EAST-WEST CHURCH & MINISTRY REPORT

FALL 2004 VOL. 12, NO. 4

The Russian Security Service Versus Western Missionaries

Roman Lunkin

For more than ten years Russian authorities paid little attention to the influence of Western missionary organizations and evangelists. But since 2001 a campaign aimed at expelling missionaries from Russia has accelerated. While a few of those expelled are Roman Catholic, Mormon, Muslim, and even Buddhist, most are staff workers of Evangelical church unions and Western missionary organizations.

Allegations against Missionaries

For example, at the end of November 2003 authorities issued an ultimatum to Takhir Talipov, a missionary from Latvia who had led the Baptist denomination in Tatarstan since the beginning of the 1990s. Authorities alleged that Talipov's worldview and church activities "do not conform to the interests of the country, bear an extremist nature, and present a threat to interconfessional and ethnic stability." Moreover, by expelling denominational leaders, the authorities cast a pall over Baptists and Pentecostals who live in Russia and actually are Russian citizens.

The vast expansion of Protestantism in Russia in the 1990s included its penetration into social and cultural spheres that were often overlooked by bureaucrats and representatives of traditional churches. Authorities could not directly limit the activities of Protestant churches because they were legally registered and many had existed in Russia for more then ten years. That is why, with the advent of the strengthening of central authority under Putin, the KGB, renamed the Federal Security Service (FSB), took control of regulating missionary activities all over Russia. This is according to the statements of Russian authorities and Protestants themselves. State security organizations officially explain that missionaries are involved in, or potentially may be involved in, "extremist activities." By deporting foreigners who are said to be advocates of Western culture and dangerous religions, the FSB postures before the public as the defender of patriotic values. In its anti-missionary actions, it does not face any protests from society. Nor does the FSB encounter protests from Evangelical believers or from missionaries themselves. Anti-missionary politics consists of clearing Russia of real or imaginary enemies without ever firing a shot. In contrast, such a "victory" is not possible in the struggle against corruption or in battles against Chechen rebels.

Contextualized Ministry

Western missionaries deported from Tatarstan, Kalmykia, Adygeia, and the Altay Region have adapted their preaching and the life of the church to accommodate national aspirations, customs, and traditions. Protestant missions have been trying to overcome the common Tatar or Adyg stereotype that conversion means accepting some kind of foreign religion that uproots national traditions. It is important to point out that Protestant missionary activities among Russia's ethnic minorities are being conducted in a secular society in which only a small portion of the population actively practices Islam, Buddhism, or Shamanism. In this situation, the attention Protestants have paid to local history, national epics, native languages, and traditional customs has led indigenous people to trust missionaries. In Evangelical churches, which have made national dress, melodies, and musical instruments a part of worship, new converts have discovered not only faith, but also have rediscovered elements of their national culture.

In 2002 authorities refused to renew the visa of Paul Kim, a U.S. citizen. This Korean-American is the founder of an indigenous Kalmyk church belonging to the Evangelical Christian Missionary Alliance (*Evangel'skii khristianskii missionerskii soyuz*). According to Kalmyk church members in Elista, Kim had had a successful ministry among them because this Asian missionary related well to Asian Kalmyks. He had shared with them his religious experience in South Korea of discovering God and becoming a Christian from a Buddhist background. Young Kalmyk pastor Dzhanga Dagayeva has shared that Kim, in his preaching, respected Buddhist culture. Kim's position was that Buddha was a good man and philosopher, but that he never claimed he was God. In this way, Kalmyk Buddhism could be seen to pave the way for Christianity.

(continued on page 2)

Outreach to Adygei and Altay

Russia deported Swedish missionary-evangelist Leo Martenson of Light in the East *(Licht im Osten)* mission in fall 2002. He worked in Adygeia and Krasnodar, planting Adygei churches and translating the New Testament into the Adygei language. As early as 1997, FSB officers regarded such activities as ideologically provocative and forcefully demanded that Semyon Borodin, head of the Evangelical Christian Missionary Alliance (ECMA), stop such evangelism among the Adygei. But in spite of these restrictions, ECMA continues its ministry among the indigenous population. Alexander Korneev, pastor of the Maikop ECMA Church, thinks that today, in the absence of strong local Islamic traditions, Adygei need to rediscover their fifteenth-century Christian roots.

In Barnaul and Gorno-Altaysk in Siberia, American church planter Gregory Clark and his wife have sought to preserve the local culture. In the Gorno-Altaysk Pentecostal church which they founded, the majority of members are of Altay nationality. Praise and worship at every worship service are in both Russian and Altay. In cell group meetings in believers' homes, Christians worship, sing, and fellowship in their native languages. Worship services employ Altay national instruments (*tapshur, ikli,* and *kamus*). Church members also compose Christian songs in the Altay language and perform these numbers with the help of the same traditional guttural singing (*oyrots*) that has been used to pass down Altay heroic epics for generations. The desire of the Clarks to respect Altay culture extended to supporting village believers' tradition of not building fences between homes, offering tea to every stranger, respecting the elderly, and preserving good relationships among relatives in Altay clans. Nevertheless, in spring 2003 Russian authorities denied Gregory Clark a visa renewal, leaving the church in Gorno-Altaysk without a pastor. The Ministry of Domestic Affairs (MVD) and the Gorno-Altaysk Office of General Prosecutor explained to members of the church that federal authorities had their own reasons for denying visas to foreign missionaries.

Outreach to Tatars

At the beginning of the 1990s Takhir Talipov, a Tatar from Latvia, planted an independent church of Evangelical Christians that to date has spawned five more of the same type in Tatarstan. Pastors from Talipov's church are supervising a new translation of the Bible into the Tatar language. Worship services in the national language are being conducted in practically all large Protestant churches of the republic: in the Cornerstone (*Kraeugol'nogo kamnya*) Christian Charismatic Church, headed by Pastor Roman Usachev; in Ebenezer Church in Naberezhnye Chelny, the largest Pentecostal congregation in Tatarstan; and also in the Church of Christ, which belongs to the Charismatic movement of the International Calvary Church. All these churches, whose membership totals more than 1,500 in Kazan only, attract significant numbers of Russian and Tatar intelligentsia. Since the end of the1990s there has been a tendency toward mass conversions of Tatars to Protestantism and the formation of some new Tatar Christian churches.

Tatar and Kalmyk Protestants, as well as Adygeia and Altay Evangelicals, already play a significant role in the religious and cultural self-identification of various indigenous nationalities.

Compassionate Ministries

Charity work with social institutions is another very important area of ministry for Protestant Christian outreach to indigenous peoples. Anti-alcohol and anti-drug ministries and assistance to children, the poor, the elderly, and the sick characterize every Evangelical community. Protestant pastors, preachers, and bishops not only offer occasional assistance, but practice a unique theology of social ministry that obligates every Christian to help those in need. The church in Maikop, for example, is ministering to handicapped children and offers help to hospitals and orphanages. It also collects clothes for Chechen refugees. In the Altay Region believers have developed a network of rehabilitation centers for drug addicts, while missionaries serving in mountain villages are offering help to Altay people who want to free themselves from the bondage of alcoholism. In Kalmykia, rock concerts against drugs have been organized. Moreover, the Evangelical Christian Missionary Alliance Church in Elista organizes seminars for physicians, computer scientists, and business people.

At the same time, more and more secular authorities disapprove of Protestant social, political, and economic tendencies. Protestants teach new converts to respect democratic values and the rights and freedoms of the individual. Evangelicals, historically associated with the "Protestant work ethic," support the growth of a liberal market economy. As a result, most Protestants vote in elections for parties that support a democratic platform, such as *Yabloko* and *Soyuz Pravyh Sil* (Union of Right Forces), but are suspicious of *Edinaya Rossiya* (United Russia), which has the backing of state functionaries.

Protestant Growth among Minorities

Missionary deportations have not been a catastrophic event for Russia's Evangelical churches. Nor have the punitive actions of authorities, often conducted behind believers' backs, destroyed the holistic worldview of these believers. Many churches founded in the 1990s, overcoming many obstacles, now occupy certain niches in society and are no longer a marginal force in Russian life. The situation regarding Tatar and Kalmyk Protestants, as well as Adygeia and Altay Evangelicals, shows that they already play a significant role in the religious and cultural self-identification of various indigenous nationalities. Tatar, Kalmyk, Adyg, and Altay pastors no longer are rarities, while Evangelical churches support themselves through the practice of tithing. Foreign help plays a role only occasionally, as in cases of church construction or large-scale humanitarian aid projects.

