available since June 2014—after 40 years of work! A complete Uzbek-language Bible is now being published; and we have the four Gospels in the Tajik language.

Editor: How receptive are Muslims in Moscow to Christian witness?

WMM: It varies by nationality. The least open to Christ are Muslim Tatars and Muslims from the Caucasus. Tatars often are adamant in their Muslim identity, but at the same time nominal in practice, consuming pork and alcohol, for example. However, among Muslim converts, Tatars who become followers of Christ are especially zealous to live out their faith and reach the lost. On the other hand, Muslims from Central Asia tend to be more open. Moscow is home to at least 25 communities of Christ-followers of Muslim background from Central Asia (Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and Tajiks).

Editor: Are there any new developments that you find encouraging?

WMM: I am glad to see some Christ-followers of Muslim background from Central Asia intentionally moving to Moscow for the purpose of witness and evangelism. Also, some Russian evangelical churches are beginning to develop a heart for the nations (particularly for reaching Muslims) and acting on it. In Moscow reaching Russian-speaking Muslims is less about "going" to other places and more about faithfulness to the Gospel, as defined for us in Scripture: making disciples of ALL nations and modeling to our Russian brothers and sisters in Christ how to love ALL our neighbors, as Christ first loved us. In Russia, Christ's command to reach ALL nations begins at the threshold of our apartments.

Punk Rockers in the Cathedral: Another View (continued from page 16)

interpretation requires the omission of facts.⁹ PR never uttered the words “Vladimir Putin” inside either cathedral. Rather, PR, after the fact, inserted Putin’s name in the YouTube video it edited. Moreover, PR’s January 2012 demonstration in Red Square included obscenities specifically targeting both Putin and the Orthodox Church.¹⁰

Was the Punishment Excessive?

Was the Russian court’s punishment of its punk rockers excessive? In fact, Russian law safeguarding religious observance is not radically different from similar laws in the U.S. and Britain. California’s penal code states: “Every person who intentionally disturbs or disquiets any assemblage of people met for religious worship at a tax-exempt place of worship, by profane discourse, rude or indecent behavior, or by any unnecessary noise, either within the place where the meeting is held, or so near it as to disturb the order and solemnity of the meeting, is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or by imprisonment in a county jail for a period not exceeding one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment.” Similarly, the United Kingdom provides imprisonment for up to two years for “racially or religiously aggravated offences.”¹¹ Nevertheless, a key word for Christian believers should be “forgiveness.” Strikingly, the staff of both Moscow cathedrals did not punish PR. The cathedrals’ response to the rockers’ invasions was simply to release them.¹²

Only later did Russia’s highest decision-makers choose to inflict cruel pain—handing down multi-year sentences in a country famous for its brutal prisons. The conversations behind closed doors among Putin, Patriarch Kyrill, and their staffs relating to the disposition of the three arrested PR performers would have been interesting to overhear. Did Kyrill simply obey as a KGB colleague,¹³ or did he actively lobby for harsh punishment? Either scenario is quite plausible. We cannot expect those conversations to be made public anytime soon. Meanwhile, PR’s allies, trashing piety, are rewriting the West’s old rules. So far, most Russians, both pro-Putin and anti-Putin, are refusing to join in that “long march” against civility. We need more such refusals. ♦

Notes:

¹ Two members of PR appeared at an Amnesty International concert in February 2014. Other members of PR objected stating that this appearance was “highly contradictory to the principles of Pussy Riot.... We never accept money for our performances.... We only stage illegal performances in unexpected public places.” For more details see <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/feb/06/pussy-riot-madonna-amnesty-concert>.

² Masha Gessen, *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2014): 73-76.

³ See the interview with anonymous, masked PR members in the documentary film, “Pussy Riot: a Punk Prayer,” by Mike Lerner and Maxim Pozdorovkin, 2013.

⁴ The group Voina (“War” in Russian), a precursor of PR, performed this stunt in a museum in 2008. At least one participant in the 2008 museum performance participated in the so-called “punk prayers” inside the two cathedrals. Gessen, *Words Will Break*, 40. See also http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/russian-art-group-voina-uses-often-illegal-means-to-spread-anti-state-message/2011/03/30/AF6dtfLC_story.html; and http://www.colgate.edu/docs/default-source/d_academics_departments-and-programs_russian-and-urasian-studies_student-theses/pussy-riot-and-its-aftershocks-politics-and-performances-in-putins-russia.pdf?sfvrsn=0.

⁵ <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/11/what-pussy-riots-punk-prayer-really-said/264562/>.

⁶ Gessen, *Words Will Break*, 6, 42, and 53.

⁷ For a wealth of details see Konstantin Akinsha, Grigorij Kozlov, and Sylvia Hochfield, *The Holy Place: Architecture, Ideology, and History in Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 154.

⁸ [http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-139863#{"itemid":\["001-139863"\]](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-139863#{).

⁹ Gessen, *Words Will Break*, 193. See also http://www.digitalicons.org/issue09/files/2013/06/D1_9_6_McMichael.pdf.