Missionary churches now represent a real social and cultural force among indigenous people groups in Russia. They preach the ideals of a healthy and

prosperous society. Muslim authorities in Tatarstan are much more intolerant of Tatar conversions to Protestantism than to Orthodoxy. At the same time, Orthodox hierarchs and Muslim *myftiyat* express growing anger over Tatar conversions to Evangelical faith. Local authorities feel increasing pressure to limit Protestant activities that Orthodox and Muslims define as proselytism. More and more, one can hear angry voices of Kalmyk nationalists who regard Kalmyk Evangelicals as traitors. In the Altay Region, missionaries, especially those serving in remote villages, face powerful resistance from Shamanists, who proclaim the "indigenous faith" of *Oyrots*.

Conclusion

Foreign missionaries and their Russian and ethnic minority disciples have successfully organized indigenous congregations. Contrary to the popular, pro-Orthodox opinion that foreign evangelists denigrate or downplay native culture, many coming from the United States and Scandinavian countries leave behind strong and independent local churches. These congregations reflect an understanding of their context, including the cultural history and spiritual sensitivities of their flock. The planning and growth of churches in Russia's national republics in particular have succeeded because of the positive personal qualities of Western evangelists and their effectiveness as church leaders. In contrast to those missionaries of the early 1990s who acted less cautiously and who often rigidly swept away anything that hindered their work, more sensitive foreign workers since then have respected indigenous cultures and have made a place for elements of local customs and traditions in worship and missionary work. The displeasure of traditional churches towards Protestants, whether the latter proceed in a culturally sensitive manner or not, comes as no surprise. However, that Protestants, unlike most Orthodox believers, strongly support the development of democracy in Russia is less well known. Thus, while Orthodox opposition to Protestants may stem from a majority faith's yearning for a return to its previous monopolistic state-church status, the opposition of authoritarian-minded state officials to Protestants may stem from Protestant preference for a democratic outcome to Russia's present floundering for a new way forward. ◆

Roman Lunkin *is a research fellow of the Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow. He also is on the research staff for Keston Institute's forthcoming* Encyclopedia of Contemporary Religious Life in Russia.

A Comparison of Russian Orthodox and Evangelical Social Doctrine

Scott Lingenfelter

In 1906 Sergei Bulgakov warned the Moscow theological establishment that the greatest problem facing the church was not administrative restructuring, or philosophical disputes about the existence of God, but whether or not the church had any social relevance in a rapidly industrializing, secular Russia. Largely unheeded at the time, Bulgakov's challenge has a contemporary ring. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia's churches have attempted to redefine themselves socially within a fluid, ambiguous state legal order. Recent social statements by the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian Evangelicals reveal the extent to which this maneuvering has led to serious reflection on the character of their social ministry and even the basic mission of the churches at this critical time in Russia's history. *Osnovy sotsial'noi kontseptsii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Bases of the Social Conception of the Russian Orthodox Church]*, completed in 2000, was the work of a 26-member commission of clergy and laity formed in 1997. (An English translation can be found on the Moscow Patriarchate's website: http://www.mospat.ru/chapters/e_conception.) Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's External Relations Department, chaired the commission. The 2003 Russian Evangelical response, *Sotsialnaia pozitsiia Protestantskikh Tserkvei Rossii [Social Position of the Protestant Churches of Russia]*, nearly two years in the making, was drafted by Adventists, Evangelical Christians-Baptists, and Pentecostals—a considerable, though not all-inclusive segment, of Russia's Protestant churches. The two documents possess a similar structure and some common ground, but fundamentally they (and recent joint meetings) reveal two divergent confessional traditions coming to grips with a shared sense of social and demographic crisis. The statements will be compared below under four headings: church, nation, and state; freedom of conscience and human rights; Christian ethics and secular law; and economics, labor, and globalization.

Recent social statements by the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian Evangelicals reveal serious reflection on the character of their social ministry.

Church, Nation, and State

In both statements Christians are seen as having a dual earthly and heavenly citizenship that confers social responsibility. This responsibility is rooted in theology—ecclesiology in the Russian Orthodox tradition, soteriology in Evangelical thought. The documents affirm that the church is universal and national, understood in the Russian Orthodox

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

statement as national autocephaly within ecumenical Orthodoxy. The Evangelical statement, on the other hand, focuses on the church's mission within a community of nation states. Patriotism is applauded, aggressive nationalism condemned, but the Russian Orthodox national conception leads it to assert that when a nation represents "predominantly a mono-confessional Orthodox community, it can in a certain sense be regarded as an Orthodox nation" (II.3).

This conception of "Orthodox nation" is the basis for a lengthy set piece on church-state relations in which Western models are critiqued in favor of Orthodox "symphony." With the synodal period of Russian history in view, the document terms the established or "territorial" church model "an evident distortion." At the same time, the document affirms that the church may "urge the government to exercise power in particular cases," and can expect "the state, in building its relations with religious bodies, [to] take into account the number of their followers and the place the[y] occupy in forming the historical, cultural, and spiritual image of the people" (III.3, III.6). Why the church did not use this context to craft even a few carefully worded lines about its predicament during the Soviet period baffles this writer. Both documents do, however, maintain the separation of church and state, the inadmissibility of claims of one over the other, the political neutrality of the clergy, the crucial political and social role of the laity, and qualified Christian support of the state during war. Both statements also outline about 15 areas of church-state cooperation, ranging from charity and initiatives to strengthen the nation's (particularly the family's) moral fiber to collaboration in education, scientific research, and the mass media. The Evangelical conception of its relationship to the state is grounded in freedom of conscience, perhaps the single greatest divide between the two statements.

Running through both documents is a deep anxiety about Russia's current demographic and ecological problems.

Freedom of Conscience and Human Rights

Freedom of conscience occupies a central place in the Evangelical social statement. It is placed at the top of the statement's agenda, just under theological presuppositions, and it is discussed well over a dozen times throughout the 72-page document. "At the basis of the church's mission lies the firm conviction that freedom of conscience should be guaranteed to all people," the statement opens. It continues that the churches are prepared to defend "freedom of conscience and religious freedom as a basic human right as consonant with biblical teaching and international human rights documents" (7). Again, in the context of an appeal to several international human rights conventions, "[w]e believe that freedom of thought, conscience, and religion are basic and inalienable personal rights" (8).

The Russian Orthodox statement views freedom of conscience with ambivalence. As a product of the Enlightenment, it resulted in some measure of religious freedom in a "non-religious world." At the same time, it possesses a threat of egoistic assertion, its necessity in fact proving that society has "become massively apostate and actually indifferent to the task[s] of the Church." The document also laments that people "in a society which affirms freedom of conscience no longer aspire for salvation" (III.6). The statement is thus hesitant to sanction the concept of human rights *per se*, and rather than acquiescing to individualism or the "protection of self-will," it maintains that "the idea of human freedom and rights is bound up with the idea of service" (IV.7). This service means confronting several thorny social issues.

Christian Ethics and Secular Law

For both, civil disobedience is contemplated only when man's law contravenes God's. Stress is on being law-abiding and socially active. This is especially true of the Evangelical statement as the churches have been viewed as foreign imports—an impression this document takes pains to correct. Several particular social issues are discussed. In both documents, the social role of women and their reproductive rights are considered integral to current concerns about the deterioration of the family. With regard to the social role of women, the Russian Orthodox position is expressed traditionally: "the desire to remove or minimize the natural differences [between the sexes] is alien to the church mind" (X.5). In the Evangelical statement, the primary tasks are to restore "the respect accorded to a woman as wife and mother" (26). Larger families are encouraged in both statements, thus abortion and abortifacients are explicitly condemned. Contraception is left to a couple's discretion. Reproductive technologies are considered admissible and surrogate motherhood discouraged. Homosexuality and transsexuality are viewed by both as perversions of the created order.

As for experimental medical technologies, the Russian Orthodox statement is more specific than its Evangelical counterpart in forbidding the cloning of human beings, but suggesting cautious optimism about the prospects of cloning organic cells and tissues. Organ transplants are advocated in suitable cases and their commercialization discouraged. Physician-assisted suicide is equated with murder in both documents.

Issues of crime and punishment are addressed with a focus on rehabilitation, particularly in the Evangelical statement, which advocates setting up formal rehabilitation centers. The Russian Orthodox position on the death penalty is that there is no provision in Scripture or tradition that would obviate it, though "mercy … is always preferable to revenge," and steps to this effect by state authorities are welcomed by the church (IX.3).

In general, personal and national health and well-being are considered primary concerns. Indeed, running through both documents is a deep anxiety about Russia's current demographic and ecological problems. "Russia is experiencing a situation of demographic crisis," the Evangelical document states, and this "great disaster" is the churches' business,

particularly its effects on children (33). In what is perhaps the most lucid section of the Russian Orthodox statement, Russia's demographic crisis is attributed to "sharply decreased" birth and average life expectancy rates, the scourge of alcoholism and drug-addiction, and longer-term factors such as "wars, revolution, hunger, and massive repression, the consequences of which have aggravated the social crisis" (XI.4, 6). Both documents advocate appropriate government legislation and relief measures, and in particular medical research and social programs "intended to protect motherhood and childhood."

Economy, Labor, and Globalization

Neither document advocates a particular economic system. The Russian Orthodox position is that labor in itself is "not an absolute value," but is driven by two motives: self-sufficiency and concern for the well-being of others (VI.4). Passages from Scripture and the church fathers are quoted to support the dignity and necessity of work from a Christian perspective. The Evangelical position is expressed in faintly schematic terms: "in labor the human personality is formed and developed" (42). Adoption of the Protestant work ethic is seen as meeting a particularly urgent need in today's Russian business environment: "The enterprising Christian conceives of work as a special form of worship, as a calling, a means of realizing the divine plan in life" (44). Both documents view the ownership and use of property as a personal right to be exercised for the common good. Expropriation of property for any reason is rejected.

The Russian Orthodox Church's reservations about the process of economic and cultural globalization go hand-in-hand with her concerns about secularization and the mass media. The primary concern is that international organizations will ride roughshod over popular will and "may become instruments for the unfair domination of strong over weak countries, rich over poor, and technologically ... developed over the rest" (XVI.2). The concern is also confessional. "This process ... has been accompanied by attempts to establish the dominion of the rich elite over... some cultures and worldviews ... which is especially intolerable in the religious field" (XVI.3). Something of the Church's frustration with Russia's increasing religious pluralism is evident in such passages. Viewed by Evangelicals as requiring real discretion, the mass media is seen by Russian Orthodoxy as the recent instigator of "more profound and principled conflicts," some involving "systematic" distortion of perceptions about "the Church and her servants" (XV.3).

Conclusions

These documents are significant because they are the first of their kind, especially in their comprehensiveness, and they demonstrate different methods. The Russian Orthodox statement is canonical in format, drawing on both Scripture and church tradition. (Its English translation needs some editing.) It could well have been more conservative or more liberal. The Evangelical counterpart's prose is more relaxed, its conceptions supported exclusively by Scripture. More substantively, the documents demonstrate some common ground on moral issues, as well as some basic differences in political and economic philosophy. The Evangelical statement's insistence on freedom of conscience and freedom of religion can be viewed as a declaration that Russia's restrictive religious and political order, past or present, is unacceptable and counterproductive. Indeed, one of the intriguing features of the Evangelical document is its brief appendix, "From the History of the Russian Protestant Churches," which serves as a brief apology for the social role of Russian Evangelicals. The common ground, however, is the shared task to address critical social needs in the complex arena between people and state.◆

Scott Lingenfelter *is a doctoral candidate in Russian history at the University of Illinois, Chicago.*

The documents demonstrate some common ground on moral issues, as well as some basic differences in political and economic philosophy. The common ground is the shared task to address critical social needs.

Problems I See with Theological Education

Peter Mitskevich

Editor's note: The author wishes to credit two sources for his comments: Mark Harris, "Pitfalls of Student Selection in Leadership Training in Russia," Mission Frontiers *(March/April 2003), 12-13; and Ralph D. Winter, "What's Wrong with 4,000 Pastoral Training Schools Worldwide,"* Mission Frontiers *(March/April 2003).*

Problems:

1. In the selection of theological students, new converts should not be admitted. They do not have maturity. They need milk, not meat.
2. Due to changes in society, there are fewer and fewer quality applicants. They have no experience in ministry or experience of life or families. We train people academically who cannot use their education practically in life.
3. Students are not qualified spiritually. We need those who fear God and have a strong commitment.
4. Students come without a call from God. They do not want to be missionaries. They come for answers. They stay as students for years and years.
5. Students are not sent by churches. After graduation, churches will not accept them due to changes in their theology.

(continued on page 6)

Problems I See with Theological Education
(continued from page 5)

6. The level in seminary is professional and academic. Students watch professors and presidents and these are their models, [not preachers].
7. Students come for diplomas, especially if the seminary is accredited. They want the name recognition. The goal is a diploma, not education.
8. Some students have the goal of a good career with a Western mission or to obtain a good scholarship in the West. Many graduates have no place to serve and many will not serve where they are needed.

Why do the qualified not apply? Most ministers are working full time and cannot study in seminary because of pastoral and family responsibilities. Still, there are good students, but others do not have hearts that burn for Christ. We need to use the principle of maturation. Will the immature influence the mature or vice versa? Seminary graduates are not trusted by senior pastors when they return. Pastors do not want talented people to leave for seminary because they do not want them to leave the church.

Does the seminary exist for the church or the church for the seminary?

Solutions:

1. Each student should have a mentor and should be assigned to a specific church for an internship while in school.
2. We should use the Internet so people who cannot move to a seminary location can study in remote places.

Discussion

Nikolai Kornilov (Moscow Theological Seminary of Evangelical Christians-Baptists): Some go to seminary to get answers to questions they have in the church.
Peter Mitskevich (Vice-President, Russian Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union): The task of seminary education is to change the whole person.
Kornilov: We need to shape the personality as well as to educate.
Counter opinion: This [approach] would be the same as the Soviet Union.
Another comment: Graduates are wandering around without church assignments and they end up in Western missions.
Anatoly Prokopchuk (Kyiv Evangelical Christian-Baptist Seminary): The exclusively academic approach is the greatest danger. We need the application of education, not academic education only.
Mitskevich: Our seminary academic standards need to fit our circumstances.
Alexander Karnaukh (Odessa Baptist Theological Seminary): Seminary professors need to be involved in teaching in churches. Then candidates will be more prepared for seminary. The number of schools is increasing, but the number of students is decreasing. This relates to the quality of students and increases the desire for students from other countries.
David Hoehner (Donetsk Christian University, Ukraine): Now there are five or six schools in Donetsk alone. We need to discuss the issue of the number of schools. We should depend not only on Western donations, but also on national support. Students shop around for the best scholarships. We need to find ways to be independent of Western funds.
Igor Kobyakovsky (Kyiv Christian University): Students need to pay more for their education.
Another brother: Most students are new believers. Why don't we have more students from believers' families? Christians do not want their children to be pastors.
Another brother: Maybe we need to work with these young students up to 20 and change our education to meet their needs. Then many will be Christians in society if not in the pulpit. We need new programs and new approaches. We need to change our attitudes.
Mitskevich: We should work with everybody. We also need to help the older pastors who have had no chance for seminary. We need to reorganize our seminaries using extension centers and/or the Internet and/or teaching in churches.
Rudolfo Giroi (Euro-Asian Theological Seminary of the Church of God Cleveland, Moscow): I suggest that students return to their churches in the middle of the program.
Another brother: Some pastors send students to seminary to get rid of them. Seminaries and churches have to work together. We don't want to have seminaries and churches going in different directions and criticizing each other (as in the West).
A sister from Christian Leadership Development, Kyiv: Does the seminary exist for the church or the church for the seminary?
Asatur Nagapetyan (Armenian Baptist Theological Seminary): Seminary should be in the church and then it will not be purely academic.
Ivanas Shkulis (Lithuanian Pentecostal Institute): One problem is that we have no Sunday school for adults.
Another brother: Pastors just do not trust seminary graduates.
Another brother: Churches need to support students in seminary. If the church invests in a student, then it will want the student back.
A Tashkent brother: We need to have a sympathetic attitude towards our institutions. Many Christians from Central Asia have emigrated to America. Now we work with a new, younger generation. No school graduates generals. Our graduates can obtain greater leadership with experience after graduation.
Alexander Abramov (Odessa Baptist Theological Seminary): Our churches are closed culturally and we have a danger that our students will be too Westernized. ◆

Peter Mitskevich *is vice-president of the Russian Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union. His presentation was made at the Euro-Asian Accrediting Associate Conference, Kiilov, Ukraine, 15 October 2003. The discussion section is based on notes taken at the meeting by the editor.*

Moldovan Outreach to Central Asia and Russia

Oleg P. Turlac

The College of Theology and Education (CTE) in Kishinev, Moldova, was founded and received its official government registration in 1995. A Russian-language Bible school founded in 1993 by Bethel Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church (Fiodor Mocan, president) and the Romanian-language Trinity Theological Institute (Valeriu Ghiletchi, president), founded in 1994 by Moldovan Baptists, merged in 1995 to form CTE. Mocan was elected president of the new school, while Ghiletchi assumed the responsibilities of academic dean. To date a total of 490 students have completed its programs in theology, missions, Christian education, and social work..

Missionary Possibilities

CTE's leaders from the beginning have been mindful of missionary possibilities. They did not limit their vision to Moldova alone, but dreamed of training students for missions in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union. In 1995 the first students from abroad began to arrive. They were from the Caucasus and Siberian and Far East Russian regions, including Yakutia (Sakha) and Chukotka. Students also came to CTE from two Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union. The goal has been to educate future leaders who will return home as missionaries and church planters. This vision requires training students in theology in the Russian language in order to enable them to proclaim the gospel clearly to their own people in their own languages.