¹⁰ For that song’s unprintable words see Gessen, *Words Will Break*, 104-05.

¹¹ The Crime and Disorder Act of 1998; <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=pen&group=00001-01000&file=302-310.5>.

¹² Gessen, *Words Will Break*, 117-22. See also [http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-139863#{"itemid":\["001-139863"\]](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-139863#{) and <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=9161>.

¹³ “Materials unearthed from the KGB archives indicate that four of the six current permanent members of the Moscow Patriarchate Holy Synod are, or at least until recently were, KGB agents: Patriarch Aleksii II (agent code name “Drozdov”); Metropolitan Iuvenalii of Krutitsy (“Adamant”); Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk (“Mikhailov”).... It should be stressed that an ‘agent’ of the former KGB was considerably more than an informer; he or she was an active operative of the Committee for State Security, in effect a non-uniformed officer of that organization.” John B. Dunlop, “The Russian Orthodox Church as an ‘Empire-Saving’ Institution,” 30, in Michael Bourdeaux, ed., *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (London: Armonk, 1995).

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The aim is to build up friendships so that Christianity is caught, in C.S. Lewis’ phrase, “by good infection.”

Punk Rockers in the Cathedral: Another View

Lawrence Uzzell

Political Protest or Religious Sacrilege?

Eliot Borenstein's article, "The Cathedral of Christ the Savior as Scandal and Haunted House," *East-West Church and Ministry Report* 22 (Spring 2014), perversely misses the most important point in the 2012 controversy with Moscow's punk rockers insulting Orthodox Christians. The punk militants are conducting a "long march" against civilization. P**** Riot, or PR (I refuse to echo their obscene language), and its many allies are celebrating forms of behavior until recently considered unacceptable. PR claims the right to confront and insult Christians attempting to exercise their religious freedom. Both PR and Vladimir Putin love coercion.

My words must seem excessive if one is dependent upon Western media, which have downplayed key points. PR is not just a rock band that happens to have strong opinions about politics and occasionally stages demonstrations. PR has never performed for a willing audience in a concert hall—at least before 2014.¹ It has never produced a CD for voluntary listeners. At least before 2014 its performances always were as offensive as possible in both the secular and religious spaces that they coopted without permission.² PR defies the formal and informal rules of any civilized society, rejecting dialogue or compromise.³

Imagine raiding someone's private shop, insulting the shop's owner, employees, and customers. Imagine an invasion of a biology museum designed for all ages with the end result of children observing nude couples engaging in intercourse.⁴ Again, the audiences were entirely involuntary, just as older Russians recall being forced to listen to Soviet tirades via loudspeakers. PR's so-called "punk prayer" in

Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior in 2012 parodied Christian worship, combining Orthodox-style prostrations with high kicks and boxing gestures. Its text explicitly linked the Lord's name with an obscenity.⁵ Grotesquely, those who performed the "punk prayer" were soon idolized as "prisoners of conscience," as if they were on the level of Solzhenitsyn or Sakharov. Mainstream media ignore PR's systemic shoplifting that was employed to finance one rocker's Ralph Lauren wardrobe.⁶ Thanks to PR and its allies, sacrilegious acts inside a church are considered justifiable behavior by its Western apologists.

Points of Agreement

My position, however, is not the opposite of Professor Borenstein's. Actually, I agree with many of his points. I especially applaud his observation that "The Cathedral of Christ the Savior is tantamount to taking an Indian burial ground, building a shopping mall on top of it, and then knocking down the shopping mall in order to replace it with a sparkling new Indian burial ground—with a casino attached to it." Many object to the cathedral's square footage given over to commercial operations. Even without this conflating of retail and spiritual space, the building should not have been reconstructed in the 1990s. Many experts on church architecture, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, protested Moscow's pseudo-reconstruction of the mammoth cathedral. "Why rebuild it when thousands of historically important churches and monasteries all over the country were crumbling (and are still crumbling). Aleksei Komech, director of the Research Institute of Art History, calculated that the cathedral reconstruction cost would be equivalent to the federal budget for restoration of architectural monuments for a hundred years."⁷ I explicitly voiced my opposition to the project when I was living in Moscow. By the mid-1990s Moscow had more than enough functioning Orthodox Church buildings in downtown Moscow, while many rural and suburban areas in Russia had far too few parishes. When I lived in Moscow I physically walked from the cathedral's construction site to an existing working church, a distance of less than 1,000 steps, much less than a mile.

The Epiphany Cathedral Attack

Returning to the rock exhibitionists, Professor Boernstein's article omits a key point. The Cathedral of Christ the Savior was not the only church invaded by PR in 2012. That same year this punk rock group targeted another church with no scandalous history of hyper-expensive construction. PR attacked Epiphany Cathedral just a few days before its antics in Christ the Savior, ignoring everyone's rights except what it considered its own.⁸

Western media have depicted the rockers merely as anti-Putin political demonstrators. But this

Moscow's punk rockers and Vladimir Putin love coercion.

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