Also in the mid-1990s, several Gagauz students from southern Moldova were studying at the Protestant Emmanuel Bible Institute in Oradea, Romania. Gagauz, numbering approximately 234,000, are ethnic Turks who never converted to Islam, but instead embraced Eastern Orthodoxy. Related to the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks who conquered the Byzantine Empire, they withstood centuries of enticements and subtle pressures to accept Islam. Some of the 2,500 to 3,000 Gagauz who are Protestants have been sent as missionaries to fellow Turks in several Central Asian republics (*Praying for Turkic Ethnic Groups*; Kirk Johnson, "The Christian Gagavuz Turks of Moldova," unpublished paper, 1993).

The Role of Joseph Ton

Gagauz students were able to study in Oradea, Romania, due to the vision of Dr. Joseph Ton (pronounced Tson) who was then president of Emmanuel Bible Institute. Under the Communists, this Baptist pastor had endured house arrest, grueling interrogations, and finally, in 1981, exile. From 1982 to 1995 he served as president of the Romanian Missionary Society, Wheaton, Illinois, which devoted itself to supporting Evangelical churches in Romania.

Dr. Ton had a vision to reach beyond Romania into Moldova and other republics of the former Soviet Union. Along with young people from Moldova, he invited several students from Russia to study in Oradea. Ton's involvement in the lives of Moldovan students at Emmanuel Bible Institute proved to be vital to the existence and vision of the College of Theology and Education in Kishinev, Moldova.

In 1997 one of the Gagauz graduates of Emmanuel Bible Institute, Victor Ormanji, a native of Cheadir-Lunga in southern Moldova, returned home after receiving his B.Th. in Oradea. Initially he planned to stay in Cheadir-Lunga, but because of Dr. Ton's influence he began his teaching career at CTE as instructor in missions and head of the missions department.

Dr. Ton had a vision to reach beyond Romania into Moldova and other republics of the former Soviet Union.

A Change of Leadership

In 1998 Valeriu Ghiletchi, academic dean of CTE, was elected to the Moldovan Parliament, the only Evangelical Christian-Baptist to serve in this capacity to date. In 2001 Ghiletchi was elected president (bishop) of the Moldovan Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union and in 2002 became chair of the board of trustees of CTE. Rev. Mihail Malancea replaced Ghiletchi as CTE's academic dean in 1998. This professor of church history and theology and pastor earned a B.Th. from Bucharest Baptist Theological Institute, an M.A. from TCM Institute for Biblical Studies, Austria, and is pursuing a doctorate in Islamic studies at Bucharest State University.

The Bachelor of Missions Program

In 1998 under the leadership of Mihail Malancea and Victor Ormanji, CTE launched a Bachelor of Missions program with an emphasis on ministry in Central Asia. This ambitious and far-sighted three-year program has developed into a comprehensive course of study including Study of the Koran, Introduction to Islam, Historical Development of Islam, Principles of Discipleship in the Muslim World, Culture of the Muslim World, Theology of Islam, Ministry to Muslims, The Church and Its Status in the Muslim World, Human Rights in the Muslim World, World Religions and Cults, as well as Arabic and Turkish language instruction.

Dr. Ton became an active supporter of this missions program. As an adjunct professor, he often visited CTE, taught classes in the areas of theology and ethics, and provided necessary encouragement for the leadership of CTE. In fact, members of the faculty of CTE like to speak of Joseph Ton as their "spiritual father and mentor."

(continued on page 8)

Moldovan Outreach to Central Asia and Russia
(continued from page 7)

Students have come to study at CTE from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Korea, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

Keys Ministries

Dr. Ton put the leadership of CTE in touch with the U.S.-based missionary organization, Keys Ministries (http://gardenchapel.org/missions/keys). Founded in 1993 in Liverpool, Pennsylvania, its stated purpose is "to glorify God and make Him known here and throughout the world by providing resources for Christian leaders." Keys became very instrumental in providing support for CTE's new missions program.

Joseph Ton and his wife, Elizabeth, had been friends of Palmer and Joan Long, members of the Evangelical Free Church of Hershey, Pennsylvania, since the late 1980s. Dr. Ton's appeal to the Longs to provide scholarships for Gagauz students in Romania struck a responsive chord, in part because Palmer Long had had "a very keen interest in sharing the Gospel with Turkic people since serving in the U.S. military near Ankara [Turkey] in 1962-63" (letter to the author, 4 January 2004). As director of Keys Ministries, Long first led a team to Moldova in May-June 1998. Since then Keys Ministries has sent mission teams to CTE twice a year to teach English as a second language. It also encourages U.S. professors to teach at CTE.

To Siberia, the Far East, and Central Asia

Vyacheslav Grini, Peter Litnevsky, and Vladimir Gladkevich, graduates of CTE, serve in Chukotka near the Bering Strait in Siberia. Yuri Vylkov serves as a missionary in Bulgaria. In the Yakutia region of Russia, Lyubomir Tataev, a 1998 graduate of CTE, and Alexander Kravchenko, a 1997 graduate, have joined together in ministry. Viktor Koval serves as a missionary in Yoshkar-Ola, while Mikhail and Inna Biryuk serve in Chita in the Russian Far East. Evgeny Shablenko, Alexei Botnari, Pavel Belev, and Sergey Kul'kov serve in different regions of Russia, while Mikhail Arabadji ministers in Turkey and Nikolai Khripko ministers in the Odessa region of Ukraine.

Vyacheslav Verbitsky and Emil Agaev founded a Bible school in Shymkent (Chimkent in Russian), Kazakhstan. The Bible school in Shymkent became the first satellite school of CTE. Igor Kohaniuk, a graduate of CTE's Bachelor of Divinity program, started a Bible school in Tajikistan in 2003. In the fall of 2003 CTE's professor Serghei Namesnic traveled to Tajikistan to teach homiletics to 34 students at the Bible school in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan.

Keys Ministries initiated a partnership with a new extension school in Central Asia in January 2004. This extension school is currently training 32 believers for ministry. CTE faculty also travel and teach at this extension school ("New CTE Extension School, Tajikistan," *Keys Ministries*, January/February/March 2004. See also Serghei Namesnic, "Pe urmele apostolilor," *Pulse of Ministry*, no. 4, 2001, 29-30.)

From time to time CTE faculty members visit schools in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and teach one- to two-week modules. In February 2003 Professors Sergey Germanov and Alexander Girbu traveled to Kazakhstan to teach at the Bible school in Shymkent. They also visited Uzbekistan and taught courses in a Bible school there. Professors Malancea and Ormanji travel to Asia at least once a year to teach at CTE's satellite schools and to recruit new students for CTE's missions programs.

A Multi-Ethnic Campus

The graduating class of 2003 was the largest in CTE's history. One hundred and thirteen graduates (75 graduates of full-time programs and 38 graduates of the part-time program) received diplomas in theology, missions, Christian education, and social work. British missionary Ron George, adjunct-professor of Islamic studies at CTE, was the main speaker at the graduation ceremony. Students have come to study at CTE from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Korea, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Currently students of 20 nationalities of the former Soviet Union are enrolled in CTE's programs.◆

Oleg P. Turlac *is professor of theology at the College of Theology and Education, Kishinev, Moldova, and a doctor of ministry candidate at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama.*

Letter to the Editor

I read the article on European values [12 (Spring 2004), 8-9] and would have to say that the results pretty well mirror my experience. I would only wonder whether the interpretation of some of the terms is the same in each country. For example, it is hard to believe so many people are against bribery in some of the countries mentioned. But what do they see as bribery? Is it taking money to help people get away with something they shouldn't? Or would they also consider as bribery taking "gifts" in appreciation for services to be rendered which are legally due the recipient? I suspect most people who take and give such gifts don't consider it bribery.

Sharon Mumper
Magazine Training Institute
Baden-Leesdorf, Austria

Christian Magazine Publishing in the Former Soviet Union

Sharon Mumper

"How did you find us?" It was the second day of a conference for Christian magazine publishers and two of the participants had approached me. "We didn't even know one another," the editor from Siberia said, looking around at participants who had come to Moscow from cities thousands of miles apart: representatives of a Christian newspaper from the Arctic Circle, of a newsletter from the semi-tropical south of Russia, and of magazines from the farthest reaches of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

How did we find them? One contact had led to another, then another, then another. It was our first conference for Christian publishers in Russia, but our third for Russian-language publishers from the former Soviet Union. As we prepared for our first conference for Russian-language publishers in Ukraine in 1996, we found that very few church leaders knew of more than one or two Christian magazines.

There can't be more than 50 Christian magazines in the entire former Soviet Union, one director of a ministry to Russia told us in 1995. I was convinced he was wrong. Already, publishers of more than 100 Christian magazines in Eastern Europe had attended one or more of our conferences over the previous five years. To this day, no one knows how many there really are. However, since 1996, staff members of nearly 100 Christian magazines from countries of the former Soviet Union have attended conferences organized by the Magazine Training Institute (MTI). At every conference, participants are astounded and delighted to meet fellow journalists working with magazines they didn't know existed. It is not surprising that in a region spanning 11 time zones and thousands of miles, journalists know only a small percentage of their colleagues. Publishing in a region that large presents tremendous potential as well as enormous challenge.

Marketing Across 11 Time Zones

The greatest potential lies in the size of the Russian-language Christian market—over 5 million Evangelicals, Charismatics, and Pentecostals in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus alone. Even the East European countries with the largest Christian populations can't boast a market half that size. However, size—or rather, distance—is also the greatest challenge to Christian magazine publishers. It doesn't help to have an enormous market if there is no way to distribute magazines in a cost-effective way. Also, publishers in one country cannot easily market their product in another country, even if the language is basically the same. Export/import regulations, costs, and paperwork are a major factor, as is the problem of moving funds between countries. The banking system does not allow for convenient or inexpensive transfer of funds from one country to another.

Some magazines have tried to establish informal relationships with Christians in other countries who agree to act as distributors. However, informal systems are awkward and rarely work well. Marketing and distribution are problems even for publishers operating within a single country. In most cases, because of the relatively small market for a Christian magazine and the miniscule (or nonexistent) profit margin, newsstand distribution is out of the question. And Christian bookstores are few and far between. How will prospective subscribers find out about the magazine? If Christian journalists know of only a small percentage of the Christian magazines in the region, how will prospective subscribers find out about them?

Russian publishers who met at an MTI conference in 2003 brainstormed one possible solution. Each agreed to pay a small amount of money to one of the publishers who had access to several mailing lists of Christians. He produced a flier describing each magazine and providing access information. The plan was a modest success, with publishers gaining subscribers who otherwise never would have known about their magazines. One magazine editor in Magadan, in Russia's Far East, was thrilled to gain subscribers from towns thousands of miles away. Her region has few Christians but her magazine's potential is enormous—if she can reach the market across a thousand miles of tundra and forest.

At every conference, participants are astounded and delighted to meet fellow journalists working with magazines they didn't know existed.

Distribution Across 11 Time Zones

After marketing, the greatest challenge is distribution. Many publishers still don't trust the Russian postal system, which has been known to solve the problem of a backlog of unsorted mail by unloading it straight into a dumpster. The cost of distribution is also a challenge for publishers who need to keep subscriptions affordable in a region with high unemployment and low salaries. And the enormous distances involved in transporting magazines mean they may arrive weeks or even months after they are mailed. Some publishers have resorted to a sort of hitchhiking magazine distribution system, handing off packets of magazines to strangers in train stations and giving them the name of the person at the other end who will meet the train and receive the packet in return for a modest "transport" fee.

Another challenge is selling magazines in countries where the average annual income per person is $2,500 or less, and in some countries much less. Some Christian magazines have outside sponsors who provide regular funding, but most must look to a wide variety of sources to cover expenses. The most common base of support is the staff themselves, many of whom work for the magazine on a volunteer basis. Occasional donations from foreign and local organizations and individuals are also a vital source

(continued on page 10)

Although experienced writers are still at a premium, 80 percent of the Christian magazines about which MTI has information use little or no translated material. This is encouraging.

(continued from page 9)

of funding. But for nearly half of Christian magazines recently surveyed by MTI, subscriptions and single-copy sales are a primary source of income.

Despite the economic challenges and the constant concern about funding, many Christian publishers are amazingly tenacious. *Maria*, a Russian-language magazine for women, is published in Moldova, which, with an average annual per person income of $460, is the poorest country in Europe. Nevertheless, editor Olga Mocan and her staff celebrated ten years of continuous publishing in 2004. The attractive, 36-page Russian-language magazine has a circulation of 7,000 and is distributed throughout the region.

Maria was one of the first Christian magazines to begin publishing after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Most Christian magazines in the region are considerably younger. Perhaps because Christian publishing in the region is so new, there appear to be proportionately far fewer Christian magazines there than in Eastern Europe. According to the 2001 edition of *Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, Bulgaria and Belarus have nearly the same number of Evangelical, charismatic, and Pentecostal Christians. Nevertheless, while MTI knows of only 10 Christian magazines in Belarus, we have had contact with 30 in Bulgaria.

Russia, with a population five times that of Romania, has fewer Protestant magazines. Admittedly, the percentage of believers in Romania is much higher than that of Russia, so for those aiming at just the Evangelical, Charismatic, and Pentecostal market, the number of prospective subscribers would be similar. It is also probable that because of Russia's enormous size, a large number of small publishers have escaped our lenses.

New Christian magazines are continually surfacing throughout the countries of the former Soviet Union. Christians see the potential impact of the printed page and are eager to embrace the opportunities it presents. Few anticipate the very real challenges of publishing. But many with grit seize the opportunities and endure the challenges. And when they can possibly afford the cost of travel and time away from work, they come to professional conferences where they meet colleagues from Christian magazines they never knew existed. ◆

Christian Magazines in the Former Soviet Union: A Profile

Editor's note: Findings are based on an MTI survey of 110 Christian magazines.

- Most magazines surveyed are aimed at Evangelical, Charismatic, or Pentecostal Christians, with nearly a quarter listing discipleship or teaching as their primary purpose. About 20 percent say their purpose is evangelistic. Some expect to both disciple believers and reach unbelievers with the same content and approach. MTI guesses that fewer than five percent are truly evangelistic in nature, tone, and impact.
- About 10 percent of Christian magazines are aimed at women and the family. Another 5.5 percent are geared toward children and youth. About 15 percent of Christian magazines are directed to church leaders, with nearly half of those aimed at youth and children's workers. Although only 11 percent of Christian periodicals consider themselves denominational or church publications, because of the problem of achieving widespread recognition, many editors have minimal impact beyond their own church circles.
- About 40 percent of the magazines have a circulation of 2,000 or fewer. Some 30 percent have a circulation over 5,000. These circulation figures are considerably higher than those of magazines in the much smaller countries of Eastern Europe.
- Although experienced writers are still at a premium, 80 percent of the Christian magazines about which MTI has information use little or no translated material. This is encouraging for the future development of Christian writers in the region.
- Some 40 percent of Christian magazines are published quarterly; most are published more frequently. Many major Christian periodicals in the U.S. have gone to quarterly publication in order to reduce expenses. However, most publishers in Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union continue to believe that, like consumer magazines, Christian periodicals should be published more frequently.
- The advertising that drives consumer magazines and makes their more frequent publication profitable is largely unavailable to Christian publications. Many, if not most, Christian publishers in the region say they would take advertising if they could get it. However, few Christian organizations and companies can afford to advertise.
- Like Christian magazines in Eastern Europe, magazines in the countries of the former Soviet Union tend to be thin. Only slightly more than half of the magazines have more than 26 pages. Some 20 percent of the periodicals are actually four- to eight-page newsletters.
- Most Christian magazines in the region have been published fewer than 10 years. As the economies stabilize and ministries mature, Christian magazines may be expected to grow stronger. Even volunteer staff members are eager to increase their professional skills. Christian magazine workers are gaining experience and expertise with each passing year. As a result, their magazines are becoming more effective.

Sharon Mumper *is director of the Magazine Training Institute, Baden-Leesdorf, Austria.*

Report Highlights Religious Liberty Abuses

Editor's Note: The 2004 annual report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Liberty assigned three republics of the former Soviet Union to its Watch List for abuses of freedom of conscience (Belarus, Georgia, and Uzbekistan) and placed one on its list of "Countries of Particular Concern" (CPC) for especially flagrant violations of religious liberties (Turkmenistan). The report also documents increasing infringements on religious liberty in Russia.

Belarus

Violations of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief by the government of Belarus became more pronounced in 2003. Official intolerance and harassment of various denominations has grown, including of the Greek Catholic Church and the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, as well as of religions relatively new to the country, including Pentecostals, Hindus, and Hare Krishnas. The Commission has placed Belarus on its Watch List and will continue to consider closely whether the government's record rises to a level warranting designation as a "country of particular concern," or CPC.

In October 2002, President Aleksandr Lukashenko signed new legislation on religion that led to further restrictions on religious freedom in Belarus. Although the law purports to codify protections for religious freedom, in fact it provides government officials with tools to repress and control religious activities without providing any clear mechanisms to check abuses by these officials.

Considered by many observers to be the most repressive religion law in Europe, the new law essentially prohibits all unregistered religious activity by organized groups; religious communities with fewer than 20 members; foreign citizens from leading religious activities; and religious activity in private homes, with the exception of small, occasional meetings.

The law also requires all religious organizations to apply for re-registration within two years. The registration criteria laid out in the law are vague, thus facilitating continued abuse by government officials. According to the new law, religious publishing and education will be restricted to religious groups that have 10 or more registered communities, including at least one that was in existence in 1982. This requirement of at least 20 years existence in Belarus is particularly onerous, since the cutoff date of 1982 falls during the Soviet period of religious repression when few religious groups were able to operate openly. Moreover, all religious literature is now subject to compulsory government censorship, and most communities are denied the right to establish institutions to train clergy.

Since 1994, President Lukashenko has openly pursued a policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church, a policy that frequently results in discrimination against other religious communities. The relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Belarus government has created particular problems for many Protestant groups, which have sometimes been denied registration or permission to build a place of worship by regional authorities who have been influenced by local Orthodox leaders. Several "independent" Orthodox churches that do not accept the authority of the Orthodox Patriarch in Moscow have been denied registration, before and after the new law was passed. These churches include the Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the True Orthodox Church, a branch of the Orthodox Church that rejected the compromise with the Soviet government made by the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1920s. In June 2003, the Belarus government and the Russian Orthodox Church signed a concordat codifying the Orthodox Church's influence in government affairs and other facets of public life.

Georgia

Georgia's previous government under Eduard Shevardnadze maintained a slow and inadequate response to ongoing vigilante violence against some of the country's religious minorities. In a welcome move in March 2004, the new Georgian government of Mikheil Saakashvili ordered the arrest and pretrial detention of seven leaders of mob violence against religious minorities. Following the ouster of Shevardnadze, officials reportedly permitted the Jehovah's Witnesses Watchtower Bible Society to operate legally in November 2003. Nevertheless, other significant religious freedom issues remain unresolved, including the fact that only the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) has the right to register and gain legal status, giving the GOC precedence over other religious communities in official affairs, including public education. The Commission placed Georgia on its Watch List in 2004.

The 1995 Constitution guarantees religious freedom and forbids "persecution of an individual for his thoughts, beliefs, or religion." In practice, however, violations of religious freedom do occur, especially at the regional level, where local officials restrict the rights of mainly nontraditional religious minorities, who in recent years have been subjected to societal violence.

In the past three years, minority religious groups in Georgia, including Baptists, Catholics, Hare Krishnas, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Orthodox churches that do not accept the primacy of the GOC Patriarchate have been subjected to more than 100 violent vigilante attacks. Jehovah's Witnesses have been especially singled out, as well as members of independent Orthodox churches. Pentecostals have also been attacked; adherents have been beaten and property has been vandalized or stolen. Local police are sometimes implicated in these attacks or often refuse to intervene to protect victims. What began in 1999 as a series of isolated attacks in the capital of Tbilisi escalated into a nationwide scourge of mob assaults against members of religious minorities treated with relative impunity. According

(continued on page 12)

President Lukashenko has openly pursued a policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church, a policy that frequently results in discrimination against other religious communities.

(continued from page 11)

to the Department of State, the number of such attacks continued to increase in 2002 and 2003.

The main instigators of these attacks were "renegade" members of the GOC: defrocked priest Vasili Mkalavishvili and director of the Orthodox "Jvari" Union, Paata Bluashvili, who reportedly was supported by some in the GOC hierarchy. On November 4, 2003, a court in Rustavi sentenced Bluashvili and four associates to conditional prison terms, ranging from two to four years.

In June 2003, a court ordered that Mkalavishvili be held in preventive detention for three months, but he went into "hiding" and continued to act without consequence. Over 100 police stormed Mkalavishvili's church in Tbilisi in March 2004, where the priest and his followers had barricaded themselves. Mkalavishvili was taken at once into three-month, pre-trial detention in conformity with the June 2003 court order. At a closed hearing on March 14, the judge ruled that seven of Mkalavishvili's followers also be held for three months of pre-trial detention.

The GOC, to which 65 percent of the country's population claim adherence, is granted privileges and influence not given to other religions. Article 9 of the Constitution recognizes the "special importance of the GOC in Georgian history," giving the GOC considerable influence in official affairs, particularly education. The GOC is the only religious organization to have been granted tax-exempt status. In October 2002, the Georgian government signed an agreement, or concordat, with the GOC, which grants the Patriarch immunity, excludes GOC clergy from military service, and gives GOC clergy the exclusive right to conduct religious services in prisons and the military. The agreement also grants the GOC approval authority over construction of religious buildings and publication of religious literature. Assyrian Chaldean Catholics, Lutherans, Muslims, Old Believers, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Roman Catholics have informed Forum 18 News Service that the GOC Patriarchate has often acted to prevent them from acquiring, building, or reclaiming places of worship. The GOC Patriarchate has also reportedly denied permission for Pentecostals, the Salvation Army, and the True Orthodox Church to print religious literature in Georgia.

At present, Georgia is the only country of the former Soviet Union that does not have a religion law. The absence of a mechanism for obtaining legal status means that only one religious community in the country—the GOC—in effect has such status. In September 2003, the Roman Catholic Church failed to gain legal status in Georgia when the Georgian government suddenly cancelled plans to sign an agreement with the Vatican. The leaders of many religious minorities also seek recognized legal status, since that is a prerequisite for owning property and organizing most religious activities.

The Russian Federation

Clearly, the practice of religion in Russia is freer than at any time in its history. Despite this improvement, problems remain. For example, a federal law on religious organizations enacted in 1997 contains provisions that have prevented some religious groups from registering and thus practicing freely. Regional governments have often passed ordinances that result in discrimination against minority religious groups, and acts of violence against members of religious minorities are widespread. What is more, foreign religious leaders and workers have experienced difficulty gaining entry or maintaining residence in Russia.

The March 26, 2004, Moscow court decision banning Jehovah's Witnesses in that city may mark a major shift in Russian official policy towards religious minorities. The protracted trial in Moscow took place even though 135,000 Jehovah's Witnesses practice their faith in registered communities in many other parts of Russia. If that decision is upheld on appeal, Jehovah's Witnesses will become the first national religious organization to have a local branch banned under the 1997 law. The prosecutor's claim that Jehovah's Witnesses were inciting inter-religious conflict because they see their religion as having the sole claim to truth is especially troubling.

Official efforts to portray "foreign sects," mostly Evangelical Protestants, as alien to Russian culture and society appear to be escalating.

Official efforts to portray "foreign sects," mostly Evangelical Protestants, as alien to Russian culture and society appear to be escalating. In December 2003, state-controlled Kultura TV ran a film made in 1960 that reportedly portrays Pentecostals as practicing human sacrifice. This official campaign appears to be part of an increased effort by Russian authorities to promote the "more equal" status of the state-approved forms of Russia's purported "traditional" religions: Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. A "Law on Traditional Religions," which was proposed in February 2002 and whose status remains unclear, would grant benefits, at varying levels, to these four religions. In March 2004, the Russian press reported that President Putin, while acknowledging the legal separation of church and state, said that he supports a legal initiative to "support the spiritual leaders of the traditional confessions," including on property issues.

Particularly on the local level, evidence suggests that the Orthodox Church has a very close relationship with officials and other state bodies. For example, there are frequent reports that minority religious communities must secure permission from local Orthodox churches before being allowed to build a house of worship.

Russian authorities often seem to turn a blind eye to societal violence directed against certain religious communities, especially at the local level. On the eve of a national conference in January 2004, the "Initiative" Baptist church in Tula was bombed. Arsonists have attacked Pentecostal churches in Podolsk, Chekhovo, Balashikha, Tula, Lipetsk, and Nizhny Tagil. No criminal investigations into these incidents have been launched.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan is among the most repressive states in the world today and engages in particularly severe, ongoing violations of freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief. Since 1985, the country has been

ruled by President Saparmurat Niyazov, who, since Turkmenistan gained independence in 1991, has assumed total control of the country through a "cult of personality." Niyazov's all-pervasive authoritarian rule has effectively prevented any opposition from operating within the country. The Commission continues to recommend that the Secretary of State designate Turkmenistan as a "country of particular concern," or CPC. Despite the fact that religious freedom is severely proscribed in Turkmenistan, the Secretary of State has not yet named Turkmenistan a CPC.

The status of religious freedom declined further after the passage of a new law on religion in November 2003. This law further codifies the Turkmen government's already highly repressive policies that effectively ban most religious activity in Turkmenistan and calls for criminal penalties for those found guilty of participating in "illegal religious activity."

President Niyazov has promoted a state-controlled version of Islam as part of Turkmen identity. The earlier 1997 version of the religion law effectively banned all religious groups except the state-controlled Sunni Muslim Board and the Russian Orthodox Church, though religious instruction even for these two communities is severely limited. Niyazov has allowed only one *madrassa*, or Islamic school, to remain open. In late March 2004, he proclaimed that no new mosques should be built. *Imams* have been instructed by the government to repeat an oath of loyalty to the "fatherland" and to the president after each daily prayer. Niyazov bolstered his personality cult with the publication of a three-volume work, *Ruhnama*, containing his "spiritual thoughts," which is required reading in all schools. Copies of *Ruhnama* are now reportedly required in mosques and Russian Orthodox churches, and given equal prominence with the Koran and the Bible.

Turkmen security forces routinely interrogate and intimidate believers, especially those attempting to fulfill the registration requirement. Members of unregistered religious communities—including Baha'is, Baptists, Hare Krishnas, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, Shi'a, and other Muslims operating independently of the Sunni Muslim Board—have been arrested, detained, imprisoned, and reportedly tortured, deported, harassed, and fined. In addition, they have had their congregations dispersed, services disrupted, religious literature confiscated, and places of worship destroyed. Members of some religious minority groups in Turkmenistan have reportedly been forced to renounce their faith publicly, swearing an oath on a copy of *Ruhnama*. Security officials regularly break up religious meetings in private homes, search homes without warrants, confiscate religious literature, and detain and threaten congregants with criminal prosecution and deportation. Family members of detained religious leaders have been subjected to harassment and internal exile. Even the registered Russian Orthodox community has been affected by the repressive policies of Niyazov, who in September 2003 issued a decree banning residents of Turkmenistan from receiving Russian publications by mail, a ban that included the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has a highly restrictive law on religion that severely limits the ability of religious groups to function. The Uzbek government in recent years has also been harshly cracking down on Muslim individuals, groups, and mosques that do not conform to government policies on the practice and expression of the Islamic faith. As a result, thousands of people have been arrested, many of whom have been tortured in detention. The Commission has placed Uzbekistan on its Watch List and will continue to consider closely whether the government's record rises to a level warranting designation as a "country of particular concern," or CPC.

The Uzbek government continues to exercise tight control over all religious practice in the country. Despite the constitutional guarantee of the separation of religion and state, the government under President Islam Karimov strictly regulates Islamic institutions and practice through the officially sanctioned Muslim Spiritual Board. Over the past 10 years, and particularly since 1999, the Uzbek government has arrested and imprisoned, with sentences up to 20 years, thousands of Muslims who reject the state's control over religious practice.

The government of Uzbekistan does face threats to its security from certain groups that claim religious links, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which has used violence in the past but whose membership reportedly declined significantly as a result of U.S. military action in Afghanistan in late 2001. Uzbekistan continues to be subject to violent attacks, though the perpetrators are not often apparent. In late March 2004, 47 people were reported dead after bombings and shootouts during several days of violence in the capital Tashkent and the ancient city of Bukhara, according to the Uzbek government. A female suicide bomber was allegedly involved in one incident.

The Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations passed in May 1998 severely restricts religious freedom. Through a series of regulations that are often subjectively applied, the law imposes what the State Department calls "strict and burdensome criteria" for the registration of religious groups; criminalizes unregistered religious activity; bans the production and distribution of unofficial religious publications; prohibits minors from participating in religious organizations; prohibits private teaching of religious principles; and forbids the wearing of religious clothing in public by anyone other than clerics. As with Muslims, pastors or other members of Protestant churches have been arrested on spurious drug, or other charges. Several Christian leaders have in the past reportedly been detained in psychiatric hospitals, severely beaten, and/or sentenced to labor camps. In the past year, Christian groups continued to have their churches raided, services interrupted, Bibles confiscated, and the names of adherents recorded by Uzbek officials. Several Christian leaders were imprisoned for leading religious services in private homes. Some Christian groups in Uzbekistan have been forced to operate underground. ◆

Christian groups continued to have their churches raided, services interrupted, Bibles confiscated, and the names of adherents recorded by Uzbek officials. Several Christian leaders were imprisoned.

Edited excerpts reprinted with permission of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom from the Commission's 2004 annual report, available at http://www.uscirf.gov/reports/12May04/finalreport.php3?scale=1024.

Book Review

Caldwell, Melissa L. *Not by Bread Alone: Social Support in the New Russia*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004.

Reviewed by Cheryl K. Hosken.

Not by Bread Alone is an enthnographic study of the elderly poor in Moscow who were fed in church-supported soup kitchens in the late 1990s. The ministry of the soup kitchens continues to this day, although diminished in size. For those of us who desire to understand Russian society and how it works, Melissa Caldwell's study is filled with useful information. It is also helpful that the author knows the Russian language and understands not only conversations, but also the nuances of meaning in words people use. She details her observations with examples that she herself experienced.

The theme of the book is "making do" with the economic and material uncertainties of life in Russia, especially following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Soviet citizens nearly always experienced a shortage of consumer goods. Thus, families had a network of family and friends who procured needed items and lent money when necessary. In the 1990s, consumer goods increased, but disposable income was practically nonexistent. Therefore, Western agencies and humanitarian organizations began to distribute food packages and feed the poor.

The book focuses on a food program set up by the congregation of the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy. For a number of reasons, it is a fine example of *koinonia*, the New Testament Greek term for sharing or fellowship. The program feeds those who are most needy as recommended by the local social welfare offices. Students who are in need of food serve as volunteers and receive one hot meal per day. The church supervises the program and works with locally run cafeterias to prepare and serve food. A good percentage of the food recipients and volunteers worship together at the host church. By working together, these groups serve and form community for the elderly poor. The food program gave the elderly companionship, information on goods for low prices, a sharing of needs and ways to meet needs, and celebration of personal and national holidays. In other words, more than just bread was shared in the cafeteria.

The network of family and friends is used today as well to help the elderly in times of trouble or material need. The practical rules governing what one can expect to receive in exchange from this network is difficult for Westerners to understand. However, the author gives examples of exchange, gift giving, and to whom one can look for help. Russian elderly also need to reciprocate charity and kindness shown them even if the return gift has little monetary value. Such a revelation will help Westerners understand the need to accept gifts or invitations to tea with an elderly person. The book also explores changes in Russian society and interpersonal networks through globalization and technology. Family relationships are changing as Russia has been introduced to name brands, personal computers, European culture and trends, and increased amounts of disposable income.

The book ends with a note of uncertainty about the continuation of food programs for the elderly. Russia has certainly changed since Ms. Caldwell's original visit in 1997. From information I have gathered in Moscow, many food programs were negatively affected by the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack. Funding from the West decreased, therefore lowering the number of pensioners who could be served. Russian Duma legislation is also affecting pensioners and handicapped people. They will receive increased monthly income in cash payments but all discounts for housing services and assistive equipment will be removed. Prescriptions will be subsidized at what is now about $12 per month (*Moscow Times*, 13 August 2003). Given such small pensions for the elderly, perhaps those who now sponsor food programs will find it necessary to continue and even expand them.◆

Cheryl K. Hosken *teaches social work courses at the Russian-American Christian University, Moscow, and with her husband, Bob, heads Agape Biblia and Agape Rehab Society.*

Letters to the Editor

Let me express my thanks and admiration for your making the Kosovo tragedy the topic of your lead article in the latest issue [12 (Summer 2004), 1-3]. Most of the self-proclaimed defenders of religious freedom in the Protestant world would have simply ignored the subject—all too often they seem to care about religious persecution only when it affects their fellow Protestants. (My fellow Orthodox are, of course, often equally guilty of such selectiveness.) Keep pursuing the truth, whether it's popular or not!

Larry Uzzell, President
International Religious Freedom Watch
Fishersville, Virginia

We appreciate the honest evaluation of the church in Moldova in the latest *East-West Church & Ministry Report* [12 (Spring 2004), 13-14]. For anyone wanting to help Christians in the former Soviet Union, Oleg Turlac's article hits the nail on the head. Change creates stress anywhere, but nowhere more than in a country and community that was isolated for generations. Helping the church go through change and embrace its new opportunities without polarizing the church can be a great contribution. Turlac's article is right on and can be of great help in that process.

Hank Paulson, President
New Hope International
Colorado Springs, Colorado

(continued from page 16)

and many were evacuated, the Hobans decided to stay. The villagers told them, "You'll be the last to die. First, we will die; then our children will die; only then would you die." On another occasion, Muslim missionaries from Pakistan came to the village and told the Albanians they should kill the Hobans because they were Christian missionaries. The villagers told them to go away: "They are Christians, but they are our Christians. They are one of us."

Sacrificial Giving

Aletheia is a small church with a large missions vision. It was one of the first churches in Romania to send out missionaries without support from outside organizations. Although the level of help from outside sources is probably larger than implied by the main participants, the church nevertheless has devoted itself to providing for its missionaries as completely as it can. The missions pastor says that Aletheia supplied 60 to 70 percent of the Hobans' funds. At the beginning, the church apparently had Western contacts who would have connected them to a mission board that would have taken care of the Hobans. However, the leaders decided not to take advantage of this offer. They felt God had called them to do it, so they asked God to supply the needs. Several Romanian businessmen from outside the church have become regular donors. These men, some Orthodox and some Evangelical, have responded positively to presentations of the needs in Albania and have given generously.

Aletheia has not been able to fund its missions program totally from its own resources. This has required establishing relationships with partners outside the country. Exodus Fellowship in Maryland is listed on the church letterhead as a U.S. contact. A church in North Carolina also has been a partner. Donors come from Northern Ireland and Germany as well. And World Relief helped build the new community center in the village.

Open to New Vision

Aletheia had a multi-cultural character from the very beginning. Among the church's initial ten members was an American missionary who provided access to multiple perspectives in its founding stages. Aletheia has planted three churches in the Timisoara area and others farther away, it is starting a church among Gypsies, and is helping churches in Oltenia, primarily with training. The important point is that Aletheia was open to new ways of doing ministry, and therefore the church was able to respond to a need and a vision and adopt it as its own. No inherent resistance to doing something new and challenging existed. Marincu, as a visionary and initiator, certainly made this easier as well.

Through the six years that the Hobans served in Albania, people from the church visited regularly. (Marcel Hoban is now the missions pastor of Aletheia.) About twice a year, a church group traveled to Albania to visit and encourage the Hobans and to help with practical issues, money, and supplies. Ten to 15 members have made these trips, quite a large percentage for such a small church. Leaders sent both mature and not-so-mature people because, in addition to practical help, the purpose of the trips was to challenge people. The missions pastor says of those who participated, "They have now lived there for a week and they understand better. The impact was significant. They now have a heart for missions."

Aletheia has relationships with the Pentecostal churches in Timisoara, which typically look at it with distrust because it is charismatic and has not joined the Pentecostal Union. However, Cornel Marincu has developed a reputation and trust that has overcome many barriers. At the same time, Aletheia recently joined a new denomination that has ties to the Pentecostal Missionary Society (PMS), one of the earliest mission agencies founded after the 1989 Revolution. So far, PMS supports two women from Oradea serving in India and a man from Satu Mare serving in Afghanistan.

The Hobans' initial Western contacts were through the Albanian Encouragement Project (AEP), a consortium of all mission groups working in Albania. They later switched their affiliation from AEP to the Albanian Evangelical Alliance. The current missions pastor has become involved in foreign ministry, traveling to Vietnam with BEE to teach courses to others who now experience under Communism what Romanians have lived through. The church has a written manual that includes a section on multiplication and mission. All church members have to read and understand the vision. In addition, Aletheia has developed a mission constitution outlining policies, finances, communication, and partnership.

A Lot to Learn As Well As Give

Although Romanians feel they have something important to bring to Albanians, they see that they have a lot to learn from them as well, for example in the area of hospitality. Romania has a strong reputation in this area, but "We don't know anything compared to them [Albanians]. They give you everything." They recognize the possibility and the danger of an attitude of superiority and pride, of being full of themselves. They know they need to be humble, to see others as "like us." Marincu talks of BEE as being a role model for them in this, in that BEE staff came in and recognized they had things to learn from Romanians, and not just to teach. Finding the balance between having something to offer and something to learn is important. BEE training helped Marincu develop his own ministry skills and philosophy of ministry. Western missionaries modeled missions for Romanians, helped them to see missions first hand, and encouraged them to think about missions for themselves. Others came regularly and encouraged them in their vision. An American missionary family with BEE was in the church from the beginning, encouraging the church's vision and personally supporting the Hobans.

On the negative side, some missionaries were not good models because they were not willing to learn Romanian culture and language and they created problems with their condescending attitudes. Nevertheless, it was still seen positively. Romanians looked at Western missionaries with whom they were not impressed and thought: "If this is what a missionary is, we can do a better job than they do. We have people who are more mature, better prepared, more experienced, and able to teach." In conclusion, vision did not change the economic system. Instead, it changed the way people understood their capabilities and made them willing to use their financial resources to further a specific cause. ◆

Edited excerpt reprinted with permission from Scott Klingsmith, "Factors in the Rise of Missionary Sending Movements in East-Central Europe," Ph.D. dissertation, Trinity International University, 2002.

Scott Klingsmith *is a missionary with CBI International and lives in Vienna, Austria.*

Missionary Sending Movements in East-Central Europe:
A Romanian-Albanian Case Study

Scott Klingsmith

Vision changed the way people understood their capabilities and made them willing to use their financial resources to further a specific cause.

In 1988, Marcel Hoban, then 18 years old, was a member of a youth group in Timisoara, Romania, which met regularly for prayer and Bible study. One guest speaker encouraged those attending to pray for countries with very few Christians and for Christians facing persecution. He also shared that Albania recently had declared itself the first officially atheistic country in the world. Hoban, together with his group, began to pray for a Bible translation and Christian response in Albania.

Agape and Alethia Church Support

One day, while praying and studying the Bible, Hoban received a vision of mountains and darker-skinned people and heard an inner voice say, "There you will be a missionary." In April 1994, while visiting Albania, he came to a certain mountain. As he saw the needs of the surrounding villages, it suddenly became clear to him that this was the same mountain and these were the same people that he had seen in his vision. Agape, their church in Timisoara, sent Marcel and his wife Felicia as missionaries to the village of Pinet.

Six months after their church's funding ended, they responded to a previous invitation from Cornel Marincu, pastor of Aletheia, another church in Timisoara. Despite being just one year old and with just some two dozen members, this church agreed to support the Hobans as its missionaries. In 2001, Aletheia sent another couple to serve in the village of Pinet in Albania. A church now of around 100 members, it wants to send missionaries to Serbia and also has someone preparing to go to the Muslim world.

Daniel Matei, a Pentecostal pastor, immigrated to the United States and then served as a missionary in China. Immediately after the 1989 Revolution he returned to Romania and shortly thereafter helped start a new style church. This charismatic church, Agape, unlike traditional Pentecostal churches in Romania, emphasized a more contemporary worship style, ministry training, and outreach. Matei had a heart for missions and it was part of his desire for Agape to become involved in missions. He encouraged his church to accept Hoban's vision and to support him.

Cornel Marincu, the founding pastor of Aletheia, was one of the original members of Agape and was its director of church planting and missions, but left over differences in philosophy of ministry and practice. Influenced by the "Church Dynamics" course taught by Biblical Education by Extension (BEE), Marincu developed a growing awareness of the need for mission outreach. When Hoban visited the church, it adopted his vision. However, church members did not just accept his vision: they caught it for themselves and owned it.

Vision More Critical Than Money

In many situations in Romania since the 1989 Revolution, people with a missions vision have had to leave their church to find another congregation willing to share their desire to be sent. So often the pastor by his attitude can promote or destroy any missions vision. Those involved in supporting the Hobans in Albania believe that if the church has the vision, there will be no problem with money. One respondent, who spoke passionately about the relationship between giving and vision, said the church has to teach people that money belongs to God. "Economics is not the biggest problem. People think first you have to have money. Not true. Money is only money. Most important is vision." Aletheia committed to providing the Hobans with $250 a month. "By the grace of God, by miracles," respondents say they have never missed a month. In the year 2000 alone the church invested $15,500 in Albania because people sacrificed to help: some gave up their cars while others gave up their vacation money.

Missionary Hardships

At times, things were very difficult for the Hobans. They lived at the same level as the villagers, they hauled water by donkey, and for three years they did not have a car. They moved to the village of Pinet simply to establish a Christian presence in the village. They went as newlyweds, and as such were adopted and protected by the village. During the violence in Albania in 1997, when foreigners had great difficulties

(continued on page 15)

East-West Church & Ministry Report, published quarterly by the Global Center, seeks to encourage Western Christian ministry in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that is effective, culturally relevant, and cooperative. It also serves as a forum for the exploration of a variety of issues relating to Christianity's presence in Europe's formerly Marxist states. Letters to the editor are welcomed. Subscription rates are $44.95 per year (U.S. and Canada); $54.95 (international); and $19.95 (E-mail). Reprint and photocopy policy: 1) Quantity photocopies or reprints of up to three articles from a single issue may be distributed or reprinted with no royalty charge. 2) Written permission is to be secured for each distribution or reprinting. 3) The following statement is to be carried on each photocopied article reproduced and each article reprinted: **Reproduced (or Reprinted) with permission of *East-West Church & Ministry Report*.** Currently indexed by OCLC Public Affairs Information Service (formerly PAIS), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and Zeller Dietrich (formerly Zeller Verlag).

Editor.....Mark R. Elliott
Assistant Editor.....Pamela Garner
Designer.....Jennifer Myers

Samford University
Birmingham, AL 35229

East-West Church & Ministry Report
The Global Center
Beeson Divinity School
Samford University
Box 292268
Birmingham, AL 35229
Tel.: 205-726-2170
Fax: 205-726-2271
E-mail: ewcmreport@samford.edu
Web site: http://www.samford.edu/groups/global/ewcmreport

 ISSN 1069-5664